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# Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Sri Lanka

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**Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and Islamophobia in Contemporary Sri Lanka**

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

by

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Lewiston, Maine

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who lost their lives, family members, friends, and homes in the ethnic and religious violence of June 2014 in Aluthgama and the surrounding area.

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## *Introduction*

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“Ayubowan, *bodubalase*na.” Ananda answers the phone in the Kirulapone head office of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Sri Lanka’s most notorious and politically influential Buddhist organization. I sip on a cup of tea – the BBS serves me tea each time I visit their office – while listening to a Sinhala phone conversation that is too quick and complex for me to understand. Moments after it ends, a second phone rings. “Ayubowan, *bodubalase*na,” Ananda repeats, with no less energy than the first time. He is the only secretary at the office today; behind him, a young monk in orange robes is typing up a letter to a politician on the group’s official letterhead. “One man show,” jokes Ananda after the second conversation ends, touting his ability to run the office on his own, even on a busy day like today. The room is nicely air-conditioned, a welcome change from the sweltering Colombo summer heat, and the building – a cross between a Buddhist prayer area and a modern office, with a conference room upstairs where the group’s head monks speak to the press – exudes a high-tech, corporate vibe. Still, a gang of mosquitos buzz around the room; Ananda swats angrily at each one that flies by our desk.

A young man walks into the office, asking Ananda for a membership form. He introduces himself to me as Dayan. “So what made you want to join the BBS?” I inquire. “I wanted to do something for my country, for my religion, rather than being lazy and sitting around,” he replies. He had overheard our previous discussion – Ananda was explaining that the BBS rejects multiculturalism and interfaith concepts. “If the Muslims and Buddhists are 50/50,” Dayan chimed in, “this country will become like Nigeria, with abductions and killings.” Boko Haram, a radical Islamist militant group, was in the news for the kidnapping of over 250 schoolgirls in the northern Nigerian town of Chibok, and fears of radical Islam were at a high. “Kattankudy, the Muslim town on the east coast, is already like a separate country,” Dayan added. Ananda agreed

with his assessment: “They’re planning for separate states, just like Eelam. Jihad groups are starting, with connections to Pakistan. Muslims are making money from drug trafficking and smuggling. They have a lot of money to build mosques – black money from Saudi Arabia.”

Later, our conversation shifted to a discussion of the country’s name – Ananda claimed that Sri Lanka should have a name derived from “Sinhala,” the nation’s majority ethnic group. “Thais, Thailand. Malays, Malaysia,” he quipped. “Sinhalese?” he asked, waiting for me to answer. I sat quietly. “The country’s proper name is Sinhale,” explained Dayan. “Malays in Malaysia are a smaller percentage than Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, you know,” added Ananda. Dreaming of total confluence between the Sinhala nation and the state, Ananda, a long-time BBS member, and Dayan, the group’s newest recruit, envisioned a mythical island nation called Sinhale, in which Buddhism would prosper for generations to come, no longer to be threatened by assertive minorities or powerful foreign forces.

## **Background**

Sinhalese are the majority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, a state which is also home to substantial Tamil and Muslim ethnic minority populations. Most Sinhalese are Theravada Buddhists, while a small Sinhala Catholic minority also exists; Tamils are religiously divided between Hinduism and Catholicism. A subcategory of the Tamil population is known as “Indian Tamils,” “Hill Country Tamils,” or “Up-Country Tamils,” interchangeable terms which refer to Tamils recruited by the British from South India to work on plantations during the colonial era. Unlike the Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities, which are defined on the basis of language, the Muslim ethnic identity is defined on the basis of religion. Thus, in Sri Lanka, to be Muslim refers to both an ethnic and a religious category. Muslims generally speak Tamil at home; in Sinhala-majority areas, many are fluent in both national languages. Sinhalese constitute approximately 75% of Sri

Lanka's total population, while Sri Lankan Tamils constitute 12%, Muslims 9%, and Indian Tamils 4%. The North and East of Sri Lanka are predominantly Tamil regions, with the East also containing a substantial Muslim population. With the exception of the tea plantation region, which is predominantly inhabited by Indian Tamils, the remainder of the country is majority-Sinhala.

Prior to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon)'s independence from Britain, Tamils were viewed as a privileged minority. Popular stereotypes suggest that Tamils were harder workers than Sinhalese, placing greater value on education and learning English. Some organizations, such as the Ceylon National Congress, attempted to unite Sinhalese and Tamils on a common anti-colonial platform. Yet efforts to establish a Ceylonese or Sri Lankan national identity that transcended ethnic differences largely failed. After independence, Sri Lanka became an ethnocratic democracy in which the Sinhala Buddhist majority gained control of political institutions. The Sinhala language and Buddhist religion were legally encoded into the framework of the state, with minorities facing exclusion and discrimination. The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 disenfranchised the Indian Tamil population by denying them citizenship. The Sinhala Only Act, passed in 1956, made Sinhala the sole official language of the country, giving no recognition to Tamil. In 1958, island-wide ethnic riots took place against the Tamil minority. The 1972 Constitution, while guaranteeing fundamental rights for all religious groups, granted Buddhism the "foremost place" in Sri Lanka, thus reinforcing the cultural dominance of the majority. In education, the policy of standardization, implemented in the 1970s, created a quota system for university admissions which discriminated against Tamil students. Throughout this decade, various Tamil militant groups composed predominantly of youth rose to prominence, most notably the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a ruthless separatist group. The history of

Sri Lankan state discrimination against Tamils culminated in several major acts of ethnic violence: in 1981, the burning of the Jaffna library, a precious repository for books and manuscripts and an important symbol of Tamil cultural achievement, and in 1983, in response to an LTTE ambush in Jaffna that killed 13 Sri Lankan Army soldiers, a major anti-Tamil pogrom known as Black July. Both of these acts received the patronage and support of Sinhala-dominated governments and law enforcement authorities.

Following the 1983 pogrom, the ongoing low-level insurgency carried out by militant Tamil nationalist groups in the North and East became a full-scale ethnic war between the Sinhala-dominated Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the LTTE. The LTTE made territorial claims to a Tamil homeland in the North and East of the country, creating quasi-governmental institutions in areas that it controlled with the ultimate goal of establishing a separate state to be known as Tamil Eelam. Such claims were categorically rejected by successive Sinhala-dominated governments. Though some efforts were made to decentralize political power through devolution to Tamil-majority regions – most notably through the Indo-Lankan Accord (1987), which created a system of Provincial Councils – these were largely unimplemented throughout the war, and remain so today.

After promoting exclusionary Sinhala nationalist policies in the pre-war era, Buddhist monks became known for vocal support of the military during wartime. Through the involvement of the *sangha* (i.e. the monastic community) in ethno-nationalist affairs, the politicized Buddhist monk rising in defense of the Sinhala nation became an iconic archetype in Sri Lankan politics. Ananda Abeysekera writes that “since the early 1980s a variety of Buddhist discourses began to authorize a particular Buddhist image of the “fearless” young monk who would march to the “battlefront” and lay down his life to rescue and lead the Buddhist nation



facing the threat of “terrorism” (2001:5). These discourses gained particular importance in the rhetoric of the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People’s Liberation Front), a Marxist-Leninist insurrectionary movement also deeply steeped in Sinhala nationalism. The JVP, which included Buddhist monks among its cadres, challenged the apolitical notion of Buddhism promoted by the UNP (United National Party) under President J.R. Jayawardene, viewing this government’s opposition to a military onslaught against the LTTE and its support of the Indo-Lankan Accord as betrayals of the nation. As Abeysekara argues, the JVP’s militant notion of Buddhism would come to be contested by future Sri Lankan governments. However, the formation of the JHU (Jathika Hela Urumaya or National Sinhala Heritage Party), a Sinhala Buddhist nationalist political party which unprecedentedly fielded hundreds of monks as candidates for the 2004 parliamentary elections (nine of whom were elected to Parliament), increased the prominence of a notion of authentic Buddhism explicitly based around monks’ involvement in nationalist politics (Deegalle 2004:84). The JHUs political platform included strong opposition to the Norwegian-led peace negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, which began in 2002 and were perceived by Sinhala nationalists as disadvantaging the majority (93).

The position of Muslims in Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict is complex. Though Muslims and Tamils share both a language and the experience of being a minority in Sri Lanka, Muslims in the North and East were largely unsupportive of Tamil militancy, fearing that they would be even worse off in a separate Tamil state. Thus, in Tamil nationalist circles, Muslims became viewed as a fifth column; an opinion which was bolstered by the Sri Lankan state’s use of Muslim “home guards” in its fight against Tamil militants. Muslims living in the North and East became targeted by the LTTE in several high-profile incidents. In August 1990, LTTE cadres

killed over 100 Muslim men and boys who were praying in a mosque in Kattankudy, while in October of the same year, the LTTE ordered the forcible expulsion of the Muslim population living in Jaffna, leading to the displacement of over 70,000 people. Thus, the Muslim population has its own distinct position in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, identifying with neither Sinhala nationalist nor Tamil nationalist narratives.

Sri Lanka's civil war concluded in 2009 with the total military defeat of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. The final stages of the war saw massive Tamil civilian casualties; the government has been accused of committing war crimes, including the intentional shelling of "no-fire zones" for noncombatants, during this period. Moreover, the war victory engendered a political climate of extreme ethno-nationalism and Sinhala triumphalism, bolstered by the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, a Sinhala nationalist who derived his main appeal from "defeating terrorism" and whose rule since 2005 became increasingly authoritarian until his recent electoral defeat in January 2015. Few political concessions toward Tamils have been made in the post-civil war period, and government attempts at reconciliation in any form have been feeble at best. With regards to the territorial issues around which the war was fought, the Sri Lankan state has failed to implement a meaningful policy of devolution to the Provincial Councils (which are already viewed by many as inadequate for Tamil self-determination). Moreover, the post-civil war period has seen the rise of Sinhala expansionism into predominantly Tamil regions – through the settlement of Sinhala military personnel and their families; the erection of Buddhist statues and shrines; and the macabre phenomenon of Sinhala war tourism to the North. Though the fighting may be over, no political solution has been offered to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

It is in this context that radical right-wing Buddhist groups have gained a foothold in Sri Lanka's political scene, receiving what many view as the tacit support of the Rajapaksa regime. Following the defeat of the Tamil enemy, Muslims have become "another Other," as my Politics professor, the late Ranjith Amarasinghe, once put it during a conversation at the University of Peradeniya. Indeed, during the post-civil war period, the Muslim minority has become the target of ethno-religious hatred and violence from vigilante groups of right-wing Buddhist monks and laypersons who claim to be protecting the Sinhala Buddhist nation, race, and culture from the perceived incursions of Islamic extremism.

Chief among these groups is the Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force; hereafter BBS), a monk-led movement formed in 2012 that has been accused of incitement and violence towards religious minorities. Though the two are not directly connected, the leading monks of the BBS were formerly involved with JHU as candidates for parliamentary elections (Law & Society Trust 2014:8). The BBS originally dealt with internal Buddhist issues on a nationalistic basis while simultaneously targeting Christian and Muslim religious others. Later, it became more strictly focused on promulgating anti-Muslim rhetoric. The group has been accused of inciting and committing acts of violence against Muslims, their property, and their places of worship. Its key figure is Galaboda Aththe Gnanasara Thero, a controversial and aggressive monk best known for giving a vicious anti-Muslim diatribe prior to the June 2014 anti-Muslim riots in Aluthgama and the surrounding area. My own observations indicate that the support base of the BBS is predominantly male, young, and based in urban or semi-urban areas (the BBS head office is located in Colombo). Two other groups, Sinhala Ravaya (Sound of Sinhala) and Ravana Balaya (named after the mythological ten-headed king Ravana), promote a very similar ideology to that of the BBS and have emerged in approximately the same time period. Like the BBS, these

movements are only active in Sinhala-majority areas of Sri Lanka, and are vigilante groups rather than political parties. The JHU also continues to be an important political force representing Sinhala nationalist interests in Parliament, though it is no longer predominantly composed of Buddhist monks. While the BBS has at times indicated its potential interest in entering the electoral fray, its main goal is to serve as an “unofficial civilian police force against Muslim extremism” (Bastians 2013). However, at least until the Rajapaksa regime’s recent defeat at the polls, many observers suspected that the BBS was receiving state patronage – particularly from the powerful former Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who ceremonially opened a Buddhist leadership academy run by the BBS in Galle (Jeyaraj 2013). Such views were reinforced by the failure of the authorities to arrest the perpetrators of anti-Muslim violence.

## **Research Methods**

I conducted fieldwork on the BBS, Sinhala nationalism, and Islamophobia during two separate visits to Sri Lanka. The first research period took place in November-December 2013, during the independent study session of the Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education (ISLE) study abroad program. The second took place in May-June 2014, and was funded by a Bates Summer Research Fellowship. My fieldwork involved conducting open-ended interviews about the Sinhala nationalist Islamophobic movement with Sri Lankans (predominantly BBS members and supporters, but also minorities and opponents of the group), attending events and rallies held by the BBS, and documenting BBS-related posts on social media pages. I lived and conducted most of my research in Colombo, while occasionally travelling to other areas of the country for interviews. As such, this thesis speaks most strongly to the particular context of Islamophobia in Colombo, and may not fully capture the local specificities of other cities and towns in Sinhala-majority areas of Sri Lanka. Due to funding constraints and my own lack of proficiency in

Sinhala, a majority of my interviews were conducted in English, the second language of my informants. In cases where interviewees spoke very limited English or none whatsoever, I employed the services of Manju, a translator fluent in Sinhala, English, and Tamil. For the translation of content written in Sinhala, I used a variety of translators, whose names are listed in the Acknowledgements section. For certain speeches by Buddhist nationalist figures, I also used English translations provided in online videos, while making occasional alterations for comprehensibility and syntax.

### **Cultural Relativism and the Study of the Far-Right**

My research on right-wing Buddhist groups is relevant to broader anthropological debates about relativism and morality. The facade of neutrality that shaped past anthropological research has come under widespread criticism in recent years. In light of the discipline's deep entanglement with colonialism during the era of alleged scientific objectivity, it is now understood that neutrality in the face of injustice will only further inscribe systems of power. Within reasonable limits, anthropologists are now encouraged to take sides – or more specifically, to stand for the oppressed, colonized, and downtrodden. While this has led to increased efforts to understand non-Western cultures on an egalitarian basis, pure cultural relativism has also become called into question for its possible role in perpetuating inequalities. The implications of these developments for studying right-wing political groups are numerous, particularly in a postcolonial setting. Should anthropologists take a relativistic stance toward nationalist and chauvinist movements, or at the very least, make a serious attempt to understand them on their own terms? Or do such efforts to contextualize right-wing groups obfuscate the violence which they perpetrate? Moreover, can a white Western anthropologist criticize a right-

wing group from a formerly colonized society without participating in a form of neo-imperialism?

The approach which I take to these questions is as follows. This thesis makes no claims of neutrality or objectivity; rather, I write with an unapologetic bias in favor of the rights of Sri Lankan Muslims and against Islamophobia. Nevertheless, I hope to have done justice to the views of the BBS, to have offered a sincere portrayal of the group's beliefs, and to have provided a deeper and thicker understanding of far-right Buddhism in Sri Lanka than one would get in journalistic accounts (which tend to focus on the alleged dichotomy between Buddhism and radicalism). Moreover, by considering the fears and insecurities that animate the politics of the far-right in Sri Lanka, I hope to have captured the humanity of BBS supporters rather than portraying them as caricatured villains.

### **Fieldwork Practices and Ethical Concerns**

Issues related to anthropological conceptualizations of the far-right also have important implications for fieldwork practices. How should an anthropologist react when speaking with informants who hold highly problematic views? How does this dynamic differ in the interview setting than in casual conversation, where most would surely agree that it is wrong to allow racist comments to be made without reproach? Is it ethical for an anthropologist to listen to fascistic or quasi-genocidal rhetoric and calmly take notes, documenting the intricate details of hatred and using it as "data" while actual people are simultaneously subjected to violence because of this very same rhetoric? Or must the anthropologist push back when an informant expresses deeply racist opinions? Is it even possible for an anthropologist studying a political movement to reveal

one's own ideological disagreements with that movement without thwarting one's research goals?

I consciously chose to avoid disclosing my political opinions to members of right-wing Buddhist groups throughout my fieldwork. Pragmatically speaking, my research would have been very difficult to carry out if I had raised objections every time a BBS supporter expressed problematic views. Thus, my interviews with BBS members necessarily involved a degree of acquiescence to anti-Muslim rhetoric, if only in order to document and understand it. Is the production of anti-oppressive anthropological scholarship about right-wing movements worth the cost of quietly accepting the expression of oppressive views during one's fieldwork? Put otherwise, does the end justify the means?

In my situation, holding a position of potential influence as a result of racial, national, and class dynamics, I felt some degree of obligation to challenge my informants' deeply ingrained stereotypes about Muslims. BBS supporters often use the West as a benchmark: since many Westerners also view Islam as a threat, the BBS's own anti-Muslim views seem more reasonable to its supporters. As likely one of the few Westerners with whom my interviewees had ever actually talked to about Islam, I felt that I could potentially challenge this narrative, or at the very least avoid reinforcing the normalization of Islamophobia. Nevertheless, for every instance in which I questioned the logic or veracity of an Islamophobic story or rumor, there were many others in which I simply sat and listened. The ugliest elements of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse were often both the most interesting and the most difficult to criticize logically. Overall, I attempted to strike a delicate balance between pragmatic research concerns and my sense of personal obligation to oppose anti-Muslim bias.

Moreover, my own positionality as a white Western researcher raises a number of important ethical concerns. It is worth noting that I surely could not have conducted such extensive fieldwork with BBS supporters had I looked Arab or Muslim. Furthermore, as a white man spending time in the BBS office and attending rallies and events held by the group, I was a conspicuous presence. For Sri Lankans in the postcolonial context, being with a white-skinned person can convey status and power. By spending so much time with BBS supporters, then, did I make the group appear powerful and influential? This may seem to be a less than substantive concern, but one incident from my fieldwork captures its potential importance. In the town of Gampola, an ethno-religiously divided area and the site of Sinhala-Muslim riots in 1915, I noticed heads turning in my direction as I walked around with Anuruddha, a hardline BBS supporter. Anuruddha was presumably well-known in the town as a nationalist, as he was responsible for organizing a recent rally. I feared that perhaps, in the eyes of Muslim observers, my presence alongside him might signal that he had powerful connections and was someone to be feared. Moreover, for Buddhists, his presence with a white foreigner could signal that joining a nationalist group was a means of access to higher social strata. Thus, fieldwork does not occur in a lab; rather, the researcher's presence produces social impacts which are unpredictable and potentially harmful. Particularly in the context of research that deals with sensitive ethnic tensions, then, anthropologists must remain cognizant of their external impact.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Anthropological approaches to ethnoreligious conflict which take transnationalism and globalization seriously offer a suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of Sinhala Buddhist Islamophobic movements. With regards to the BBS, one key question to consider is as follows: what drives hatred and violence against the relatively powerless Muslim minority, who would



seem to pose little actual threat to the Sinhala Buddhist majority's hegemony? In *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), Arjun Appadurai grapples with the problem of hatred and violence against minorities as it plays out in the transnational era. In what follows, I summarize the most important aspects of Appadurai's approach, which serves as the backdrop for my analysis of the Sinhala Buddhist anti-Muslim movement throughout this thesis.

Appadurai postulates a direct link between globalization and increased violence against minorities. Pointing to "the systemic compromise of national economic sovereignty that is built into the logic of globalization," as well as "the increasing strain this puts on states to behave as trustees of the interests of a territorially defined and confined "people,"" Appadurai claims that "minorities are the major site for displacing the anxieties of many states about their own minority or marginality (real or imagined) in a world of a few megastates, of unruly economic flows and compromised sovereignties" (42). Further, in an age of porous boundaries between countries, minorities "are metaphors and reminders of the betrayal of the classical national project." Thus, minorities are targeted because they represent "the failure of the nation-state to preserve its promise to be the guarantor of national sovereignty" – i.e. the failure of a model of statehood in which distinct ethnic groups are attached to defined national territories – in an increasingly globalized world (43).

Moreover, drawing on Mary Douglas' authorship about boundaries and margins, Appadurai argues that minorities are the target of hatred because they do not fit neatly into accepted social categories. Rather, they "blur the boundaries between "us" and "them," here and there, in and out, healthy and unhealthy, loyal and disloyal, needed but unwelcome." For Appadurai, many of these boundaries are also blurred by global forces: minorities "embody the core problem of globalization itself for many nation-states." As such, "the globalization of

violence against minorities enacts a deep anxiety about the national project and its own ambiguous relationship to globalization.” It is impossible for such anxieties to be directed at globalization itself – a “force without a face.” Instead, as representatives of the tension between nationalism and globalization, minorities become “the flash point for a series of uncertainties that mediate between everyday life and its fast-shifting global backdrop” (44). In this schema, since both globalization and minorities distort the boundaries of the national project, minorities become representative of globalization, and thus become the target for the majority’s anger about various aspects of globalization.

In Appadurai’s framework, the categories of majority and minority are not taken as static, pre-figured, or given. Rather, “it is through specific choices and strategies, often of state elites or political leaders, that particular groups, who have stayed invisible, are rendered visible as minorities against whom campaigns of calumny can be unleashed, leading to explosions of ethnocide” (45). As such, “rather than saying that minorities produce violence, we could better say that violence, especially at the national level, requires minorities. And this production of minorities requires unearthing some histories and burying others.” In this highly selective process, issues of global concern can become deeply local, and local minorities can become tied to transnational forces (46). Thus, based on international contextual factors as well as the conscious decisions of political elites, different minorities shift in and out of focus at different times.

Moreover, Appadurai considers the connections between the impersonality of globalization and the intimacy of violence against minorities. He claims that “new forms of intimate violence seem especially puzzling in an era of fast technologies, abstract financial instruments, remote forms of power, and large-scale flows of techniques and ideologies.” Yet he

does not configure the relationship between the abstract and the embodied as one of contradiction. Rather, “[t]he body, especially the minoritized body, can simultaneously be the mirror and the instrument of those abstractions we fear most.” Further, in the context of anxieties about globalization, “part of the effort to slow down the whirl of the global and its seeming largeness of reach is by holding it still, and making it small, in the body of the violated minor.” Thus, violence against the bodies of minorities “is not about old hatreds or primordial fears” (47). Rather, “[i]t is an effort to exorcise the new, the emergent, and the uncertain, one name for which is globalization” (48). As such, corporeal violence, in all its intimacy and locality, can be directly tied to abstract transnational forces.

Further, the most extreme forms of ethnic violence are a result of predatory identities, i.e. “those identities whose social construction and mobilization require the extinction of other, proximate social categories, defined as threats to the very existence of some group, defined as a we.” Predatory identities emerge from pairs of identities with “long histories of close contact, mixture, and some degree of mutual stereotyping.” “One of these pairs or sets of identities is turned predatory by mobilizing an understanding of itself as a threatened majority” (51). Thus, the majority’s fear of minorities is motivated by its fear of “trading places”, or of one day becoming a minority itself (52). Additionally, “[p]redatory identities emerge in the tension between majority identities and national identities”, aiming to “close the gap between the majority and the purity of the national whole” (53). Thus, the smallest and least powerful minorities have a large capacity to produce fear and anger among the majority.

Appadurai’s approach to violence against minorities in *Fear of Small Numbers* resonates strongly with my own findings from interviews with Buddhist nationalists. Throughout this thesis, I apply his theoretical frame loosely to my fieldwork, placing a strong focus on the role of

global and transnational flows in Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse. However, I also argue for the value of contextually specific approaches to ethnic nationalism and violence. In the case of Sri Lanka, BBS supporters feel that globalization poses a threat to Sinhala Buddhist hegemony because they believe that Sri Lanka's minorities are more globally influential than the majority Sinhala community. In the alleged absence of strong international allies for the Sinhalese, Sri Lanka's Muslim minority, relatively powerless in terms of local politics, becomes a threat in the eyes of Sinhala nationalists because of its perceived ability to forge ties with a powerful global Islamic movement. Thus, I argue that it is not small numbers alone that animate ethnic violence in the era of globalization, but rather their (genuine or imagined) connections with large forces.

In addition to Appadurai's work, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi's *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India* (2012) serves as a key source of inspiration for my own ideas about the role of food consumption in Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse. Ghassem-Fachandi considers how Hindu notions of vegetarianism and nonviolence (*ahimsa*) are used to produce disgust at the allegedly violent, meat-eating Muslim. He suggests that "the figure of the Muslim comes to stand for all those vices that many [Hindus] are incapable of renouncing on the one hand, and that are associated with meat consumption on the other. Muslims are made to stand openly for what many others do anyway more clandestinely, or find various alternative contexts to engage in" (20). Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* is also an important background text for my consideration of embodied politics. For Douglas, "[t]he body is a model which can stand for any bounded system," and "[i]ts boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious" (1978:116). I found this insight to be useful for interpreting Sinhala Buddhist nationalist metaphors in which the body comes to represent the nation.

## Literature Review

While the BBS has received much attention in Sri Lankan journalistic sources such as *Groundviews*, little scholarly analysis has dealt with the relatively recent rise of anti-Muslim hatred and violence in Sinhala-majority regions of Sri Lanka. Below, I assess the relevance of existing academic work on several related topics –Sri Lankan Muslim ethnoreligious identity, ethnic and religious violence in Sri Lanka, and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism – to the emergence of Islamophobic right-wing Sinhala Buddhist groups. Drawing on and contributing to these literatures, I situate my thesis as part of a nascent body of scholarship on the Sinhala Buddhist anti-Muslim movement.

### *i. Sri Lankan Muslim Identities*

Much of the literature on Sri Lankan Muslim identities deals with the construction of difference between Muslims and Tamils. Although Sri Lankan Muslims are likely of substantial South Indian descent, perhaps with some minor genetic contribution from Arab traders, one cannot be both Tamil and Muslim in Sri Lanka, as one can in Tamil Nadu. In “Arabs, Moors and Muslims,” Dennis McGilvray documents the production of a Muslim ethnic identity distinct from that of Tamils in Sri Lanka (1998). He points out that politically motivated attempts by Tamil nationalists to prove that “the Moors [a Portuguese colonial term for Muslims] were simply Muslim members of the Tamil ‘race’” were largely rejected by the Muslim community itself during the colonial era (449). This dynamic shaped the position of Sri Lankan Muslims in the ethnic conflict, during which Muslims were expelled from Tamil-controlled areas and castigated by the LTTE “for their alleged ethnic betrayal” (473). In “Muslims in Sri Lanka’s Ethnic Conflict,” Farzana Haniffa argues that the Sri Lankan Muslim community “does not have

a place in any larger nationalist narrative—either a narrative of a liberation struggle (Tamil nationalism), or in a fight to safeguard the motherland (Sinhala Nationalism)” (2007).

Furthermore, she claims that both Sinhala and Tamil nationalists “propagate an understanding of the conflict in reductive two party terms,” at the expense of the Muslim community (52-53). The altered ethnic dynamics of the post-civil war scenario have not yet received extensive examination in the literature.

Various scholars have also commented on recent shifts in Sri Lankan Muslim identity as a result of globalization. In “Sri Lankan Muslims: between ethno-nationalism and the global ummah” (2011), McGilvray suggests that Sri Lankan Muslims today have “a heightened awareness of ‘Muslim issues’ around the world, from Kosovo to Kuala Lumpur, and thus a greater sense of membership in the global community of all Muslims (the *ummah*).” This has resulted in a “self-conscious turn toward Islamic dress (*hijab*), especially among younger and more urban Muslim women,” as well as “a modest growth in the adoption of male Islamic clothing, such as the Arabian-style thobe (*thawb*), and the cultivation of beards” (54). Ultimately, claims McGilvray, “the current trend toward Middle Eastern styles of dress and architecture now draws greater attention to the Muslims as a conspicuous social ‘other’ in the public sphere” (60). In a similar vein, Haniffa explores the increasing visibility of what she refers to as the “Islamic Piety movement” in Sri Lanka (2008). She suggests that the movement is motivated in part by global Islamic trends, and in part as a reaction to the strongly articulated Sinhala and Tamil nationalist identities already existent in the country. She argues that the turn toward Islamic piety is “affecting Muslims' place in the Sri Lankan polity, by the cultivation of ethnic exclusivity” (372). Thus, the literature suggests that Sri Lankan Muslims are actively mobilizing around their religious identity and becoming more strongly connected to issues of concern to Muslims

worldwide, and that these developments have reinforced the conspicuous difference of Muslims in the eyes of other Sri Lankans. Scholarly analysis of Sri Lankan Muslim responses to the new wave of Islamophobia remains lacking.

