

**Human Rights and Reconciliation
in the Post-Conflict Multicultural
Society in Sri Lanka**

Human Rights and Reconciliation in the Post-Conflict Multicultural Society in Sri Lanka

Edited By

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First Edition - 2022

ISBN 978-624-00-1985-9

Page Setting by:
Sanu Creation
076-7502625

Cover Design by:
Prof. Sudarshana Bandara
Dept. of Fine Arts
University of Peradeniya

Published by:
S. Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd.
661/665/675, P. de S. Kularatne Mawatha, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

Printed by:
Chathura Printers
69, Kumaradasa Place, Wellampitiya, Sri Lanka.

24215/8151/200

Preface

In 2016, when the University of Peradeniya and the University of Southeast Norway (USN) in 2016 started working on the proposal for a joint development project in higher education on the topic Human rights and reconciliation in a post conflict multicultural society, it was much needed at the end of a long period of civil conflict in Sri Lanka. Given the time and context, the topic was timely. The project was selected for funding by the Norwegian center for Internationalisation in Higher education (SIU) now HK-Dir.

The project is jointly conducted by the Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Peradeniya and the Department of Culture, Religion and the Social Sciences of the University of Southeast Norway (USN) since 2017. The primary objective of the Project is to promote education, research and professional practice in the fields of human rights, reconciliation and inter-religious understanding in a post-conflict multicultural society.

Through the project, we have successfully established a master's degree program in Human rights and multiculturalism at the PGIHS, UoP. The program provided opportunities for student exchange, and over 40 students spent a semester or more at the USN in the well-established MSc program in Human rights and multiculturalism, with credit transfer. Further staff-exchanges gave opportunity for academic discussions and collaborative work. There has been a mutual exchange of ideas, learning opportunities, and for the staff to gain a deeper understanding that may lead to future collaborations.

This edited volume is one of the outcomes of the collaborative research of participants from both institutions, focusing on State, Politics and Human Rights in the Context of Post-conflict Sri Lanka. As with the project itself, the volume reflects a transdisciplinary approach to the topics of human rights and diversity. We extend our appreciation to the two editors, all contributors and reviewers bringing this volume to completion.

We acknowledge the funding from the Norwegian agency, which has made this project possible. We also extend our thanks to the PGIHS at UoP and the IKRS at USN for supporting the project, and colleagues at both universities who have supported the project in various capacities. These include academics who have contributed to the project with their expertise and knowledge, and administrative staff who have helped with organization and facilitating travel and meetings and more.

As a part of our project, we have met with and appreciated the input and information received from NGOS, researchers and the human rights commission. These included: WOMEN, Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Plan international, and more. Our sincere thanks for their hospitality and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences.

Further, a special word of thanks is due to Deshabandu Sirisumana Godage (Chairman of the Godage International Publishers), his beloved wife and the staff of S. Godage & Brothers Publishers (PVT) Ltd, in Sri Lanka for the publishing work.

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Pahalawattage Don Premasiri is Emeritus Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. He obtained a Ph.D. from the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1980 in Comparative Philosophy for the thesis titled “Moral Evaluation in Early Buddhism: From the Perspective of Western Philosophical Analysis.” Prof. Premasiri served in the Department of Pali and Buddhist Civilization for a period of 13 years from 1963-1976 after which he served the Department of Philosophy of the University of Peradeniya for 20 years from 1976 to 1996. In 1996, he assumed duties as the Cadre Chair in the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies and served in that capacity until 2006, the year of his retirement. His main research interests are in the areas of Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Ethics and Buddhist Psychology. Prof. Premasiri has served as a Visiting Professor in reputed Universities in the USA, Singapore, Malaysia, India and in Norway. He has contributed nearly twenty-five articles to the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism and many research papers relating to Buddhist Ethics, Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Psychology and Comparative Philosophy to reputed journals.

Gamini Samaranayake

Gamini Samaranayake was a Professor of Political Science at the Dept. of Political Science at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. He joined the academic staff at the same Dept. in 1977 and obtained a Masters degree researching on the “Role of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the Politics of Sri Lanka” in 1983. His PhD title was “Political Violence in Sri Lanka: A Comparative Analysis of the JVP and the LTTE from 1971 to 1987”. His PhD was submitted to the University of St. Andrews, Scotland in 1991. The crux of his research finding was that political violence in Sri Lanka is a dual conflict attributed to both ethnic and social milieu. Building on his argument on the nature of conflict in Sri Lanka, he conducted studies on various aspects of conflict and conflict resolution and has published in scholarly journals. He has served as the Vice Chancellor at the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, the Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and as an Ambassador for Sri Lanka in the Philippines. Currently, he is engaged in Postgraduate teaching at the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Peradeniya.

