



# **CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN SRI LANKA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The process of cultural transformation in South Asia has witnessed many phases both in terms of political power and religion. Presently the Islamic faith seems to be forming the newest phase of cultural transformation in South Asia whereby followers of Islam in the region are increasing rapidly. This paper analyses the conditions which have prompted this trend and their implications for the South Asian region with a focus on Sri Lanka. It maps the social, economic, political, and cultural means by which the Islamic faith is spreading in the country and region, and argues – drawing from previous studies – that Islamization can have an adverse impact on the political stability of South Asia.

**Keywords:** Cultural Transformation, Islamization, South Asia, Sri Lanka

## **INTRODUCTION**

A historical analysis of major episodes of cultural transformation, at least within the South Asian region, confirms that they all have occurred due to power fluctuations.

Rama – Ravana (5000 years ago) epic is one of the furthest records where one era of supremacy was followed by another. Similarly, other chapters of history that have greatly influenced the cultural landscape of the region include Mahabharata era (1200-800 BC), Alexander the Great's era (330 BC), Ashoka the great- Chandragupta Maurya era (260 BC), Chola era (300 BC-1200 AD), Han Dynasty - Silk road era (200 BC-220 AD), Genghis Khan era (1200 AD) followed by the

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Mughal era (1500-1800) and then European domination (1400-1950). The bottom line is that conflicts have taken place and will continue to take place at the global and local scales. These conflicts will lead to the oppression of a lot and the emergence of more dominant super-powers. Once a superpower emerges the value system of the new superpower is likely to spread and replace the earlier value system. This has nevertheless aided the cultural evolutionary process of the human race (Roberts and Westard 2013).

From the period of liberation from Europeans, South Asia’s culture has evolved with the incorporation of a considerable amount of cultural values that were passed onto them mainly by the British and the Europeans. Even today, the impact of over 500 years of influence of the Europeans is an integral part of the local culture of South Asia. Even after the Europeans gave up the South Asian region in the formal political sense, they sustained their influence through neo colonialism followed by neo liberalism. However, change is occurring in South Asia in terms of its religious landscape. The

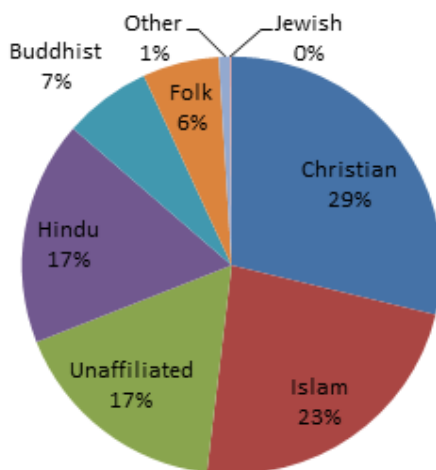
Muslim population seems to be on the rise, a pattern observable even on the global scale.

As far as the world’s religions are concerned (Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the world population by religious beliefs), the largest share of the pie (29 percent) is claimed by Christianity which could be considered as a product of colonialism. The 23 percent of Islamic faith is dominated by the Mid Eastern region and the Central to East African region. 17 percent Hinduism is mostly confined to India and as a nation with a population of over 1.2 billion (approximately 1/5 of the world’s population) India contributes to a large portion of the 17 percent representing Hindus.

Buddhism is mostly confined to the East Asian, South East Asian and a few countries in the South Asian region. However, the 7 percent of Buddhists are largely constituted by the Buddhists in China who are believed to be in excess of 244 million.

Over the past century, the world has seen a change in the cultural landscape largely influenced by the religious beliefs of the