*ii. Ethnic and Communal Violence in Sri Lanka*

Though little academic material has been produced thus far about the recent wave of anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka, a significant base of literature exists regarding the anthropology of violence in the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. In fact, this scholarship is so extensive that some commentators have raised the question of how violence became such a prominent phenomenon of study and what this reveals about the anthropologizing of Sri Lanka. For instance, Pradeep Jeganathan documents the rise of “violence” as a canonical category in anthropological renditions of Sri Lanka since the 1983 Black July riots, suggesting that the term “is an analytical name for events of political incomprehensibility, events of horror, events that challenge ideas of humanness and humanity, without a countervailing and intelligible political meaningfulness” (1998:46). In the postcolonial context, the use of “violence” as a catch-all frame for interpreting ethnoreligious relations is problematic. However, much of the literature on Sri Lanka that deals with “violence” is self-critical and cognizant of these dynamics.

While schemas which suggest that ethnic violence in the underdeveloped world results from cultural flaws are now widely discredited, the body of scholarship concerning “communal” violence in Sri Lanka has not been immune to these pitfalls. Bruce Kapferer’s *Legends of People, Myths of State* (1988) has been the subject of much critique, with detractors claiming that it posits a primordialist connection between Sinhala violence and Sinhala cultural practices (see Abeysekara 2001:2). Less ethnocentric approaches have superseded Kapferer’s model,

though questions remain regarding the degree of relativism that is acceptable when studying nationalism and violence. Valentine Daniel's *Charred Lullabies*, which also deals with the Sinhala-Tamil conflict, struggles with these questions of neutrality and representation. His work applies the anthropological turn toward reflexivity to the highly brutal subject matter of anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka. He suggests that an adequate representation of violence must avoid falling into pornographic sensationalism on the one hand or excessive theorization on the other (1996). However, postcolonial scholars like Qadri Ismail have criticized Daniel's approach for its alleged focus on Western academic issues and insufficient willingness to intervene in Sri Lankan political debates (2005:xxix).

Non-ethnographic, historical authorship on the 1915 clashes between Sinhala Buddhist and Muslims is also relevant to an anthropological study of current-day Sinhala Islamophobia. Modern-day Sri Lankan stereotypes depicting Muslims as foreigners and rich traders are drawn in part from this historical context. Stanley Tambiah's *Levelling Crowds* provides a detailed analysis of the 1915 riots, suggesting that they were the result of tensions between Sinhalese and Coast Moors – recent Muslim immigrants from South India primarily involved in commerce. He references Kumari Jayawardena's description of Sinhala complaints regarding the Coast Moors:

The charges against the Coast Moors were that they were unscrupulous, alien [...] and they loaned money at usurious rates... Before the 1915 riots, Sinhalese had boycotted Coast Moormen's boutiques (general merchandise shops and food counters) as a warning to them to desist from attempting to seduce Sinhalese girls. (qtd. in Tambiah 1996:57)

The Sinhala population resented the Coast Moors' economic dominance, associated them with foreignness, and feared the loss of Sinhala women to an ethnic other. These views are



remarkably similar to those that the BBS expresses today about Muslims. Thus, a stereotype which began with regards to Coast Moors was extended to Sri Lankan Muslims writ large. Tambiah suggests that, when ethnic tensions broke out, the local Muslim minority (then known as Ceylon Moors) associated itself with the Coast Moors on the basis of religion. As such, “the initial distinction which the Sinhalese made between the [Coast] Indian and Ceylon Moors began to fade gradually and to disappear completely when violence broke out in 1915” (Ali, qtd. in 75). Striking similarities exist between those stereotypes about Muslims formed in the context of the 1915 riots and those which exist today.

### *iii. Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism*

Significant overlap exists between the literature on “communal violence” and the literature on “religious nationalism” in the South Asian context. In popular discourse, many have posited a contradiction between nonviolent Buddhist doctrine and the often-violent reality of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Stanley Tambiah’s *Buddhism Betrayed* (1992), a seminal work on the Buddhist monkhood’s support for all-out war against the LTTE, operates from this perspective. Intended for a general audience, it considers how Buddhists can engage in political violence when their religion preaches peace. In a similar vein, Tessa Bartholemeusz considers ethno-nationalism and support for violence among monks through the lens of “Buddhist fundamentalism” (1998), while also reflecting on Buddhist approaches to just-war ideology (2002).

Some have criticized this literature for creating reified categories of “religion” and “violence,” supposedly existing in diametric opposition to one another. Discussing Tambiah’s frame, Ananda Abeysekara claims that “the very question of *Buddhism betrayed?* presupposes

an authentic, nonviolent Buddhism as opposed to a “political Buddhism” (Tambiah’s term) that advocates violence.” For Abeysekara, “this argument takes both categories of “violence” and “Buddhism” to be self-evident” rather than questioning “the ways in which specific persons or practices are authorized, enabled, and indeed obliged to come into central view and fade from view as Buddhism and non-Buddhism” (2002:203-204). Similarly, in *The Work of Kings*, H.L. Seneviratne takes a critical stance towards Max Weber’s conception of “ancient Buddhism” – “more an extrapolation from an essentialized Buddhist doctrine than an abstract of monastic life as it was actually lived” (1999:1). Seneviratne’s ethnography of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism examines its practice in the Sri Lankan monkhood, in particular by considering the impacts of Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala. Reflecting the general trend in anthropology away from “objective” relativism, Seneviratne suggests that social issues within post-colonial states, including majoritarian nationalisms, “demand the anthropologist’s involvement, not merely as allegedly objective and impartial analyst or culture writer agonizing about how to write culture, but as a participant in unraveling social ills with a view to contributing towards their amelioration” (6). As such, Seneviratne is critical of the Sri Lankan Buddhist *sangha*’s use of the notion of worldly engagement to justify involvement in Sinhala nationalist politics. *The Work of Kings*, though written before the rise of the BBS or even the JHU, remains a highly relevant text for contextualizing the role of monks in Sri Lankan society and politics.

In tracing the rise of increasingly chauvinistic Sinhala Buddhist formations since the turn of the century, some scholars have focused on the impact of globalization. Using a transnational frame, Stephen Berkwitz analyzes the rhetoric and impact of Ven. Gangodawila Soma Thero, a controversial, charismatic, and often chauvinistic monk who stressed the need to embrace authentic local Sinhala ways of living in the face of global forces, while nevertheless using mass

media to convey his message (2008). Berkwitz remarks that Soma combined a moral struggle against corruption and degradation in Buddhism itself with a political struggle against various groups that represented the Other: “corrupt and “Westernized” politicians, evangelical missionaries, the World Bank, Tamil separatists, Norwegian peace mediators, and the allegedly booming populations of Sri Lankan Tamils and Muslims” (95). Further, Soma gained a popular following by “merg[ing] the universal truth of Buddhism with its particular expression in Sinhala traditions while rejecting global intrusions into religion and nation as particular forms of corruption and malevolence that threaten what he felt holds the keys to individual and societal well-being” (104). Elements of Soma’s ideology are clearly present in BBS rhetoric: the alleged threat posed by external others, the opposition to foreign forces, and the deployment of mass media as a means of political messaging. Moreover, Berkwitz’s research raises important questions about globalization, suggesting its ability to exacerbate and sharpen parochial identities rather than diminishing them. These will be investigated in further depth when discussing the BBS’s relationship to the global.

Ven. Soma’s death, which was associated with a number of conspiracy theories about foreign involvement, ushered in a new phase of Buddhist nationalist politics. As Mahinda Deegalle argues, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), a nationalist political party primarily composed of Buddhist monks, drew on popular sentiment following Soma’s passing to contest an election and make substantial gains (2004:88-89). In an article entitled “Politics of the Jathika HelaUrumaya Monks: Buddhism and Ethnicity in Contemporary Sri Lanka,” Deegalle outlines the political agenda of the JHU, which includes the creation of a “*dharmarajya*” (righteous state), opposition to devolution of power to minorities, and suspicion of NGO involvement in religious conversions (95-96). Deegalle points out that “the contemporary Sri Lankan situation

[...] can be seen by Buddhists as a genuine threat to the future survival of Buddhism on the island”, thus justifying monks’ political participation in the eyes of the Buddhist public. He urges that the party’s nationalistic stances must be “interpreted in the current volatile ethno-politics in Sri Lanka” (99). Deegalle’s documentation of the history and ideology of the JHU remains useful for an analysis of the BBS, which emerged from the former’s more radical elements. In particular, the BBS and JHU share the notion that threats to Buddhism necessitate the involvement of monks in ethno-nationalist politics. Their methods, however, are very different: whereas the JHU participates in parliamentary elections, the BBS engages in street protests, rallies, and violence. Further, the JHU lacks the BBS’s specific focus on Islam as an enemy.

Academic scholarship on Buddhist Islamophobia in Sri Lanka is lacking, as saffron-robed vigilante groups rallying against Muslim extremism in the streets of major Sri Lankan cities are a relatively new phenomenon. James John Stewart’s “Muslim-Buddhist Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka” appears to be the first published long-form journal article with a direct focus on Sinhala Buddhist Islamophobic protest groups (2014). Stewart focuses on the role of social media in the anti-Muslim campaigns of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist organizations, analyzing the content produced by pro-BBS Facebook pages. He notes that fear of Islam in Sri Lanka is driven by international imagery of Muslim extremism, as represented, for instance, in the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas (249). He also points to the important role of meat in Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, drawing attention to recent campaigns against halal certification and cattle slaughter. He argues that the modernizing impulse and technological savvy of the BBS seems entirely compatible with continued intolerance toward religious minorities and national others (257). In this respect, Stewart’s findings match up with my own. His analysis of Facebook

posts by pro-BBS pages provides a valuable launching point for further consideration of primary materials published in the Sinhala nationalist anti-Muslim movement.

### **Toward a Better Understanding of Sinhala Nationalist Islamophobia**

While academic scholarship on the Sinhala Buddhist anti-Muslim movement is still in the embryonic stages, several important questions emerge from the literature which I have summarized. Does the rise of the BBS signal a radical break from previous forms of Sinhala nationalism, or their continuation and extension? How have more traditional forms of Buddhist majoritarianism, focused on the territorial threat of Tamil separatism, transformed into the extreme anti-Muslim movements that have gained such prominence in recent years? Further, what are the discursive connections between Sri Lanka's BBS, India's Hindu nationalist movement, and the trend toward Islamophobia in the West? More generally, why have Muslims suddenly emerged as a targeted minority in post-civil war Sri Lanka? Why Muslims, and why now?

In this thesis, I argue that the hardline majoritarianism of the BBS is related to the Sinhala Buddhist majority's sense of powerlessness in a globalized context. Globalization often disrupts local identities, eviscerating traditional, birth-given roles and producing confusing outcomes. In response to the de-territorialization of power away from national governments and toward global organizations, right-wing nationalism offers a return to the stable borders of the nation-state. Moreover, nationalist opposition to global flows can be read as a means of maintaining ethnic hegemony. In the discourse of the BBS, Sri Lanka is the only Sinhala country in the world; a two-thousand year old Theravada Buddhist civilization that has survived three waves of colonialism. Moreover, the Sinhalese have no other countries in which to seek refuge

or live; if they no longer constitute a majority in Sri Lanka, then their only homeland will be lost. Sinhala nationalists deeply fear the possibility of “switching places” with a minority. Globalization exacerbates this fear by connecting relatively powerless internal minorities to powerful transnational forces – the Tamil diaspora, the Muslim *ummah*. In contrast, the Sinhala nationalist movement feels that the majority has no such international connections. Thus, Sinhala Buddhist nationalists understand themselves as a majority under siege from outside, threatened by collusion between weak local enemies and strong foreign agents. BBS paranoia about foreign (i.e. non-Sinhala) others must be understood in the context of globalization.

Furthermore, I argue that Muslims have come into focus as a main target of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist campaigns at this specific point in time due to the international context. Consistent with international Islamophobic discourse, the local Sri Lankan Muslim community has come to be associated with the rise of global political Islam. Thus, in Sri Lanka, Muslims are both a small minority with little political influence and the internal symbol of a major looming threat. Moreover, in the eyes of many observers, Muslim-majority states are homogeneous polities with little or no tolerance for other religious groups. Though this perception may be monolithic and inaccurate, it resonates strongly among Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, who feel that Muslims will renege on their current support for religious freedom and impose their rule on the Sinhalese if the former group becomes a majority in Sri Lanka. Since Muslims are allegedly unable to separate their religion from their politics, a reversal in ethnic fortunes would be of particularly disastrous consequences for Sinhala Buddhists if the Muslim minority gains hegemony in the country. For the BBS, then, anti-Muslim measures are required today in order to prevent the emergence of a future Muslim-dominated Sri Lanka in which religious minorities

will have no freedom. Ironically, then, the perception of inherent Muslim intolerance serves as a justification for anti-Muslim bigotry.

These internationally influenced factors interact with existing local prejudices to produce a form of Islamophobia that is distinct to its context. One locally specific stereotype, based on the historical roots of Islam in Sri Lanka as a religion brought to the island by Arab merchants, suggests that all Sri Lankan Muslims are traders. Trading communities are often associated with foreign economic forces and stigmatized for blurring the boundaries between the inside and outside of the nation, while also serving as a convenient scapegoat for economic grievances. Based on the success of a small Muslim elite with strong international connections, Sri Lankan Muslims are also viewed as wealthy (in reality, most live below the poverty line). In a manner reminiscent of traditional European anti-Semitism, this stereotype is used by the BBS to paint a picture of Muslim financial control. Food-based politics also takes on great importance in the South Asian context. Pervasive ideas about Muslims as beef-eaters and butchers who do not share the Buddhist majority's qualms about causing pain to cattle are used by the BBS to stigmatize Muslims as violent. These home-grown stereotypes interact with transnational narratives to produce a contextually specific Islamophobic discourse. In right-wing ethno-nationalist politics as in many other spheres, globalization alters the experience of locality (Appadurai 1996).

In the chapters that follow, I take a closer look at various aspects of far-right Sinhala Buddhist Islamophobic ideology. I begin in Chapter 1 by considering the importance of geography and spatial politics to the BBS, proposing that the Sinhala nationalist sense of territorial isolation in Sri Lanka is exacerbated by the possibility of transnational connections between minorities and foreign actors. In Chapter 2, I deal with the role of the body and gender

in the discourse of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist groups. I argue that the Sinhala woman symbolizes the nation, with bodily boundaries representing the borders of the state. In Chapter 3, I turn to issues of meat consumption, animal slaughter, and halal certification, finding that the entry of food into the body is also a metaphor for transnational flows into the country. Moreover, I argue that the notion of a violent Muslim other is constructed on the basis of food politics; ironically justifying allegedly defensive violence against Muslims. Finally, in the conclusion chapter, I consider the implications of my research for Appadurai's theorization of violence against minorities, while also discussing the future of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist movement under newly elected President Maithripala Sirisena.

Notably, I have chosen to eschew a focus on inconsistencies between an allegedly unchanging Buddhist philosophical doctrine and the practice of chauvinistic political Buddhism in Sri Lanka. When I tell friends unacquainted with Sri Lanka about my thesis research, the typical response is one of great surprise – “How can *Buddhists* be doing this?” While understandable, this reaction not only reifies religion as static, but also replicates the discourse of the BBS itself, in which Buddhism is inherently peaceful (and Islam inherently violent). Religion is always bound up with society and politics – Buddhism in Sri Lanka is no different. For right-wing nationalists, religion is often more of a marker of majoritarian identity than a set of rules to live by. Thus, the emergence of groups like the BBS must be situated within the social and political context of post-civil war Sri Lanka, rather than viewed in doctrinal or theological terms.



## **Introduction**

Spatial politics played a key role in the European colonial enterprise. At its core, the colonial project was an effort to extend and project power over the maximum amount of land possible. Geography continues to have strong political salience in many formerly colonized countries. As nations gained independence, the dynamics of European colonialism frequently gave way to internal racisms. Majority groups, much like the departed colonizers, demonstrated their dominance over ethnic and religious minorities through the exertion of control over territory. This story of transition from colonialism to majoritarianism is familiar to many in Sri Lanka, whose elected governments following independence enacted an array of policies which favored the Sinhala Buddhist majority over ethnic and religious minorities. These policies, and the grievances which they created, are commonly understood to have led to the genesis of a militant Tamil separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which sought to establish a Tamil homeland known as Eelam in the North and East of Sri Lanka. For the several decades of war which ensued, the Sinhala nationalist movement defined itself in opposition to Tamil separatism and its territorial claims. It is perhaps unsurprising that land, geography, and space continue to play an important role in Sinhala nationalist discourse, even after the defeat of the LTTE and the shift toward Muslims as a new national enemy. In this chapter, I interrogate the role of *geography* in the rhetoric and activities of Sri Lankan Islamophobic groups which have emerged and gained popularity in the post-civil war period, most notably the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). I find that spatial politics are central to Sinhala nationalist discourse about the alleged threat of radical Islam.

## **Globalization, Sinhala Isolation, and Predatory Identities**

The processes of globalization have significantly altered the relationship between majorities and minorities in states around the world. With the increasing concentration of political power in transnational entities that exist above and beyond borders, many majorities perceive their dominance over the territories of states as being under threat. The notion of globalization as a homogenizing force, erasing “tribalistic” ethnic tensions through the incorporation of populations into consumer markets, has proven to be unfounded. Instead, globalization has often led to a hardening of local identities, as majorities attempt to preserve their control over states despite the impact of forces and institutions which transcend national boundaries. The popularity of the far-right is one manifestation of this attempt to maintain ethnic hegemony.

Attempting to conceptualize the rise of violence against minorities in the globalized world, Arjun Appadurai suggests that “minorities are the major site for displacing the anxieties of many states about their own minority or marginality (real or imagined) in a world of a few megastates, of unruly economic flows and compromised sovereignties” (2006:42). Moreover, he claims that “predatory identities” – i.e. those identities which define the ‘other’ as a threat to the very existence and survival of the ‘we’ – “arise in those circumstances in which majorities and minorities can plausibly be seen as in danger of trading places” (51-52). Among majorities, the fear of one day becoming a minority is heightened when global forces are perceived to destabilize national politics and territorial hegemony.

Combined with Sri Lanka’s status as a small and relatively inconsequential state in the geopolitical realm, the popular perception of the Sinhala majority’s lack of global influence makes such a trade in places seem possible in the eyes of nationalists, thus rendering Sinhala nationalism into a predatory identity. In the rhetoric of the BBS, the Sinhalese are not truly a

majority but rather a minority in global terms. The BBS has released a publication dealing with demographics, entitled “Encountering the Demise of a Race: An Enquiry Into the Population Trends in Sri Lanka.” This document suggests that the “relative majority” of the Sinhalese is a myth; in reality, the Sinhalese are an “absolute minority” (Liyanage 2014:7). This means that the Sinhalese “are a minority in the global population comprising 0.20% of the total world population. Therefore, we are a majority relative to Sri Lanka’s population. We are a minority in absolute terms in relation to the global population” (8). The publication includes a table comparing the status of Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka and global population statistics (see Fig. 1.1 in *Appendix*) (7). In a personal interview, Dilanthe Withanage, the organization’s head layperson, claimed, “In the globalized context, Sinhala Buddhists are a minority – a global minority.” Palitha, a 30-year old from Colombo, echoed this sentiment: “It’s a small percentage [of Muslims] in Sri Lanka. But in the global world, how many Sinhalese are there? How many Muslims are there?” Thus, the de-territorializing impacts of globalization have led BBS supporters to feel that political contestations for hegemony no longer take place within the boundaries of the state – a development which allegedly threatens Sinhala control over Sri Lanka.

These concerns about demographics are connected to broader notions of besiegement and global isolation, which play a prominent role in Sinhala nationalism. Wedding anti-imperial and right-wing discourse, Sinhala politicians and political figures often speak of global conspiracies against Sri Lanka, particularly regarding UN resolutions attempting to investigate atrocities committed during the conclusion of the civil war. In nationalist narratives, the Sinhalese are portrayed as a population constantly under attack from outside forces (the international community, the Tamil diaspora, Muslim-majority countries). Furthermore, whereas Tamils and

Muslims are said to have allies outside of the country, it is claimed that the Sinhalese lack such connections and are totally isolated. As the only nation in which the Sinhala language is spoken and one of the few countries with a Theravada Buddhist majority, Sri Lanka is seen by Sinhala nationalists as their sole ethnic homeland. Such views are expressed in the BBS document “Demise of a Race”:

We have seen how the minorities demonstrate against the Sri Lanka state in front of UN offices in Geneva at the slightest provocation against a Tamil in our land. We have seen how Tamil Nadu rulers as well as central government in New Delhi seek to intervene in Sri Lankan affairs at critical times. We have seen how seats of embassy officials representing Middle Eastern countries heat up when something happens to Marakkalas [derogatory term for Muslims] in our country. We have seen how Tamilians and Marakkalas use their international contacts to corner presidents in our country from JR Jayawardena to Mahinda Rajapaksa at critical junctures in the Sinhala land.

Why does this happen? Even though there are some Sinhalese in the West and a limited cohort of patriots among them demonstrate in support of the Sri Lankan state at times of crisis, we must realize that there is no Sinhala diaspora as such. There is no other country that represents our interests in global fora. (Liyanage 2014:8)

Thus, despite the large Sinhala demographic majority in Sri Lanka, and the subsequent hegemony of the Sinhalese in the Sri Lankan political arena, BBS supporters and members feel that their place as the country’s dominant majority remains vulnerable due to the lack of global Sinhala influence vis-à-vis the influence of the Tamil diaspora and Muslims worldwide. Global flows across borders exacerbate these vulnerabilities by making the possibility that the Sinhalese could switch places with one of the minorities seem more real. It is this sense of geographical isolation in a globalized world that renders the Sinhalese ethnic identity predatory.

### **The Lost Buddhist Empire**

In the discourse of the BBS, the limited reach and influence of the Sinhalese today is contrasted to the past glory of Buddhism. The loss of a Buddhist “empire” at the hands of

Muslim conquerors figures prominently in Sinhala nationalist imagery. In discussions with BBS supporters, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Maldives are all cited as examples of previously Buddhist countries which have now become Muslim. Grandiose portrayals of Buddhism's previous territorial reach evoke pride in an idealized past, but also a sense of emasculation: Sri Lanka is seen as the next domino that could fall to Islamic domination. In "Demise of a Race," it is stated that Sri Lankan Muslims are trying "to make Sri Lanka their next colony in an expanding Muslim empire sought to be established by Wahabbi movement spreading from the Middle East, Pakistan and Malaysia" (Liyanage 2014:3). By raising the specter of Wahabbism – a term for radical Sunni Islam intended to raise fear because of its unfamiliarity to most non-Muslims – this publication produces connections between Sri Lankan Muslims and global political Islam, thus associating a weak local minority with an expanding territorial force that recognizes no national boundaries. The text's reference to several nearby centers of Muslim influence exacerbates nationalist fears that the Sinhala Buddhist majority is geographically surrounded by hostile powers.

Furthermore, much as in European Islamophobic discourse, Muslim rule is seen by the BBS as incompatible with democracy or liberalism – meaning that a Muslim takeover of Sri Lanka will not only result in the loss of the country's Buddhist ethnic identity, but will also cause the state to become authoritarian and/or theocratic. "If this country was ruled by a Muslim, would we still have freedom here?" asked Chaminda, a young and particularly ardent BBS supporter. "Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, and Iraq were all Buddhist countries before, belonging to Ashoka. What happened to them?" Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero, leader of Sinhala Ravaya, made a similar claim. "Indonesia, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq had Buddhist statues. Slowly, Muslims have captured all these areas and have destroyed those statues. Now,

they are not Buddhist countries anymore. This is the shadow of that in Sri Lanka, what is happening now.” Thus, Muslim territorial takeover leads to religiously homogeneous countries that are oppressive toward minorities. Furthermore, in this primordialist view, Sri Lankan Muslims who call for secularism and equal rights are acting deceptively: once they become a majority, they will impose their religion on everyone, just as they have in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the rest. These beliefs are expressed in various images shared on pro-BBS Facebook pages, which imply that Muslims begin behaving differently once they gain power (see Fig. 1.2 & 1.3). Rhetoric regarding sharia law – an unfamiliar, fear-invoking concept – is also commonly used in Sinhala nationalist Islamophobic discourse to imply incompatibility between Islam and secularism.

Moreover, Buddhism’s inherently nonviolent nature is said to be the reason for its decline and replacement by Islam in other countries throughout Asia. Rev. Wimalabuddhi, a student monk at the University of Sri Jayawardenapura, suggested that in a violent world, Buddhist nonviolence would result in the religion’s decline: “In Tibet, they followed the peaceful way. What happened to them? In Myanmar, they followed the peaceful way. What happened to them? In Thailand, there are Muslims killing monks. Bangladesh also.” Though many of these examples do not line up with geopolitical realities (most notably Myanmar), they reflect a worldview in which Buddhism is a religion under attack. To Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, principles of nonviolence only serve to stifle “defensive” reactions by Buddhists, which are justified on the basis of the *inherent* nonviolence of Buddhism and violence of Islam. For Sri Lanka to remain a Buddhist country, the BBS suggests, Buddhists must defend themselves from Muslim territorial incursions by any means necessary.

### **Ethnicity and Place**

The BBS promotes a bounded notion of culture in which each ethnoreligious group has its proper place. Rejecting multicultural models, they draw discursively on the European New Right's notion of "ethnopluralism," based on fixed homelands for different ethnic communities (Minkenberg 2013:19). "We respect that all countries have their own identity," claimed Ananda. "English people have the Church of England. Italy has a Catholic ideology. Saudi Arabia is Muslim. But they don't respect our ideology." A letter to the editor written by a Sinhala nationalist in a popular newspaper echoes his sentiment: "Rome is sacred to the Catholics, so is Jerusalem to the Jews and so is Mecca to the Muslims. The tiny island in the Indian Ocean...where the Sinhalese lived for over 25 centuries...is the hallowed land of Sinhala Buddhists" (qtd. in DeVotta 2007:30). Dilan, a lawyer for the nationalist Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) political party, responded affirmatively when I asked him whether Sri Lanka was a Buddhist state: "In the same way, the Vatican is a Catholic state. In England, Church of England is the foremost religion. In the same way, Catholicism is the dominant religion in Italy." Thus, BBS supporters envision a world of homogeneous nation-states in which religious and ethnic groups are closely linked to specific regions. This can be read as an attempt to maintain hegemony over land in an increasingly de-territorialized world.

Moreover, in this bounded schema, Muslims are seen as having numerous "motherlands" or countries of their own, while the Sinhalese are seen as only having Sri Lanka. "We do not have any other country," it is stated in "Demise of a Race." "The Sinhala state is the only country where we can die or propagate" (Liyanage 2014:8). Equally, Mahesh, a 23-year-old BBS supporter from Colombo, explained, "We have no other countries to live – only Sri Lanka. No motherland anywhere else. Muslims have a lot of countries, many motherlands." Moreover, demands for equal representation and voice for minorities within Sri Lanka are negated by the

notion that Tamils and Muslims have other countries where they can be represented, whereas the Sinhalese do not. In *Pogrom in Gujarat*, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi writes of a Hindu nationalist logical formulation in which “Partition eliminated the need for Muslim recognition in India — by territorial displacement, India no longer had to deal internally with the demands of Muslims” (2012:236). Further, the Indian perception of Pakistan as a homogeneous Muslim society where minorities are repressed serves as a justification for making India a homogeneous Hindu society. In Sri Lanka, absent Partition, the BBS employs similar reasoning: if Muslims have their own ethnically homogeneous homelands (where Buddhist statues are destroyed, as in Afghanistan), then Sri Lanka need not be a multicultural society but should follow suit and act as an ethnically homogeneous Sinhala Buddhist country. Moreover, in BBS discourse, if Sri Lanka is a secular, multicultural state, communally minded Muslims will take advantage of the majority’s generosity in order to take over the country.

The BBS’s desire for homogeneity is expressed most strongly in the group’s support for changing the country’s name to “Sinhale.” A proposal for such a change was put forth at the group’s Maha Sangha conference, attended by Buddhist monks from around the country. Even prior to this event, however, some BBS supporters explained that they wished to alter the country’s name to express the identity of the dominant ethnic group: Malaysia, reasoned Ananda, has a name reflecting the majority’s ethnic identity despite the fact that Malays represent a smaller proportion of that country’s population than Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. I understand the mythologizing of “Sinhale” as an attempt to close what Appadurai describes as “the gap between the sense of numerical majority and the fantasy of national purity and wholeness.” Unlike Sri Lanka, a state where the Sinhalese are merely a majority, Sinhale is a complete whole, in which the island itself is consistent with the Sinhala race. “Small numbers”, writes Appadurai,



“represent a tiny obstacle between majority and totality or total purity” (2006:53). It is the attempt to close the gap between majority and totality, Sri Lanka and Sinhale, which leads to predatory ethnic violence.

