

# Social Constraints to Development

*with special reference to  
Compulsory Teaching of Religion  
(Education Policy - Sri Lanka)*

*Hemachandra Wijesooriya*

*University of Sri Jayewardenepura  
Nugegoda  
Sri Lanka*

*Master of Arts - Sociology  
1996*

To

P.M. Jayasekara, my mother, whose devotion to religion  
inspired me to inquire further.

## CONTENTS IN BRIEF

|    |                           |     |
|----|---------------------------|-----|
|    | Prologue                  | 01  |
|    | Acknowledgements          | 03  |
| 1. | Introduction              | 07  |
| 2. | Methodological Approaches | 12  |
| 3. | Conceptual Framework      | 55  |
| 4. | Interpretation            | 91  |
| 5. | Conclusion                | 171 |
|    | Epilogue                  | 179 |
|    | Bibliography              | 183 |

## CONTENTS IN DETAIL

Prologue

Acknowledgements

### 1. Introduction

The Focus  
The Objectives  
The Rationale

### 2. Methodological Approaches

The Issues  
The Social Anthropological Approach  
Theoretical Perspectives

The Researcher was :

The Primary Instrument of Inquiry  
A Policy Maker  
A Social Technologist  
A Learner  
A Subjective Experience  
Educationist  
for Political Decision

The Universe of the Research  
A Flexible Universe  
A Sample of Significance  
Classification of Informants  
Questionnaire in the Research  
Social Relationships were Techniques  
The Interactive-reactive Approach  
Observation was :

First-hand  
Long-term  
Participant  
Non-participant  
Naturalistic

The Eclectic Approach  
Holistic Perspective  
Cross-cultural Frame of Reference  
Humanistic Outlook  
The Reader of the Research  
Democratic Objective  
Critical Presentation  
Dialogue with Citizen  
Research is Method in Policying

### 3. Conceptual Framework

#### DEVELOPMENT

A Definition  
In Historical Perspective  
In Modernist Perspective

#### POLICY

A Definition  
In Traditional Society  
In Modern Society  
In Rationalist Liberalism  
In the Nation-State

#### EDUCATION

A Definition  
Secularism as Policy in Education  
Enlightened Policy Direction  
Liberalism as Policy

#### RELIGION

A Definition  
The Problem of Objectivity  
Theoretical Perspectives in Definition  
Emile Durkheim  
Bronislau Malinowski  
Talcott Parsons  
Religion in Modern Society  
The Individual  
The Community  
Religion and Policy  
Transformation and Adaptation  
Religion and Religiosity

## 4. Interpretation

### FRAMEWORK OF THE ANALYSIS

- A Triumvirate Framework
- Processes of Social Change
- Religioisation
- Secularisation

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

- A Criterion of Evaluation
- The Initial Inquiry
- The Indepth Probe
- Significance of the Finding
- Some Representations
- Middle Class Ritualism
- The Empowerment of the Monastery
- The Minors and their Preferences
- Beliefs and Attitudes of Minors
- Human Rights and Minors

### NATIONALISM

- Language-Religion Identity
- The Matrix of Development
- The Tax-payer and his Rights in Nationality
- Nationalism in Sri Lanka
- The Race-Religion Identity

### LIBERALISM

- Liberal Education
- Liberal Education and Secularism
- Secularism in Open Society
- Secularism and the Monastery
- Theravada and the Religious Curriculum

### RELIGION IN OPEN SOCIETY

- The Difference
- Class-room Religion
- The Open Society

### INDIVIDUATION

- Traditional Societies
- Rationalisation
- Empirical Findings
- The Minors

## GENERALISATION

Open Society and its Values  
The Minors and their Values

## BESACRILISATION

A Rationalisation  
A Pluralism  
Industrialism  
Open Society  
Rationalisation and Religion

## TRANSFORMATION

This-Worldly Religiosity  
The Macro-cosm of the Feudal State  
The Micro-cosm of the Village  
Ascendency of New Gods  
A New Sensuality  
The New Elite and its Pathological  
Syndrome