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Introduction

Ådne Valen-Sendstad
Lena Lybæk
Jeewaka Saman Kumara

The partnership program “Human rights and reconciliation in a post-conflict multicultural society” (2017-2023) between the University of Peradeniya and the University of South-Eastern Norway is funded by the Norwegian Partnership Programme for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART). The project was initiated in 2016. The topic and aims of the project were timely. At the time of writing the proposal, Sri Lanka was still going through “post-war recovery” after the violent end to the civil war in 2009. In 2016 the country was in the midst of inclusive efforts to develop a new constitution with the aims to consider the interests of all Sri Lankan groups, a promising development that was aborted in 2019. (Pushparajah & Balamayuran, 2022)

The NORPART funding scheme supports mainly international mobility projects and educational development activities between Norwegian Higher education institutions and partner institutions in the global south. The overriding objectives of the program is to increase internationalisation, enhance the relevance and quality in higher education programs, and boost international student and staff mobility. (DIKU, 2022) Connecting the post graduate institute of the humanities and social sciences at UoP and the staff connected with USN’s MSc program in Human rights and multiculturalism, the main efforts of the project were directed at staff and student mobility and establishing an MA in human rights and multiculturalism in Peradeniya. These activities have proven highly successful, impacting educational activities and content at both institutions, and the careers and individual lives of students and staff involved.

Several national and international events have posed challenges to implementing the project. In particular, the initiation of joint research efforts suffered as a result of university workers strikes in 2018, the Easter Sunday bombings 21 April 2019, and the subsequent two-year covid pandemic. These events all impacted the activities of the project, posed restrictions on mobility and threatened continuity. The present volume is a testimony to the dedication of the partners, and individual scholars, to the project, and contributes to knowledge of human rights and cultural diversity.

Given the different contexts in which the institutions live and work, both the topics we have chosen to engage with-human rights, multiculturalism and reconciliation, and the ideals of internationalisation in higher education, are contentious. Through the project, we have not attempted to negotiate and establish a common understanding of these. Rather, becoming exposed to various positions, reflections, and understandings in the course of the project activities, has contributed to a wider understanding of their complexity, both with regard to theoretical foundations, academic discourses and empirical situations. Also, international and national events in both Norway and Sri Lanka during the years of the project, have prompted critical engagement with theories and issues at its centre and a deepened understanding of how individuals, local communities and nations are affected by normative economic, social and political practices, provoking inquiries related to the study of human rights, multiculturalism and reconciliation.

Relating these processes to increased internationalisation and enhanced quality in education, one can say that the project has contributed to a renewed concretization and contextualization of the study of human rights and multiculturalism, and more inclusive curricula in our respective master programs. Faculty and student mobility has, despite a two-year gap due to local covid-19 lock-downs, and international travel restrictions, provided the possibility for studying and learning in an international community. In an age that praises digital platforms and online learning possibilities, it is significant that the simultaneous and co-locational encounter between individuals and groups have for some, been transformational, in particular with regard to their understanding of the other, and of past and present ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. (Cf. Kaalen, 2017)

The project has adopted a wide, cross-disciplinary understanding of multiculturalism, both in its descriptive and its normative content. This wide understanding is also evident in the various topics represented in the articles in this volume. Multiculturalism as a descriptive term, can be said to denote the presence and coexistence of various cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic groups in a particular society or geographical region. In a more normative political sense, multiculturalism can be said to denote the policies, regulations and attitudes that accommodate the inclusion, integration and participation of various cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic groups in a particular polity. Multiculturalism in this latter sense is concerned with difference and matters of diversity, (Modood) and how diversity is approached ethically, institutionally, and politically. It is in this latter sense that the contributions in this volume are understood. While multiculturalism in a political sense often is connected to western liberal democratic societies concerned with the accommodation of indigenous societies, religious minorities or diaspora communities (e.g. Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1997), in our understanding, diversity is a central feature of any society. The question then, is how this diversity: ethnic, religious, or other, is approached in a given society,-either historically, politically, socially or ethically. Issues of conflict, marginalization and social justice (Young, 1990) is therefore relevant to the study of multiculturalism, including questions of race, disability, gender, children, and persons who identify within the LGBTQI umbrella.