### **The Muslim Threat as Territorial**

Additionally, BBS supporters often conceive of the Muslim threat to Sri Lanka in spatial terms, mirroring and building upon Western Islamophobic rhetoric about “no-go zones” allegedly being set up by Muslims in areas of European cities. In “Demise of a Race,” it is claimed that a number of Muslim towns “have been unofficially declared by the mosques as “high security zones” not open to social, economic, cultural and political activities of Sinhalese and Tamils” (Liyanage 2014:2). Moreover, BBS supporters often draw parallels between the Tamil separatist movement and the territorial incursions supposedly made by Muslims since the civil war’s conclusion. In BBS discourse, Muslims are establishing exclusive ethnoreligious enclaves in areas where they have a substantial presence. Moreover, the impulse to capture land is viewed as a primordial Muslim trait. Palitha, a BBS supporter from Colombo, claimed that Muslim students in Kattankudy (a predominantly Muslim city on the east coast) made a resolution to work for a separate state, much like the Vaddukoddai Resolution made by Tamils who sought independence from Sri Lanka. Moreover, he suggested that Muslims intended to establish one “stan” on Sri Lanka’s east coast and another on the west (the two areas where there are the largest concentrations of Muslims on the island), drawing a parallel with Pakistan and Bangladesh on either side of India. Romesh, a very young and ardent BBS supporter from Kotte, claimed that Muslims had “captured” the Colombo Harbour and were implementing their own Sharia-based laws there. In the view of the BBS and its supporters, then, Muslims are attempting to take over areas and impose their rule.

Further, economy and geography are interlinked in the discourse of the BBS, which abounds with imagery of rich Muslims buying up land. Anuruddha, a BBS supporter from Gampola (a town near Kandy with a substantial Muslim population), drew an analogy between Tamil militancy and Muslim economic activities:

*They buy up areas and separate them as Muslim areas. It's separatism. [...] The Tamils were doing it in a specific area – the north and east. The Muslims are doing it everywhere in Sri Lanka. The LTTE did it with guns. Muslims use their black money. They are doing through the deed what [LTTE leader] Prabhakaran tried to do with the gun.*

This comment implies continuity between minority transgressions; through their economic power, Muslims are taking over territory in much the same way as Tamils did. Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero made similar connections between Muslim economic power and geographic expansion, claiming, “These lands here in Colombo, [Muslims] buy. Some land they take by force. When they’re buying on one side, taking by force on the other, we will not have enough land for us.” Here, land ownership is understood as a zero-sum game, in which Muslim gains are Sinhala losses. In this monk’s comments, the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist fear of being contained to limited amounts of space is connected to the perceived economic power of the Muslim minority.

Stereotypes associating Muslims with wealth are common in Sri Lanka, despite the fact that a majority of Muslims live below the poverty line. These ideas emerge in part due to the persistent historical image of Sri Lankan Muslims as a trading community, which has led to stigmatizations similar to those attributed to Jews in Europe. In the eyes of many onlookers, the

current success of a small group of upper-class Muslims in various business and technological industries confirms the stereotype that all Muslims are rich, despite all evidence to the contrary. Moreover, local beliefs about Muslim wealth are exacerbated by Sri Lanka's economic interactions with rich Gulf states. Since the introduction of the neoliberal economy to Sri Lanka during the late 1970s, Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim women have been going to work in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar as housemaids, "reflecting a global trend in outsourcing domestic labor to women from less developed countries" (Gamburd 2010:13). The remittances which these migrant laborers send home form a major contribution to Sri Lanka's economy, with wages amounting to "between two and five times what women could earn working in Sri Lanka" (15). However, the lack of legal protections for workers in these positions often results in abusive relationships between hosts and housemaids – which take on particular significance in Sinhala nationalist discourse about Muslim men and Sinhala Buddhist women, as will be discussed further in Chapter 2. These macro-level flows between Sri Lanka and the Gulf have affected micro-level relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka, such that connections are drawn in the Sinhala popular imaginary between rich Saudis and local Muslims. Allegations of Muslim spatial expansionism in Sri Lanka are tied to conceptions of the Middle East as a religiously homogeneous geographical region where Buddhist foreign workers are oppressed by wealthy Muslims. In the most farfetched fears of BBS supporters, rich Sri Lankan Muslims are seen as trying to establish similar arrangements of ethnoreligious power at home. For Sinhala nationalists, perceived geographical encroachments by minorities seem all the more important due to global interactions in which the Sinhalese seem powerless or isolated.

### **Buddhist Sacred Space**

While BBS supporters accuse Muslims of forming exclusive Islamic zones, it is often quite difficult for minorities to live and practice their religion in areas of particular historical and religious importance to Buddhists. Several of the most high-profile attacks on mosques and Muslim shrines have occurred in areas where there is a Buddhist claim to sacred land, such as Dambulla and Anuradhapura. A report from the Centre for Policy Alternatives explains that Buddhist nationalist groups “have opposed religious structures of other faiths in the vicinity of Buddhist temples, in some public spaces considered sacred to Buddhists, as well as on private lands in areas perceived by them to be in areas that are predominantly Buddhist” (2013:53). The report notes that “there are efforts to declare [Dambulla and Anuradhapura] as ‘sacred areas.’” Moreover, “Muslim religious places and even residents have faced both legal and extra-legal processes to evict them from these areas” (58). Thus, while accusing Muslims of attempting to demarcate exclusive territorial areas for their ethnoreligious group, the Sinhala nationalist movement is itself involved in such practices.

Claims of sacred space and ownership over land are frequently made by BBS supporters when discussing mosques attacked by Buddhist groups. Sinhala nationalists often suggest that the land on which these mosques were built originally belonged to Buddhist temples, as it was given to them by the ancient Sinhala kings. “They can’t ask for a mosque close to Dambulla Temple,” explained Chaminda. “Most land in Sri Lanka was given to the temples by kings as a gift.” Nimal, a peripheral supporter of the BBS, gave a similar explanation:

They built the mosque in the land of the temple. In Sri Lanka, ancient kings gave large areas of land and villages to the maintenance of the temple. So in Dambulla, the area where they built the mosque belongs to the Dambulla Raja Maha Viharaya. The high priest of this temple didn’t like to have the mosque on temple land.

In the case of Anuradhapura, he claimed:

They built a mosque on holy land. Anuradhapura is a main city of Buddhists. We have Sri Maha Bodhi and many important temples in Anuradhapura city. The government has named it a holy city area for that Buddhist temple. Muslims have built a mosque in that holy city area.

Thus, Buddhist ownership over land can be expressed in both literal terms (“this land belongs to the temple”) and religious ones (“this is holy land”). Regardless, the consequences for Muslims and other religious minorities are exclusionary.

Moreover, Muslims are portrayed by Buddhist nationalists as failing to respect the sacredness of Buddhist heritage sites. Making reference to Kuragala/Jailani, the site of an ancient Sufi shrine and allegedly also an early Buddhist monastery, Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero claimed that “places where Buddhists used to meditate, caves where they would sit inside, are being used to slaughter cows now.” As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, cattle slaughter is associated with the Muslim minority and is viewed by Sinhala nationalists as an affront to Buddhist values and the majority’s sensibilities. By drawing a contrast between peaceful Buddhist meditation and violent Muslim cattle slaughter, this monk associates Muslim presence in sacred space with impurity and excess, while also foreshadowing an ominous future in which the country’s most important Buddhist sites are debased by Muslims. These claims provide the legitimacy for the destruction of mosques (and often the expulsion of Muslims themselves) in areas said to be of historical and religious importance to Buddhists.

Moreover, mosques that have been attacked by Buddhist mobs are described by BBS supporters as illegal or makeshift buildings rather than legitimate places of religious worship.

When I questioned Udaya Gammanpila, the former leader of the Sinhala nationalist Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) political party, about attacks on Muslim places of worship, he claimed, “At all these places, there is an unauthorized Muslim mosque, an illegal mosque. People kept complaining to the authorities, and when the authorities didn’t listen, people came out and protested against these mosques.” Palitha echoed his views: “Dambulla and Anuradhapura, they were not properly built mosques. They were kept secret. Then they say it was there for 100 years.” Romesh gave a similar explanation: “They buy a building and make a mosque out of it.” In Dambulla, he suggested, “they started with a small hut, put a green colour flag up and made it a mosque. It is not legal.” By portraying mosques that have been attacked as recently purchased buildings rather than longstanding places of worship, BBS supporters delegitimize Muslim historical claims to land and portray Muslim presence on Sri Lankan soil as temporary.

Further, the use of shops as makeshift mosques was a recurring motif in my conversations with BBS supporters. In Mahiyangana, where a mosque was closed after raw pork and stones were thrown into the building during Friday prayers (Rush 2013), Romesh claimed that “the trick they have done is to buy a shop for business purposes and convert it to a mosque.” Ananda shared this interpretation: “One year ago, they erected a mosque in Mahiyangana town. They bought two connecting shops to use as a mosque. People opposed this because Mahiyangana is a prominent place for Buddhists.” With regards to the Grandpass Mosque, Udaya Gammanpila explained, “They built a big building claiming it was a store for 3 years [...] All of a sudden, they started praying inside that building.” Ironically, it is possible that these stories about mosques in storefronts result from the Muslim community’s pragmatic use of nonconventional spaces for religious worship in Buddhist-dominated areas, where it would be politically impossible to build an actual mosque because of pressure from groups like the BBS.

Alternatively, the shop-as-mosque image may be part of the BBS's portrayal of Islam as an invisible force permeating the nation's boundaries through economic means. Consistent with Appadurai's thesis, in which minorities are stigmatized as symbols of globalization, I argue that the narrative of "creeping sharia," which configures Islam as invisible and below the surface, reflects the opacity and incomprehensibility of economic globalization itself – a force which operates through the accumulation of millions of invisible market transactions. In the context of Sinhala guest work in Gulf states and BBS allegations of Muslim economic takeover, concerns about shops turning into mosques may reflect deep-seated fears about global economic forces affecting idealized religiously homogeneous polities.

Further, for the BBS, the spatial politics of Sri Lanka are conceived of in zero-sum terms, such that land where religious minorities have autonomy or ownership is seen as the loss of the Sinhalese. In "Demise of a Race," it is stated that ethnoreligious conflicts begin when Muslims "pose a threat to encroach the heartland of the Sinhalese. When they try to grab the land from others in areas where they are proliferating. When they try to push out the Sinhalese and others in areas where they expand" (Liyanage 2014:2). Here, Muslims are portrayed as aggressively widening their sphere of influence to larger and larger geographical areas. Further, the document describes the Sinhala population as "getting restricted to a limited stretch of land" and "concentrated (*kotuweema*) in limited physical space and economic terrain" (5-6). After Tamil separatists' attempts to "flush out the Sinhalese from the districts of Putalam, Mannar, Jaffna, Mulativu, Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Trincomale, Batticaloa and Ampara and herd them to the South" – i.e. to "limit the Sinhalese to a 66.6% of the total of 65610 Sq. kms in Sri Lanka" – today the Sinhalese go to most of these districts "merely as tourists," claims the document. "There is a trend towards increased concentration of Sinhalese, other than military, to limited

land areas in many of the districts” (6). These comments reflect a deep-seated fear of a reversal in ethnic power relations; in which the Sinhalese will be pushed out of Tamil and Muslim-majority areas and find themselves constrained to smaller and smaller tracts of land within their only country.

Ironically, the Sri Lankan government is accused of deliberately settling Sinhala members of the armed forces and their families in the Northeast and building Buddhist statues and shrines in the same districts mentioned in the BBS publication. What is the relationship between the reality of Sinhala expansionism and the BBS’s suggestion that the very opposite is occurring? “Demise of a Race” directly addresses the claims of Sinhala internal colonialism toward Tamils and claims that Muslims are actually the ones responsible:

The separatist cohorts who claim that Sinhalese are involved in an ethnic genocide against Tamils must understand that the real threat for them comes from the Tamil speaking Musalmanus who initially joined them in their separatist campaign. [...]

[T]raditional Tamil villages are gradually being converted to Islam and absorbed into the Muslim community in a carefully planned program. In Naindakadu village in Ampara district, 75 traditional Shivaite Hindu families have been converted to Islam and now an Islamic mosque has been newly erected. We have received reports that Hindu girls who work for Muslim employers in Sammanthrai, Potuvil and Akkaraipattu are sexually abused by Muslims and encouraged to become prostitutes in an organized manner. We have also received reports that Muslim gangs coming from Colombo become friendly with Tamil girls and the children born in such unions are converted to Islam in an organized manner. Similarly the Tamils in estate areas are also being converted to Islam in some areas.



[...]

The Northern Provincial Council [a major political unit representing the Tamil-majority Northern province], which is passing many anti-Sinhalese legislations on a routine basis, is living in a fantasy world. When a Sinhala army soldier erects a small Buddha statue at the foot of a Bodhi tree to offer flowers to Lord Buddha, these anti-Sinhala separatist politicians loudly claim that this is a Sinhala expansionism. But they do not realize that the real threat to them comes from Islamic quarters. (Liyanage 2014:10)

These allegations of Muslim cultural imperialism in Tamil areas – particularly those related to the construction of religious edifices and the rape of women – mirror the very same charges made by human rights organizations and NGOs against the Sinhala Buddhist-dominated Sri Lankan state. Perhaps this is merely a form of projection, in which transgressions perpetrated by the self are displaced onto the dehumanized Muslim other. Alternatively, the perceived threat of radical Islam may serve to justify further Sinhala expansion in the Northeast.

### **The Natural Environment and Sinhala Nationalism**

In addition to notions of “sacred space,” which tend to be steeped in religious and historical significance, natural space plays a major role in Sinhala nationalist territorial politics. Sri Lanka’s natural environment is not conceived of as the equal property of all ethnicities and religions, but has become entangled in political debates about ownership, indigeneity, and belonging. In the discourse of the BBS, Sinhalese are portrayed as an indigenous group and minorities are depicted as immigrants or foreigners (despite the predominantly Indian origins of all major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka today). Nationalist ideas about natural heritage reinforce this dynamic. Considering “the relationship between nature and Sinhala-Buddhist nationhood in Sri

Lanka,” Tariq Jazeel argues that “dominant discourses, materialities, and not least the poetic registers of Sri Lanka’s natural environment form part of an ongoing spatial production of ethnicized identity and difference” (2013:2). Indeed, in the discourse of the BBS, consistent with a narrative in which the land of the country belongs to majority, Sri Lankan nature is coded as distinctly Sinhala Buddhist.

In particular, Wilpattu National Park, an important natural heritage site north of Puttalam, served as a major flashpoint for Buddhist-Muslim territorial issues following the controversial resettlement of war-displaced Muslim IDPs in the park’s buffer zone. Sinhala nationalists seized on this moment to deploy the potent semiotic imagery of Muslim invasion. A news article claims that the “Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) has declared war against the rape of the Wilpattu National Park, where massive-scale illegal land grabbing is taking place in order to establish Muslim colonies, separate zones and villages, in the guise of resettling the internally displaced” (Jayakody 2014b). In the context of qualms about miscegenation between Muslim men and Sinhala women (to be discussed further in Chapter 2), the use of rape as a metaphor for the conquering of territory is no coincidence. When discussing Wilpattu, Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero painted a picture of all-powerful Muslim control over political institutions:

In the Wilpattu area, they have cut the jungle, and cleared about 20 kilometers that has already been taken by Muslims. They have got the influence of government, political parties and religious leaders, who do not take any action. This is all government land. Muslims have captured it and by force they have taken it. They have their own lawyers. They have made houses for Muslims.

Here, Muslim spatial expansionism is linked to notions of covert political and economic control, in a manner reminiscent of anti-Semitic discourse. Further, referring to Wilpattu as “an environmental issue and a demographic issue,” Ananda claimed Sinhala ownership of the national park by pointing to its historical, archaeological, and mythological importance. “Remains from 40,000 years ago have been found there – archaeological remains and skeletons,” he explained. “In a Sinhalese legend, Vijaya, the first Sinhalese king, came to Sri Lanka from India and went to the Wilpattu area.” He dismissed the claim that there was a Muslim presence in the Wilpattu area prior to wartime displacement, while also implying a broader notion of archaeologically grounded Buddhist ownership over the entire country: “It’s untrue that [Muslims] used to live there. There is no mark of the old foundations. There are Buddhist ruins in this place. In the whole country, anywhere that you dig, the only ancient ruins are Buddhist temples. Not until the 10th century do you see Hindu ruins.” Here, Buddhist ownership of Wilpattu (and by extension Sri Lanka as a whole) is configured based on the age of archaeological ruins and their depth in the ground. In this nationalistic worldview, the Sinhala “sons of the soil” have an exclusive geographical claim over Sri Lankan natural heritage areas.

In the wake of the aforementioned Muslim resettlement, an English-language petition regarding Wilpattu and other issues related to ethno-spatial politics was published online and widely shared on BBS-supporting Facebook groups. This petition, entitled “Save the Endangered Sri Lankan Sinhala Race and Their Land,” was posted on Change.org – not a typical venue for right-wing group, and in fact a website more characteristically associated with minority rights and the BBS’s stated opponents in the NGO world – and has since been removed from the internet. It constructs an image of the Sinhalese as an endangered indigenous species – living

harmoniously with the country's natural environment, yet at risk of extinction at the hands of hostile minorities.

The petition begins like a tourist brochure, describing Sri Lanka as “a tropical paradise surrounded by beaches and lush green landscape,” before discussing the “enduring ancient culture” of the Sinhalese. The author claims that the country is “widely abundant with natural resources and a major tourist attraction because of its rich culture, white sand beaches, warm weather, happiness and peaceful native people.” The nation is posited as peaceful and harmonious prior to the mention of ethnoreligious minorities.

However, claims the author, “something is disrupting the *natural state* of Sri Lanka” [italics mine]. “Unfortunately, the democratic and pluralistic values of Sri Lanka are killing the Sinhala race. Their kindness is actually destroying them.” Here, the good nature of the Sinhalese is posited as the reason for their decline. “This ancient country and culture that *belongs to the Sinhala people* will be destroyed, changed or taken over by Muslims that are not *original inhabitants of this sacred Island*” [italics mine]. In this nationalist historiography, Muslims are recent arrivals to the country, while the Sinhalese are purely indigenous. As will be discussed further, the portrayal of Muslims as foreigners allows the BBS to place itself in the lineage of European anti-immigrant movements. Next, the petition reveals long-standing Sinhala insecurities about international isolation: “Sri Lanka is the only place that the Sinhala people belong to. It is the only place in the world that speaks the Sinhala language.” In Sinhala nationalist discourse, the notion of Sri Lanka as the sole Sinhala homeland provides the justification for allegedly defensive violence and repression toward minorities.

The following paragraph deals specifically with the Muslim minority. Muslims, it is claimed, “originally entered Sri Lanka as tourist [sic] and businessmen and soon they started marrying Sinhala woman.” Here, through association with tourism and business, the Muslim presence in Sri Lanka is rendered temporary and fleeting. Moreover, the petition reveals Sinhala nationalist concern with miscegenation and intermarriage – topics which are discussed further in Chapter 2. Following this, the author claims that “[t]he kind and loving Sinhala people openly accepted the Muslim people as their own, but soon the Muslim people didn’t reciprocate this love and respect to the Sinhala heritage and culture.” In this paternalistic narrative, the Sinhalese were generous enough to share *their* country with outsiders, who went on to stab them in the back. The petition goes on to list a number of transgressions committed by the Muslim community. I focus here on several which are specifically related to spatial politics:

Muslims are illegally cutting down rainforests and sanctuaries to make space for their Mosques, their houses and their businesses. Trees and nature are being destroyed. From the beginning of the Sinhala history the land always belonged to the Buddhist temples. The Sinhala people lived off that land and always gave back to the land by farming and planting new trees. Now it is being taken. The Muslims are not farming on this land or planting trees, but they are destroying the land.

This point alludes to the Wilpattu resettlement, creating an opposition between spaces of natural heritage and the space that is needed for Muslim mosques, homes, and shops. It is suggested that the Sinhalese lived in harmony with the land, forming a part of the natural environment itself. In contrast, the Muslims are ruining the country’s natural beauty.

Muslims are trying to push Sinhala people out by bringing refugees over from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Sri Lanka is overpopulated and doesn't have the room for immigrants.

Again, Muslims are portrayed as outsiders rather than legitimate residents of the nation. The Sinhala nationalist fear of being "pushed out" of Sri Lanka expresses deep concerns about space.

Muslim countries do not allow the practice of any religion except Islam. However, in Sri Lanka they have built many mosques. Muslims do not have tolerance for other religions. They are taking over Sri Lanka's land by destroying sacred temples. In the Northeast there was once [sic] 11,000 Buddhist temples and now there are only 9,800 left because they were desecrated at the hands of Muslims out of hatred for the culture and beliefs of Sri Lanka.

Here, the inherent intolerance of Muslims, whose own countries are religiously homogeneous, serves as the justification for Buddhist intolerance in Sri Lanka. Further, Muslims are portrayed as taking advantage of Sri Lanka's generosity and religious freedom by building mosques and destroying temples.

The petition goes on to list recommendations for the President, several of which are related to land and spatial politics:

We need to stop Muslim Immigrants from seeking asylum in Sri Lanka and making this their new home.

Sri Lanka needs to stop selling land to foreigners.

All land that is held illegally by Muslims need to go back to the Sri Lankan government.

Finally, an appeal is made: “Please sign this petition to stop Muslims from taking over Sri Lanka, the country that belongs to the Sinhala people. [...] The Sinhalese can’t afford to lose Sri Lanka to Muslims. This is the only land Sinhala people will ever have and once it’s gone its lost forever.” This foreshadows an ominous future in which Sri Lanka is taken over by Muslims and the Sinhalese no longer have a country to call their own.

The petition’s imagery seems reminiscent of orientalist authorship, portraying Sri Lanka as an unchanging, ancient paradise. The Sinhalese play the role of noble savages – a peaceful, simple people who live off the land. In an attempt to depict the Sinhalese as authentically indigenous, the petition draws upon classic tropes about aboriginal populations living harmoniously with their natural environment, while simultaneously ignoring the reality of Sinhala engagement with global modernity. Notably, the BBS invited the chief of the Veddas, a very small Sri Lankan indigenous ethnic group, to its Maha Sangha conference (Colombo Gazette 2014). The presence of the Vedda chief at a Sinhala nationalist event seems intended to lend legitimacy to the Sinhala claim of indigeneity. At this conference, the BBS expressed the view that there are no ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka, only “Sinhala Buddhists, Sinhala Hindus, Sinhala Catholics, Sinhala Christians, and Sinhala Muslims” (Jayakody 2014a). In this schema, all other ethnoreligious groups are merely Sinhala Buddhists who have been converted. The Vedda chief is presumably also viewed by the BBS as being Sinhala. Ironically, though his presence at the conference seems intended to reinforce the notion that the Sinhalese were in Sri Lanka before any other ethnic group, it also simultaneously disproves this same claim. The BBS document “Demise of a Race” also discusses Sri Lankan indigenous groups. In a paragraph dealing with Muslim resettlement, the author states that “it has been reported to us that some Muslims have been settled side by side with original aboriginal people in Ratugala” (Liyanage

2014:4). Here, a polar opposition is set up between Muslims and indigenous peoples, such that it is unnatural for the two to live together in the same space. This passage comes directly after the author claims that “not less than 1500 Pakistanis [...] are living in Negombo,” reinforcing the notion that Islam is antithetical to indigeneity. Ideas about the indigenous and the foreign are deeply implicated in spatial politics, which attempts to demarcate who belongs where. The seemingly benign proposition that Sinhala Buddhists are perfectly suited to Sri Lanka’s natural environment actually constitutes a means of exerting control over land at the expense of ethnic others.

### **Natural Heritage in Gnanasara Thero’s Aluthgama Speech**

Notions of indigeneity also figure prominently in a confrontational speech given by BBS leader Gnanasara Thero to a crowd in Aluthgama prior to the extensive anti-Muslim violence of June 2014. Sri Lankan natural heritage plays an important role in Gnanasara’s speech, helping to construct the notion of Sinhala ownership of the country and to stoke fears of a Muslim takeover. Gnanasara suggests that if the country loses its Buddhist identity, “you would be punished not by the Sinhala general public but by the nature itself.” He makes reference to “those who nurtured and civilized this earth and soil, and who continued to protect the culture, civilization and values; who built 64,000 lakes.” Discussing an ancient reservoir in Anuradhapura, he claims, “The Kala Wewa was built by King Dhatusena. There were no Mohammeds present at the time when the Kala Wewa was being constructed. Now the Sinhalese are reportedly not allowed to carry out fishing in the Kala Wewa. See how strong [the Muslims] are.” The past accomplishments of a homogeneous Sinhala polity are contrasted with the disaster of modern multiculturalism, which has turned the Sinhalese into an oppressed majority. He calls on Sinhala Buddhists to “be



determined; hereafter not a single inch of land will be handed over to a Muslim.” Further references to land and the natural environment directly follow overt calls for violence:

There is a conflict close at hand; we must get ourselves prepared for the battle. We must safeguard this Sinhala country even by killing. Fauna and flora and animals in this land are in need of heroism. Don’t you feel it? When climbing Adam’s Peak or going to Kandy, while on the way to Anuradhapura, when visiting the Kande Viharaya in Aluthgama, even though the lives of our ancestors became extinct, their souls are still alive. Their souls exclaim that this Sinhala land is about to be perished, the Sinhala land is about to be conquered by the Muslims, so safeguard this country! (YouTube.com 2014)

In this passage, presumably intended to inspire a sense of pride among the Sinhalese audience, Sri Lanka’s nature and heritage are infused with ethnonationalist content – or rather, the latent ethnonationalist content in Sri Lanka’s nature and heritage is brought to the fore. Why should flora, fauna, and animals care whether Sri Lanka is a Buddhist- or Muslim-majority country? Does Adam’s Peak have a stake in protecting the Sinhala nation from a Muslim threat? These allegedly neutral Sri Lankan natural and historical places and phenomena are already coded as Sinhala Buddhist. What Gnanasara’s speech does is to make this fact blatant: flora, fauna, and areas of historical importance are literally calling out for Sinhala heroism. By suggesting that even the natural environment will feel the negative effects of Muslim rule, Gnanasara provides the impetus to defend spaces like Wilpattu from alleged Muslim incursions. As demonstrated by the pogrom that transpired in Aluthgama, the implications of this majoritarian territorialism are often violent.

## **Urban and Rural**

The claims of indigeneity discussed above privilege one particular expression of Sinhala identity as authentic. To be truly Sinhala is to live a traditional village lifestyle based around the temple, tank, and paddy field; Sinhalaness is placed in direct opposition to urban modernity. This theme is emphasized in “Demise of a Race,” which portrays Colombo as a city lost to modern multiculturalism:

Colombo and other cities in Sri Lanka are parasitic cities dependent on the rural hinterland for their sustenance. It is the rural workers who work in industries in cities. The suppliers to urban industries and consumers of urban products are also mostly in the rural hinterland. We watched with enthusiasm the movement of educated Sinhalese and Sinhala businessmen to cities. But look at the fate of urban centres today. Colombo is the capital city of Sri Lanka. The following chart illustrates the population composition in Colombo Divisional Secretariat which contains the main business locations and economic centres in the capital city. (Liyanage 2014:7)

The chart, entitled “The Crisis in Capital City” (see Fig. 1.4), alleges that Tamils and Muslims have surpassed Sinhalese in population within the city of Colombo. “Colombo is no longer a Sinhala capital city as such”, the document explains. Thus, true Sinhala spirit is to be found in the “rural hinterland,” not in the parasitic, multicultural capital of Colombo. The notion of the rural as authentically Sinhala was also alluded to at the Maha Sangha conference, during which Rev. Kirama Wimalajothi stated that if the government fails to address the concerns of Buddhists, the BBS will “bring a man from the village” to become President (Jeyaraj 2014). In this rhetoric of agrarian populist chauvinism, any Sinhala villager would recognize what Colombo’s political elite fails to notice: that the country is in deep danger of losing its Sinhala essence.