## 5. Conclusion

An Ideological Mis-match  
A Compulsive Act  
Undemocratic Orthodoxy  
Anti-Nationalist Religion  
Religion, Humanism and Nationalism  
A Violation of Human Rights  
Religious Monoliths of Separatism

## Epilogue

## Bibliography

# Prologue

Making an inquiry on the Nation's Policy of compulsory teaching of Religion can appear sacrilegious to some, for they may be of opinion that Religion is sacred and therefore should not be interfered with. To some others, it may appear presumptuous, because they may believe that Religion is outside empirical inquiry. Yet to another, it may appear as trespass, for they may believe that Religion is private. However, this research should not countenance such criticism. This is a scientific inquiry into behaviour in Social Policy, and its objectives are constructivist and humanist. It is a Sociological and Social Anthropological inquiry into a social phenomenon of tremendous magnitude in National Policy, - Religioisation.

Religioisation in modern society has appeared in significant weight, mainly in the parts of the world referred to as the under-developed or the developing. The Middle Asian scene is vividly colourful of this process and *Hindutwa, Islamism, Buddhist Revival,* and *Evangelism* are its manifestations. Religion is also closely tied up with ethnicity, and hence, the escalation of ethnic consciousness in Civil Religion is parallel with Religioisation.

On the other side, in East Asia, we are witnessing a highly accelerated process of economic and commercial efflorescence, stable democracies, secularist Social Policies, and scientific and technological subcultures. In West Asia, we see a fast growing, oil-rich fundamentalism, political autocracy, and cultural ethnocentrism. It is against this backdrop that the Policy of compulsory teaching of Religion acquires significance for the Nation and its Development. Sri Lanka is a part of this Region.

Sociologically, and in comparative cross-cultural analysis, the Policy of Compulsory Teaching of Religion is adjunct to the regionally distinct process of Religioisation. The compulsory teaching of Religiosity, contributes and enhances the impact of Religioisation in the social, political, cultural and psychological domains of the Nation. Religioisation can be a part of the Political Agenda, presumably of a dominant Political Community. Religioisation promoting conflicting community and religious interests within the political ambit of the Nation, can lead to a social impact which we probably do not yet know about, without reflection and research. Religioisation may carry an impact not too welcome on Education, in the areas of Science, Technology, Entrepreneurship, Social Justice,



Democracy and Humanism. We do not know yet its significance for sure. Computing different dimensions to view these processes, and abstracting the realities behind such social processes, can most certainly help fruitful Policy Formulation.

Considering these reasons the researcher feels that this research is justified, useful, and timely. The frames of reference adopted to view the processes are **empirical, theoretical, ideological** and **comparative**. They are, by definition of being scientific, **critical**, but they cannot and do not claim prescription. The intention of the research is to contribute to the growing repository of knowledge and simultaneously, enter into dialogue with citizen.

The research should not in any way hurt the feelings of any religious person or community, institution or organisation. In fact, the research in critical Policy intervention, stands to uphold the right of every citizen to ones own right to belief, right to one's Religion, and the right to participate of its institutions. It does not trespass private ground, rather, intends to help clear it of its snares and pitfalls before Human Right, political agency for self determination, and moral obligation for the like liberties of all.

## Acknowledgements

When thinking has gone through the research process and the outcome is put down in print, a feeling of satisfaction dawns on the researcher. This satisfaction, makes the researcher retrospect the process, and in reflection, feels grateful to all those who contributed to it.

In the first instance, there comes to my mind the memories of those friends, who at the beginning of the research were highly appreciative and supportive of my interest in Educational Research. However, they were not quite in favour of the topic that I had selected for inquiry, **Religion in Education**. "*Leave Religion out*" they said "*Do something which is relevant and useful*". However, this disapproval, did not dissuade me. Rather, spurred me further to chase the very same research area with greater conviction of its value and relevance. The researcher felt that inquiry into Religion could be untraditional, yet may open up important areas of hitherto unexplored territory. I am indeed grateful to them for getting me to think along these lines, although, quite in contrast to their points of view.