**Figure 1: World population by religious groups**



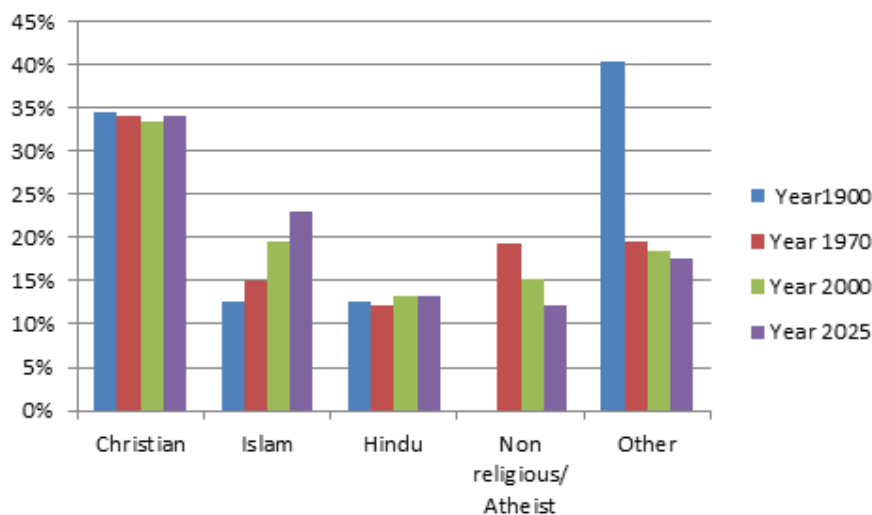
**Source: Pew Research Centre (2012)**

world population that has eternally been a vital aspect of defining cultural settings. This process has been influenced by the spread of neo-liberalism, which has played a significant role in the transformation of cultures depending on how well national economies are managing in the global market. Accordingly, as holders of the better part of the very lucrative energy market, the Middle Eastern region has emerged as a super power that has the potential to change cultural values of inhabitants in native countries. As will be shown in the paper, this emergence has religious undertones that impact different parts of the world with which the Middle East is strongly connected.

As is elaborated in Figure 2, the percentage of the population following Christianity and Hinduism has more or less sustained whereas the followers of the Islamic faith has nearly doubled during the past century globally. During the past 30 years, the percentage of the global population following Islam has increased by 4.5 percent. In the meantime atheists and other religious groups have declined by 5 percent during the same period.

As shown in Figure 3, the global phenomenon above is also reflected in post-independence Sri Lanka in general and in the post 1977 period signified by the free market economy in particular.

**Figure 2: Global population by major religious groups from 1900- 2025**



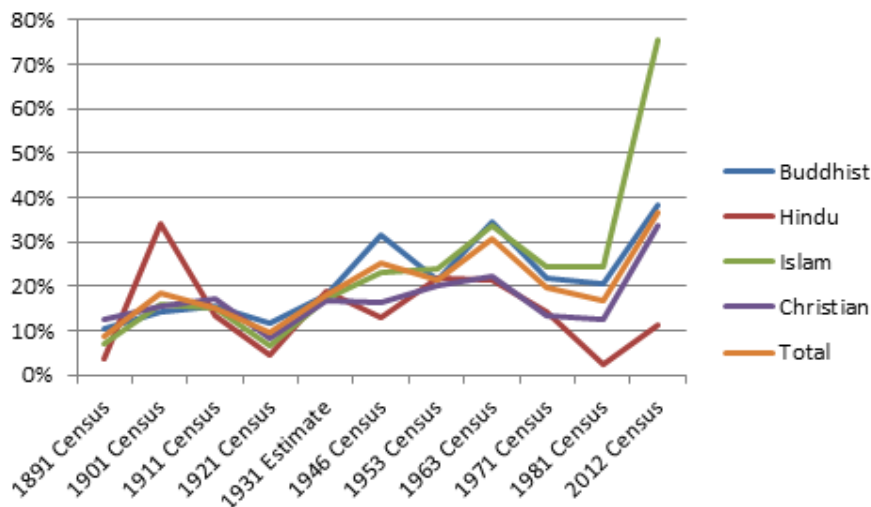
**Source: Johnson and Grim (2009)**

The correlation between the growth of the global Moor population and that in Sri Lanka could owe in large part to the newly gained monetary power of the Middle Eastern countries that could have contributed towards enabling the people with Middle Eastern links, mainly the moors of Sri Lanka, to gain economic and political clout, thereby facilitating a rapid growth in their numbers.

This increase in their population can be traced from 7 percent in 1981 to 10 percent in 2012. This is in stark contrast with the

Sinhala population which is an ageing one, and the Tamil population which is largely an out migrant one. When it comes to fertility rates, Sri Lanka has an average fertility rate of 2.4. Unbundling the above figure along ethnic lines exhibits an alarming disparity: Fertility rate of the Sinhalese and Tamils is 2.3 whereas the figure is 3.4 for Muslims in Sri Lanka. Sinhala and Muslim populations have increased at the rate of 1.04 and 1.87 percent respectively between 1981 and 2012. As Figures 4 and 5 show, since 1981 the

**Figure 3: Increase of population by religious group**



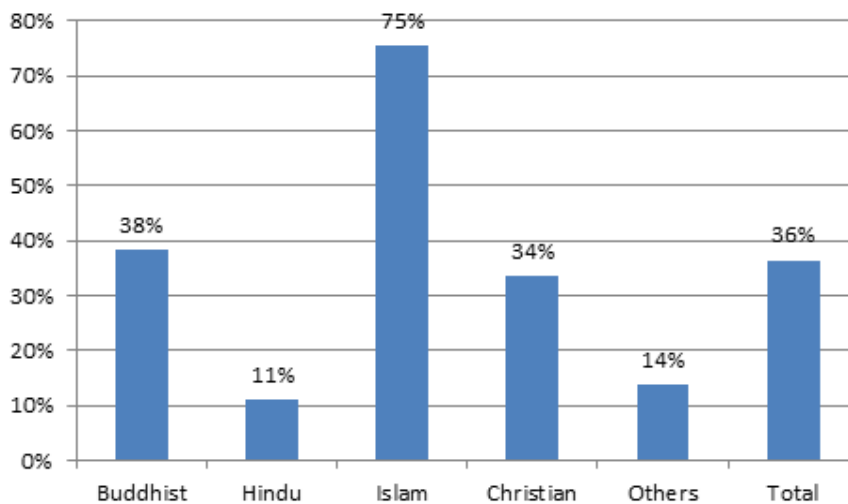
**Source: National Census Report (2012)**

increase of the Islamic group has been 75 percent whereas the growth of the Buddhists and Christians is between 30-40 percent. The Hindu population is showing an increase of only 12 percent largely due to out migration.