Not only is the idealized notion of rural Sinhalaness promoted in BBS rhetoric inconsistent with how many Sinhalese live today, but it is also particularly removed from the lifestyles of most BBS members. The BBS is a Colombo-based organization with a primarily urban and semi-urban supporter base. Very early in my research, in a conversation with a member of the intellectual Colombo elite, I inquired as to whether the BBS was widely supported in rural villages. “It is not a populist group!” she exclaimed. “I asked my maid from the village about the BBS and she had never even heard of it!” Among laypeople, I found that some of the most committed BBS supporters were tech-savvy young men with a fairly strong grasp of English. These youth operate popular Facebook pages that serve as a main outlet for the distribution of propaganda and the promotion of BBS events. As will be explored further, these young supporters are far more connected to a global network of online Islamophobes than to traditional Sinhala village lifestyles based around agriculture.

### **The BBS and International Islamophobia**

If the BBS promotes a notion of Sinhalaness that is deeply rural and agrarian, why does it garner support among young men in urban areas? I argue that the BBS helps these youth to form an identity which assuages the sense of global weakness and isolation that some Sinhalese feel because of Sri Lanka and the Sinhala majority’s relative unimportance on the global geopolitical scale. The BBS offers a compelling narrative in which the Sinhala nation is at a crucial juncture for its own survival. Islam has swept away the vast stretch of Buddhist countries across Asia, the Sinhalese are constantly under attack from foreign threats, and Muslims are encroaching on Buddhist spaces and threatening to turn the Sinhalese into second-class citizens in their own homeland. Heroism is needed to save the nation. Through an alliance with international Islamophobes, the Sinhalese can become powerful again.

This alliance is primarily an exercise of the imagination, in which BBS supporters come to view themselves as part of a major international movement. It involves only a very limited amount of official collaboration with Islamophobic groups. Yet, with the internet facilitating discursive cross-pollination between social movements, formal cooperation seems almost unnecessary; Western Islamophobes can already be found posting comments on a popular anti-Muslim Facebook page called *Buddhist Defense League*, which reports primarily in English on Sri Lankan and Burmese affairs. Sinhala Islamophobes, in turn, borrow Western-originated narratives about sharia law, to name one example, and map them on to an existing stock of local prejudices. Notably, the page name “Buddhist Defense League” is itself a variant on the British anti-Muslim group known as the English Defense League. Reverend Dhammasiri, a BBS-affiliated monk, even cited the inspiration of Western Islamophobes when I asked about the BBS’s use of social media: “The internet and Facebook is our big weapon. Tommy Robinson, the English Defense League leader, says that he also uses modern technologies to spread information.” For all the optimism about the role of social media in progressive political movements and pro-democracy activism, it has proven to be an equally valuable tool for reactionary politics. The internet has facilitated the creation of connections (whether tangible or merely discursive) between the BBS and worldwide Islamophobic currents, thus helping to alleviate Sinhala nationalists’ strong sense of geographical isolation and global powerlessness.

It is important to note that BBS supporters do not view their actions in isolation but rather conceive of themselves as part of a global movement against radical Islam. My interviews and conversations with BBS supporters involved frequent references to international figures and groups perceived to be critical of Islam. Reverend Dhammasiri praised David Cameron’s criticism of multiculturalism in the U.K.: “In London, they asked for Sharia law, but David

Cameron said ‘No, this is England, not Saudi Arabia.’” Chiranthi, an older female BBS supporter, expressed positive opinions about Russia and Japan’s prohibitive laws about Islam, bemoaning the fact that Sri Lanka has not learned from their example. Others also praised Russia’s laws: “Putin says, ‘We do not want minorities. If Muslims want to live in Russia, they should follow Russian culture,’” explained Reverend Dhammasiri. He also claimed that the BBS is “discussing meeting with international groups to make a global network against Muslim extremism. The Secretary General visited the USA to discuss this; we hope to visit England too.” One day at the BBS head office, Ananda referred me to online videos about the “Islamization of Europe,” even espousing the merits of direct collaboration with the English Defense League. Western Islamophobic groups and figures are a key influence for the BBS, connecting Sinhala Buddhist nationalism to a globally powerful movement.

Inspiration also comes from close by. On the eve of Narendra Modi’s election, Ananda claimed that India’s Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is “the same as the BBS, except for Hindus in India.” “If you ask an Indian about Muslims,” claimed Chaminda, “they’ll talk the same way as me.” As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, Indian narratives about cattle slaughter and beef consumption serve as a key source of inspiration for Sinhala Buddhist nationalists. Many of the rumors spread by the BBS about Muslims also take a similar tone to those that exist in India. The BBS has also collaborated with Burma’s 969 Movement, which uses similar rhetoric to the BBS but appears to be more powerful and violent in its own national context, where it targets the disenfranchised Rohingya Muslim minority. The Burmese monk Wira Thu, the central figure of the 969 Movement, was a keynote speaker at the BBS’s Maha Sangha conference. Moreover, the two groups signed a Memorandum of Understanding

which proposed the establishment of a “Buddhist International” (Colombo Telegraph 2014). Such official collaborations with Western Islamophobic groups have thus far not materialized.

Rather than simply imitating other anti-Muslim groups, the BBS adapts Islamophobic narratives and ideas that originate elsewhere to suit the Sri Lankan context, while also contributing to the production of new forms of anti-Islamic discourse. For instance, at the high-profile launch of “Demise of a Race,” references were made to organizations such as the USA Defense League, Britain First, the English Defense League, and Stop Islamization of the World – all Western groups which share similar Islamophobic ideologies to the BBS. Following this, one video from Britain First was shown, seemingly with the intent of drawing particular parallels to Sri Lanka. The video’s narrator made reference to “the sacrifices of our war heroes” – a phrase equally applicable to the Sri Lankan case. “Our people are becoming a minority in our own country,” the narrator explained; “we are already a minority in London.” Next, a speaker from the BBS compared London to Colombo, implying that both were multicultural metropolitan areas that had betrayed the rural spirit of nationalism. By applying the British-originated narratives of war heroism and rural authenticity to Sri Lanka, the BBS participates in a global exchange of Islamophobic discourses.

Ironically, in an era where brown bodies are often demarcated as those of Muslims or terrorists, many of the Western Islamophobes whom the BBS draws inspiration from would presumably also hold racist views toward all South Asians. The Islamophobia of the BBS can thus also be understood as a call of “We hate Muslims, too!”; an attempt to establish Sinhala Buddhists as a racial group allied with the West in the “clash of civilizations.” The central benefit of this alliance is a feeling of connectedness to a globally influential anti-Muslim campaign, which helps to assuage concerns about rising worldwide Muslim power vis-a-vis the

alleged international isolation of Sinhala Buddhists. The BBS's efforts to position itself as part of an international movement against radical Islam can thus be seen as a response to the nationalist fear of switching places with the Muslim minority.

## **Conclusion**

I have attempted to demonstrate the important role of geography in the discourse of Islamophobia and Sinhala nationalism promoted by the Bodu Bala Sena. I argue that feelings of international isolation, geographical containment, and loss of spatial influence among the Sinhala Buddhist majority have become exacerbated in an increasingly globalized world, making longstanding fears about the possibility of future minoritization seem real. Further, for the BBS, the alleged territorial threat posed by radical Islam serves as a justification for “defensive” Sinhala reactions: the declaration of exclusive Buddhist “sacred spaces” in Sinhala-majority areas of the country, and aggressive expansionism elsewhere. The natural environment plays an important role in Sinhala nationalist spatial politics, serving to reinforce notions of Sinhala indigeneity and Muslim foreignness. However, despite the localized, village-based notion of authentic Sinhalaness promoted in BBS discourse, the problem of Sinhala isolation and powerlessness is ultimately resolved by going global. By conceiving of themselves as part of an international movement against radical Islam, BBS supporters are able to project a Sinhala identity that is strong and powerful.

Numerous connections exist between geographical and bodily politics in the discourse of the BBS. In Sinhala Buddhist nationalist rhetoric, land frequently serves as a metaphor for the female body, with sexual penetration symbolizing the capture of territory. In the following chapter, building on my analysis of the spatial politics of Sinhala nationalism, I consider embodied aspects of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism more closely.

## **Introduction**

Colonialist discourse is rife with sexual symbolism. Potent semiotic rhetoric about the penetration of untouched, virgin land is commonly used to describe violent acts of territorial appropriation. Such metaphors generally go along with actual acts of sexual violence by the colonizers. However, colonized populations also frequently used sexually-based discourse to describe the conquest land, even drawing on such rhetoric to mobilize anti-colonial nationalist sentiment. Moreover, similar ideas about territory and sexuality continue to be employed by various actors (dominant and subordinated alike) in the postcolonial era, where space continues to play a highly important role in power politics.

In the previous chapter, I considered the role of geography and territory in Sinhala nationalist Islamophobic movements. I argued that the Bodu Bala Sena's (BBS) concern with global forces is related to a fear of losing ethnic hegemony over land. When cross-border flows disrupt the perceived stability of nation-state, the possibility that majority and minority might switch places becomes intensified – if not in reality, then at least in the eyes of majorities themselves. Considering the Sinhala Buddhist self-perception of isolation in Sri Lanka, in contrast to the alleged international power of Islam, these dynamics are all the more salient, leading to supposedly defensive violence against minorities in order to protect the sole national homeland of the majority. Thus, the goal of ensuring that Sri Lanka remains a Sinhala Buddhist country for future generations justifies violent territorialism – for instance, through attempts to delineate Buddhist “sacred areas” (where ethnoreligious minorities face hostility), and through state-led expansionist efforts to settle Sinhala Buddhists in the Northeast.



The conquest of space is often a process that is mapped onto individual bodies. According to Mary Douglas, “[t]he body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.” Moreover, “[t]he body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures” (1978:116). In this chapter, I consider how ideas about the body come to serve as symbols for the nation in Sinhala nationalist discourse. Rejecting strong dichotomies between the political and the cultural, the global and the local, the abstract and the intimate, I argue that embodied experiences are deeply linked to sweeping global forces. Thus, concerns about cross-border flows often correspond to qualms about substances that enter and exit the body. Strong differences exist between the forms of embodiment that are attributed to the Sinhala majority and the Muslim minority. While great efforts are made to control what enters the Sinhala body and to prevent the ingestion of foreign toxins, the Muslim body is marked as uncontrollable in its fecundity and reproductive vigor.

The embodiment of the nation is also a deeply gendered phenomenon. “If religious nationalism is a way to mark the land, to defend or redefine a nation's boundaries,” suggests Roger Friedland, “then we might interpret religious nationalism's obsessive control of women's bodies as a parallel figuration, the policing of a bodily frontier” (Friedland 2002:411). Indeed, in many nationalisms (religious or otherwise), female bodies from the majority group represent the nation and its territory; male bodies from an enemy group come to signify territorial threat; and sexual penetration becomes a metaphor for the projection of ethnic and territorial dominance. As such, I also interrogate the important role played by gender in the discourse of the BBS, a predominantly male right-wing nationalist group. In examining the intersections between gender and race, I find that a variety of actors occupy contradictory positions, serving as unstable

signifiers in both Sinhala nationalist rhetoric and everyday Sri Lankan stereotypes. Sinhala women, on the one hand, are representatives of national purity; the daughters of the nation. On the other, they are constantly at risk of being converted to Islam or violated by Muslim men. The latter are aggressive, sexually uncontrollable, deviants, predators and pedophiles. However, they are also pious, hard-working, rich, and sexually vigorous. Muslim women, in turn, are oppressed victims of male ferocity in need of saving. Yet they are also “fearless, oversexed matrons who produce too many babies and routinely prepare meat dishes unperturbed by the sight and smell of blood,” to borrow Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi’s argument from the Hindu nationalist context (2012:54). Sinhala men are lion-blooded sons of the soil, war heroes; the protectors of Sinhala women and the potential saviors of Muslim women. Yet they are also lazy and naïve, in need of a nationalist awakening to mobilize in defense of their race. I investigate and interrogate these gendered and racialized contradictions as they play out in the rumors, stories, and rhetoric of the BBS.

Through discourse about reproduction, these aforementioned stereotypes about Muslim sexualities become linked to concerns about the demographic makeup of the nation. As established in the major BBS publication “Encountering the Demise of a Race: An Enquiry into the Population Trends in Sri Lanka,” the BBS believes that Muslims are attempting to become a demographic majority in Sri Lanka through their high birthrates. In this theory, the stigmatization of individual Muslim bodies becomes tied to the grand Muslim takeover of the body politic. Though the nationalist obsession with demography and population counting would seem to imply an abstract impersonality, these ideas become intimate – and intimately violent – when expressed in an embodied form.

### **Gender and Sri Lankan Muslim Origins**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the BBS's construction of the Sinhala majority as an indigenous race and the Muslim minority as a foreign ethnic group. These notions of national ownership are strongly connected to the theme of embodiment. In Sinhala nationalist discourse, Muslim entry into the Sri Lankan polity is contemporaneous with the Muslim male's penetration of the Sinhala woman. Thus, a popular story recited among BBS supporters suggests that Muslim men originally came to Sri Lanka without women and began marrying members of the local population. "In the past, our great kings helped the Muslims in Sri Lanka," explained Mahesh. "They didn't know that the Muslims would want to take over. One great king, he gave a ship to the Muslims to bring Muslim men to Sri Lanka so they could marry Muslim widowers." Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero recounted a similar tale: "Seven Muslim men came to Sri Lanka at the beginning. Only men. How come? Only seven men means that they have gotten involved with our women and started their generation." Moreover, he cited this story to deny the authenticity of a distinct Sri Lankan Muslim ethnic identity: "How they can say that they're Muslims when they've mixed with the Sinhalese? The Muslims do not have a long history of their own." In his speech prior to the Aluthgama anti-Muslim pogrom of June 2014, Gnanasara Thero also made reference to these stories about Muslim origins in Sri Lanka:

In the past, Muslims walked around in our villages, while calling our neighbors "Menike," "Bebinona," and "Ayya," with the loin cloth wrapped around the head. And they brought fancy goods and silk fabrics. Our village lasses are thrilled by the pieces of cloths they give. When a village lass is given a pair of bangles, she admires the Muslim vendor. What our ancestors have done was to give away their daughter to the Muslim vendor for just pair of bangles. [The Muslims] haven't brought women with them from abroad. And the Sinhala women were prepared to tie the knot with them. See how it goes

on now? Those who were born with Sinhala blood are now prepared to destroy us.

(YouTube.com 2014)

Thus, Sinhala women have been wooed into conversion by the material wealth of Muslim men. In addition to establishing Muslims as outsiders, Gnanasara's historical portrayal of Muslims as a trading community is also linked to current stigmatizations of their alleged economic power, which continues to be associated with the conversion of Sinhala women to Islam. Discussing right-wing Hindu politics in Gujarat, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi writes that "for Hindu nationalist demagogues, Gujarati Muslims are not really Muslims but only converted Hindus" (2012:263). Equally, Gnanasara's reference to Sinhala blood implies that Muslims are essentially converted Sinhala Buddhists. Moreover, in suggesting that the Sinhala race was already present in Sri Lanka at the time of Muslim arrival, and that Sri Lankan Muslims only exist as an ethnic group due to the exploitation of Sinhala women, Gnanasara reinforces the notion that Muslims are foreign to Sri Lanka's soil and implies that they owe their very existence to the Sinhalese. Notably, these stories about Muslim origins in Sri Lanka draw an important parallel between the female body and the nation. To put it bluntly, Muslim entry into the country is simultaneous with entry into the Sinhala woman.

### **Conversion through Marriage**

The BBS creates continuity between this original story of Muslim-Sinhala miscegenation and alleged current Muslim efforts to use marriages as a means of converting women to Islam. Since, in Sri Lanka, the signifier "Muslim" refers to both practitioners of the religion of Islam and members of the Muslim ethnic group, conversion to Islam is not merely a renunciation of one's previous religion but also constitutes the negation of one's racial identity. This is to say

that one cannot convert to Islam and remain Sinhala, at least on the basis of a traditional understanding of Sri Lankan ethno-religious categories. Moreover, the rhetoric surrounding religious conversion is deeply gendered. The BBS views Buddhist women, but not men, as at risk of being converted through interreligious marriages. This reflects both patriarchal realities, whereby the woman might be expected to convert to the man's religion in the case of an interreligious marriage, and the deliberate use of gendered imagery in Buddhist nationalist rhetoric about "protecting Sinhala women." Rev. Samitha, a young monk based just outside of Colombo, described the marriage-based conversion process as follows:

The Muslim boys focus on a young girl and start a love affair, a close relationship between a Sinhala girl and Muslim boy. Afterwards, sometimes during the period when they are having close relations, they behave as husband and wife before marriage. Finally, the girl has no other option but to marry this guy. Sometimes before marriage she is having a baby. The Muslim boys say to the girls, "if you want to marry me, you have to accept my religion." Since there is no option for the girl, she is converted. She has to accept Islam. Commonly she has to change her name too. Before marriage, Muslim guys call her a Sinhala name. But after marriage she would take on a Muslim name. She would never participate with temple activities afterwards. The Muslims won't allow her to work with the Buddhist community.

This parable, in which the Sinhala woman is essentially tricked into conversion, draws upon long-standing Sri Lankan stereotypes of Muslims as a calculating and aggressive minority. Notably, the converted woman cannot retain any element of her previous identity – even her name is changed. Further, the alleged intolerance of Muslims towards other religions ("The Muslims won't allow her to work with the Buddhist community") serves as the justification for

“defensive” Buddhist intolerance aimed at preventing conversions. Stories in which Muslim males attempt to use marriage as a tool to convert Sinhala women to Islam were a recurring motif in my discussions with BBS supporters. When combined with stereotypes about aggressive Muslim men, rumors about conversion through marriage create a major impetus for male Sinhala nationalists to become self-styled saviors of Buddhist women. Thus, patriarchal and paternalistic gender dynamics are reinforced through fear of a racial other.

Furthermore, many BBS supporters implicated Muslim businesses in the phenomenon of conversions through marriage, suggesting that stores owned by Muslims were deliberately hiring Sinhala girls in order to set them up with Muslim boys, thus paving the way for their conversion to Islam. Nimal directed such accusations toward several Muslim-owned clothing chains:

Fashion Bug and No Limit, they are very big organizations in Sri Lanka with a number of shops all over the country. But they never hire and employ Sinhala boys. They get Sinhala girls to work, but all the boys are Muslims. [...] When Sinhala girls are working with Muslim boys, they can easily convert them to Islam. Sometimes through relationships, sometimes just by talking about Islam.

The association of Muslim-owned stores with the conversion of women replicates Gnanasara’s rhetoric about Muslim traders and applies it to the modern era. Rev. Pannasekara described the involvement of Muslim businesses in marriage-based conversions as follows:

Fashion Bug in Kandy – some Sinhala girls work there. Muslim boys also work there. Muslim boys love Sinhala girls. They marry, and afterwards she changes her name and changes her religion. Then the entire family converts to Islam – the whole Sinhala girl’s

family. Because the Muslim boy's side gives money and solves all the problems of the girl's family.

Here, as in the story about Muslim origins, stereotypes about Muslim wealth are linked to conversion of women. Moreover, the conversion of the Sinhala girl is seen as preceding the conversion of the entire family – thus raising the stakes in the effort to prevent conversions. This parable can also be read as a microcosm of the BBS's broader national fears, in which global Muslim economic power lures the nation itself into becoming a Muslim country.

### **Rape and Sexual Violence**

If the Sinhala nationalist theme of conversions through marriage suggests that Muslim men are predatory, this view is made literal through BBS discourse implicating Muslims in sexual violence and rape. One particular discussion during my fieldwork illuminated the power of rape as a metaphor for the supposed danger posed by rising Islamic extremism. As we sat near the beach at Galle Face, exasperated with my skeptical line of questioning, Chaminda described the looming Muslim threat to Sri Lanka as follows: “Look, it's like this: if your mother is gonna be raped by someone and you can stop it, would you let it happen? Or would you do something?” Much as in colonialism, rape can serve as a metaphor for the conquest of land and the takeover of the country. Thus, ethnic politics become embodied, as the Muslim territorial threat is coded as that of a male rapist whilst the Sinhala nation is portrayed as a female victim – in this case, the mother. The use of these sexualized metaphors also brings about a powerful discourse of national purity that places Sinhala men in the role of guardians for their female counterparts.

However, the BBS's association of Muslims with rape is not limited to the metaphorical realm. In fact, BBS supporters suggested that the same shops allegedly implicated in marriage-based conversions were also involved in incidents of sexual assault against Sinhala women. Fashion Bug and No Limit, two successful Muslim-owned clothing chains specializing in modern youth styles, have become the targets of a particularly intense smear campaign related to sexual violence. Branches of these shops have been the target of numerous violent incidents linked to the BBS. Even my translator, Manju (a Tamil woman married to a Muslim), claimed that her family stopped frequenting these stores for several months after hearing rumors about them. Romesh, a young BBS supporter from Kotte, linked Muslim-owned businesses to incidents of rape:

No Limit, Fashion Bug, Glitz, Hameedia, Cool Planet – at all of those places, most of the male workers are Muslim, starting from higher management to all sales boys. The girls are Sinhala and Tamils. There was a rape of a 15 year old Sinhalese girl. She has been raped so many times by the general manager. [...] When she goes and complains about it, they say 'we will take care of her' – meaning that they will get her married to one of the Muslim guys in the shop.

Here, the enemy is portrayed as targeting particularly vulnerable members of the in-group (young women), thus facilitating the mobilization of nationalist sentiment. Rev. Wimalabuddhi, a student monk at Sri Jayawardenapura University, also described Muslim businesses as involved in rape: "Many Fashion Bugs and No Limits are employing young Sinhala girls. Very poor girls from villages. These shops belong to Muslims. They assault the poor Sinhala girls." In this parable, village life is associated with the untouched Sinhala female. In contrast, Fashion Bug and No Limit are urban, Westernized clothing shops; thus, they also carry associations with



liberal sexual culture, another threat to Buddhist women and the nation. Indeed, despite the stereotype of the Muslim community as excessively conservative in their religious practices, Muslims are also simultaneously the bearers of vice and libertinism, as will be explored further when discussing the stereotype of Muslims as drug dealers. Here, Fashion Bug and No Limit are representative of both consumerist sexual liberation and Muslim economic power. In BBS discourse, these themes are tied to the rape of Sinhala women by Muslim business owners.

Further, the path of causality between claims of rape and incidents of nationalist violence is often unclear. Do rumors about Muslim rapists spread by the BBS motivate anti-Muslim violence? Or are these rumors invented after violent incidents as an excuse for their occurrence? I propose that the relationship between rape rumors and violence is mutually reinforcing. Prior to anti-Muslim incidents, sexual rumors about Muslims serve as a means of mobilizing support for communal violence. However, following attacks on Muslim stores or property, sexual violence also becomes an alibi to portray anti-Muslim incidents as haphazard disputes and to reject claims of Islamophobic intent. “This Fashion Bug incident, the media got it wrong – they were influenced by Muslim groups,” claimed Palitha. “There were no religious problems. It’s an isolated incident. Some Muslim employee raped a small girl.” In an interview with Al-Jazeera, former President Rajapaksa responded to allegations of anti-Muslim violence with a strikingly similar claim: “A seven year old girl was raped. It is naturally [sic] they will go and attack them no matter what community or religion they belong to. The people, when they heard about it were so upset” (Daily News 2013). Thus, claims of rape may serve as a means of deflecting allegations of ethnically motivated violence.

An incident that occurred in Aluthgama one month prior to the large-scale anti-Muslim riots serves as an important case to consider the relationship between sexual rumors and

violence. In May 2014, a highly successful Muslim businessman's shop in the area was torched. It was claimed that a mob committed this action following an act of sexual assault committed by the shop-owner against a child. Yet it is hard to tell whether these sexual rumors surfaced prior to or after the shop burning; some commentators suggested that there was a premeditated plan to frame the shop-owner and prompt a violent reaction (Karim 2014) (Naleemi 2014). After the fact, I spoke with numerous BBS supporters and other Sinhala nationalists about the incident, all of whom cited the alleged rape as the reason for the shop's burning. "Muslims raped some Sinhalese girls in the town," claimed Mahesh. "A small child, I think 12 years old, was raped. First we go to the police. If the police don't care, then we should take action. Because this is our country." These comments are reflective of a narrative commonly repeated by BBS supporters when asked about incidents of violence against Muslim property: economic power allows Muslims to get away with sexual crimes by buying off corrupt police, thus creating anger among the local Sinhala population, who respond violently when the rule of law fails to ensure justice. Udaya Gammanpila, a prominent politician with the Sinhala nationalist JHU (Jathika Hela Urumaya or National Heritage Party), described the shop burning in similar terms:

In Aluthgama, the elder brother of the shop owner molested a 7-year-old boy. The mother complained to the police but they didn't take any action – they totally ignored the plea. The village thought that the shop owner bought the police over because he was one of the richest persons in the town. So they protested before the shop – this was not organized by the BBS or any Buddhist organization. People before the area protested before the shop, but later on some people got angry and burned it. It was a result of frustration because the law was not applied. This would have happened if the shop owner was Sinhalese, Tamil, Burgher, or whatever. No ethnic issue here – a rich man committing a crime and avoiding

facing the law because of his immense wealth. They have unnecessarily given a religious side to this issue to suppress the molestation of a little boy.

After the fact, claims of rape allow Sinhala nationalists to de-emphasize ethnicity and legitimate violence – they weren't attacked because they were Muslims; they were attacked because they were rapists. Of course, in the discourse of the BBS, Muslim men are already sexually stigmatized and seen as prone to committing rape, and (real or imagined) incidents of sexual violence by Muslims take on great symbolic significance. As such, the distinction between Islamophobic violence and vigilante justice against sexual predators quickly breaks down.

In contrast to Udaya Gammanpila's retelling of the Aluthgama pedophilia story, the version provided by Gnanasara Thero at the launch of "Demise of a Race" made Aluthgama a flashpoint and provided the impetus for future communal violence. Gnanasara's speech occurred just weeks before the June 2015 outbreak of anti-Muslim riots in Aluthgama. Thus, rape rumors spread by the BBS can serve as catalysts as well as deflecting mechanisms. In his rendition of the Aluthgama story, Gnanasara castigates the authorities for their alleged unwillingness to arrest Muslims:

Next, it must be about ten days now in Aluthgama area. A small child, about 7 or 8 years old, went to the shop with the mother. The shopkeeper takes the child inside the shop and tries to touch the child in the private areas. The small one was in intensive care. There are videos. Finally when they went to complain to the police station, 1 or 2 police people, not everybody, for a small bit of money, are selling the country, selling the nation, selling the law, selling the race, the soul. There are some useless people who are selling all these things. These fuckers (*mun*)! Without taking the complaint, they're requesting that the

mother takes one lakh. Because if we try to bring about justice, there will be problems with racism. (YourListen.com 2014)

The implication is that Muslims are getting away with criminal activity because Sinhala police are too worried about appearing racist to stand up for themselves. By portraying the police as corrupt and unable to protect Sinhala interests, Gnanasara opens the door for communal violence to serve as a form of mob justice. Thus, rape rumors facilitate violence by providing a justification for right-wing extremists to supersede traditional authorities, which have failed to defend the Sinhala woman (and by extension, the Sinhala nation). In the case of Aluthgama, the results of this communalist vigilantism were the worst ethnic riots on Sri Lankan soil since the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983.

However, it remains unclear whether the violence committed in relation to rape claims is spontaneous or pre-planned. Sinhala nationalists attempt to portray Buddhist communal mobilizations as authentic local responses to Muslim transgressions, often denying BBS involvement in the planning of protests. In contrast, many Muslims suggest that violent Sinhala chauvinist mobs are entirely outsider-driven. For instance, one member of the committee for the Grandpass Mosque, which was attacked by a Buddhist mob in a high-profile August 2013 incident, claimed: “There are a few locals in these extremist groups, but 99% are outsiders. They pick up 10 locals and bring 300 outsiders to every event. It’s always the same 300 people.” Moreover, the Muslims with whom I spoke often went to great lengths to expound on their history of good relations with the Sinhalese, portraying the BBS as almost entirely unrepresentative of Buddhist popular opinion and its rallies and violent actions as plots cooked up by elites. The truth likely falls somewhere in between these two interpretations of communal mobilization. While Buddhist mobs cannot be dismissed entirely as external *agent provocateurs*,

many incidents of violence against Muslim-owned stores associated with rape rumors may be carefully planned attacks than spontaneous reactions by “angry groups of locals.” The sexual stigmatization of Muslim men as rapists, and the simultaneous representation of the Sinhala nation as the sexually assaulted woman, provides a coherent basis around which supposedly defensive violence can be structured in various disparate temporal and geographical milieus.