Several issues and concepts are prevalent in the study of human rights, reconciliation and multiculturalism, dependent on historical and political situations and setting. Cultural heritage and identities are central concepts: what are the stories we tell about ourselves and of each other? How do our practices, convictions and histories, past and present wrongs, form our identities and self-understanding? How are those identities acknowledged, recognized and affirmed, socially or politically? Related to these are questions of representation and participation. How are persons belonging to a specific social group represented, in narratives about each other, in cultural products like art and media? How do social power relations and positions influence these representations? Who is given a voice, place and position to influence and act on their own behalf either in their own lives, or in matters of communal

or political concern? In the present volume, these questions and issues are addressed in the context of education, language policies, reconciliation, and sustainability and social justice. They concern women's and children's participation, and how persons with disabilities are viewed and given a place in society.

The theory and practice of reconciliation in deeply divided societies is a field of peacebuilding that has received serious attention from scholars and practitioners alike in recent decades because of the worldwide increase in the number of post-conflict settings where violence or antagonism continues to fester (Skaar 2013). Reconciliation was a part of the transitional justice debate. In the context of conflicts, the question of reconciliation arises from the occurrence of violence between communities which damages the relations between them, making future coexistence extremely difficult. In the post-conflict setting of Sri Lanka, there has been critical debate on the role that reconciliation can play in uniting the country. Since the end of the civil war in 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken several steps to promote a discourse on reconciliation, the theory and practice of the reconciliation process including rehabilitation and reintegration programs. During the years between 2009 and 2022 Sri Lanka faced the same challenges, with some positive achievements, as in most other societies. Some authors of this edited volume have discussed this as a critical matter related to both reconciliations attempts and its main precondition known as the 'transitional justice' aspect.

In the current project, human rights are regarded as relevant instruments for reconciliation. In a political and moral reading of human rights, they entail recognition of rights for oneself as well as the rights of others. This is a core dimension in reconciliation in a society split by conflicts, and at the same time a huge challenge. Human rights are not fulfilled by signing international conventions. To transform human rights, for them to be realized for marginalized and minorities groups, is an ongoing process. Further, how the resources and opportunities are distributed among groups in a country is vital for peaceful coexistence.

Human rights are individual rights, but to be able to realize them it is also necessary to look at the structures of a society. Some of the chapters in

this book address the impact of social structures on societies, and how these relate to coexistence and justice. In order for reconciliation to take place, it is important to localize these dimensions.

In the history of human rights, raising awareness about human wrongs has had a major focus. The progress made in the sphere of human rights through the last three centuries, is the result of reaction to oppression and suffering. On the one hand, human rights have become answers to oppressions. On the other hand, they have contributed to raising awareness about other oppressive structures, or groups that experiences sufferings. The progress of rights continues to develop understanding of other and new types of oppressions.

The first rights concerning only white men from the upper classes, have been applied to more and more groups of people. Slaves formed one of the first groups, followed by the working-class people, people of color, women, children, indigenous and disabled people. Human rights documents and conventions have multiplied, in order to be more inclusive and bring rights to new groups of people and bring new aspects of life into human rights. The first proposition of children's rights was adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations and named as the Geneva Declaration. Children were given protection and provided for, but they were not given a legal status or rights to participation. What started as a short list of five rights has become a full convention covering multiple aspects important for children and their status. The convention on the rights of the child in 1989 is an example on the progress of human rights. Children are granted a voice also in political issues, - a topic in one of the chapters in the current book. They have rights to be heard in matters that concern them both personally and politically.

The Rights movement took long steps forward in the 19th century, very much driven by interest groups like the abolitionist groups in USA from 1830-1870 that worked against slavery. This has continued and in modern times. NGOs have taken a leading role in the push for realization of human rights and for new rights, a topic discussed in the book in the context of Sri Lanka.

Education and questions related to language are important for reconciliation in a multi lingual country like Sri Lanka with Sinhala and Tamil.

The language issue has caused conflicts in Sri Lanka, and one of the chapters in the book addresses the language policy on the island. Language rights are not a strong feature in human rights. The issue has probably been sensitive for several countries in the UN system., Nevertheless, language rights are important for minorities, - in particular in a context of reconciliation. Another topic where human rights are not explicit, but very important for coexistence is what is taught in school about a country's history. How are the histories of minorities presented? Are textbooks dominated by the majority view of history? This is an issue dealt in the book.