The scenario mentioned above is not an unfamiliar situation throughout the South Asian sub continent.

The dramatic increase of the Moor population

**Figure 4: Sri Lanka’s population growth for 1981- 2012 period by religious groups**



**Source: National Census Report (2012)**

can be attributed to the economic rise of the Middle East due largely to the high demand for crude oil and the region’s ability to supply it. As a result, Middle Eastern influence on other parts of the world (especially regions with sizeable moor populations like South Asia) has grown, especially by way of economic backing for local moors. Although this cultural

change is not yet very obvious, traits acquired from the Middle Eastern culture including certain practices prescribed in the Holy Quran such as Shariya banking, Shariya judiciaries, Halal certification and even attire (Ali 2012) are becoming increasingly visible presently.

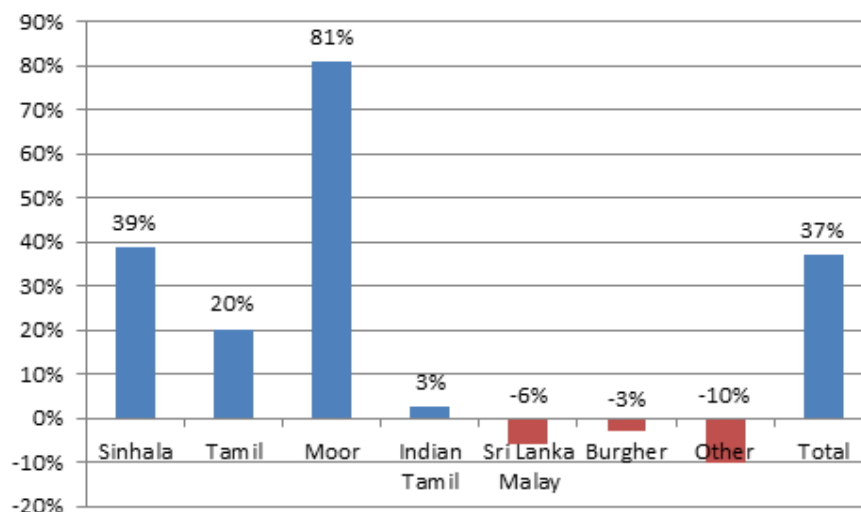
Mishra (2004) notes that the increase in Moor numbers is connected with a strategic design

to achieve political power faster through greater numbers. This phenomenon is also applicable to the South Asian region and will change the political, economic and cultural setting in the years to come. In light of these tendencies, it is important to study the process of cultural transformation in Sri Lanka, South Asia, and the world in order to understand the trajectory of such transformation and its

implications for the future.

The paper, therefore, will discuss the distinct episodes of cultural transformation in Sri Lanka including the present situation. Under the current episode of cultural transformation, this paper will discuss the factors leading to cultural transformation, evidence of cultural transformation, inevitable

**Figure 5: Sri Lanka's population growth for 1981- 2012 period by ethnic groups**



**Source: National Census Report (2012)**

nature of cultural transformation and the impact of cultural transformation on a national, regional and global scale. It will conclude with some observations and predictions.

**FACTORS LEADING TO CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION**

***Historical Factors***

Sri Lanka's history has a few distinct episodes of cultural change. The furthest traces of an existence of a developed civilization run back to over 30,000 years where the Balangoda man (*Homo sapiens balangodensis*) existed. According to the evidence available, Balangoda man's existence was primarily based on agriculture. The Hydraulic civilization with a stereotypic cascading canal system could have evolved after this particular era (De Silva 1981).

The Rama-Ravana epic describes a phase where Indian armies overpowered the Sri Lankans, eventually resulting in some parts of Indian culture being incorporated to that of Sri Lanka. Prince Vijaya's arrival in Sri Lanka 2600 years ago seems to have expedited the process of replacing the local culture with a predominantly Indian one. The arrival of Arhath Mahinda and Sangamitta (son and daughter of Emperor Ashoka) around 300BC and the subsequent introduction of Buddhism was one of the major episodes of cultural transformation where the traditional ancestor worship and worship of natural resources and deities was replaced by the Buddhist way of life. Later on Chola and Dravidian expansionist programmes again replaced the local culture temporarily, but were not forceful enough to change the local setting completely.