Much as in colonialism, metaphors of sexual violence which express ideas about the nation are connected to the literal rape of racially subjugated bodies. In the backdrop of Sinhala nationalist accusations that Muslim men are sexually predatory and deviant, a report from Human Rights Watch indicates that the predominantly Sinhala Sri Lankan security forces have systematically perpetrated acts of sexual violence against Tamils (2013). As discussed in Chapter 1, Sinhala colonization of the predominantly Tamil Northeast occurs simultaneously to the BBS’s claims of Muslim territorial expansionism; equally, the Sri Lankan army’s involvement in sexual violence against Tamils is contemporaneous with the emergence of rumors about Muslim rapists. These displacements seem to involve the projection of the unspeakable elements of the self onto the other. Considering that rape is fundamentally a violent expression of power, interethnic sexual violence is generally committed predominantly *against* subjugated ethnic groups, rather than *by* them. Thus, it is far more plausible that sexual violence against Muslims is being perpetrated by Sinhala Buddhists than vice-versa. Rumors about Muslims raping Sinhalese express a fundamental confusion about which ethnoreligious group is truly hegemonic. Indeed, in the context of globalization, BBS supporters are insecure about whether the Sinhala race will continue to be the most powerful in the country.

### **Female Guest Labor in the Middle East**

As discussed in Chapter 1, many Sri Lankan women work on a temporary basis as domestic servants in oil-producing Gulf countries, where labor laws generally do not apply for expatriates and abusive relationships between hosts and housemaids consequently often develop (Gamburd 2010). While Sri Lankan Muslims are typically preferred as guest workers by Middle Eastern families, and while male labor in the Gulf is also an emergent phenomenon, Sinhala nationalist discourse has focused on the maltreatment of Sinhala Buddhist female housemaids by male Muslim hosts. In addition to rumors about Muslim sexual violence against Sinhala women on Sri Lankan soil, then, similar stories are also shared about their abuse in Muslim-majority Gulf states.

It is impossible to know whether the horror stories described by BBS supporters accurately reflect the lived experiences of female temporary laborers. While it is certainly the case that many women are treated poorly and abused while working in the Gulf, distance facilitates the exaggeration of stories and rumors. Moreover, the BBS has a vested interest in portraying Muslim men as barbarians and using the imagery of abuse as political propaganda. Acts of violence committed against Sinhala women in the Middle East serve as fodder for the BBS's representations of Muslim male sexual pathology. Rev. Kirama Wimalajothi described the abuse that Sinhala guest laborers face in graphic terms:

They don't allow them to go out of the house. They convert them to Islam. They give little food. Some houses don't pay the money. After working for 3 or 4 years they come with empty hands. Some girls are dying there. They kill them. Some come back with broken leg and broken arm and lots of beatings. We really don't like our local girls to go as a housemaid.

Chiranthi, a female BBS supporter, made similar statements, describing guest work as “modern day slavery.” “Once they go they’re caught in a prison. They’re stuck. They harass them by inserting needles into them.” Rev. Pannasekara claimed that “the Muslim people who own the houses [where guest workers stay] insult our people and threaten them. You can see in the news, they put nails in their bodies. People die. They cut their fingers. It’s a threat to our people, our women.” Notably, several of these accounts involve the penetration of the body with sharp objects. In the context of the BBS’s concerns regarding transnational flows of money and people, I propose that this symbolizes the penetration of national borders. Further, for the BBS, the poor treatment of Sinhala women in the Middle East necessitates measures to prevent Sri Lanka from becoming a Muslim country. Fearing the possibility of a flip in ethnic power relations, such that Sri Lanka will one day become like Saudi Arabia, Sinhala Buddhist nationalists conceive of Islamophobia as a defensive reaction to Muslim incursions. Repression and violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka becomes justified based on imagery depicting the repression and violence of Buddhists in Muslim countries.

Moreover, BBS discourse on sexual violence against Sinhala Buddhist women working in the Middle East also implicates local Sri Lankan Muslims. At the launch of “Demise of a Race,” Rev. Gnanasara Thero recounted a story about a guest labor recruitment agency in Kurunegala, which he refers to as Wayambe Manpower. “When you hear the name, do you have any clue that it’s a Muslim organization?” he asks, hinting that the agency was attempting to hide its identity as a Muslim business. Notably, the name of the agency itself, “Wayambe Manpower,” expresses the notion of the male exploiting women for their labor and their sexuality. Gnanasara’s story implicates this recruitment agency in a case of sexual abuse:

One woman has come to the agency from Thambuththegama [a rural area]. For what? To go abroad as a housemaid. The boss responds, ‘if you come with me to go to a hotel, I will give you a job abroad’. She doesn’t agree. That sinner (*paw karaya*) tried to abuse that helpless (*asarana*) woman, tried to abuse her in a very bad way (*bara pathala*) inside his office, on the sofa, twice. Twice! (YourListen.com 2014)

Though this speech was delivered to a largely middle-class audience in Colombo, the choice of an innocent Sinhala woman from a tiny village as the story’s protagonist reinforces the notion that the Sinhalese have few international connections. In contrast to this portrayal of rural locality, the global economic interactions between Sri Lanka and the Middle East are tied to this woman’s abuse – Muslim attempts at sexual and economic penetration are deeply intertwined in the rhetoric of the BBS. Notably, however, Gnanasara is not simply describing abuse directed toward female guest workers by Muslims in the Gulf itself. Rather, the villain of his story is a Sri Lankan Muslim recruiter – an intermediary between “the Muslims over here” and “the Muslims over there.” This localizes the issue of guest labor, creating a common thread between Sri Lankan Muslims and Gulf Muslims on the basis of their religion, and thus implicating Sri Lankan Muslims in the violence committed against Sinhala women working in the Middle East.

Gnanasara’s description of the woman’s response to the attempted sexual assault is an allegory for the Sinhala nation’s reaction to alleged Muslim aggression. Firstly, the woman tries to defend herself physically:

She has hit him with a slipper, until she broke the slipper. With a broken slipper, scratch marks on her, and torn clothes, straight away she went to police station.

Next, she goes to the authorities:



When she went to the police station, Honorable Nayaka, you'll see what happens. The police said 'no, what you are saying is lies. That man will never do something like that.' And when they wrote the complaint, they did not use the word "rape" (*athawara*). It was described as a fight (*paharadima*), nothing to do with abuse.

Finally, she turns to the monks as an alternative source of justice:

Still there are principles in our country: either justice is served, or if not, you go to the temple. [...] She comes to the Athgona temple, crying, and telling the monk, "I had a problem, and I went and complained to the police. After I went and told the police also, I became more helpless because they didn't take my complaint." The monk starts working on it. He speaks to the police, and to the SSP [Senior Superintendent of Police], and then the police DIG [Deputy Inspector General]. But there is no result. The woman has been discharged from the hospital. The police, the DIG and everybody all got together and started planning to take that monk into custody.

Like the woman hitting her abuser with the slipper, the BBS believes that the Sinhala nation is reacting defensively to Muslim hostilities. Since the authorities have failed the woman (and hence the Sinhala nation), the monks must step in to defend her. Gnanasara's criticism of the police as corrupt (willing to take Muslim money) or soft (unwilling to arrest Muslims for fear of being accused of racism) is an important factor in necessitating the BBS's existence as an "unofficial civilian police force" (Bastians 2013). For the BBS, Sinhala communal violence becomes justified as a natural, defensive reaction when the authorities fail to punish Muslims in cases of sexual assault.

Moreover, Gnanasara offers a stern warning regarding the disrespect of monks, transitioning from the theme of touching a woman to that of touching a robe:

We are telling these bastards (*parayanta*) that our patience is over (*iverai*). If you come to touch any robe, even one robe (*eka siura katawath*), the patience is over. We'll see (*balamu api*) how they're going to do justice to this monk (*hamuduruwo*).

(YourListen.com 2014)

This quick shift from the female Sinhala body to the monk's robe is no coincidence; rather, both serve as symbols of the Sinhala Buddhist nation. Further, Gnanasara's reference to touching a robe seems prescient: the incident used to incite massive anti-Muslim violence in Aluthgama was an alleged assault on a local monk, Samitha Thero, by a group of Muslim youth. In his speech prior to the anti-Muslim violence, Gnanasara claimed, "What we tell Venerable Samitha is that it was not only you who was assaulted. They touched the entire yellow robe tradition of this country." Through semiotic imagery in which icons like the robe and the Sinhala female come to represent the nation as whole, minor incidents such as this one are extrapolated into master narratives. Gnanasara's Aluthgama speech ends as follows, with reference to several sexual incidents alongside the alleged assault of Samitha Thero:

Every minor thing has now become a sign of racism. A child has been teased. No legal step has been taken out of fear for racism. Strange! A woman has been abused; she had been forced to come to a lodge. When a monk attempted to settle the dispute, he was not allowed, saying that it might pave the way for racism. A day before, when a Sinhala girl stepped in to shop in Badulla, when she was buying clothes, she has been filmed. We speak with evidence at hand. Unlike some police officers who create evidence, we have

evidence with us. Finally, it was not considered when taking legal steps. The reason is reportedly racism. Dear venerable monks, if you get assaulted, no need to go to the police – let the law of the jungle take over. May Buddha bless you (*budu saranai*).

(YouTube.com 2014)

Presumably, the “law of the jungle” refers to the violent actions of anti-Muslim mobs, which caused extensive property damage and loss of life in Aluthgama and the surrounding area following the BBS rally. In BBS discourse, then, the Sinhala woman and the Buddhist monk’s robe are both deeply sensitive national symbols whose violation by Muslims warrants communal violence.

### **The Sinhala Population & Conspiracy Theories**

As argued throughout this chapter, Sinhala nationalist ideas about the body do not exist in isolation, but rather are strongly connected to ideas about the nation. This body-nation dynamic plays a particularly important role in the sphere of demography. As demonstrated most notably in “Demise of a Race,” a quasi-scientific tract published by the BBS which alleges that the Muslim population may soon overtake that of the Sinhalese, Sinhala nationalists place great importance on population – keeping count of it, attempting to keep it stable, and worrying about the possibility that it might change. The processes of population counting and demography, so deeply intertwined with the modern meaning of statehood, may seem abstract and depersonalized. However, in Sinhala nationalist discourse, these are connected to the most intimate bodily functions. In what follows, I analyze various conspiracy theories spread among BBS supporters about deliberate attempts to reduce the Sinhala population, finding close links between demographic and embodied issues.

Connecting global economic flows with the alleged decline of the Sinhala race, Buddhist nationalists suggest that NGOs, Western states, and Muslim countries are providing funding for family planning schemes intended to reduce the number of children in Sinhala households. The late Soma Thera, an ideological forefather of the BBS who spread his strongly nationalistic message through television, lamented the low birth rates of Sinhalese and “blamed the weakened state of Buddhist morality and Sinhala culture on global “others” who campaign for lowering birth rates and distribute contraception” (Berkwitz 2008:97). One common narrative suggests that Western NGOs or mysterious outside forces have promoted a family planning concept called *punchi pawula rattaran* (the small family is golden) to encourage the Sinhalese to have fewer children. The BBS has issued denunciations of “forces that are working towards reducing the Sinhala Buddhist population in the country under the “small family” (Punchi Pawula Raththaran) concept” (Lanka News Web 2013). Rev. Kirama Wimalajothi, one of the founding monks of the BBS, linked decline in the Sinhala population to “the Western countries: the British and Norway. They are funded here to say that the small family is golden. They ask [Buddhists] to have only one or two children.” In addition, he suggested that such family planning programs could erode Sinhala Buddhist ethnic hegemony: “The Buddhists are getting lesser. If it goes like this for another 50 years, we will become a minority.” Young BBS supporter Malinga suggested that Muslims were behind the backing of family planning programs:

The *punchi pawula rattaran* [small family is beautiful] concept came from the government. But the hidden idea was given by Muslims. The ministers have taken money from the Muslims and brought that theory out. There are 400 Muslim organizations in Sri Lanka now – Saudi Arabia is sending money for all of these organizations. About 400 Catholic organizations also – America is sending money for these organizations. Our

people are accepting the money. Even the health organizations are taking money and promoting people not to have children. Previously, Sinhalese families had about 10 children and there was no issue. But now health organizations and hospitals are taking money. They promote operations to stop people from having children. They encourage people to go for a C-section because that way you can't have more than three kids. It's another tricky way of reducing the Sinhalese population.

Thus, foreign money is seen as playing a major role in the promotion of anti-Sinhala family planning programs. Theories about external funding aimed at reducing the Sinhala population express qualms about the perceived threat posed by global flows to Sinhala ethnic hegemony. They are also a means of targeting foreign enemies of all stripes – Norway (maligned by Sinhala nationalists for its role in peace negotiations with the LTTE), other Western countries critical of Sri Lanka's human rights record, NGOs, Muslim and Christian religious groups. By linking weak domestic minorities to these powerful foreign funders, the BBS is capable of mobilizing fear. As will be seen, these connections between the inside and the outside of the nation, which play upon the discomfort caused by liminality, are reflected in concerns about what enters and exits the body.

In addition to conspiracies about foreign funding for family planning programs, the discourse of the BBS also implicates local Muslims in efforts to reduce the Sinhala population. Many BBS supporters suggested that Muslim doctors were deliberately attempting to prevent Sinhala women from having large numbers of children. Anuruddha spoke of a Muslim doctor in Colombo who “is forcefully doing Caesarian operations to many Sinhalese women” in order to ensure that they can only have two to three kids. Equally, Rev. Wimalabuddhi stated that Muslim doctors “are doing Caesarian surgery. After that, the mother can only give birth to 2 children. It

is to reduce the Sinhala population.” Rev. Dhammasiri suggested that abortion was being forced upon Sinhala women by Muslim doctors. “Muslims never let their women abort. Some Muslim doctors forced our women to abort their children. It is a way to stop Buddhists. If the Buddhist population goes down, Muslim extremists will take over.” In discourse about conversions, the figure of the Muslim male uses Sinhala women to create Muslim children. Here, the Muslim doctor, also typically coded as a male figure, is preventing Sinhala women from having Sinhala children. Thus, Muslim men either appropriate Sinhala female sexuality to increase their own population or tamper with it in order to keep the Sinhala population down. Moreover, these stories about Muslim doctors connect the violation of individual bodies to concerns about the nation’s demographics.

The primordial notion that Muslims are inherently communal, such that those in positions of power will use their authority to target non-Muslims, is not limited to rhetoric about doctors. Through rumors about Muslim shops, which are also implicated by the BBS in the attempt to prevent Sinhala population growth, this theme is extended to stigmatize Muslim economic influence. One particularly well-known rumor suggests that Fashion Bug hands out free toffees to Sinhala women to make them sterile. An image shared on pro-BBS Facebook pages, entitled “The No Limit Toffee which kills Sinhalese” (see Fig. 2.1), reads as follows:

No Limit, who gets business from the majority Sinhalese, once shit on our ears by distributing Arabic calendars. Now they are up to another shrewd plan. They are distributing free candy (toffee) during the new-year time. This toffee contains malic acid (E296) which will abort the fetus of a pregnant woman. This is not suitable for children at all and can affect the kidney and other organs. Think about why they give such sweets to

Sinhalese in bulk? Are we going to dig our own graves by going to these extremist places that plot to end the Sinhala race?

This parable is a fascinating metaphor for the existential threat which the Sinhala Buddhist nation is said to face by the BBS. Candy, a seemingly benign temptation for consumers, is given to women by modern, Muslim-owned stores; its entry into the female body is synonymous with the quiet infiltration of outside Muslim forces into the body politic. Clothing shops seem to be a particularly salient target for such rumors. “In Kegalle,” claimed Romesh, “there was a spray that was used by a clothing store on Sinhala women’s undergarments to prevent them from having children.” Again, Muslim economic power is linked to the deliberate control of Sinhala female fecundity. The secret entry of foreign substances through the orifices of the body is symbolically representative of ideas about a Muslim takeover of the nation. The power of such metaphors of corporeal entry depends on the notion that Muslims themselves are foreigners rather than legitimate residents of Sri Lanka.

Despite the important symbolic role played by “the Sinhala woman” in the rhetoric of the BBS, women themselves are notably absent from the group’s rallies, marches, and activities, with occasional exceptions. In my interview with Palitha and Priyanka, a married couple who both identified as BBS supporters, I asked about the role of women in the organization. After Priyanka gave a muted response, Palitha claimed:

There is a major role for women. When the Muslim population is growing, they will be a majority, we will be a minority. Women have a major responsibility: to help the men to have larger families. This is what the BBS expects as a contribution from women. The

birth rate must be at least 2.8 per family to maintain the majority. Islamic birthrates are higher.

Thus, nationalism reinforces patriarchy by relegating women to the subservient position of birth-givers. Ideas about rising Muslim birthrates become the justification for Sinhala men to keep women in traditional caregiving and mothering roles. Even as Sinhala women seem to be featured prominently in BBS discourse, then, Sinhala nationalist symbolic content about gender serves to further limit the agency of women rather than to empower them.

In the backdrop of the BBS's theories regarding birth control and family planning programs aimed at reducing the Sinhala population, measures of a similar nature are actually being directed toward Tamils in the North. In Kilinochchi, a report has found that "government health workers coerced women into accepting Jadelle, a progestogen-only subdermal implant (PODSI) manufactured by Bayer" (The Social Architects 2013). These implants were administered during a nutrition clinic without the informed consent of the recipients. Moreover, the report points out that "members of the Sri Lankan armed forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) receive an incentive of Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR) 1 lakh (about 600 Euros) for their third child." As such, the BBS's fears of programs aimed at controlling the Sinhala population seem to invert reality. To be more specific, the aggressions which the BBS claims have been committed by Muslims against Sinhalese are in reality being committed by Sinhalese against Tamils. This can be explained as a form of projection onto the other. Moreover, fears about conspiracies to decrease the Sinhala birthrate serve as a justification for Sinhala nationalists to enact these very same measures of nefarious birth control towards minorities. Thus, the alleged intolerance of ethnic others fuels the intolerance of the majority.



## Stigmatizing Muslim Male Sexualities

I have previously argued that abstract concerns about national demographics become tied to intimate ideas about the Sinhala body in BBS discourse about conspiracies to reduce the Sinhala population. Equally, stereotypes about Muslim male sexuality are linked to what the BBS perceives as deliberate efforts to increase Muslim fecundity. BBS discourse about large Muslim family sizes draws upon representations of Muslim male sexuality as pathological. Images shared on pro-BBS Facebook pages implicate Muslim men in such practices as child marriage, rape and pedophilia. For instance, in one image, the “M” of “Islam” is used to spell “Molestation of women” (see Fig. 2.2) (Samaratunge 2014:52). The picture’s caption states “God why did I have to marry a Muslim man? What kind of sin did I commit to be born a Muslim woman?” Another post depicts what appears to be a marriage ceremony between grown men and young women (see Fig. 2.3). It reads:

These poor little girls don’t understand until they are taken to bed. This is only one of many marriage ceremonies created by the leaders of Islam for the benefit of all Muslim men. These Muslims like to get the most pleasure out of little girls.

This is one marriage ceremony that was held in the Gaza strip with the sponsorship of Hamas. These little girls who are 4 and 6 are holding hands with their husbands! They follow their leader ‘Prophet’ and for some of these men this is their second or third marriage.

You will live, eat and be merry till you die. In the future your granddaughter or their daughters will be subject to this kind of treatment in a Muslim Sri Lanka.

The other important thing is that Buddhists believe in rebirth, in your next life you might be born to your own bloodline and be subject to this. Don't let it happen. (107-108)

In this posting, the sexual stigmatization of Muslim men as pedophiles provides the rationale for anti-Muslim violence, in order to prevent a future “Muslim Sri Lanka” in which Sinhala women are subjected to child marriage. Drawing on the same themes of sexual deviance, a Facebook post entitled “Legalize Sex slavery – A request by a female representative of the Kuwait parliament,” claims, “Non-Muslim prisoners and refugees from warring countries could be purchased for sex slavery” (see Fig. 2.4) (172). That this post is entirely unrelated to Sri Lanka demonstrates the importance of transnational discourse about Muslim masculinity. Moreover, the text reinforces the notion that Muslims view non-Muslims as expendable and that Muslim-majority countries will mistreat non-Muslims, thus providing a rationale for supposedly defensive violence to prevent Sri Lanka's Islamization. A comment on the picture posits Muslim sexualities as primordial:

Even there they choose women of other religions. This is their way of life? Whatever it is they want to do they should just do it with their own women...they are slowly going into the Stone Age. (175)

Thus, whether “here” in a Buddhist country or “there” in a Muslim country, Muslims, by nature of being Muslims, seek women from other religious groups to convert through marriage and sex. The comment also alludes to the mistreatment of Muslim women, but views this as acceptable so long as Muslim men stay away from “our” women. Ultimately, the association of Muslim men with sex slavery, pedophilia, rape, and other forms of sexual deviance serves to dehumanize

them. This facilitates anti-Muslim violence, which becomes more acceptable if seen as a defensive reaction against Muslim male aggressiveness.

Furthermore, these intimate bodily stereotypes about Muslim men are linked to more abstract concerns about the country's demographic makeup. Drawing on stigmas about Muslim male sexual uncontrollability, BBS supporters spoke of high Muslim birthrates as part of a plot to take over the country. "Now it has become such a big problem that they have captured the East. They at least have 7 or 8 children in a family," explained Romesh. Referring to what he called the "theory of the womb (*garbasha niyamaya*)," he stated that "[Muslims] want to have huge families and distribute the business among them." It is notable that Romesh linked high birthrates to both economy (distributing the business among the family) and geography (taking over the East). Jayasena also connected Muslim fecundity to the conquest of territory: "Sinhala families have one or two children. Muslims have three, four, five or six. They want to spread their community very quickly. The LTTE used weapons; Muslims are using wombs." Here, continuity is drawn between Tamil and Muslim territorial transgressions. The notion of the womb as equivalent to a weapon expresses the majority's deep-seated fear of demographic change as a potential harbinger of demise for Sinhala Buddhists.

Moreover, BBS supporters view Muslim reproductivity as in need of control. Prefacing his comments on Muslim birthrates by stating that his opinions were not the policy of the BBS, Ananda claimed, "We need to have some restrictions. In Myanmar, they allowed only 2 children for Muslim families. The same is true in Thailand." Thus, sexual discipline must be legally enforced upon Muslims through the exertion of state power. When linking uncontrollable Muslim male sexualities to the possibility of a demographic takeover, the ethnocidal impulse of the BBS becomes explicit.

Further, BBS supporters stigmatized the Muslim practice of polygyny (rare in Sri Lanka but prominent in BBS rhetoric), linking it to large families and the ability to reproduce at incredible rates. “They marry 4 wives and they make 15-20 children, each man,” claimed Rev. Kirama Wimalajothi, in a tone of simultaneous disgust and fascination. He went on to claim that “the government has a law that one man can marry one wife. But Muslim mosques, these organizations have introduced polygamy. So there are different laws [for different ethnic groups].” The longstanding use of Muslim family law for private matters such as marriage and divorce between Muslims is portrayed by the BBS as indicating the existence of a separate Islamic legal system in Sri Lanka. Stereotypes about polygyny are also used to link Muslim masculinities to visceral excess and disgust. One story from Gnanasara’s speech prior to the riots in Aluthgama exemplifies this tendency:

In Negombo, a man with a long beard did not reveal his family details when he was asked to do so. Our gentlemen requested the details, saying that it was important. Then everything came into light. He tied the knot with the first woman in 1979. Got married in 1991 and she was born in 1969. The second woman was born in 1975. His next two women were born in 1986. The last woman was born in 1987 or 1988 [...] Now 5 women for one man. [...] Surprisingly he has 20 children. Can't Sinhala people do this?

Although the story seems to be portraying the Muslim man from Negombo in a highly negative light, this final question also suggests emasculation: the Sinhalese are being outdone by the Muslims. Thus, Muslim masculinity is an unstable signifier; simultaneously a source of disgust and awe. Further, Gnanasara draws connections between the bodily and economic spheres:

The most important thing here is that he has no means of income generation. Almighty Allah must be earning income for them. No means of income. No livelihoods. This is so puzzling. One man, 5 women and 20 children! Think about how much money he needs per day to feed them – without an employment?

He goes on to suggest that an NGO is providing funds for this family, claiming that “if we [Sinhalese] got the same amount, we would make 100 children instead of 20.” Again, global economic flows are linked to the imminent Muslim takeover of the country. Moreover, Gnanasara points to polygamy and the notion of separate Muslim laws to link Sri Lankan Muslims to Gulf Arabs:

Two laws cannot prevail in this country. A country should have one law. The law of marriage should be equal to everyone. If one is unable to abide by this law, then go back to Arabia. If one wants to keep 5 women and produce 20 children, then go to Saudi Arabia; it is not allowed here. (YouTube.com 2014)

Drawing on European Islamophobic rhetoric, these statements counterfactually produce Sri Lankan Muslims as immigrants. Male sexual aggressiveness provides the rationale for Muslim expulsion from the body politic – since their sexuality cannot be contained, they must “go back” to a Muslim country. Thus, stereotypes about sexual and familial practices provide the basis for right-wing nationalists to portray Muslims as a foreign other.

However, the sexual stereotypes about Muslim men promulgated by the BBS contain contradictions. For women, the negative image of male sexual aggressiveness which predominantly male BBS supporters associate with Muslims can easily become a more positive trait – vigorous masculine sexuality. My translator, Manju, happened to be married to a Muslim

man herself (though the two appeared to be going through a rocky period at the time of my fieldwork), and had much to add to my research about notions of Muslim masculinity. While describing her husband as an atheist of Muslim origin, she suggested that Muslim men were particularly desirable as a product of their pious religious belief. “[Muslims] are brainwashed. They are really scared of going to hell. Sinhala Buddhists are so relaxed; there is no fear of God.” As such, she claimed that Muslim men were harder workers than Buddhists, explaining their ability of the former to sustain larger families: “The Sinhalese don’t want to work hard enough to support two kids. Muslims don’t mind having more children because they will be taken care of. Muslims work very hard, they’re not lazy.” Many women desired Muslim men, she claimed, because “Muslims earn and provide. They look after the woman. They have to do this because of their religion.” In BBS discourse, too, Muslims and other monotheists are compelled to act in certain ways because of their faith. “In Islam and Christianity, there is no questioning,” claimed Ananda. “We Buddhists can question our faith, they can’t. Their faith is unquestionable.” As in Western Islamophobia, then, Muslim irrationality and extremism can be explained by excessively strong belief in the literal truth of religious doctrine – a position which ignores the inherent contextuality of religion.

Manju essentially agreed with this primordialist assessment of Islam, but reframed it in a positive light, as a force which led Muslim men to be harder workers and better husbands. These notions of religious compulsion contain a surprisingly similar form of primordialism to ideas about Muslim sexual compulsion. In both, Muslims are essentially uncontrollable, whether compelled by belief or sexuality. In Manju’s discussions of Muslim masculinity, the two are connected – large Muslim families, the product of Muslim masculine sexuality, are linked to the ability to work hard, the result of religious piety. Thus, the negative sexual stereotypes

promulgated by the BBS are only one side of the coin; the masculine vigor attributed to Muslim males in Islamophobic discourse can also become a positive trait.

In addition to ideas about the *individual bodies* of Muslim men, one Sri Lankan stereotype suggests that all Muslims act as a *collective body*. For instance, when describing her husband's interactions with other Muslims, Manju put forth the notion of primordial Muslim unity:

However much of an atheist he is, however broad-minded he is, he still favors Muslims a little bit. I can see that favoritism. On the other side of the apartment where we're staying, there's a very bad man, a bad-mouth, an unpopular man who nobody likes. But my husband is always helping him out because this man is a Muslim. He shows favoritism. It's in his blood.

Thus, even by renouncing religion, Muslims cannot get rid of their inherent predisposition towards other Muslims. While Manju's reference to blood was lighthearted and joking, it demonstrates the salience of the body in notions of Muslim primordialism. When describing childhood cricket games, Anuruddha also suggested that Muslims acted as a collective group:

Muslims get together and try to do harm to us. When we used to play cricket, there would be 2 teams, mostly Muslims on each. Let's say one team has a single Sinhala or Tamil person. There's an argument and that person says, "no no, I'm not out." The Muslims on his team will go with the other Muslims and still say that he's out.

This seemingly trivial story about cricket is representative of broader Sinhala nationalist beliefs about Muslim primordial unity. The notion that Muslims act as a collective, with each individual supporting the interests of other Muslims rather than the Sri Lankan nation as a whole, holds

strong sway in BBS discourse. Such essentialisms draw upon the strong connections that many Sri Lankan Muslims feel toward the idea of a global *ummah*; these are used to imply that Sri Lankan Muslims have greater affinity for other Muslims worldwide than for other Sri Lankans. Notions of Muslim collective unity also become a justification for Sinhala Buddhists to follow suit and act in a nationalistic manner themselves.

