

## Religious Harmony: An Harbinger of Peace and Tranquillity in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka as a nation has nurtured four major religions. Buddhism as the religion of the majority community has as its adherents about 66 percent of the population of the island. The Hindus constitute roughly 18.5 percent of the population. The Christians and the Muslims constitute about 8.4 and 6.7 percent respectively of the population. Beginning from its early history till the colonial phase, the people from different religions have lived together in proper harmony and contributed to the prosperity of the state.

As the basic philosophy of all religions is to spread the message of peace, harmony and human bonding, the colonial powers in Sri Lanka have not succeeded in widening the gulf among different religious groups. When the country became independent, some of the ruling elites in order to strengthen their vote bank and win cheap popularity tried to play the religion card of using one community against the other by creating some animosity among them. But in the long run, using the religions on narrow considerations have generated more tensions in the political and social fabric of the island. The paper will try to examine the basic philosophy of the four major religions in Sri Lanka and will identify their areas of convergence. It will also examine the adverse impact of politicisation of religions by the ruling elites. A holistic effort will be made to minimize the scope of exploiting different religions on partisan considerations which will lead to a congenial atmosphere for good governance in Sri Lanka.

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