The introduction and spread of Arab culture in Sri Lanka owes to the arrival of Arab traders and the commencement of their trading activities in the island. With the expansion of the Mughal Empire in India, the Arab religious ideology spread more quickly in the region including Sri Lanka (Dewaraja 1994).

The next major episode of cultural transformation was marked by the arrival of Europeans; the Portuguese in the 1500s, followed by the Dutch and then the British. These arrivals and their colonial heritage influenced the culture of Sri Lanka mainly through imposing Euro-Christian values on the local populace. During this period Buddhism and the Buddhist ideology were forcefully and strategically demoted by the colonialists that promoted Christianity and laid the foundation for capitalist growth (De Silva 1981).

This phase of cultural transformation continued to the post-independence period (since 1948) that was highlighted by strategic investments of corporations devised to leach out resources and mobilize markets to continue the process of neo colonialism which later on evolved into neo liberalism that further promoted corporatocracy (Kapoor 2002). Along with this process, the western cultural affinity of said corporate giants was also promoted across the globe.

Since the 1980s Sri Lanka went through an armed conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka whereby the former claimed to be working towards securing the interests of the Tamil minority against a majoritarian government (Bandarage 2009). Seeing as the Moors were for the most part spared the brunt of heavy casualties, it is natural that their population has not suffered as massive a decline as the Sinhala and Tamil populations. This absence of harm to their numbers, coupled with the out-migration of

Tamils (due to ethnic unrest) and Sinhalese (due to the search for greener pastures), resulted in a rise of moor power within Sri Lanka in all economic, social and political spheres (Ezzati 2002).

### ***Socio-Economic Factors***

After the colonialists replaced Sri Lanka's traditional subsistence agriculture with export oriented commercial plantations of tea, rubber and coconut, Sri Lanka's interactions with the outer world increased significantly. However, the post-independence era resulted in a phase of renaissance of the agriculture sector and Sri Lanka's policy was reaching self-sufficiency in rice, while keeping intact the major export crops for foreign exchange. Later on modernization and population boom resulted in increased national consumption of export crops, which left Sri Lanka with only a few options to gain foreign exchange. Therefore the state had to resort to any avenue to earn foreign exchange.

In the meantime Middle Eastern economies were booming due to the new found oil wealth and its increased marketability. This prompted Sri Lanka to consider temporary labour migration to the Middle East for employment as a source of foreign exchange. As the demand was mainly for females as domestic workers, the Sri Lankan female labour force was convinced of the economic benefits of foreign employment and promptly dispatched to the Middle East in general and to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE in particular.

Ever since, the dependence on remittances has increased considerably. Remittances of migrant workers at present accounts for approximately half the export earnings of Sri Lanka. Other major contributions towards the national earnings come from export agriculture, export of garments and the tourism industry. As Sri Lanka has not successfully diversified its economic avenues, the country appears to be looking

at increasing the number of migrant workers that are largely unskilled, earning low wage scales. The government's vision is to increase the remittances from USD 6 billion in 2012 to 9 billion in 2016 which indicates that the government is looking at promoting migration for foreign employment which keeps the level of unemployment at a low level (Hettige and Punchihewa 2013).

Adding to this is the ever growing concern of national debt. During the recent past, Sri Lanka has emerged as a middle income country, transforming itself from being a low income country. For a country that has gone through an episode of ethno-terrorism spanning three long decades, it is a significant achievement. However, it should be noted here that this transformation has been largely due to the international borrowings that have explicitly shown a marked increase in the per capita income which has placed Sri Lanka among the middle income earning countries amidst widespread disparities in income distribution. Since May 2009 when the LTTE was militarily defeated, Sri Lanka's national debt has risen to Rs. 6.63 Trillion (USD 51 Billion), which has made each citizen indebted to the tune of Rs. 360,000 (USD 2,769)(Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2013). This is largely a consequence of unplanned acquisition of international development assistance. Development assistance that come with multiple conditions has not only paved the way for resources of Sri Lanka to be exploited by trans-nationals, but also highlighted the ineffective and opaque way of utilizing such assistance for national development. In order to negate the effects of rising debt, earning foreign exchange by whatever means possible is necessitated.

Although migration is an avenue to be considered towards this end, the social cost of migration for employment has always been a matter of concern. In spite of having serious concerns, successive governments

of Sri Lanka have shown a keen interest in promoting migration for employment. The relatively higher salary scales that foreign employment offers have resulted in the out migrant labour force lose interest in local employment. For a country that has failed to diversify economic avenues and that is burdened with a sizable foreign debt, remittances from nearly 300,000 people that it sends off shore annually seem one of the few options available to sustain national income. At any given time, there is an estimated 1.8 million people (nearly 1/10 of the population of Sri Lanka) employed offshore (Hettige and Punchihewa 2013).