### **Muslim Women's Dress**

The stigmatization of conspicuously Muslim clothing also plays an important role in perpetuating the idea that Sri Lankan Muslims feel stronger connections to abstract notions of global Islam than to Sri Lanka. A globally influenced Islamic reform movement, likely with some financial support from the oil-producing Gulf, has gained popularity among Sri Lankan Muslims in urban areas, leading to more conspicuously Islamic styles of dress. This is the case among men and women alike, but much as in the West, Muslim women's dress has become particularly politicized in Sri Lanka. In an increasingly interconnected era, Dennis McGilvray suggests that Sri Lankan Muslims' "heightened awareness of 'Muslim issues' around the world" and "sense of membership in the global community of all Muslims (the ummah)" have led to a "self-conscious turn toward Islamic dress (hijab), especially among younger and more urban Muslim women." This has "draw[n] greater attention to the Muslims as a conspicuous social 'other' in the public sphere," he argues (2011). Building on McGilvray's argument, I propose that Muslim women's conservative dress is not a static signifier of otherness, but rather that Islamic clothing has emerged as a salient political issue in Sri Lanka through its contextualization in a broader Islamophobic discourse about the body and the nation.



Building on the commonly used metaphor of woman as the nation's land, the cover of "Demise of a Race" depicts a map of Sri Lanka as a Muslim woman with a burqa; her red eyes peeking ominously out of the slit (see Fig. 2.5). When considered in relation to imagery that portrays the country's territory as the Sinhala woman, this picture implies the loss of the "the motherland" to Muslims. If we consider the image as a portrayal of a menacing future, then the woman should be viewed as a converted Sinhala woman, a burqa placed over her face as a symbol of her loss to the ethnoreligious Other. In *Pogrom in Gujarat*, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi argues that Hindu nationalists interpret the veil in a similar manner. "Veiled Muslim women are "stolen women," [...] stolen by the Muslims, seduced and then forcibly married, which is to say, converted" (2012:53). In the BBS publication, the nation-as-woman, too, is stolen. Thus, burqas and veils can be conceptualized of as gendered symbols of national loss.

In the above interpretation of Muslim female dress, Muslim women are formerly Sinhala women – the converted "we." However, in other aspects of BBS discourse, burqas and niqabs are representative of outsider status, making Muslim women into the foreign "other." For instance, Nimal conceptualized of the burqa as a symbol of rising Muslim extremism and unwillingness to integrate:

They never used to cover their faces. Now they are wearing a veil. In those days, they only covered their hair, not their face. When I was a child, they'd wear a neck shawl or head shawl. Now most use a burqa also. They are not trying to live with harmony with Sinhalese people but want to live as a separate nation.

Here, the specter of a separate nation is invoked in order to draw continuity with Tamil separatism. In this discourse, burqas represent the fact that Muslims are no longer the "model

minority,” but are now a rebellious faction like the Tamils. Drawing on notions of indigeneity discussed in Chapter 1, Chaminda considered the burqa to be unsuitable for Sri Lanka’s climate, and thus a symbol of Muslim foreignness. “This is a hot and humid country. Do we need to have these long black things? I don’t think so.” Here, the burqa symbolizes outsider status, inconsistent as it is with Sri Lanka’s climate. Connecting the female Muslim body and the economic sphere, Dilanthe Withanage, the leading lay figure in the BBS, suggested that “Saudi funding” was behind the promotion of “black clothes completely different from Sri Lankan culture.” As a manifestation of the alleged linkages between Sri Lankan Muslims and global political Islam, conservative Muslim women’s clothing gains importance in BBS discourse as a means of tying the internal minority to powerful external forces.

Moreover, as an article of clothing that conceals the wearer’s identity, burqas evoke the unknown. Since Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism concerns itself with protecting the borders of the nation from global forces that could conceivably alter the ethnic power dynamics of Sri Lanka, the appearance of “foreign” religious garments that conceal their wearers’ identity can symbolize the secret permeation of these borders. In BBS discourse, then, the burqa reflects hidden aspects of Islam as well as the covert Islamic infiltration of the nation. Considering this, it is unsurprising that many BBS supporters opposed the burqa based on the alleged difficulty of identifying the wearer. “In France and Malaysia, there are laws against the burqas to protect their countries. How do we identify who’s in the burqa? It’s very dangerous if we can’t identify someone,” explained Rev. Dhammasiri, drawing on global post-9/11 fears about Islam and security. Chaminda took this idea further, suggesting that Muslim women had begun wearing burqas in order to hide their pregnancy: “I have one theory. They are trying to increase the population. With the burqa, no one will know that they are pregnant. It is to hide it.” The hidden pregnant

Muslim body discussed in this comment is a metonym for the hidden Muslim demographic takeover of the country. Drawing on similar ideas about the invisible realm, Rev. Samitha suggested that burqas constituted a threat to national security: “When they cover their whole body, nobody can identify who’s in the dress. Sometimes it’s a male. Sometimes it’s a dangerous guy.” In this comment, fears about burqas concealing the unknown are also applied to gender itself. The imagery of a man wearing a burqa implies an unstable relationship between the gendered stereotypes of Muslim female passivity and Muslim male aggressiveness.

Moreover, BBS supporters linked burqas to the unlawful crossing of national borders. “Some illegal things may happen with that dress,” claimed Rev. Samitha. “Sometimes they can travel with illegal arms. Sometimes they can travel with illegal drugs – heroin or something like that.” The fact that burqas become a signifier of danger when associated with cross-border travel demonstrates nationalist qualms about global flows and their effects on Sinhala ethnic hegemony. Furthermore, these comments are representative of the BBS’s ability to adapt global discourses about airport security and border control to the Sri Lankan context.

As alluded to in Rev. Samitha’s remarks, fears about the secrecy of Muslim women’s dress are also linked to pervasive stereotypes about Muslims as drug dealers – circulated in mainstream Sri Lankan media as well as among BBS supporters. In Sinhala nationalist discourse, drugs are coded as foreign or Muslim, with their entry into the Sinhala nation mirroring their entry into the body. BBS head monk Rev. Kirama Wimalajothi claimed, “The drugs, all those things coming from overseas, are secretly mostly coming from Muslims, from Pakistan. They distribute it among the countryside Buddhist people, even among schoolchildren.” This reference to “countryside” children reinforces the notion that Muslims target the most innocent members of the Buddhist community. Equally, JHU monk Omalpe Sobitha Thera stated, “Who have

brought into this country drugs, pills, birth control vials, and heroin the most? If you analyze, it is clear it is the Muslims who are behind such acts” (Wimalka 2013). The mention of birth control and drugs in the same breath indicates a semiotic nexus between different substances that penetrate national and corporeal confines. Moreover, Sinhala Ravaya leader Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero claimed that drug dealing formed part of a Muslim plot to take over land:

Most of the drugs are imported by Muslims. The government is not taking any action against this, against any of these things. That’s why we are talking about it. You can do the research and find out for yourself. 99% of drugs in Sri Lanka are imported by Muslims. They drug the Sinhalese people and then take all their land. They have a master plan. First, they make the Sinhalese people weak. They give drugs to the Sinhalese, get them addicted. Next, when [the Sinhalese] don’t have any money, they start selling their land.

These statements draw upon long-standing Sri Lankan stereotypes of Muslims as a conniving minority. They also connect the entry of drugs into Sinhala national body to ideas about territorial takeover. The fact that the responsibility for Sinhala drug use is placed on Muslims, rather than the Sinhalese themselves, demonstrates the instability of the self-other relationship. Here, Muslims represent the unspeakable part of the Sinhalese self that must be destroyed or erased. Thus, agency for Sinhala drug use is displaced onto the Muslim community, who becomes a scapegoat for the majority’s qualms about its own vices. More generally, through discourse about Muslim drug importation, the BBS’s portrayal of the quiet, ominous permeation of Islamic extremism into the Sinhala Buddhist nation becomes intimate and embodied. In BBS discourse, the fact that burqas and niqabs serve as the means for the passage of drugs across national and bodily margins connects the hiding of Muslim bodies to the permeation of Sinhala

ones. Considering nationalist fears that global forces could erode Sinhala ethnic hegemony, it is no surprise that cross-border flows are of deep concern to the BBS.

## **Conclusion**

Several patterns have emerged throughout my analysis of the role of the body in the discourse of the BBS. Firstly, the body comes to represent the nation, particularly with regards to boundaries and margins, where the permeation of bodily orifices serves as a metaphor for transnational flows into the country. However, the body-nation relationship is not unidirectional; rather, issues of national import also imprint themselves onto individual bodies. Thus, the dichotomy between intimate personal concerns and abstract political affairs quickly breaks down. This is to say that we cannot relegate ideas about purity and pollution, for instance, to the category of “cultural,” as they are deeply embedded in nationalist politics.

Furthermore, my analysis of BBS discourse demonstrates that nationalism is deeply gendered. Sinhala female and Muslim male bodies play particularly important roles in imagery about penetration that spans across various spheres: sexual, economic, geographic. Whereas the Sinhala woman is metaphorically representative of the nation itself, the Muslim man symbolizes the threat of foreign penetration. In its use of gender to portray Muslims as outsiders attempting to permeate the Sinhala nation, the BBS draws upon common nationalist motifs that can be traced back to colonial times.

Finally, it is important to note that the Sinhala Buddhist majority is actually committing many of the transgressions which the BBS claims are being committed against them. This is the case with regards to geographic expansionism, sexual violence, and the non-consensual administration of birth control. In BBS discourse, these indiscretions are projected onto to the

Muslim minority, whose alleged intolerance also becomes a justification for Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism. Such displacements reflect the nationalistic fear that the subjugation enacted on minorities might one day come back to the majority if ethnic fortunes are reversed. Globalization makes such shifts in ethnic power dynamics seem more plausible, to majorities themselves if not the general observer. In order to better consider the relationship between majorities and minorities in the Sri Lankan state, this fear of changing places must be accounted for.

## **Introduction**

In May 2013, Bowatte Indarathana Thero, a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk and member of the hardline nationalist group Sinhala Ravaya, set himself on fire outside of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and burned to death. This act, which occurred in broad daylight in front of shocked onlookers, was allegedly the first self-immolation in modern Sri Lanka. Though the sacrifice of one's own body draws upon powerful transnational Buddhist imagery, Bowatte's self-immolation had little political similarity to those in Tibet, Vietnam, or China, which have received extensive coverage in Western media. Rather, this monk's action was the culmination of Sinhala Ravaya's campaign against cattle slaughter in Sri Lanka, and was closely linked to political efforts for legislation against the killing of cows. Following the incident, Buddhist nationalist politician Udaya Gammanpila claimed, "We plan to transform the demands made by Indarathana Thero into reality and hope that the two Bills already presented in Parliament against animal cruelty and religious conversions committed by force, would be approved in Parliament" (Padmasiri 2013). Evidently, then, cattle slaughter plays a highly important role in Sinhala nationalism – thanks in no small part to the efforts of colonial era Buddhist revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala, who campaigned vigorously against the killing of cows. In the context of intensified Islamophobia, right-wing Buddhist groups have employed issues related to meat and slaughter as a means of targeting Muslims, who are perceived to be the main consumers of beef and operators of slaughterhouses in Sri Lanka. Thus, Buddhist nationalist opposition to cattle slaughter is better understood as an ethnoreligious issue than one of animal rights.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Sinhala nationalist discourse contains powerful metaphors in which bodily boundaries stand for national borders. While previously discussed in

relation to sexual penetration, I propose that these metaphors are also applicable to the consumption of food – an activity that has surprising and important implications for ethnic politics. Sri Lanka’s various ethnoreligious communities have distinct culinary styles. Restaurants are often demarcated as belonging to a specific ethnic group – either through their names or through religious imagery in the windows. One can expect slight variances in flavor at Sinhala, Muslim, and Tamil kadees, “hotels,” and restaurants, even when they are serving the same dishes (as is often the case). Moreover, average consumers not motivated by ethnic chauvinism often take ethnicity into account when deciding where to eat. When eating out in Colombo, I even found myself gaining an awareness of which restaurants were run by whom – the Muslim hole-in-the-wall that served beef *kottu roti*, the Tamil restaurant with metal trays that billed itself as a “pure vegetarian” South Indian-style eatery, et cetera.

Further, particularly with regards to meat, “who eats what” is an important topic of discussion in Sinhala nationalist circles and otherwise. Based on standard religious justifications, Muslims strictly avoid pork and Hindus strictly avoid beef, at least in theory. Some Buddhists adopt a vegetarian diet based on religious motivations, while many Hindus do the same. Influenced by Dharmapala, Buddhists often claim to avoid beef; yet it remains widely consumed in the Buddhist community, if not conspicuously. Gombrich and Obeyesekere describe the status of beef for Sinhala Buddhists as follows:

The consumption of beef, which is cheaper in Sri Lanka than in most other countries in the world, was perhaps unusual in premodern times when the country was within the Hindu cultural sphere, but at least since the mid-nineteenth century it has been the meat most widely available to the Sinhala population and was very widely consumed.



However, when a Sinhala Buddhist has renunciatory tendencies, beef is the first food to be cut out of his diet. (1988: 233)

Thus, abstention from beef serves as a symbol of purity and incorruptibility in Sinhala nationalist discourse. However, vegetarianism is not a prerequisite for involvement in the nationalist movement. Some BBS supporters espouse the merits of a vegetarian diet, but many others admit to eating chicken and fish. In Sinhala nationalist discourse and Sri Lankan society at large, not all meat is created equal: rather, beef occupies a different semiotic register than other forms of meat. This places an additional stigma on Muslims as a community that openly eats beef; that is accused of operating a majority of Sri Lanka's slaughtering houses; and that performs religious rituals involving the sacrifice of cows for holidays such as Eid.

### **Overt and Covert Beef Consumption**

Though right-wing Buddhist groups ostracize Muslims on the basis of cattle slaughter and beef consumption, the Buddhist claim of abstinence from beef is highly disputed, particularly by non-Buddhists. Omar, a Muslim journalist, accused the Sinhala nationalist groups conducting anti-slaughter campaigns of hypocrisy:

These monks are worried about animal slaughter, but the Sinhalese eat the most meat in Sri Lanka. You can't legalize morality. Most of the guys protesting are meat eaters. Look at the amount of beef we import. The Sinhalese eat it. Tamils too. They're sheer hypocrites.

Manju also suggested that Buddhist claims of vegetarian purity were disingenuous. "Buddhists drink alcohol and eat beef. They love to eat it," she claimed. The link drawn here between alcohol and beef implies symbolic connections between two taboo substances. Both are

associated in the fact that their consumption may be interpreted as a breach of Buddhist precepts. However, their dual stigmatization is not strictly a religious phenomenon. Rather, taboos on consumption serve to demarcate boundaries between the inside and the outside, the self and the other. This powerful concept is applicable to both the individual body and the ethnoreligious group, rendering the ingestion of certain kinds of food into a topic of deep concern for nationalists. The fact that Sinhala Buddhists generally do eat some beef, and are often accused of being disingenuous about their purported abstinence from the substance, creates further tension about the boundaries between “us” and “them,” and can actually strengthen the power of meat-related issues to arouse anti-Muslim sentiment.

The role of meat in Hindu nationalism in India serves as an interesting comparison point for the Sri Lankan case. In the context of Gujarat, the location of massive anti-Muslim riots led by right-wing Hindu groups in 2002, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi argues that the stigmatization of Muslim meat consumption is driven by tensions between those who consume meat openly and those who do it covertly:

Muslims are made to stand openly for what many others do anyway more clandestinely, or find various alternative contexts to engage in. In this moral economy of food substances, disgust is a defense against the appeal of lurking transgressive possibilities that meat signifies, and the disgusted reaction is habitually portrayed as a form of religious authenticity and dietary innocuousness. (20)

Thus, Hindu disgust toward the Muslim community’s overt meat consumption practices reflects concerns about covert consumption by Hindus themselves.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, Buddhists generally do not admit to eating beef, but it is an open secret that many do so anyway. Such tensions between what is said and what is done, between rules and reality, play a major part in driving prejudice against those who are not constrained by the same social taboos as the dominant ethnoreligious group. By breaking the social boundaries on beef consumption that Buddhists face but do not always heed, Sri Lankan Muslims come to be associated with excess and uncontrollability.

### **Violence, Slaughter, Excess, and Boundaries**

The discourse of the BBS justifies Buddhist intolerance towards Muslims by suggesting that Muslims are themselves inherently intolerant. For BBS supporters, cattle slaughter demonstrates that Muslims are crueler and more willing to inflict pain than non-Muslims. Images depicting Muslim cruelty to animals are a recurring motif in Sinhala nationalist Facebook pages. Some are nothing more than extremely gory displays of dead cattle in pools of blood. Their intent seems to be to provoke visceral reactions of disgust, which later become attributed to Muslims themselves. One post, which includes a bloody image of a dead cow, hints toward an ominous future for Buddhists in Sri Lanka (see Fig. 3.1). “Two bulls have been killed by hanging them in a Bo tree. Is everyone blind to these insults against Buddhists? If this continues, it might soon be time when Buddhists too are hung in Bo trees.” While the Bo tree is sacred for Buddhists, cattle slaughter is visceral. To hang a cow in a Bo tree constitutes an erosion of the boundaries between these categories. Moreover, the act of cattle slaughter is seen as an insult toward Buddhists, a deliberate provocation and an assertion of power by minorities. The possibility of Buddhists being hung in the future is a manifestation of the Sinhala fear of “switching places” and becoming a minority themselves. Further, the post’s quick transition from

the killing of cattle to the killing of Buddhists demonstrates the symbolic importance of the cow as an animal that is representative of the Sinhala Buddhist nation.

Other posts juxtapose pictures of Buddhist monks behaving nicely towards animals with images of Muslim ritual slaughter being performed (see Fig. 3.2). These posts appear intended to construct the image of a peaceful, kind, and harmonious Buddhist self – consistent with Western orientalist notions of Buddhism – through the mobilization of difference from the violent Muslim other – also an orientalist image. The obvious irony is that this difference itself becomes the justification for anti-Muslim violence, thus negating the Buddhist claim of peacefulness. Thus, for the BBS, primordial Muslim intolerance, as expressed here through willingness to slaughter innocent cattle, serves to justify defensive Buddhist intolerance as a response.

Moreover, BBS supporters link Muslim cruelty to the halal method of animal slaughter, which they suggest is particularly painful. “The way they kill is to make the cow suffer until it bleeds to death. It’s very painful and not accepted by us,” claimed Thilini, a young female BBS supporter. “The way they are killing is to make the animal suffer for a longer period,” added Romesh. “They say “allahu akbar” and then they kill. They cut a little bit and let the animal bleed and then cut the rest. They want the animal’s blood to come out completely for purification.” In these comments, the potent imagery of cattle slaughter is used to portray Muslims as willing to cause pain to animals. Moreover, some BBS supporters even view killing cows as a precursor to violence against humans. For instance, Chaminda told me a story about a Muslim man who killed his wife, linking his actions to the killing of cattle. “My friend’s mother, her second marriage was with a Muslim. The Muslim man killed her, cut her throat.” He held two fingers to his neck like a knife, making reference to the halal method of animal slaughter, a main target of BBS campaigns. “When you’re killing animals, it’s nothing to kill a human,” he

stated. For Chaminda, cattle slaughter desensitizes Muslims to intense violence, thus allowing them to kill Buddhists with little remorse. In reality, however, the imagery of Muslim violence, as portrayed in blood-filled pictures of dead cattle on pro-BBS Facebook pages, not only desensitizes BBS supporters to extreme gore but also dehumanizes Muslims by rendering them collectively responsible for slaughter. Thus, the stigmatization of Muslims as violent facilitates violence against Muslims.

In conversations with non-BBS-supporting Sri Lankans, I found cattle slaughter and beef consumption to carry a stigma reminiscent of that which surrounds sexual matters. This is unsurprising, as sex and slaughter occupy similar semiotic registers; the extremes of pleasure and pain that exceed the mundane and pedestrian. I argue that this taboo on meat has to do with excess and the erosion of boundaries. Manju, who is a teacher at a school for Bohra Muslim students, frequently took on a bashful tone when discussing cattle slaughter and meat consumption, smiling and whispering as though speaking about something illicit. She once described an incident that occurred when non-Muslim teachers were disturbed by a goat sacrifice ritual performed by students. “Teachers complained about it, and now the Bohra Muslims only do such things on holidays,” she explained. As we drove up to the school in a three-wheeler taxi one day after an interview, she pointed to an area adjacent to the building. “Here is where they slaughter the animal. Sometimes blood flows down the road.” In this comment, the notion of excess associated with Muslim meat consumption and animal slaughter becomes literally represented by blood spilling out of its intended area and into the public domain. By disturbing the boundaries between public and private, animal slaughter becomes a matter of great political concern rather than a depersonalized part of the food production process. Notably, for Sinhala Buddhists, covert beef consumption involves careful management of the public-private

boundary. Thus, nationalist anger about the public nature of Muslim animal slaughter may be reflective of anxieties about Buddhists themselves being exposed as beef-eaters.

Building on the themes of boundaries and excess, Manju also offered a graphic description of cattle slaughter in open outdoor markets, which she perceived as an exotic spectacle. “In other Muslim-majority areas, they pray and they kill it fresh. In markets, big outdoor markets like Kirulapone, Narahenpita, the animal is killed right there. Sometimes you can point to the animal you want. You can choose,” she said with a smile. This comment associates Muslim cattle slaughter with the dissolution of boundaries; such practices are supposed to be performed in designated areas, rather than in the middle of a market. Further, in the practice of choosing the animal oneself, what should be impersonal is rendered intimate. Manju also viewed cattle slaughter as a backward, rural phenomenon. “Ja-Ela area, this happens. Colombo is a bit more civilized. We never see that. It’s a different lifestyle here.” That Manju refers to cattle slaughter in civilizational terms demonstrates the salience of discourse about Muslim barbarism. Ideas about which practices are civilized and which are barbaric are strongly connected to socially constructed margins and taboos.

Further, as demonstrated by Manju’s remarks, *when and where* an animal is slaughtered is just as important as the slaughter itself. These ideas were echoed in comments made by BBS supporter Palitha. “They kill cows at mosques! There are places to kill animals for food. But these people are doing it anywhere!” Equally, a member of the JHU cited animal slaughter as a justification for opposition to the construction of mosques: “When many of these people [Muslims] come to the mosques, they are arrogant, they are not disciplined, and they slaughter animals. So unfortunately people have found that building mosques in the vicinity is an obstacle to peace in the area” (Centre for Policy Alternatives 2013:60). Here, the discourse of discipline is

used to stigmatize Muslims as savage and unsophisticated, providing a defense for the spatial exclusion of mosques from Buddhist areas. Since Muslims will behave arrogantly and slaughter cattle if allowed to build a mosque, Buddhists should act defensively to prevent the mosque from being built. In Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse about cattle slaughter, Muslims exceed the boundaries which are supposed to contain the killing of animals to certain spaces and situations.

### **Humans and Animals**

In addition to the stigma placed on Muslim animal slaughter, Muslims *themselves* are portrayed as subhuman and animalistic in BBS rhetoric. As discussed in Chapter 2, Muslim men are portrayed by the BBS as angry brutes unable to control their sexual desires. Through the themes of meat and slaughter, this carnal stigma is connected to a capacity for extreme violence, which occupies a similar semiotic register to sex. The body, rather than the mind – passion, rather than reason – is said to control Muslim actions. In BBS discourse, while Muslim animal slaughter muddles the boundaries of social acceptability, Muslims themselves blur the ultimate boundary of species.

Comparisons between Muslims and animals are common on Sinhala-language pro-BBS Facebook pages. On a page entitled *Sinhala Buddhist*, one post included an image of Asad Salli, a Muslim politician, alongside his claim that 70 percent of Sinhalese eat beef (see Fig. 3.3) (Samaratunge 2014:70). This post compares Salli himself to a cow (the top line claims, “Asad Salli Moos”). Some of the comments on the picture are listed below:

Kavindu Tharanga: Mooooooooooooo

Maynu Perera: We don't eat meat you Cow! You're trying to include us in that 70%

Asela Pradeep: You are the one who kills cows and eats them, Eat cow shit too...

Maha Dutugemunu: He must not know that there are more pigs in this country than cows. Then it would be right if we killed the pigs and fed it to them. In addition, the rate at which the Muslim population is increasing in the world is a big problem. Because they are having kids like pigs have piglets. Then what the others should do to control their population is to kill them.

Malinda Gunarathne: Where is this carnivore getting these statistics? There is no mention of Sinhalese Buddhists here...according to this guy the increase in the percentage of cows should be controlled like animals in the jungle kill and eat...It would be good to remember that being Sinhalese doesn't mean being Sinhala Buddhist.

Chanaka Perera: Asad has mad cow disease! Dumb Bovine!

Sasika Nilanga Jayasuriya: You are the biggest cow! (71)

As demonstrated by these comments, the Buddhist community is highly sensitive to accusations of beef consumption. The cow is also an unstable signifier – both venerated as the mother of the nation and used to denigrate the Muslim minority. In addition to the stigmatization of Salli as an animal, references to pigs are intended to insult the Muslim dietary practice of halal. In contradiction of this practice, Maha Dutugemunu's comment proposes the forcible feeding of pork to Muslims. Here, as in sexual violence, hegemony is exerted through the nonconsensual penetration of bodily boundaries. Further, in this comment, meat is tied to reproduction (“they are having kids like pigs have piglets”). Thus, the themes of food and sexuality are deeply intertwined in discourse which portrays Muslims as animalistic.

A similar Facebook post compares Muslims to dogs, suggesting that readers give their dogs Muslim names (see Fig. 3.4). “Because of the destruction caused to our country by foreigners, we name our dogs foreign names...this suited those times. [...] Because of



*Hambayas* [derogatory term for Muslims], I changed our dog's name to Mohammad," claims the author (Samaratunge 2014:57). Here, Muslims are portrayed as foreigners, thus justifying their relegation to the position of animals. Presumably, the foreigners who previously caused destruction to the country were colonizers. As such, this post creates continuity between the history of European colonialism and alleged current Muslim efforts to take over land. While this implies that Muslim foreigners are exerting their power over Sinhala Buddhists, it is the reality of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony that allows for the portrayal of Muslims as outsiders to the nation in the first place. Through comparisons with animals in BBS discourse, Muslims are portrayed as foreign not only to Sri Lanka but also to the human species itself.

However, inverting ethnic hierarchies, BBS supporters often expressed concerns that Muslims were portraying Buddhists as animals. Romesh (who runs multiple pro-BBS Facebook pages with tens of thousands of followers) claimed that he first got involved with the BBS because others were humiliating Buddhism by portraying Lord Buddha, monks, and Buddhists as cows and goats:

Buddhist monks and Buddhism were being humiliated on Facebook. Other pages have used different animals – cows and goats – to insult the religion and the monks. They used a cow's face on Lord Buddha. [...] There were some very violent stories on Facebook. One example was about Buddha eating dead bodies. [...] Behind those pages are the Muslims and the Catholics.

Romesh suggested that he began making his own Facebook pages to counter these anti-Buddhist messages. In one video that seems to fit Romesh's description, a member of Sri Lanka Tawheed Jamath (a Muslim religious group portrayed by the BBS and others as a local manifestation of Islamic extremism) made claims suggesting that Buddhism encourages cannibalism and that the

Buddha himself ate human flesh. Few in the Muslim community took these statements seriously, though they received immense attention among Sinhala nationalists. The irony, of course, is that pro-BBS Facebook pages contain the same type of tropes directed at Muslims. Thus, Romesh's claim is both a form of projection and a means of justifying his own negative portrayals of Muslims. Alleged Muslim insults to Buddhism provide the impetus for BBS supporters' own anti-Muslim postings, in which Muslims are depicted as blurring the boundary between humans and animals.

### **The Anti-Slaughter Campaign and Spatial Politics**

The crossing of boundaries also figures prominently in another issue of import to Sinhala nationalists: Muslim territorial expansionism. In Sinhala nationalist discourse, concerns about meat and slaughter are also connected to geo-spatial politics (discussed in Chapter 1). Notably, most Buddhist nationalist campaigns regarding cattle are focused on ending slaughter on Sri Lankan soil rather than limiting beef consumption among the Sinhalese. Thus, the predominant issue animating anti-slaughter campaigns is not the consumption of beef or even cattle slaughter itself, but the fact that Muslims are killing cattle *in a Buddhist country*, and hence insulting the sensibilities of the majority. Sinhala Ravaya head monk Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero explained, "We're not worried about whether Sinhalese are eating beef. That's not our concern. Not to kill is the only concept. Do not kill in the country." Though this monk attempted to appeal to Buddhist precepts, these comments were followed by a rather humorous exchange in which I remarked that the cow has to be killed somewhere down the line if beef is being consumed. "Without killing in Sri Lanka, bringing it in from abroad is okay," he responded. "We can import it. But we don't want to see cows killed in the country." Thus, prohibitions on cattle slaughter are a means of projecting ownership over the nation and its land. Buddhist nationalist opposition to

cattle slaughter is far from universal; rather, it is the context of minority transgressions against the majority that animates anti-slaughter campaigns in Sri Lanka.