Human rights need cultural acceptance, and in many contexts, approval and support from leaders of different religious groups to be truly integrated in a culture. This volume includes a chapter on human rights from a Buddhist perspective, an important aspect in the Sri Lankan context. Another chapter in this book problematizes local verses Universal Rights which is a long-debated topic and the chapter gives due weight to both Universal and Local Perspectives.

In the UN system, specific conventions have been developed to secure human rights for specific groups: women (1979) children (1989) and persons with disabilities (2006). We are pleased that all these groups have been given attention in the book. The situation in Sri Lanka is quite poor with regard to women's representation in political institutions. That is in the post-conflict Sri Lanka is of great importance. Women's voices are not given representation, where they can be heard, and their experiences are not properly represented. Children also struggle to be heard in vital matters for them, for example in the current climate crisis. Moreover, the rights of persons with disabilities have in Sri Lanka a long way to go before realization, - a vulnerable minority relevant in the context of this book. All the example of these are groups, the structural challenges become evident, challenges that human rights must address in order to achieve an inclusive coexistence. Access to new technology for communication with the authorities is a matter of democratic participation and in particular relevant for minority groups, discussed in the book.

The history of human rights is not a history of perfection. Human rights have not yet been fully achieved. They nevertheless contribute with norms,

inspiration and guidelines for engagement for a better world. The human rights movement is trying to catch up with vital questions for humanity. One of the current issues is the question of human impact on nature, climate change and how we deal with these challenges. These aspects are also discussed in this book.

The Book Project

The chapters in this book are written by academics who have been involved in the program. Each author or team enter the book from their academic competency and interest. The perspectives and topics are several and in different ways relevant. The initiatives have risen from below through the engagement of each participant. Together, as mentioned, the chapters cover several aspects of challenges for a more human rights friendly culture and politics in Sri Lanka. Through diverse contributions it becomes an interesting mix. Each contribution stands for the authors views and there are conflicting views and interesting tensions, a quality expected in an anthology of today.

Some of the contributions are written by established and experienced researchers and others are written by young researchers and others are written in cooperation between students and professors involved in the program, we are glad and proud to offer this opportunity for the young academics. This is in line with the intentions of the project.

Due to the significant events in Sri Lankan politics during the last few months it is important to mention, to be fair to the authors of the book, that the most of the chapters in the book were written before the uprising during the summer and autumn of 2022.

Implications of the Ethical Teachings of the Buddha for the Notion of Human Rights by P.D. Premasiri

Buddhism is the largest religion on Sri Lanka, that makes it very interesting to include a chapter on human rights from Buddhist perspectives. In the chapter P.D. Premasiri integrates human rights within the core of the Buddhist dharma and tradition. The author comments also on some concrete

human rights like the right to democracy. The author interprets democracy from how the Buddha gave guidelines for to community. There should not be one leader, but a community where the learned search to seek agreement, a kind of democracy. In the Judeo-Christian traditions the dignity is exclusively given to humans but from a Buddhist perspective this is too narrow. In Buddhism other species are also included in the matter of dignity.

Human Dignity and Nonhuman Actors by Ådne Valen-Sendstad

Human dignity has been and is in the human rights discourse a core value that is exclusively given to humans. But humans are surrounded and live by and with technology, these things have an impact and changes human lives. They are nonhuman actors. Further, the development on the planet during the last decades show more and more the impact of human activity with a climate crisis coming. Nature is another nonhuman actor, and it hits back. These nonhuman actors must be counted with and given moral value, one cannot continue to ignore their value and impact. The technologies human develops have often a great upside, but often also a great downside, that we see more and more clearly. The nonhuman actors must be calculated as they are not empty. In the chapter, the human dignity concept is taken into a theoretical, philosophical context where the traditional understating of the concept is challenged and given a broader meaning. This is important for sustainability and living conditions for future generations-for lives in dignity.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka: 1971-2020 by Gamini Samaranayake

Gamini Samaranayake has done a comparative analysis on two conflicts in Sri Lanka. The first is the phenomenon of youth unrest and social conflict in the south of the country and the second, the Tamil ethnicity based separatist conflict concentrated in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The author does not relate the conflicts to religion, but to social and ethnic issues. The argument of the author is that the Sinhala majority subscribes to the concept of a unitary state and the Tamil minority to a federal state. The conflict in the south, based among the Sinhalese youth is a movement for a socialist state

instead of the existing capitalist state. These contradictions in determining a manifestation of the dual conflict arise from common structural causes. An economic development that is equitable and inclusive remains the only solution to the existing dual conflict, is argued in the chapter.