As it is a population of 1.8 million of which a majority are from the productive and reproductive age group, the social impact of labour migration to the Middle East is felt immediately by the families and mostly by the children of the migrant workers. Further, it is also estimated that around 23 percent of the migrant workers (about 60,000 a year) are sent abroad through the legal channel of foreign employment. They often come from poor and marginalized backgrounds, and are usually deceived or coerced to become victims of sexual slavery and forced labor despite having secured employment through official channels (Hettige and Punchihewa 2013).

The Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment, a government body that operates under the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare, has been established to monitor and safeguard the interests of migrant workers. Although Sri Lanka's migration for employment has been streamlined in theory, serious systematic discrepancies remain. Near homogenizing of national income has given the private migrant exporters literary a license to abuse their mandate.

Excessive dependence on the Middle East as a source of income has resulted on the

one hand in a decline of social cohesiveness in Sri Lanka (due to the breaking up of marriages, school dropouts in the absence of firm parenting, etc.), and on the other in a rise of the amount of political influence the Middle East can exert over the island. This will spur the process of cultural transformation that the country is currently going through.

### ***Evidence of cultural transformation***

Mahawamsa, the dominant chronicle of Sri Lankan history, indicates that it was in 1597 under King Senerath that the first batch of 4000 Muslims with an Indian origin were allowed to settle down in the Eastern Province as permanent residents. According to the National Census of 1946, the number following Islam had grown to 6.5 percent of the population. As indicated earlier in this paper, it was since the introduction of the free market economic policies that the

relative growth of the population following Islamic faith has become obvious. Judging by the transformations of Afghanistan and Bangladesh where the predominantly Buddhist and Hindu Gandhari and Bengali civilizations have become predominantly Islamic civilizations, it is of timely relevance to examine the evidence of cultural transformation in Sri Lanka in order to project the rough trajectory of this tendency.

The “Violations of Muslims’ Civil & political Rights in Sri Lanka” Stakeholder report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee by the Secretariat for Muslims on the 9th of September 2014 has indicated that hardline Sinhala Buddhist organizations and political parties such as the Bodu Bala Sena, Sinhala Ravaya, Ravana Balaya, Jathika Hela Urumaya and Tamil Hindu organizations such as Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal, and

**Table 1: Signs of Islamic Expansion Activities**

Category	Activities
Cultural Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of Madrasa Islamic fundamentalism teaching schools, expanding them, and then are developing them into Mosques</li> <li>• Opening Arabic Colleges to teach Shariya law to Ulamas</li> <li>• Undue expansion of Mosques and Muslim settlements</li> <li>• Adopting nontraditional head scarf, hijab, farda, abaya, burqua by Muslim females</li> <li>• Muslim nursing and hospital staff in certain areas (Kalpitiya, Putalam, Mampuri, Alankuda) refraining from wearing the approved hospital uniform, and instead wearing head scarves.</li> <li>• Muslims claiming that the South Eastern area of Sri Lanka as their traditional homeland</li> <li>• Slaughtering cattle and holding animal sacrifices as religious rituals (Qurban)</li> <li>• Muslims returning from Mecca after Umrah or Hajj spreading fundamentalism</li> </ul>
Cultural Cleansing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building mosques in recently established Muslim settlements in areas sacred to Buddhists, such as Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Kandy, and Kuragala</li> <li>• Causing destruction to sites and acquiring land sacred to Buddhists such as Deegavapiya, through setting fire and bulldozing</li> <li>• Grade 11 Islam book distorting the history of Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Devanagala, Muhudu Maha Viharaya</li> </ul>



Category	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Commissioner for Singapore –Farial Ashroff – engaging in anti-Buddhist propaganda internationally</li> <li>• Noncompliance or dishonoring age old local customs such as showing respect to teachers by bowing</li> </ul>
Ethnic Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim population growing from 4000 in 1597 to 268,000 in 1881 to 1.12 million in 1981 to 1.97 million in 2012.</li> <li>• Immigration of large number of Muslims from Afganistan and Pakistan as refugees to Sri Lanka and their settling down in Sri Lanka.</li> <li>• Strategies to increase fertility rates such as encouraging teen-age girls to get married.</li> </ul>
Ethnic Cleansing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslims employing females with poor economic backgrounds, raping and then forcing them to marry and convert to Islam or to undergo permanent sterilization</li> <li>• Muslims being engaged in organized ethnic cleansing of non-Muslims through sterilization programmes, importation and distribution of birth control pills/ injections and through chemical impregnated food sold to non- Muslims, Muslim medical officers forcing non Muslims to undergo permanent family planning methods</li> </ul>
Economic Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance of tax and custom duty</li> <li>• Trade monopolization and importation of banned goods and substances to Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Establishment of Islamic Shariya banks and introducing Shariya banking units in other banks</li> <li>• Importing heroin from Pakistan and Afghanistan</li> </ul>
Legal monopolization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circumcision and female genital mutilation</li> <li>• Thawheed Jamath extremist Islamic group not being prosecuted</li> <li>• 10 out of 400 organizations spreading religious fundamentalism in Sri Lanka being Islamic Extremist groups</li> <li>• Introduction and imposing Halal certification on food items that are consumed by over 90% non-Muslims in Sri Lanka.</li> <li>• Introduction of aspects of Shariya law in Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Engaging in human trafficking in the form of foreign employment, which sends people, mainly women to Middle Eastern countries</li> </ul>

**Source: Secretariat for Muslims (2014)**

Dravida Senai are opposing certain activities of Islamic extremism. According to what has been presented in the report, the following areas have been identified by Sinhala and Tamil nationalist groups as extremist

activities of certain Muslim factions.

