Social Plurality and Development with Disparity in the Post-colonial Sri Lanka
Limits and Scope for Compatibility

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Sri Lanka is a classic case of democratic-unitary political system, which has been evolved since the colonial period in a plural society. The plural character of the society has sufficient rationale for the introduction of diversified development policy, but majority community always opposed any substantive measure and, thus, ethnic and linguistic minorities got alienated and have been striving for greater autonomy. Such autonomy has not been granted. It has been resulted into the demand for separate homeland leading to secession. The state apparatus resisted such a demand through the coercive measures at its disposal, which have been proved counter- productive. However, certain steps have been undertaken in order to harmonize diverse perceptions and interests. The state always remained in the catch-22 situation between the perceptions of the minority and majority communities. The unitary character of the polity has been considered non-negotiable, but plural character of the society aggravated the demand for greater autonomy. Policies of the successive governments in the post-colonial period remained ambivalent in dealing with the social plurality and, thus, resulted into development with disparity.

An attempt has, therefore, been made in the paper to analyze both political and administrative (structural) dimensions of the development strategy and objectives vis-a-vis social plurality. The interaction of both reveals the intricacies involved in the crisis situation. The demand for parity resulted into cosmetic administrative changes, which again facilitated the political movement leading to fissiparous tendencies. However, socially desirable and politically acceptable development policy is yet to be enforced. The paper, therefore, identifies several limitations in the introduction of such a development policy and explores the scope for development strategy, which is based on parity and, thus contributes to the peaceful resolution of ethnic fratricidal war in the plural society traditionally known as resplendent island-society.

Key Words: Democratic-unitary political system, Homeland, Catch –22 situation, Development disparity, Ethnic fratricidal war

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