### **Cattle as Mothers**

Further, as for Hindu nationalists in India (though to a lesser extent), the notion of cattle as motherly figures to the nation holds significant sway for many Buddhist nationalists in Sri Lanka. In the previous chapter, I discussed the embodiment of the nation by the Sinhala female. Cows also represent and embody the nation through their role as motherly figures. “Cows are our second mother,” claimed Rev. Pannasekara. “This means that cows give us milk and help to improve our agriculture. They also give local fertilizer.” Athuraliye Rathana Thero, a prominent monk from the Sinhala nationalist JHU, explained, “In our culture, the cow is a mother. I drink milk from my mother and also from cows.” Mahesh echoed these views: “The cow is giving milk. It’s not right to kill them. They’re like a second mother to us. Muslims are killing cows for religious ceremonies. Innocent animals are being killed for no reason. It’s not right in our country.” Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero explained his group’s opposition to cattle slaughter as follows:

We cannot give the approval for [cattle slaughter] because the cow is like a mother. A child will only have milk from the mother for certain years, after that we depend on the cow for milk. In villages, still there are children that go to the cow, put their mouth on the nipple and get milk from the cow. That’s how close the cow and the child are in Sri Lanka. We should not kill any animal, but with the cow we cannot give approval because it’s like the property of our country.

As a provider of milk during childhood and after, cattle represent motherhood. Consequently, as mothers, cattle also represent the nation itself, through the dynamics of gendered embodiment discussed in Chapter 2. Further, as the center of subsistence-based village economies, cattle represent traditional agricultural lifestyles, reinforcing rural notions of Sinhala authenticity. Moreover, the incorporation of cattle into nationalist discourses reinforces the notion that Sri Lanka's natural environment, including flora and fauna, is essentially Sinhala (as discussed in Chapter 1). In a post on the popular pro-BBS Facebook page *Sinhala Buddhist*, Buddhist nationalist actions to ban cattle slaughter are seen as a form of recompense for the contribution of cattle to the Sinhala family (see Fig. 3.5). "Mothers who give us milk, we Sinhala Buddhists are prepared to repay you for the milk you loaned us. Sinhala Ravaya was able to get 509 priests who are prepared to give their lives in the manner Priest Bowatta Indrarathana Himi did" (Samaratunge 2014:67-68). In this rhetoric, which refers to the monk's self-immolation, cattle are seen as members of the Sinhala family rather than as belonging to Sri Lanka as a whole.

### **Economics and Cattle Slaughter**

Moreover, the same post also connects cattle slaughter to Muslim economic power. It contains an image of former president Rajapaksa and a group of monks, labelled with the following caption:

Plans are being drawn to completely cease the killing of cows in Sri Lanka, by order of the President. Muslim businesses pay millions of rupees, use bastards to sling mud at the President, in a major attempt to disrupt these plans. Be aware...and spread awareness by sharing this. (Samaratunge 2014:68)

Thus, connections are drawn between Muslim economic power and cattle slaughter, with the BBS implicating Muslim businesses in an effort to disrupt plans to ban the killing of cows. Furthermore, in one parable described by Gnanasara at the release of “Demise of a Race,” a Muslim man buys off the police with liquor and beef to avoid being charged for a crime (YourListen.com 2014). As previously discussed, these two substances both occupy a taboo status when consumed by Buddhists. For the police officer in the story (who is presumably Sinhala Buddhist, like most authority figures in Sri Lanka), they represent forbidden fruit. This officer gives into temptation and accepts the bribe, symbolically selling the country to the Muslims. The infusion of beef into Gnanasara’s story represents a new spin on the frequently repeated BBS motif of the wealthy Muslim buying off the policeman. Through this parable, Gnanasara produces powerful linkages between meat and Muslim economic power.

Further, for Sinhala nationalists, cattle are linked to economic sovereignty and the ability to control inflows and outflows of foreign money. The agricultural lifestyle represented by the cow is seen as a means for Sinhala Buddhists to live off the land and avoid dependency on outside forces. Thus, the veneration of cattle by the BBS and Sinhala Ravaya is consistent with the hostility of right-wing nationalist movements toward global flows, which threaten to alter the internal racial dynamics of the nation and to erode the majority’s hegemony. In the context of stereotypes about Muslim traders, which establish the Muslim community as insufficiently local (despite evidence of their longstanding presence in Sri Lanka), the global economy is seen by Sinhala Buddhist nationalists as a Muslim domain, whereas rural villages are viewed as authentically Sinhala. Sinhala nationalist support for a closed economy based around cattle must be understood in terms of ethnic ideas about locality and foreignness.

Statements from BBS supporters suggest that cattle are particularly valued for their role in agriculture. “The cow gives us milk, we use cows to plow the paddy fields. We make cows work a lot. It is not a good thing for this animal that is helping us a lot to kill him at the end,” claimed Ven. Rathana Thero. Rev. Wimalabuddhi echoed his views: “In Sri Lankan society, we drink milk from cows, use cows for work in the paddy fields. How do you kill it after that?” Romesh suggested that “it is not reasonable to take everything that we can take from the cow and to kill it afterwards.” Thus, cows are venerated for their aid in traditional forms of economic production. Furthermore, cattle symbolize traditional family structures. Rev. Samitha claimed:

Cattle are very close with our family background in rural villages. Before the introduction of the open economy [i.e. market neoliberalism], there were cattle in the family, providing milk and everything. Just like a family member. Therefore we have a close relationship with cattle. So killing cattle is a very painful thing in that situation.

These traditional notions of family are seen as preceding the intrusion of foreign influences into the country. Rev. Samitha’s focus on economic liberalization as a force which destroyed the longstanding ties between humans and cattle reflects the broader suspicion of globalization articulated by the Sinhala nationalist movement.

Moreover, ending cattle slaughter is seen by Sinhala nationalists as a key step toward fostering a locally based economy and avoiding reliance on foreign powers. “Now we are importing milk from New Zealand,” lamented Palitha. “Why can’t we protect cows and get milk from them?” Rev. Samitha expressed similar views: “Here in Sri Lanka, there is a huge problem providing milk. Sri Lanka doesn’t produce enough milk in the country. We believe that if we can save cattle, we can produce enough milk for the country. We don’t want to import from outside.”

Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero suggested that an agricultural economy based around cattle could provide Sri Lankans with local employment:

We've given the idea to the government to get all the cows together and make huge farms and have productions. We want to make fresh milk without getting powdered milk from other countries. There is no point getting poisoned powdered milk from other countries when we have fresh milk here. People can have jobs in farms. We can use cow dung as a fertilizer. People are going to other countries and looking for jobs. But we have massive major farms. We can have a lot of opportunities here.

The cattle-based economy supported by Rev. Akmeemana stands in direct contrast to foreign guest work. These divergent economic arrangements have distinct ethnic characters: whereas rural agriculture represents Sinhala authenticity, global trade and foreign labor are associated with Islam. As such, for Sinhala nationalists, economic globalization carries the possibility of a switch in places between Sinhala Buddhists and Muslims. Cattle occupy a major role in Sinhala nationalist discourse, since they represent a Sinhala agricultural economy that allegedly exists prior to and outside of the influx of foreign forces, including those associated with Muslim economic power.

### **Tainted Food**

Rev. Akmeemana's reference to foreign powdered milk as poisoned is indicative of the semiotic connections between the crossing of bodily boundaries and the permeation of national borders. Stories about tainted food, which draw on these body-nation metaphors, are common in Sinhala nationalist discourse. Discussing the use of foreign fertilizers, Rev. Pannasekara drew a similar link between foreign influence and poison:

In the past, people had very good health and lived longer than 90 years. But now they quickly go to die at 40 or 50 because we eat poison. The cow used to help the paddy field with local fertilizer product. They put the local fertilizer on the paddy field. But now we use international and nonlocal fertilizer on paddy fields. When we eat the fruits and vegetables, we quickly die.

Here, a parallel is drawn between what enters the nation (international economic forces) and what enters the body (poisoned food). While Rev. Pannasekara's comments may seem conspiratorial, reactionary, or anti-scientific, it is important to note that the sweeping, large-scale forces of globalization and the mundane, miniscule details of food consumption are connected in their opacity to the average citizen, who lacks specialized knowledge of economics or science. This monk's remarks are reminiscent of the Sinhala nationalist *jathika chintanaya* movement, which claimed that chemical fertilizer and pesticides from multinational corporations were being used as part of "a new strategy that had been adopted by the LTTE as "bio-terrorism" to rid the NCP [North Central Province] of Sinhala people" (Perera 2011). Thus, whether Tamil or Muslim, national enemies who would seem to be weak actors are seen as collaborating with powerful outside forces; the results of which are represented through the presence of external substances in food eaten by the Sinhalese. The conspiratorial attitude of Sinhala nationalism toward foreign fertilizers must be understood as a reaction to the globalization process, the confusing mix of economic and social outcomes that it brings about, and its perceived ability to alter the ethnic power dynamics of Sri Lanka.

Moreover, BBS supporters often accuse Muslim-owned restaurants of serving contaminated food to non-Muslims. These accusations tend to take the form of rumors, some of which seem particularly absurd to the outside observer. While discussing Hindu nationalist



rumors, which take a similar form to those which I encountered in my fieldwork, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi notes that absurdity does not necessarily negate the symbolic power of stories:

The fact that almost all of these stories turned out to be nonsense did not make an impression on [Bharat and Pratab, two Hindu nationalists with whom the author shared lodging]. The rumor's falsity left no mark. The point was, they explained, that the accusations *could have been true*. What to me seemed exaggerated and bordering on the absurd appeared ultimately realistic to them. That the enemy was planning and scheming new, inventive ways to score against Hindus seemed certain. (2012:50)

Similarly, the rumors promulgated by the BBS are often hard to believe, painting a picture of Muslims as cartoonishly evil. For instance, in a public speech at a BBS rally in Kandy near the famous Kandy Muslim Hotel, making reference to “the *mudalalis* [shop-owners] who wear caps” (i.e. Muslim shop-owners), one monk claimed that the Quran orders Muslims to spit three times in the food of non-Muslims (YouTube.com 2013). In my interviews with BBS supporters, this rumor was rarely if ever repeated verbatim, perhaps as a result of its refutability. Yet the idea that *some* Muslims in *some* restaurants might spit in or otherwise tamper with non-Muslims' food did become a motif in BBS rhetoric. Thus, rumors that are too absurd to be taken literally can still form part of an interconnected, symbolic web of stories that express the fears which animate exclusionary nationalisms.

In the discourse of the BBS, Islam is portrayed as both foreign to Sri Lanka and as insidiously taking over the country. Thus, stories about secret substances in food eaten by Sinhala Buddhists reflect concerns about hidden forces entering the nation. Drawing on the

theme of invisibility, Anuruddha claimed that Muslim-owned restaurants in his hometown of Gampola were attempting to mask their identity by using Sinhala and Tamil names. Pointing at a shop that had the appearance of a South Indian vegetarian restaurant, he claimed, “That one is owned by Muslims. People go to Indian vegetarian shops because there is no meat. But that one serves it.” Thus, in addition to ownership, the content of the food is also hidden: what appears to be a pure vegetarian restaurant is in fact an establishment that serves meat. Moreover, portraying Muslims as intolerant and communally-minded, Anuruddha suggested that this restaurant was deliberately serving bad food to non-Muslims: “If a Sinhala or Tamil person goes to that shop, they’ll give unhealthy food, old food.” Here, the body and the nation are connected: the consumption of bad food by non-Muslims represents the infiltration of Islam into the country. Additionally, in the eyes of BBS supporters, such alleged Muslim transgressions justify Buddhist intolerance as a legitimate response.

Furthermore, when I asked Anuruddha how he had learned this information about the Muslim-owned restaurant, he explained, “My friend can speak Tamil very well. He has a long beard like a Muslim. When he went to that shop, they said, ‘oh don’t take this one, it’s not for you.’” Thus, while the Muslim restaurant was attempting to pass as a non-Muslim establishment, passing as a Muslim is the only way for a non-Muslim to avoid receiving bad food. The restaurant’s plot against non-Muslims, which operates in the invisible realm, can only be discerned by entering the invisible realm oneself. As previously argued in Chapter 2 with regards to burqas, these concerns about visibility and invisibility are inextricably tied up to ideas about global flows, which are themselves opaque and incomprehensible. For the Sinhala far-right, globalization is a major threat; an invisible force with the potential to erode Sinhala Buddhist hegemony by facilitating collaboration between weak internal minorities and powerful external

actors. It is in this context that the penetration of bodily barriers through the entry of food takes on symbolic significance as a metaphor for the crossing of national boundaries.

Concerns about food consumption and hidden infiltration are most strongly expressed in the fear that Muslims are secretly feeding Buddhists beef; an impure substance representative of the slaughter of the national mother (i.e. the cow). This scenario is described in a post entitled “Another Muslim Trick,” published on a Sinhala nationalist Facebook page (see Fig. 3.6) (Samaratunge 2014:98-99). The post discusses a Muslim-owned restaurant named Dinemore in a suburb of Colombo. “If anyone else has been there they must also know the fucked up things they do,” the author claims. He explains that he went to this restaurant for a party with a Muslim girl and her friends. “We asked for 2 Chicken submarines, 1 Spicy chicken and 1 Tuna submarine. I’m judging by the submarines we bought and saying this. However their burgers are also this way, they don’t have chicken. It’s all beef. Even the Muslim girl asked for a chicken submarine and got beef.” The author goes on to suggest that the store was attempting to force Buddhists to eat beef. “Sinhala Buddhist stores sell all types of meat, but Muslims don’t sell pork. They are not such babies that they don’t know that we don’t eat beef. They just wanted to make us eat beef.” For the author, this is emblematic of the lack of respect among Muslims towards Buddhists. “What a disgusting thing to do to a Buddhist. What if we mistakenly fed a Muslim pork in their country?”

The territorial implication is that Buddhists are the rightful owners of Sri Lanka: Muslims have “their countries,” while this is “our country.” To feed Buddhists beef on their own soil is conceived of as a deliberate attempt at embarrassment: “I’m not saying don’t go, but what happened to me will definitely also happened to you. Then you will have to make a decision in the midst all the Muslims there if you are going to eat it or leave.” The imagery of a lone

Buddhist in a group of Muslims, forced to decide whether to eat beef or not, is a microcosm for the BBS's ominous predictions of a future in which Muslims outnumber Buddhists. Eating beef in such a situation is configured as the ultimate betrayal, as the cow represents one's own mother and the nation itself. The author concludes with a shocking statement of genocidal intent:

“Finally all I have to say is this. Very soon, the Muslims will have to leave our country.

Otherwise they are going to have to die here. The patience of Sinhalese has run out.” This violent pronouncement is made based on the notion of a forthcoming Muslim threat. Through this parable about Buddhists being forced to eat beef, anti-Muslim violence becomes justified as defensive, to prevent a future scenario in which the symbolic situation expressed through food consumption becomes real.

Moreover, fears about tainted food are linked to the BBS's ideas about birth control and population (discussed more extensively in Chapter 2). Rev. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thero, claimed that Muslim food producers were injecting a chemical into chicken in order to prevent non-Muslim women from conceiving. “They bring down a lot of birth control pills and inject E2 chemical pills into chicken. They don't eat it but they give it to others. What happens is that women will not conceive when they have it. They use these types of things to reduce the rest of the population.” Thus, fears about tainted food are connected to the BBS's theories about Sinhala population decline. Additionally, Dayarathana Thero suggested that the E2 chemical was being brought to Sri Lanka from Pakistan. Considering that Pakistan is traditionally the enemy of Hindu nationalism, these comments appear to draw upon Islamophobic discourse from the Indian context. Moreover, the reference to Pakistan indicates that cross-border economic flows are connected to Sinhala nationalist concerns about tainted food. Through this story, Dayarathana

Thero creates semiotic links between food (chicken), sexuality (birth control), geography (Pakistan), and economy (Muslim businesses).

Drawing similar connections between tainted food and birth control, Anuruddha claimed that Muslims were importing a substance from Pakistan that causes abortions and mixing it with spices:

There are spices called *suduru*, which are mostly eaten by the Sinhalese in their food. A large amount of illegal *sathakuppa* is imported by Muslims through customs. They are mixing it with *suduru*, and delivering it to Sinhala areas. If a pregnant woman eats *sathakuppa*, it causes an abortion. It is not good for women. It is a tiny substance. [...]

This was a very famous story less than 6 months ago. The *sathakuppa* is imported from Pakistan. It was on every newspaper, every TV channel. Eating that stuff, it causes the woman's birth system to be destroyed.

Thus, through discourse about tainted food, sweeping global forces and macro-level concerns about population demographics are connected to the tiniest substances and the most minute details. The fact that the *sathakuppa* was imported through customs in this story is emblematic of post-9/11 discourses about the need for tight border control around the world. Such ideas about national boundaries are symbolically connected to the permeation of bodily margins by food. Moreover, notions of penetration gain particular symbolic importance in reference to women's bodies. The connection drawn in the above parables between tainted food and birth control operates within this gendered discourse of nationalism.

As previously discussed, these concerns about tainted food counterpose the visible and invisible realms – what appears to be merely food entering the body is actually a malevolent

foreign substance (i.e. a metonym for Islam entering the nation). Other elements of BBS discourse involve a similar dynamic regarding visibility – drugs being imported by Muslims are hidden under burqas; new mosques are being hidden in storefronts. Why is the invisible realm so important in Sinhala Islamophobic narratives? Discussing the rise of concerns about zombies in neoliberal South Africa, John and Jean Comaroff suggest that as neoliberal globalization renders economic exploitation more opaque, mediated through unseen market transactions rather than direct oppression, ideas about the invisible tend to proliferate (2002). In the Sri Lankan context, too, the opacity of globalization certainly has a role to play in the rise of rhetoric about invisibility. However, I argue that there is no latent anti-capitalist content in BBS discourse about hidden conspiracies against the Sinhalese; rather, global forces are merely opposed as the potential harbingers of a shift in ethnic power dynamics. Since BBS supporters fear that globalization will threaten Sinhala hegemony by allowing Sri Lankan Muslims to establish links with the powerful forces of international political Islam, the invisible realm repeatedly comes to be associated with a Muslim takeover in Sinhala nationalist discourse.

### **Halal Certification**

The invisible realm is also invoked in BBS rhetoric regarding halal certification: products with the halal logo are said to include hidden costs which are later redirected to the Muslim community. In February 2013, the BBS began a campaign against Sri Lanka's halal certification system, which was run at the time by the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), a body of Islamic theologians, and has since been taken over by the Halal Accreditation Council (HAC). The notion of Muslim economic power is at the core of the BBS's anti-halal campaign. BBS supporters claim that the ACJU was making money from halal certification and using it for nefarious purposes. "90% of the country doesn't need Halal food. Yet everybody has to pay for

the halal certification,” claimed Dilanthe Withanage. “If you buy something halal, a small percentage of the money goes to Islamic organizations – we don’t know what they do with that.” Others suggested that money from halal certification was being used to propagate Islam. “Indirectly, they collect huge amounts of money from halal and use it how they want. They use it to spread their community and their mosques,” explained Jayasena. An image posted on a pro-BBS Facebook group (see Fig. 3.7) claims that extra money charged from halal products goes toward mosques: “You buy 5 halal items per day, and for each item you spend an extra one rupee. If you assume this fact, you have actually donated Rs. 150 to the mosque [per month].” Moreover, the post suggests that this money could otherwise be donated to Buddhist temples. Finally, it accuses Buddhists who purchase halal products of failing to stand up for their religion: “By ignoring your duty, who are you nourishing by proudly buying these halal products?” Thus, BBS supporters believe that the tiny costs required to cover halal certification are being gradually accumulated to impose a tax on the Sinhalese, in order to propagate Islam and fund mosques. Fears about halal certification, much like fears about globalization itself, are predicated on the notion that the gradual buildup of individual economic transactions could alter the country’s ethnoreligious power dynamics and turn the Sinhalese into a minority.

Furthermore, BBS supporters suggested that halal certification was an expansionist project, expressing concerns about the halal logo’s use on a variety of products other than food. “Halal certification is expanding toward all kinds of products,” suggested Dilanthe Withanage, the head layperson of the BBS. “Toothbrushes and toothpaste now have halal logos.” JHU politician Udaya Gammanpila gave a similar account of the halal logo’s spread: “In mid-2012, Sri Lankan society witnessed that almost everything in the market from paintbrushes to toothpaste had the halal logo on it. Even though the Muslim population is just 9 percent.” The

alleged presence of the halal logo on non-food products is also used by BBS supporters to portray Muslims as irrational religious fundamentalists: “They say a halal certificate is needed for a paintbrush because it might be made of pig hair,” claimed Palitha. Further, halal logos are seen as an initial step towards more sinister developments. “It is creating the foundation for the promotion of Islam in the country. It is a form of initial Islamization of Sri Lankan society,” explained Dilanthe. Anuruddha even linked the halal logo, which he described as “a mark of separatism,” to the conquest of land. “Every Sri Lankan person eats these cookies. Why do we need [the halal logo]? It’s separatism; they’re dividing land and food.” Thus, Anuruddha connected his concerns about the formation of exclusive Muslim enclaves in certain regions of the country to his belief that halal certification was creating a separate Muslim sphere in the supermarket. I argue that BBS discourse about the extension of halal logos to non-food products expresses a fear that food is the first of many spheres to fall to Muslim influence. Small symbols can come to represent major global forces: in the discourse of the BBS, the halal logo is a flashpoint for concerns about food, land, and economics, all of which are connected in a grand Muslim plot to take over the country.

Another rationale given by Sinhala nationalists for their opposition towards halal certification is that halal foods are already dedicated to a god and thus cannot be used for the *puja*. JHU politician Udaya Gammanpila claimed: “we have a practice of offering some foods in the name of the Buddha – *buddha puja*. As a mark of respect, we reserve part of our food for Buddha. Our Buddhist monks said that we cannot use halal products for Buddha puja, when it’s already been dedicated for an unknown god.” Rev. Samitha gave a similar explanation:

When we offer something to the Buddha, it should not be dedicated to other people. Halal says that everything is dedicated to god – their god, Mohammed [sic]. This creates a



conflict. We offer the first portion of our food to the Buddha without dedicating to anybody. When we are preparing a curry, the first portion provides the Buddha puja. When we are growing a tree, the first fruit is offered to the Buddha. Halal says that everything has been dedicated to the god. There is a conflict. When we want to offer something to the Buddha, we couldn't find something not dedicated to god in the market; everything has the halal label.

BBS supporters insist that it was impossible to find foods without the halal logo on the market in Sri Lanka prior to the commencement of the anti-halal campaign. As this situation seems highly unlikely, I suggest that this belief expresses a fear of *what might happen one day*: in the event of a Muslim takeover, Buddhists will have no food left to offer for the *puja*. Thus, the imagery of a supermarket or store in which all products are marked with the halal logo expresses the Buddhist majority's broader fears of switching places with the Muslim minority.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I have emphasized the importance of food production and consumption in the discourse of right-wing Buddhist organizations. As a substance consumed covertly by Buddhists and overtly by Muslims, beef is a particular source of tension in Sinhala nationalism. As such, the caricatured figure of the carnivorous Muslim becomes a scapegoat for the displacement of nationalist qualms about Buddhist beef consumption. Moreover, the gory imagery of cattle slaughter is used to portray Muslims as violent toward animals and to imply the potential of future violence against Buddhists; yet this same imagery ironically produces the justification for "defensive" Buddhist communal violence against Muslims. For Sinhala nationalists, cattle must be protected as national motherly figures representative of local Sinhala

agricultural economies. In contrast, the global economic sphere is associated with Muslim power in BBS discourse. In this context, the entry of food into the body can come to stand for external intrusions into the nation, which are of deep concern to Sinhala Buddhist nationalists. BBS supporters fear that transnational forces could erode Sinhala Buddhist ethnoreligious hegemony because they feel that Sri Lankan Muslims are more connected to global currents of power than Sinhala Buddhists. Thus, by exacerbating the majority's fear of "switching places" with a minority, globalization can lead to greater ethnoreligious repression in order to safeguard the majority's grip over its homeland.

## *Conclusion*

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Throughout this thesis, I have sought to explain the sudden upsurge of nationalist hatred toward the relatively weak and compliant Muslim minority in Sri Lanka. Why Muslims, and why now? My answer to these questions is as follows. The Sinhala Buddhist majority, itself insecure about its lack of political influence on an international scale, associates the Muslim minority with a powerful global trend toward political Islam. Ideas about minority persecution in homogeneous Muslim states – many of which are host countries that mistreat Sinhala female guest workers – have led the Buddhist majority to fear its potential future minoritization in such a state if Muslims become a majority in Sri Lanka. To BBS supporters, a switch in places between Sinhala Buddhists and Muslims seems genuinely possible due to the decline of the traditional nation-state and the increased porosity of national borders. As a counterweight to perceived linkages between Sri Lankan Muslims and global Islamic movements, BBS supporters have associated themselves with a transnational Islamophobic movement, using new technologies and social media to draw upon and contribute to anti-Muslim discourses. Simultaneously, distinctly local Sri Lankan prejudices about Muslims (e.g. those related to beef consumption and economic power) have resurfaced in the post-civil war period due to the need of political elites for a new national enemy. These stereotypes converge with narratives borrowed from Western and Indian anti-Muslim movements to produce a form of Islamophobia that is both globally influenced and locally salient.

Thus, the relationship between Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and the global is deeply contradictory. On the one hand, BBS discourse expresses fears of globalization as a destabilizing force and a potential threat to Sinhala Buddhist hegemony. On the other, the activities of the BBS are deeply embedded in global networks and technologies, including the internet. If

transnational linkages which connect Sri Lankan Muslims to Muslims worldwide are seen by BBS supporters as the cause of a national crisis for Sinhala Buddhists, the group's proposed solution to this crisis involves further Sinhala participation in global Islamophobic networks and narratives. As demonstrated by the movement's use of social media as an instrument for promulgating anti-Muslim material, however, engagement with global modernity is entirely compatible with hatred and violence.

The BBS's concerns about the impact of global flows on Sinhala Buddhist ethnic hegemony are expressed in a variety of different political and cultural spheres. In Chapter 1, I discussed the importance of spatial politics to the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist movement, which conceives of Sinhalese as indigenous and Muslims as foreign to Sri Lanka. In the context of Sinhala nationalist fears about being engulfed by an expanding Muslim empire, I argued that BBS supporters perceive a Muslim territorial threat toward Buddhist hegemony over land, resulting in allegedly defensive efforts to project Sinhala influence in Northeastern Sri Lanka and to declare "sacred spaces" throughout the rest of the country for the protection of Buddhist heritage. In reality, these practices result in geographic violence toward minorities (e.g. through forced evictions, cultural imperialism, and demographically motivated settlement).

In Chapter 2, I considered the role of the gendered body in Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. I argued that the Sinhala female represents the nation in BBS discourse, which implicates Muslim men in the conversion and rape of Buddhist women (including those working as temporary laborers in the Middle East). Equally, the penetration of bodily margins represents the penetration of national borders. Moreover, I noted that stereotypes about Muslim fecundity and conspiracy theories about efforts to reduce Sinhala birthrates enable Sinhala nationalists to connect abstract demographic concerns to intimate corporeal politics. Thus, the Sinhala

nationalist fear of “switching places” with the Muslim minority becomes mapped onto individual bodies.

In Chapter 3, I examined right-wing Sinhala Buddhist discourse on food consumption and cattle slaughter. As with sexual penetration, I argued that the entry of food into the body can serve as a metaphor for the crossing of national borders – an issue of great importance to BBS supporters. Moreover, I suggested that Sinhala nationalists associate Muslim beef eating and cattle slaughter with excess and the dissolution of boundaries, partially due to tensions resulting from covert beef consumption in the Buddhist community itself. I noted that the semiotically potent imagery of cattle slaughter is also a means for Sinhala nationalist groups to portray Muslims as capable of extreme violence – thus justifying Buddhist violence against Muslims as a defensive reaction.

In Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, geography, gendered bodies, and food interact in numerous ways. The land of the country is often represented through the body of the female, which in turn is frequently signified by the cow, who serves as a national mother figure. A transgression against one is a transgression against all – cattle slaughter is an issue of concern because of its occurrence on Sri Lankan soil; sexual violence against Sinhala women symbolizes foreign entry into the nation; Muslim territorial encroachment in Buddhist areas is tantamount to the rape of the land. These are but a few examples of the connections between various seemingly distinct spheres in the discourse of the BBS, which has a strong degree of internal coherence. Through the rumors, stories, speeches, and Facebook posts in which BBS rhetoric is promulgated, spatial, corporeal, and gastronomic politics mesh together to form a compelling narrative of a globally influenced Islamic threat against the Sinhala Buddhist nation.

## Theoretical Implications

In *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), Arjun Appadurai suggests that the decline of the traditional nation-state at the hands of transnational forces has led to increased violence against minorities worldwide, rather than the wave of global liberalism that some commentators anticipated. In Appadurai's framework, minorities serve as scapegoats for anxieties about globalization, because much like globalization itself, they blur the boundaries between us and them, inside and outside. Often as a result of elite political interests, certain minorities come into focus as national enemies at certain times, thus requiring the selective mobilization of latent prejudices. Further, though globalization has produced an increasingly atomized world, shaped by abstract economic relations and impersonal technological advances, violence against minorities has simultaneously become more intimate, tied to bodily stereotypes about ethnic others. This violence is predicated on the emergence of predatory identities, in which a majority's fear of trading places with a minority is so great that it requires the extinction of the other for its own survival. The majority's fear is not dependent on the actual strength of the minority group in question; in fact, Appadurai suggests, smaller and less powerful minorities may provoke *more* majoritarian anger, as they represent a tiny gap between mere majority and the fantasy of totality.

Appadurai's framework seems highly applicable to the case of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and anti-Muslim violence. Even through the very name of their ethnoreligious group, Sri Lankan Muslims muddle the boundaries between us and them; in the eyes of BBS supporters, their loyalty to the Sri Lankan state versus the global *ummah* is constantly in question. Further, while Muslims were once seen as a compliant minority that did not threaten Sinhala Buddhist hegemony, the interests of political elites in the Rajapaksa government after the conclusion of

the civil war seem to have motivated a sudden rise in Islamophobia, requiring the excavation of some histories and the forgetting of others (Muslim suffering at the hands of the LTTE and opposition to Tamil separatism, for instance, is entirely ignored in BBS discourse). Moreover, consistent with Appadurai's thesis, the abstract threat of Muslim demographic takeover is connected to the stigmatization of individual bodies in Sinhala nationalist discourse. Appadurai's concept of "predatory identities" (2006:51) also applies to Islamophobia in Sri Lanka: Sinhala Buddhist nationalists deeply fear the possibility of trading places with a politically weak minority that, in the eyes of outsiders, would seem unlikely to pose any actual threat to the majority's hegemony. Further, the dream of closing the gap between majority and whole, as represented in the BBS's idealized nation-state of Sinhale, does seem to animate hatred and violence against the Muslim minority, which constitutes a mere 9% of Sri Lanka's population.

Building on Appadurai's thesis, I argue that globalization deeply exacerbates the majoritarian fear of "trading places" by allowing for the creation of (real or imagined) connections between weak local minorities and powerful outside forces. However, in contrast to Appadurai, I propose that small numbers, *on their own*, do not provide sufficient cause for majoritarian violence, at least in the Sri Lankan case. Rather, Sri Lankan ethnic politics is shaped by a dynamic in which internally weak minorities are perceived to have greater global influence than the locally powerful majority. In an era when the global matters, this provides the impetus for anti-minority violence to be committed in order to protect the hegemony of the majority. While these ideas are equally applicable to anti-Tamil prejudice and violence, Muslims have emerged as an even greater threat in the post-civil war context because they serve as symbolic representatives of global political Islam and transnational terrorism in the eyes of Sinhala nationalists. As demonstrated by the Sri Lankan Muslim case, linkages between weak minorities

and powerful foreign forces need not be tangible or even factual in order to provoke majoritarian fears; rather, the mere possibility that such connections *might exist* or *could one day emerge* is sufficient to prompt violent “defensive” reactions.

The BBS’s fears about collusion between foreign forces and local minorities are predicated on the notion that Sinhala Buddhists are a totally isolated community with no international links. Of course, this is false. There exist various other Buddhist-majority countries in close regional proximity to Sri Lanka, including Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand. Further, though the Tamil diaspora may be larger and more influential, there are many people of Sinhala origin living in the West. Moreover, like all Sri Lankans, Sinhala Buddhists are increasingly connected with global economic flows and new technologies – such as the internet, which is adeptly used by BBS supporters to propagate anti-Muslim messaging and forge alliances with international Islamophobes. Thus, the portrayal of Sinhala Buddhists as a backward-oriented, traditional people untouched by the forces of globalization is drawn from orientalist ideas about unchanging “natives,” rather than the lived realities of the Sinhala community today. Nevertheless, the idea of Sinhalese as a globally isolated majority and Muslims as an internationally well-connected minority holds significant sway for Sinhala Buddhist nationalists.

Based on my own research findings, I argue that Appadurai’s thesis on violence against minorities must be adapted to account for the contextual particularities of different nationalisms and states. In the case of Sri Lanka, the Sinhala ethnic identity becomes predatory in a globalized context because Sinhala nationalists feel that Sri Lanka’s Muslim minority is more connected to international currents of power than themselves, and thus poses a threat to Sinhala Buddhist hegemony. Moreover, Sri Lanka is seen by BBS supporters as the only nation-state where the Sinhalese can flourish, whereas Muslim-majority countries are viewed as homogeneous polities



which oppress religious minorities. A comparable example to the Sri Lankan case is Israeli-Jewish nationalism, which mobilizes similar rhetoric about the sole homeland of the Jewish people in a sea of Arab and Muslim states (and has similar ethnocidal consequences for Palestinian Arabs). Lacking the same siege mentality, other forms of nationalism may not be as pronounced or violent.

Discussing the relationship between relatively liberal nationalisms and ideologies of ethnic supremacy, Appadurai claims that “all majoritarianisms have in them the seeds of genocide, since they are invariably connected with ideas about the singularity and completeness of the national ethnos” (57). I argue that some majoritarianisms are more prone to becoming predatory in the era of globalization than others. Where a minority is perceived to have strong connections to global currents of power, and the majority views itself as isolated from these same currents, the increasing importance of transnational forces and cross-border flows is more likely to make the majority feel that its hegemony is under threat. In such cases, anti-minority violence is greatly amplified, as majorities are able to justify their actions on supposedly defensive grounds. The rise of an Islamophobic movement among the Sinhala Buddhist majority in post-civil war Sri Lanka exemplifies the fear that globalization causes among majorities who feel that they are internationally weaker than minorities. The Aluthgama anti-Muslim riots of June 2014, which caused numerous deaths, many injuries, massive human displacement, and extensive property damage, are a testament to the violent results of such fear.

### **Postscript: The Future of the BBS in the Era of Maithripala Sirisena**

The landscape of Sri Lankan ethno-religious politics has been significantly altered by the shock defeat of Mahinda Rajapaksa in the January 2015 Presidential elections, at the hands of

common opposition candidate Maithripala Sirisena. In the eyes of many onlookers, the BBS's open support of Rajapaksa's re-election campaign confirmed suspicions that the group was an arm of the government. During my fieldwork, members of the Muslim community often expressed the view that a regime change would signal the end of the anti-Muslim campaign. At the time, I was skeptical of this assertion; yet the Islamophobic movement does appear to be disempowered by Sirisena's rise to the presidency. A BBS rally in Colombo's Hyde Park during the election campaign received extremely poor attendance (Ahamed 2014), while my personal observations indicate a dearth in articles about the BBS on Sri Lankan online media and a drop in activity on pro-BBS Facebook pages since Rajapaksa's defeat. This is not to imply that President Sirisena has an enlightened stance on ethnic issues – in fact, his election platform bypassed the topics of Tamil and Muslim rights almost altogether. Nevertheless, even a rational Sinhala Buddhist government with no benevolent intentions toward minorities would recognize that the BBS is a liability, not an asset, in Sri Lanka's efforts to avoid a UN-sponsored international investigation on atrocities committed during the final stages of the civil war. With Rajapaksa's loss at the polls, it is unclear what future role the BBS will play in Sri Lankan politics.

Drawing on Ananda Abeysekara's insight that the meaning of the signifier "Buddhism" in relation to other categories like "politics" and "violence" is malleable rather than static (2002), I propose that Sirisena's election signals a potential shift in dominant conceptions of "Buddhism" as a political category in Sri Lanka. While the BBS openly supported Rajapaksa, Sirisena's election campaign received the crucial support of the JHU, whose image as a bastion of Buddhist incorruptibility granted Sirisena legitimacy with Sinhala voters. With the backing of key Sinhala nationalist figures like Champika Ranawaka and Athuraliye Rathana Thero, Sirisena

managed to shift the terms of debate, portraying the Rajapaksa government as “unBuddhist” due to its corruption, its networks of family patronage, and its involvement in a major casino development project. Rajapaksa responded by mobilizing the well-worn narrative of an international conspiracy against Sri Lanka (i.e. against Sinhala Buddhists), in which the opposition would allow foreign forces to defame the country and prosecute the Sinhala war heroes who defeated terrorism. However, Rajapaksa’s effort to return the discussion to the ethnic plane failed, largely due to Sirisena’s own lack of engagement with minority grievances.

Thus, whereas for Rajapaksa, authentic Buddhism meant protecting the Sinhala Buddhist nation from *external* enemies, in Sirisena’s campaign, authentic Buddhism referred primarily to *internal* reform and the rejection of vice. Nevertheless, as shown by the common BBS motif in which rich Muslims pay off the police to avoid culpability for sexual crimes, the ideas of purity and anti-corruption that animated Sirisena’s rise to power are not racially neutral but rather are suffused with latent ethnic content. Thus, Sirisena represents a more benign articulation of Buddhist nationalism than that of either Rajapaksa or the BBS; his election does not signify a shift away from Buddhist nationalism altogether. For those concerned with ethnoreligious equality in Sri Lanka, the consequences of the continued interplay between Sirisena’s emergent discourse of Buddhist internal reform and the BBS’s discourse of “protecting Buddhism” from malevolent outside forces remain to be seen.

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Appendix

Chapter 1

Table 3: The relative significance of Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and in the world population.

Sri Lanka		Global		
'ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ' තත්වය (ජනගහණය මිලියන 20 කට සාපේක්ෂතාව)		ගෝලීය තත්වය (ජනගහණය මිලියන 7161 කට සාපේක්ෂතාව)		
Sinhala	සිංහල 74.88%	සිංහල	0.20%	Sinhala
Tamil	දෙමළ 15.4%	දෙමළ	1.07%	Tamil
Muslim	මුස්ලිම් 9.2%	මුස්ලිම්	22.74%	Muslim
(Sinhala) Buddhist	(සිංහල) බෞද්ධ 71.19%	බෞද්ධ <sup>1</sup>	6.77%	Buddhist
Hindu	හින්දු 12.6%	හින්දු	13.8%	Hindu
Islam	ඉස්ලාම් 9.71%	ඉස්ලාම්	23.4%	Islam
Christian	ක්‍රිස්තියානි 7.43%	ක්‍රිස්තියානි	33.39%	Christian
සිංහල බෞද්ධයා සාපේක්ෂ වශයෙන් බහුතර ය.		සිංහල බෞද්ධයා නිරපේක්ෂ වශයෙන් සුළුතර ය.		

Fig. 1.1

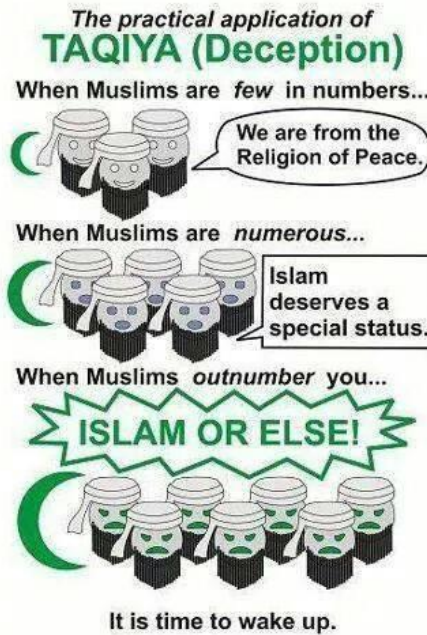


Fig. 1.2

THE CAMEL, THE MAN, AND THE TENT

**සිටුවා, මිනිසා සහ කුඩාරම**

Sir, I am here to trade goods.

Come brother, we shall live in peace

I will just peek my head in there, sir.

Go ahead brother, get your body in here as well. We are not racist.

Allahu Akbar!

Well how annoying is this!

There isn't enough space here (in the tent). Get out you dog!!!

**අපි කියපු දේ ඇහුවනම් ඔහොම වෙන්නේ නෑ. හැකි තරම් "Share" කර දැනුවත් කරන්න.**

If you listened to us, this wouldn't have happened.  
Share as much as possible and keep people informed.

Fig. 1.3

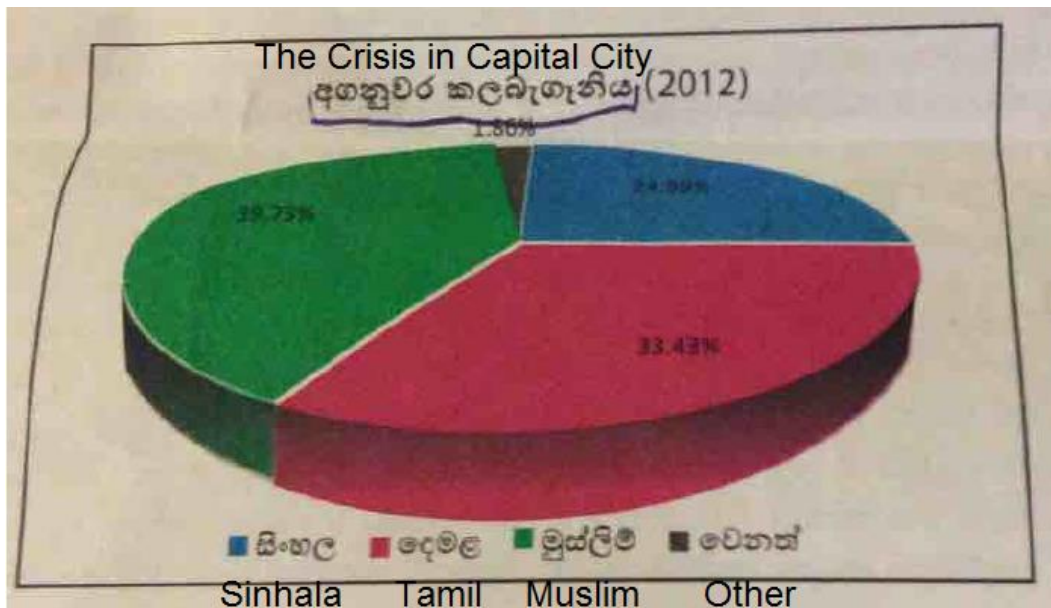


Fig. 1.4

**සිංහලයා නසන ටොපිය**

**NOLIMIT**

**Malic Acid E296**

ගර්භාණුකරණයේ වැඩිදියුණු කිරීමේදී මානවයාගේ ආරක්ෂාව වැඩි කිරීමේදී

මානවයාගේ ආරක්ෂාව වැඩි කිරීමේදී

**NOLIMIT සිංහල ජාතිකයාගේ අහිතකරයි**

බහුතර සිංහල පාරිභෝගිකයන් පිරිසක් මතම යැපෙන Nolimit කැමති මිසල්මානු රෙදි ව්‍යාපාරය සිංහල හැඟී, අරාබි බස සහිත කැලැන්ඩර් බෙදීමේ සිංහලයාගේ කණේ පැහැරුවා මතකද? දැන් ඔවුන් අත හසා ඇත්තේ ඊට වඩා අභියෝගී හයානක ආව සැලසුමකටයි.

**ජාතිය වැද කිරීමේ කුටි උපක්‍රමයක්**

අවුරුදු සමයේ බුරුකු පිටින් මේ වෙළඳසැල් ජාලයට යන සිංහල පාරිභෝගිකයින් ඉලක්ක කර ගනිමින් නොමිළේ ටොපි වර්තයක් බෙදා හරින බව ඔබ දන්නවාද?

මෙම ටොපියේ අඩංගු Malic Acid (E296) නම් රසායනිකයට ගර්භණී මානවයාගේ ගබඩා කරවීමේ හැකියාව ඇති අතර කුඩා දරුවන්ට කිසිසේත්ම සුදුසු නොවන මෙයට වකුගඩු හා අනෙකුත් අවයව වලට හානි කිරීමේ හැකියාව ඇත. වවැනි රසායනික සහිත රස කැවිලි අහුරු පිටින් සිංහලයන්ට බෙදුණේ ඇයිදැයි සිතා බලන්න.

සිංහල ජාතිය වැද කිරීම වකුගඩු ඉලක්කය කරගත් මේ අන්තවාදී මිසල්මානු ගුබ්බාගේ කුලට තවත් තවත් රිංගමින් "ජාතියේ මිනි වල සියතින්ම කපා ගන්නවාද? සිංහල ව්‍යාපාර හසා සිටුවමින් ජාතියේ අනාගතය සුරක්ෂිත කරන්නවාද? තීරණය ඔබ සතුවයි.

**SOBBY.COM SOBBY.COM SOBBY.COM SOBBY.COM**

Fig. 2.1

ඇයි දෙයියනේ මට ඉස්ලාම් මිනිසෙක්ව කසාදා බිඳින්න සිදුවී වුණෝ!  
මොන පව්කාර කමකටද මං මුස්ලිම් වෙලා ඉපදුණේ...

**ISLAM MOLESTATION OF WOMEN**

Why did you punish me by making me a muslim woman!?!  
Like Comment

Fig. 2.2

**අනේ... මේ කීරී කැටියන්ට තේරෙනවය ඇඳුට ගෙඩියකක් ඕව!**



තමයිගොන්නට වුම් කෙල්ලොන්ගෙන් උපරිම සතුට ගැනීමට සහ සමස්ථ ඉස්ලාම් පිරමින්ගේ වාසියටම ඔවුන්ගේ ලොක්කා කාදාගොස් තිබෙන ආගමික නීතියේ අප දකින විත් විවාහය උත්සවයක් පමණි මේ!

සමුදාය භාසා කීරගේ සමාස් රජයේ අනුග්‍රහයෙන් පැවැති එක් විවාහ උත්සවයක අගක් හතරක් තොරෝරෙන මේ කුඩා දැරියක් හරි හරියට අතින් අල්ලාගෙන සිටිනුයේ ඔවුන්ගේ ආධිමිමරකාර මහාලයෝයි! ඔවුන් මුස්ලිම්වරුන් සිං ආගමික ගායනාවේරනා වන 'නබී' ගුමාරි අනුගමනය කිරීම මෙයින් මොනවට වදනා පාන අතර මෙය මෙතන අපැහැදිලිවේ දෙවන තෝ ගෙවන විවාහයද වන්නේය...

අද ජාතිවාදී ලේඛලයට බොරු බිහක් ඇති කරගෙන නිහඬව සිටින ඔබටයි මේ කියන්නේ... ඔබලානං කාලා බිලා ජොලියෙන් ඉඳලා හරි හම්බන් කරලා මැරල යයි! මතු දිනෙක ඔබේ මනිබිරිය තෝ ඔවුන්ගේ දුටුරු මුස්ලිම් ලංකාවක, මෙම ව්‍යසනයට ගොදුරු වනවා නිසැකය. අනෙක් වැදගත්ම දෙය නම් බෞද්ධයන් පුණර්භවය විශ්වාස කරනා බැවින්, ඔබගේ මිලක හටගේදී ඔබම ඔබගේ මුණුබුරු පරම්පරාවට මෙගේ දාව ඉපිද මෙම භේදපනක ඉරණමට ගොදුරක් වී විදාව අපා දුක් විඳින්නේය...

විශ්‍ය විටදී පමණ ඉස්ලාම් ඉවසීම, නිවට කමයි! සිංහලයින්, නිල නොසිටි නැතිවියරි...  
 වලකට ඉවට වෙරි සමාන ගන සිතා ඉස්ලිම්වරුන්ට මෙලදි වාදු වංශලදෝගේ මොදටකෝ අද ආා යුත් විවරවා: හොඳවිට

මෙහිදී මා සමඟ වගක අවුරුදු 6 දී විවාහ බිටිය ගත්තා මද අතර වගක අවුරුදු 9 දී මිතු සමඟ සංවාදයේ කෙලෙසින් මිනුගේ මරණය දක්වා විවාහය ගත කළේයයි අයිතා වසින් පකාය කරන ලදී. (කාබිග් මුහාබ් 7,62,68)

නමුත් මෙහි කීරියට අඟු වගක අවුරුදු 18 ට අඩු අය මෙයින් වග අතර වර්ගුත් වගක අවුරුදු 09 ක දැරියක් සමඟ සංස්ථාගේ යෙදීම් ප්‍රමාණිකනයක් සහ දූෂණයකි.

මේ සියල්ල තත්පුයන් ගේ මිමට පානෙදී විමට අවශ්‍යකම් හොඳමට අත්කරපාලගා හරවා හෝ 'INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS' නම් වූ නව නායක තුමන්ගේ පාන විවිච්ච කතාව රහ දැක්වෙන විලාපවිත පොතා හරමින්ත!

Fig. 2.3

**ලිංගික වහල් සේවය නීතිගත කරනු**

කුචේටි පාර්ලිමේන්තු නියෝජිතවරිය ඉල්ලයි

**මුස්ලිම් නොවන රටවල**  
**සිරකාරියන් හා**  
**යුද්ධයෙන් අහාරි වූ ගැහැණුන්**

ලිංගික වහලියන් ලෙස මිලදී ගනු ලැබේ



Fig. 2.4

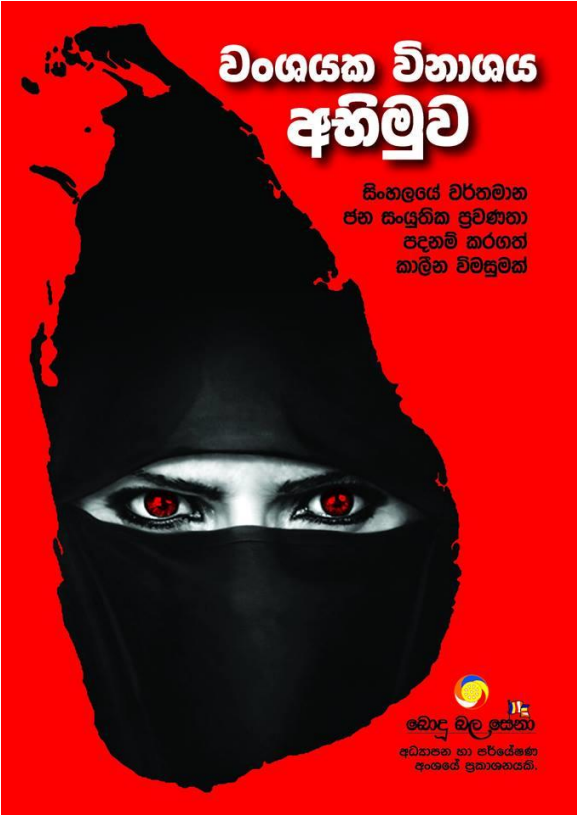


Fig. 2.5

Chapter 3



Fig. 3.1

We won't comment on this (picture / situation)

You judge yourself



"*Sinhalaya*"  
(A Sinhalese)

"*Hambaya*"  
A Muslim (derogatory)

Fig. 3.2

Asad Sali Moos.



"70% of Sinhalese eat beef. If the numbers of cattle increase it could be detrimental to the country"

Fig. 3.3

-----කාලේ තාලෙට බල්ලට නමක්-----

සුද්ද මගේ රටට කරපු විනාසේ නිසා අපේ කවිවිය ගෙදර ඉන්න බල්ලට සුද්දොන්නෙ නමි දැමීම..... ඒක ඒ කාලේ හැටියට ගැල පෙනවා. මේ කාලේ අපේ රටට වැඩිම විනාසයක් කරන්නේ..... හම්බයො නිසා මම අපේ බල්ලගෙ නම මොහොමඩ් ලෙස වෙනස් කරා .



බල්ලාටත් අපහාසයක් නොවෙන ලෙස ඉස්මයිල් , හමීඩ් , මොහොමඩ් වගේ නමි දන්න!!

එතකොට මොහොමඩ් ඉස්ම කියලා කතා කරන්න පුලුවන්

අපාය(hell)

Fig. 3.4

**ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ගව සාහනය සම්පූර්ණයෙන්ම තහනම් කිරීමට ජනපති නියමයෙන් නීති සැකසේ**

Read: [www.facebook.com/SinhalaBuddhist](http://www.facebook.com/SinhalaBuddhist)

**ගව සාහක මුස්ලිම් ව්‍යාපාරිකයින් කෝටී ගණන් මුදල් යොදවා, අවජාතිකවාදීන් ලවා ජනපතිට මඩ ගස්සවා, පනත අකුලවා ගැනීමට දැඩි උත්සාහයක... අවදියෙන් සිටින්න... Share කර දැනුවත් කරන්න.**

**සිංහල** Sinhala Buddhist  
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නිරි අම්බා වරුනි, ඔබෙන් අම්මෙක් කල් සිටි නිරි වල ආයතනවලට සිංහල බෞද්ධ අයි සුදානම්. පූජ්‍ය බෝවිත්තේ ඉන්දරකතා නිකායෙන් විභත්තේන් ජීවිත පරිත්‍යාගය සහ ජලපට ජීවිත පරිත්‍යාග නිරිවට සුදානම්ට සිටි බිත්තූන් විභත්තේලා සන්ධ්‍යා නාමිකෙන් උතුම් අරමුණ සමඟ කර ලීවට සිංහල රාජ්‍යව හැකි වෙයි. සහක දැන්වෙන්නේ 2013 07 27 දින මිලිමිටි පුවත්තෙන් ඒ හැන සෙ වූ ලිපියකි.

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ගව සාහනය තහනම් කරන නීති හදුන්වා ගන්නා කොටසක් උපදෙස් - සාලිත විවිලනේන

ගව සාහනය තහනම් කිරීමට අදාළ නීති සම්පූර්ණය කරන ලෙස ස්භාධිපතිවරයා විසින් නීති කෙටුම්පත් දෙපාර්තමේන්තුවට උපදෙස් අදාළ ලැයි කිවේ.

නීති කෙටුම්පත් දෙපාර්තමේන්තුවේ ඉහළම නිලධාරියකු සඳහන් කොළේ එම කටයුතු ඉදිරි මාස දෙකේදී අවසන් කෙරෙනු ඇති බවයි.

මීට පෙර ස්භාධිපතිවරයා සිහළ රාජ්‍ය සංවිධානයේ පහසුකම් පත්කිරීමක දෙපාර්තමේන්තුවෙන් ඇතුළු කිරීමටදැන්වී පොරොන්දු වී කිසිදුකේ මාස දෙකක් ඇතුළත ගව සාහනය තහනම් කිරීමට කටයුතු කරන බවයි. ස්භාධිපතිවරයා මේ පොරොන්දුව ලබා දී කිසිදුකේ ගව සාහනයට එරෙහිව සිහළ රාජ්‍ය සංවිධානය ඇවැත්වූ

Write a comment...

Fig. 3.5



Fig. 3.6

(You) buy 5 Halaal items a day, and for each item you spend an extra 1 rupee. If you (assume) this fact, over a month you have actually donated Rs. 150 to the mosque.

දිනකට හලාල් භාණ්ඩ 5ක් මිලට ගන්නා බවද එයින් එක් භාණ්ඩයකින් හලාල් සඳහා රුපියලක බැගින් අමතර ඔබ ගෙවන බවද උපකල්පනය කළහොත් ඔබ මසකට රුපියල් 150ක් පල්ලියට දුරුකර ඇත.

$$Rs.1 \times 5 \times 30 = Rs 150/-$$

## හලාල් සඳහා අමතර මුදල් ගෙවීම සාධාරණීකරනය කරන ඔබ

The extra money that you pay for halaal products is really the Rs.5 that you would have donated to the temple, isn't it?

මාසෙට සැරයක් පත්කලට ගිහින සාක්කුව පිරලා හොයලා හොයලා පත්කලේ පිංකැටයට දාන්නේ නේද?

By ignoring your duty, who are you nourishing by proudly buying these halaal products?

? ඔබේ යුතුකම් පැහැර හරිමින් ආධිමිධරෙත් හලාල් අරගෙන ඔබ පෝෂණය කරන්නේ කාටද?



SAY NO TO HALAAL

Look for NON-HALAAL

Fig. 3.7