This research was just not data collection and analysis. The researcher lived in the sources of the Data and within these sources were his friends. And, among the friends, there were those who closely participated in the thought processes that developed into the research. Two of my friends who were very much interested in me undertaking this inquiry into Religion in Education were, K.G. Kulasena and Dhammasiri Soysa. The motivation I got from them indeed needs special comment. I am very grateful.

Then there were also other friends, who made me feel that I was doing something useful, although they did not quite agree with me in all what I was hunching about. Nevertheless, they went all the way to help me collect data, review opinion, and participate in discussion on the ideological aspects of the research.

One such friend was U.K.G. Punchi Banda, a man of science, who in discussions with me on the subject, maintained an unadulterated sociological attitude, by separating the domains of personal belief from science.

The other was Gemunu Sri Gamage a man of religion and philosophy, with whom it was possible to discuss anything controversial in complete detachment. And then, Jayatissa Perera whose eye for meticulous detail and sense of precision, raised many a critical issue regarding the subject. Affectionate mention is recounted here, of the contribution of K.D.D. Percival, who in addition to his continuing dialogue on the research, voluntarily and willingly listened to my manuscript for any need in grammatical straightening out.

Then again, I owe a word of thanks to T.D.D. Gunasekara, of the National Institute of Education Library Services, who, +*'intrigued'* with the idea of researching on Religion, obtained for me, all the literature that I wanted. I am also thankful to Sisira Liyanage of the DEMD, NIE, who not only encouraged me in my work, but also gave me all the official *'back up'* that was necessary for post-graduate work, while still in professional service.

Then there were my students by official definition, but in fact, *intellectual partners* in the practice of my teaching at the Institute, who in addition to the dialogue as well the controversies they had with me, assisted me as *'go between'* to obtain information and establish contacts. Their experiences and the information they provided, added to the edifice of the research.

From among them to whom my thanks are offered, special mention is made of P. Vithanage, who not only obtained for me valuable information but also assisted me in many aspects of conducting the Research.

Again there was Upali Munasinghe who participated in the Research process in similar manner, helping me in the analysis of the Data.

Last but not least, a very big word of thanks go to my Supervisor, Professor Nandasena Ratnapala, without whose intervention this research would never have been raised to the status of a post-graduate Document. An accomplished writer and a researcher of the *'rara avis'* category, I was happy to be supervised by him, a teacher *par excellence*. In usual practice of post-graduate research, Supervisors are often *'terrible'*. They know their subject matter indeed, but little of the human aspect of supervision. In this context, the researcher is reminded of his first attempt at post-graduate research as far back as 1963, which after an unhappy encounter with the Supervisor, ended in jettison. To add to it, the researcher recollects the memory of a fellow student of his at the

University of Oxford, 1971, who being told by the Supervisor, "*my dear K.B.K., I am afraid you will have to rewrite most of it*" ended in depression, and that put an end, both to the research as well the student.

On the contrary, Professor Ratnapala's supervision was a treat; a student-centered facilitator approach, nevertheless, with a friendly grip, which did not loosen until the researcher had finished the job. I am certain that there are many such students and dissertations that will vouch for my opinion. Professor Ratnapala deserves the biggest slab of thanks, particularly on behalf of the cause of promoting research, whatever, whoever.

Lastly, I thank all those who did not fall under the categories mentioned above for reasons of forgetting or other, but remember on their own, the assistance they gave. I extend my thanks to all of them.

Then, at last the manuscript was ready and the job of putting it to type-script was entrusted to Suneetha De Silva an accomplished Data Entry specialist. However, being too busy herself she arranged for a colleague of hers, W.M. Dammika to take over the work. I am very grateful to Dhammika for all the pains and patience with which she accomplished the task. Herself being a student of Sociology and comfortably familiar with the terminology, dexterously transformed the staccato manuscript into readable print, — I reckon with thanks her valued contribution.