**INFLUENCE ON THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

A thorough study is yet to be done to see whether there is any validity in the claims of

the non Muslim organizations. However, there are clear examples of how Muslims, mainly men that dominate the social hierarchy in their community have managed to influence the legal system to their liking.

For example, while children belonging to non- Muslim communities have rights and legal safeguards, Moor-Islamic girls do not. The minimum age for marriage for girls was spelt out in the General Marriage Ordinance -1907s 1512. Under general law, it was 14 for girls and 16 for boys. However an exception was reserved to accommodate the Kandyan tradition where the minimum age was 12 for girls and 16 for boys. In the post-colonial period the Kandyan Marriage Act 1952 s. 66 too adopted the same benchmarks. However, post-independence, the Muslim Marriages and Divorce Act (1951) did not specify a minimum age. The 1951 Act remains intact more than 60 years after it was passed into law. This has in effect compromised the ability to enjoy rights all children are entitled to, as far as girls born to parents following the Islamic faith are concerned.

Under penal code reforms of 1995 (section 364), having intercourse with a girl below 16 years of age is considered statutory rape. In the case of Muslims, the relevant age for statutory rape is 12 years. A marriage involving a party below 18 years of age is considered as an under aged marriage and is illegal in Sri Lanka. In the case of Muslims, the minimum age for marriage is 12 years and this too could be subjected to alteration with the consent of a regional religious head of the mosque. However, there is no clarity with respect to the consent of the girl. Put simply, they could be forced, coerced, made to sacrifice their education, and compromise their health at a tender age, just to become breeding machines and to satisfy sexual desires of adult males, even at an age as young as 12 years or less.

The United Nations Child Rights Convention

was ratified in Sri Lanka in 1991 and the Children's Charter is in place since 1992. Sri Lanka has thus given an international pledge to recognize everyone less than 18 years of age as children and to safeguard their interests. This further strengthened the standards set under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which was ratified in 1981.

In spite of the oppressive law in place, gender and child rights activists have nevertheless kept relatively silent on the different aspects pertaining to the minimum age for marriage and the minimum age to have consensual sex. The relative silence has also been influenced by the very well organized religious, economic and political leadership of the Moor community of Sri Lanka that constitutes a formidable barrier surrounding the community.

The legal immunity in the case of allowing child marriage seems to translate into high fertility rates among the Moor community in Sri Lanka which stands at 3.4 in contrast to the national average of 2.3 according to the 2012 census data. This boom of the Moor population is likely to be sustained. Therefore, in the decades to come, the population percentage, vote base, parliamentary seats and the influencing capacity representing political power is likely to favor the cultural expansion of the Muslims. Similarly, there could be many other laws and interpretations of certain clauses of law that could very well transform the culture of Sri Lanka and also the South Asian region.

### **INEVITABLE AND IRREVERSIBLE NATURE OF CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION**

Urban centers including the Municipal Council areas are increasingly being colonized by the Moor community. For example, taking into account the census data in 2001 and

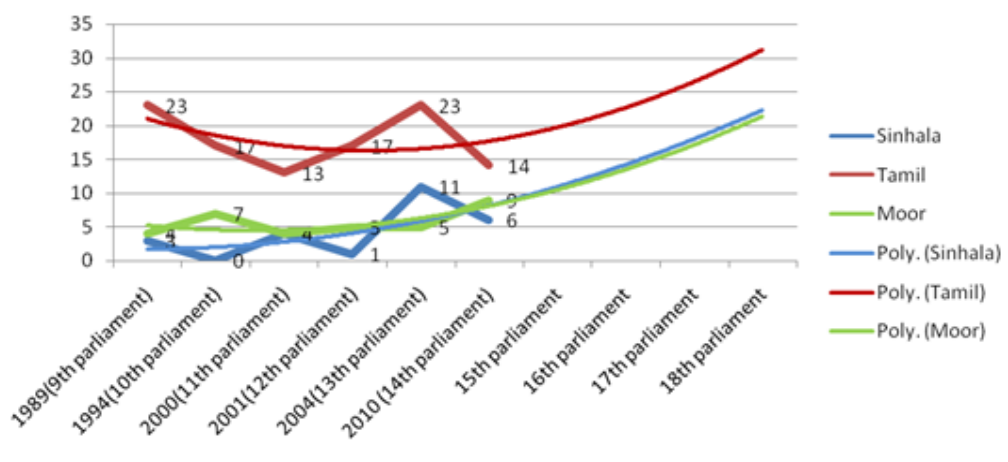
2012 from Colombo Municipal council area, the Moor percentage of the population has risen from 23.87 percent to 28.95 percent (5 percent) within a decade. Similarly, the Moor community is increasingly accessing the economic resources that are concentrated in urban centers which is likely to enhance their economic clout.

