

Rumors as a Political Instrument: Transformation of Interpersonal Rivalry to Inter-Ethnic Riot: A Study Based on Riot in Mawanella 2001

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The rumor is one important means of mobilizing force for conflict. It work as a justification for resorting to violence. The problem was “increasing the density of the ethnic riot by rumors”. Objective was finding out how rumors pave the way for expand communal rivalries to inter-ethnic riot. The present study is an exploratory which describes the ethnic relations and rivalries in ethnic township of Mawanella, Sri Lanka. It was based on primary and secondary data. Tools employed in collecting data include discussion with key informants, and others in face to face contact in the process of data collection and observation. The findings were, through pre – riots, an attempt had been made to arouse ethnic sentiments. An ethnic crowd are not known to each other personally and imaginary. So, a threat aimed at a member of the same ethnic group that they belong to is considered as a threat at them. The attempt made by the pre – riot rumors had been to cater such emotions. By the present emotion revealed, what could be interpreted is, that riot leaders of both Sinhalese and Muslim communities, have made an attempt to support. Some rumors have used to adopt religious fervor as an instrument to retaliate. In analysing the nature of the various rumors spreading during the post – riot situations, it looks like designing to continue the stressful conditions without a break. Rumors had been fabricated by the spoilers in conflicting situation; they were politicians, extremist religious leaders or robbers and thieves. Conclusion of the study are Rumors are structurally embedded in the riot situation and they facilitate communal violence, in many ways, because they are satisfactory and useful to rioters and their leaders, and efforts to counter rumors to misdirected and it promote either involvement or none involvement. Rumors are employed by both sides to mobilize the members of ethnic communities to face real or imagined damages for the people as a community and the cultural symbols of the community by the said to be enemy community.

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