School Children, Teaching History and Ethnic Conflict: A Normative Examination of Textbooks in Sri Lanka by Upul Abeyrathne & Athula Withanawasam

Upul Abeyrathne and Athula Withanawasam analyse school text books in history from age 6 to 11. The teaching of history is important for nation building for the children's identities developed within a teaching program under governmental control. The authors do a critical analysis of the content in the history textbooks. In the context of Sri Lanka, they are interested in how different events in the history of Sri Lanka comes through, and they find that it is dominated by the majority perspectives and that the texts books ignore several important events like for instance the youth insurrections in the 70ties and 80ties. Those are relevant topics to be taken up in the teaching of history to build a broader room for identities and also for student coming from different minorities; "the themes of the history text books have failed to present a true description of the history of Sri Lanka and have not been able to create space for the students to critically reflect upon the present and the future drawing upon accurate accounts of the past". They are looking for a way to teach Sri Lankan history that can be of help for the minorities too. This is also a way to transform the history telling of the majority.

Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour? A Critical Analysis of Sri Lanka's Challenges Implementing SDG16 by Babriela Mezzanotti & Piyumani Panchali Ranasinghe

In the chapter the authors critically analyse the resent policies in Sri Lanka in particular two documents, the policy programs "Vision 2025" from 2015 and "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" from 2019. The analysis critically evaluates how the authorities in the country have followed up on SDG, in particular goal 16. The targets of SDG 16 steer three specific themes:

a) peace, premiering the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies; b) justice, in terms of ensuring access to justice for all; and c) inclusion, in terms of creating accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The chapter is based on a critical discourse analysis. The study in particular finds that the key policy documents pioneered by the Rajapaksa regime in 2019 show omissions of the SDG 16 in the country. The ideological shift exhibited by the reforms made in the governance structures signal the authoritarian political model that had risen in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Rajapaksa government that came into power in 2019.

Walking the Tightrope: Sri Lankan Women's Rights NGOs between Universalism and Relativism by Hasini Lecamwasam & Sivakumar Navarathnam

In this study, the authors cooperate with NGOs to get information about women's rights in Sri Lanka. The post war situation raises several issues concerning the rights of women of a particular vulnerable group. Intersectionality gives a framework for understanding of women as a mixture of several identities and roles. Women's agency is defined through the combinations of identities, the "aim is to pay attention to structural realities that condition women's multiple understandings of their rights." The chapter deals with women's rights also in the context of the universal the local, in that sense, the study is also relevant in a global context. The women will have their universal rights, but at the same time they will keep identities from the cultures they are shaped by. For women the local traditions can be oppressive and marginalizing. Confronted by this situation women should have their universal rights, but still they will to preserve their identities, which will shape how they understand their rights.

Impediments to Political Participation and Representation of Women in Sri Lanka by Shobana Rajendran & Anoma Abhayaratne

The next chapter does also work with women related issue that is women's political participation. The horizon is the current situation in the world, South Asia and in particular Sri Lanka. The chapter shows several

statistics that document that women are underrepresented at both parliamentary and local governmental levels. The status in Sri Lanka for the participation of women in political institutions is still very low. This, despite that women have gained remarkable achievements in terms of literacy, education, health, quality of life and life expectancy. The Chapter reflects on several causes for this situation; there are political obstacles, socio-economical obstacles and Ideological and psychological hindrances. The major barriers for equal representation of women in Sri Lanka are the current political culture male domination and the lack of internal democracy within political parties. It is necessary to challenge these ideological and practical obstacles for women and claim politics as a domain where both men and women can equally participate. Women in the political field need to create a space where they can challenge the male-dominated structure within the party.