Sri Lanka being a country that already has a population density of 323 persons per square

kilometer experiences a scarcity of resources, and the majority of resources available are likely to be controlled (if not owned) by the wealthy and the powerful. Given their economic clout, the Moors are likely to be in control of a significant percentage of these resources in the near future. As such, irreversible changes in the politico-cultural landscape of Sri Lanka may be expected.

In terms of political landscape, an analysis of

**Figure 4: Sri Lanka’s population growth for 1981- 2012 period by religious groups**



**Source: Punchihewa (2014)**

parliamentary seats obtained by candidates that marketed or portrayed themselves as a representative of a certain ethnic or religious group is presented in figure 6. There is a clear pattern whereby the Moors have obtained seats in the parliament by portraying themselves as representatives of their group, while this trend has been declining among Tamil and Sinhala politicians.

**IMPACT OF CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN A NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SCALE**

As Wikileaks (2003) points out, radical Islamic groups are being formed in Sri Lanka, mainly in the Eastern Province. Karthik (2014) has pointed out how Islamic militancy is networked and how diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka are used by Islamic militant groups. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has also

highlighted an important aspect connected to the global terror network, the opium trade (Demirbuken et al, 2011). It explains that many Sri Lankan nationals are arrested in India for engaging in the heroin trade. Berry et al (2002) has clearly examined and analyzed the direct links that the global narcotics trade and the global terrorism movements including the LTTE and many Islamic terror networks possess. 13 years after the above publication, global terrorism and Islamic militant groups have seen substantial growth and diversification. The factors highlighted above makes it clear that Sri Lanka has become an important and strategic location for international terrorism and trafficking of illegal substances.

Therefore, Sri Lanka is likely to experience an episode of ethno-religious terrorism

**Table 2: Percentage of Muslims and distinct features of countries**

Countries	% of Muslims	Features
United States, Australia, Canada, China, Italy, Norway	1 - 2	A peace-loving minority, and not a threat to other citizens.
Denmark, Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Thailand	2 - 5	Begin to proselytize from other ethnic minorities and disaffected groups, often with major recruiting from jails and among street gangs.
France, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Trinidad & Tobago, Sri Lanka	5 - 10	Exercise an inordinate influence in proportion to their percentage of the population. Push for the introduction of halal (clean by Islamic standards) food, thereby securing food preparation jobs for Muslims. They will increase pressure on supermarket chains to feature halal on their shelves -- along with threats for failure to comply. At this point, they will work to get the ruling government to allow them to rule themselves (within their ghettos) under Sharia, the Islamic Law.
Guyana, India, Israel, Kenya, Russia	10 -15	Increase lawlessness as a means of complaint about their conditions. Any non-Muslim action that offends Islam will result in uprisings and threats, such as in Amsterdam, which was in opposition to Mohammed cartoons and films about Islam. Such tensions are seen daily, particularly in Muslim sections.
Ethiopia	15-35	Nations can expect hair-trigger rioting, jihad militia formations, sporadic killings, burning of places of worship of other religions.
Bosnia, Chad, Lebanon	35-60	Nations experience widespread massacres, chronic terror attacks, and ongoing militia warfare.
Albania, Malaysia, Qatar, Sudan	60-75	Nations experience unfettered persecution of non-believers of all other religions (including non-conforming Muslims), sporadic ethnic cleansing (genocide), use of Sharia Law as a weapon, and Jizya, the tax placed on infidels.
Bangladesh, Egypt, Gaza, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates	75-99.9	Daily intimidation and violent jihad, some State-run ethnic cleansing, and even some genocide, as these nations drive out the infidels, and move toward a 100% Muslim country.
Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen	100	Will usher in the peace of 'Dar-es-Salaam' -- the Islamic House of Peace. Here there's supposed to be peace, because everybody is a Muslim, the Madrasas are the only schools, and the Al Quran is the only word.

**Source: Hammond (2005)**

(possibly dominantly Islamic) in the years to come which could lead to a new chapter in cultural transformation. Hammond (2005) has presented the gradual process of Islamization in various parts of the world, and its implications for the respective countries. Table 2 contains a condensed version of this argument.