No. 78, Veyangoda Road  
Minuwangoda

*"A first requirement of scientific educational research is for methodological strategies that do not simply test and refine scientific knowledge, but rather expose and eliminate the inadequacies of the beliefs and values that are implicit in educational practice regarded as self-evidently true by educational practitioners. For, it is only by so challenging current educational certainties that the interpretations and judgements of educators will become more coherent and less dependant on the prejudices and dogma that permeate un-reflective educational thinking".*

*Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, 1988*

## CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

## The Focus

The process of **Development** viewed in broad perspective, is a phenomenon of **change** and **growth**; a change in the prevailing structures, and a growth in the direction of aspired ideologies. It is a **path** in the direction of ever-changing and ever re-stating ideas and aspirations of a society. Such a changing process, in sociological terms, is a **transformation**; a transformation of the prevailing structures of society, in all its many and varied specialisations. It is a process of overall change and adjustment, and this transformation takes place in all the systems that comprise the Nation; the **economic, political, technological and social**. The **social** in this transformation is the area of focus selected for the research.

However, the **social** is a very broad area of a Nation's life. It is an area of life which is very vast, and its intensive and extensive spread when taken as a whole, would not render feasibly, to the facile understanding of the **transformation**. Nor does its diversity allow meaningful chop up in analysis. Therefore, a smaller area of a differentiated '**social**' was marked out for the analysis.

The small area of the '**social**' marked out was the **Educational Curriculum**; a unit of expression in **National Policy**. This element of **National Education Policy** and its implementation the **Educational Curriculum**, was the focus of analysis, evaluation and measurement against the imperatives of **Development**. That is, such phenomena, the **Educational Curriculum of the National Education Policy**, was then, viewed and weighed in assessment of the rational and logistic requirements of the **Development Process**. Accordingly, in evaluation, it was observed that some factors influencing the functioning of the **Curriculum** exerted **constraints** on the **Development Process**. These factors in succinct conception were, **traditionalism, differential vested interest, political inertia, bureaucratic lethargy, professional mediocrity, ethnic racism, lingual communitiness, factional rivalry and compulsive religiosity**. Out of these, this research studied the factor of **compulsive religiosity**, the phenomenon of the compulsory teaching of **Religion** in **National Education Policy**.

The teaching of Religion is an element in the Curriculum which is **compulsory**. It allows no choice or alternative to the student. The Policy does not allow a choice, even to the parent or guardian. The learning of Religion, or the submission of the student to the process of being inculcated in the tenets and practices of the Religion through teaching, is implemented in schools through Policy directives. These directives are stipulated in the Constitution, Acts of Parliament, Ordinances, Education Law, Ministerial and Departmental Circulars, Convention and Practice. According to these stipulations, the student is compulsorily subjected to a learning of religion as described and enunciated in the National Curriculum.

### The Objectives

The objective of the study was essentially two fold. One was to gather information and light up the realities behind the phenomenon of teaching religion under the directions of National Education Policy. The other was to evaluate the phenomenon, against the rationality and logistics of the Development Process. In professional terms and in the style of the inquiry, this study is both an **Ethnography** as much an **Evaluation**. It is a **critical evaluation of a phenomenon, studied and understood through empirical inquiry, mainly in participant observation and in interpretive social analysis.**

The compulsory teaching of religion in National Policy from year one to year eleven, and the inclusion of a variety of religious observances and ritual practices at co-curricular, extra-curricular and hidden curricular activities, was the scope of the study.

Teaching the parent's religion at school was **National Policy** from as far back as 1943, but it was made compulsory for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level), only from 1972 (Ref. Cir: 65/75 of 7/5/72 MOE). However, teaching religion in schools was given a prominent place since the Independence of 1948, and religious activities in the schools received an impetus from a political and Ministerial push, after the Nationalisation of schools in 1962 (Act of Parliament, 1962). In consequence, the component of religious instruction in the Curriculum came to be enhanced and developed in accordance with the political thinking, associated with National Policy of the time (Ref. SLFP manifesto 1955). National Policy on the main, was presumed to be the wish of the Polity, and it was considered justificatory as it was supposed to reflect the ideas, values, and aspirations, of the Nation. However, it is not clearly established as to whether the political thinking of the time reflected the wishes of the Polity.