Role of E-Government in Public Services Delivery in Sri Lanka: A Review by OG Dayaratna-Banda & Nipuni Dissanayake

This chapter review and discusses the implementation of digital technologies in government, the contribution of e-government efficiency and the effectiveness of public services delivery. The existing empirical studies concerning advanced economies show that e-government has contributed to significantly improving public administration. However, there is a lack of studies that evaluate the implementation of e-government, its effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of public services delivery in Sri Lanka, and the prevailing institutional, social and cultural impediments to implementing e-government in Sri Lanka. The introduction of IT into the government's functions will not automatically impact the improvement of public services. It significantly depends on the public services orientation of the government and social structures so that governments should be mindful of citizens' interests, values and needs in designing public services delivery mechanisms. Digital technologies can contribute a space for communication between citizens and authorities, in particular for marginalized and minorities.

Linguistic Concerns and Minorities in Public Administration: A Study with Special Focus on Empowering Linguistic Rights in Post-war Sri Lanka by Athambawa Sarjoon

Another difficult topic in the Sri Lanka context is the language policies with clear Sinhalese majority and equally clear minority with the Tamil speaking minority, due to the politicization of language policy it has become a powerful manifestation of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict and managed to occupy the centre-stage of Sri Lankan politics immediately after independence. The chapter present the stages and periods of language policies from independence up to our time, and show the many facets and difficulties the language issue have represents. Although the Tamil language is legally recognized as an official language to be used in administration of public affairs equal to Sinhala, responsible authorities have failed to implement the Tamil language provisions in the official language policy in public administration at both the central and local levels. The author argues for trilingualism, where all the students in school learn the minority as well as the majority language and the former colonial language-English.

Globalizing Human Rights: The Role of NGOs in Protecting and Promoting Human Rights in Sri Lanka by Saravanapanathan Baskaran & Ramesh Ramasamy

The study aims to provide better understanding of the work and the contribution given by NGOs in the field of human rights in Sri Lanka. Scholarly works on the topic have provided little attention to demonstrate the contribution rendered by NGOs and their impact on the human rights spheres. Thus, the present chapter aims to fulfill the lacuna in the existing literature by providing theoretical and empirical insights on the role of NGOs in Sri Lanka towards the creation of human rights culture and norms. The special perspectives that the chapter addresses is in particular the role the NGO's in promoting human rights in Sri Lanka. The authors do a thorough discussion of the different phases and challenges the NGO's have faced in Sri Lanka. The NGO has a prominent role to play, to put pressure on the government in order to create to more human rights friendly politics.

The Right to Participation: Reflections on Young People’s Participation in Climate Protests in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka by Piyumani Panchali Ranasinghe & Ådne Valen-Sendstad

The chapter explores children’s rights to participation anchored in Article 12 of the UNCRC. The material examples for discussion are the school strikers in the United Kingdom (UK) and in Sri Lanka; the focus is on the ‘Stop Ecocide’ climate protest, which was held on the 19th of March 2021. Children have voices and they need spaces to communicate, express their opinions. Further they need an audience and have an impact or influence on the decisions taken. The importance of assuring a ‘space’ for young people to express views freely involves an obligation on the part of the State to facilitate the process of expressing views, irrespective of the medium in which young people express their views. One key consideration in such assurance is also ensuring that the space provided for the expression of views are free from any rebuke or reprisal. During the ‘Stop Ecocide’ climate protest, the adult decision-makers took immediate steps to remove the mural painted by children, who were expressing their sentiments against climate change through a visual medium. Participation in the form of protests is not only considered as an inherent right of young people, but also as a right that places a legally binding obligation on States to assure that legal and pedagogical barriers to participation are duly addressed.

Human Rights Status of Persons with Disabilities in Sri Lanka: Challenges and Opportunities by Jeewaka Saman Kumara

The fundamental questions that the chapter seeks to answer are: (01) What are the national and provincial level policies and institutional frameworks for enhancing the human rights status of persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka? (02) What are human rights challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka at the personal, familial, and societal levels with regard to their disability?, (03) Do the national policies of the Government of Sri Lanka help to foster positive attitudes about persons with disabilities’ capabilities and their roles in the community?, (04) What are the policy options before the Government of Sri Lanka that can be applied to overcome

some human rights-based issues faced by persons with disabilities? The study is based on a combination of interviews and statistical information. The author shows that there are significant challenges for people with different types of disabilities. The study reveals among several findings that persons with disabilities anticipate challenges in their ability to fulfill their future aspirations for employment in both the public and the private sector owing to a lack of awareness and sensitivity as well as apathy among prospective employers. When compared with right to education and right to health care, majority of them held a negative attitude towards the realization of some sensitive human rights such as sexuality, reproductivity, equality before the law and equal protection by the law and political participation.

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