**Regional impact**

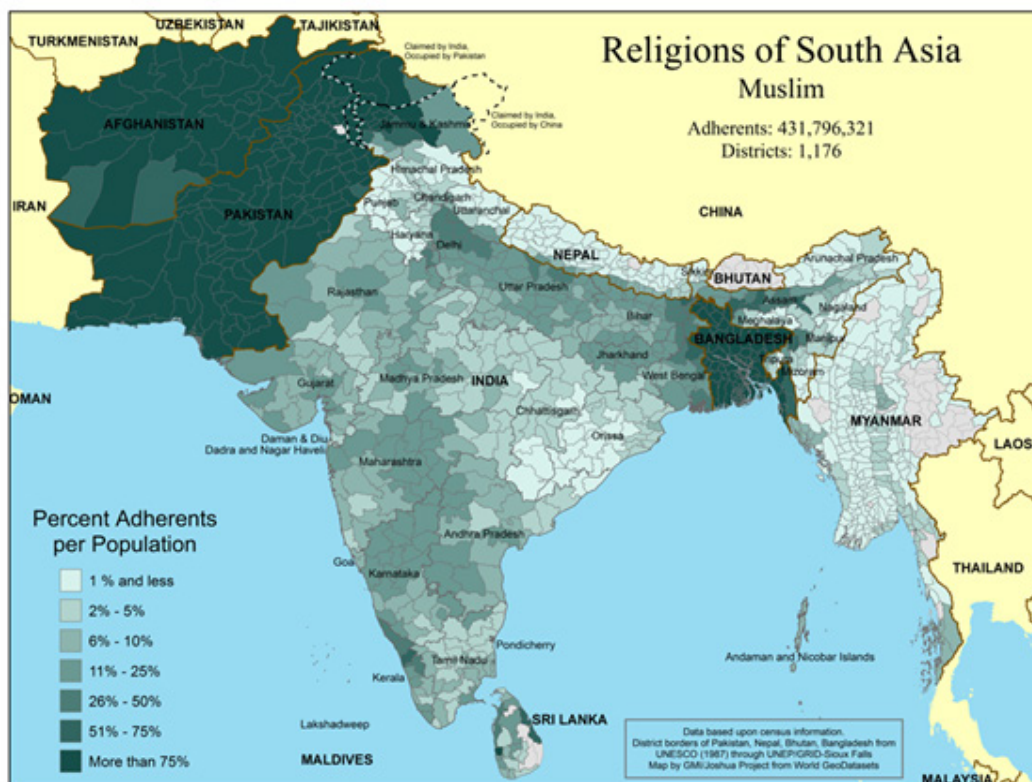
The phase of Islamic expansion taking place in Sri Lanka could by and large be seen as an impact of the rise of the Arab world during the 20th and 21st centuries due to newly gained oil wealth and the subsequent expansion of the Islamic civilization. This process could also have been aided to an extent as a response to the military, political, economic and cultural stresses imposed by the USA and its European allies from time to time (Mangold 2013).

With India already having 14.6 percent followers of Islam, and the surrounding countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Maldives collectively boasting of over 500 million (over 25 percent of the regional population) followers of Islam, the region is likely to undergo rapid cultural transformation within the next century.

The problem with this development is that according to Hammond’s(2005) indicator system the next phases include hair-trigger rioting, jihad militia formations, sporadic killings, and burning of places of worship, all of which are beginning to become commonplace occurrences in the region. This could become very problematic to the region’s already precarious order and stability.

However, the Islamic expansion programme is highly dependent on the global energy markets that in turn are dependent on the consumption patterns of major global

**Map 1: Density of Islamic Population in South Asia.**



Source: Global Mapping International 2014

economies such as USA, EU, China and India. Emergence of alternative sources of energy might also lead to reduced demand for crude oil which may arrest the Islamic expansion programme to a certain extent and the episode of cultural transformation. Other factors that might check this tendency could be the dominant positions of USA and China, and their corporate influence on governments to resort to pro-US or Pro-China agendas.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident that Sri Lanka is going through a phase of rapid cultural transformation from being a Buddhist country to becoming an Islamic one. There are clear indications and evidence to show that Sri Lanka has already adopted many aspects of the value system originated in the Arab world, hence paving the way for adopting elements of Islamic extremism and fundamentalist aspects of the Islamic doctrine.

Due to Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, if Sri Lanka has already become a center for smuggling of arms, narcotics and humans. This could easily result in further strengthening Sri Lanka's links with terror networks in the world, dominated by fundamentalist Islamic militant groups. Therefore, the rapidly changing cultural landscape is likely to become an important aspect that determines how the regional culture would be in a century. Sri Lanka's influence will be felt regionally and the conversion of Sri Lanka into an Islamic state would in a way surround the Hindu-Brahmin culture of India with Islamic states. Together with 178 million Muslims within India, South Asia's current Moor population of over 25 percent may increase dramatically, hence transforming the cultural landscape of the South Asian region within the 2100- 2200 period.

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