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Embedded Peace in an Ethnic-Conflict Narrative: The Quaker Vision

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Peace and security are two ardent desires of human beings, yet conflict and violence are integral features of human society. Working for peace and security leads one to work against conflict, violence and insecurity by promoting ethical values. Peace Studies has become an interdisciplinary field, which evolved from the philosophy of pacifism that sought an end to war and conflict with all their devastating consequences.

Thus, the goal of peace is a must, yet in many parts of the world it is complex and difficult to attain. To attain peace for the well-being of human society in the twenty-first century, we have seen non-violent means of resistance and programs for conflict resolution that enhanced the prospects for sustainable peace. The international community has broadly illuminated such programs for pacification, whose goal is the ultimate elimination of war in war-ridden societies that have been badly devastated by lethal weapons and continue to suffer from internal and external antagonism and post-conflict trauma. Looking at the causes that have invited catastrophes in the world of the twentieth and twenty-first century, peace advocates have not only concentrated on final solutions for attaining sustainable peace and security, but also promoted various missions developed by academics in the Western world who investigated alternative permanent remedies to solve the social problems that led to conflict.

This article focuses on the importance of Quakerism, initiated four hundred years ago by George Fox in Great Britain with a mission to pacify people who were regressing into war and to promote an idealistic society where every common citizen can expect to live life peacefully. In light of this mission, this article analyzes the work of the Sri Lankan novelist Nihal De Silva. His novel *The Road from Elephant Pass* tells the story of a Sinhalese soldier and a Tamil rebel, two antagonists who journey towards what in the end is new life, a resolution that saves themselves and others. Although the author is not a Quaker, his novel can be said to illuminate a Quaker philosophy that can give solace in the war-ridden Jaffna peninsula.

According to Dandelion, with the help of the Quakers' philosophy, the war-ridden society can be transformed into a peaceful one. Its tenets "which emerged out of their ideas of spiritual equality, oppose war and work for peace, as well as offer a social witness." (Dandelion, 2008, p. 1) It offers new theological insights and new social settings by which many warring societies can internalize concepts of togetherness rather than alienation. It mirrors what we find in the novel, where two antagonistic forces – Sinhalese and Tamil, personified in Sri Lankan Captain Wasatha and Tamil militant Kamala, are on the way of accepting the need of togetherness and to put aside their ethnic groups' alienation.

Dandelion seeks to illuminate the twenty-first century's need of peace and solidarity for the well-being of all people who are fractured by ethnic conflict and the desire to destroy the other's status even at the sacrifice of themselves. The philosophy of the Quakers can teach such ethnic people to realize the importance of brotherhood and peace with "spiritual equality of everyone." It illuminates the importance of everlasting peace and to prevent the causes of war, to bring an ultimate solution to ethnic conflict and promote the value of peace across the globe.

Quakerism: a Doctrine for Peace

Quakerism is full of important testimonies to truth, equality, peace, simplicity, and ideal community. Its creed is fairness and its theology promotes common ground and humanism that is distant from any kind of discrimination. Touhidul Islam, Assistant Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict in University of Dhaka, asserts:

Pacifism is a founding block of Quakerism. The cornerstone of pacifism is that all war is always wrong and should never be resorted to regardless of the consequences of abstaining from fighting. It makes the assumption that war is always an irrational and inhuman way to solve disputes." (Islam, 2013, p. 138)

Pacifism, therefore, as a basic doctrine of Quakerism, has been an important and effective principle for disarming an armed struggle and a way of establishing peace in conflict-ridden zones around the world.

The potential of Quakerism for the unfolding of peace comes from the fact that it combines social fairness, ecological integrity, a sustainable economy and provides what is ultimately a pacifying dimension on warring phenomena. It has a singular focus on the well-being of human communities and Earth's whole commonwealth life. Primarily, the concept of Quakerism is based on the teaching of Jesus Christ. The name was coined by George Fox, who declared that for the establishment of peace and harmony in the warring society of his time, people should abstain from fighting. Quaker pacifists believe that war is evil and morally wrong. The main motto of this doctrine is "not fighting, but suffering in order to bring spiritual reforms." (Islam, 2013, p. 139) It can bring the antagonistic groups into peaceful and harmonious relationship so that they could pursue a healthy life.

Matt Rosen writes that Quakers' refraining from war and often actively opposing it is to give a "peace testimony"... a testimony against war, and a testimony to the possibility and goodness of peaceful lives" that would render war unthinkable and meaningless in the present world that seeks peace and solidarity among the diverse people living across the globe. (Rosen, 2022, p. 1) Montemaggi, while showing the work of Quakers to initiate peace and solidarity, has equally highlighted Quakerism's sense of acceptance, advocating freedom from conventional theological ideas and freedom to be spiritual seekers who eschew judgmental and doctrinal views. This affords the liberal morality that promotes "inclusivity to those who have felt marginalized." (Montemaggi, 2018, p. 1) It is a spirituality of contemplation that transforms the self so that it can embrace the marginalized.

In the beginning, Quakers considered themselves a part of Christianity, but later it challenged the church for its political role in supporting war and propagating warlike ideas in a war-ridden society. Its political philosophers, thinkers and researchers from different walks of life and academic fields wrote widely, always with positive views on world peace. Thus, Quakerism became a movement to discard war and conflict and enhance peace and harmony in the society. Elaborating this argument, Kenneth Boulding states:

The movement goes back a long time, and it inherits a long tradition of philosophical, historical, and literary studies of war and peace, the classical literature of many societies, and the study of international law and political philosophy. Thinkers such as Erasmus, Grotius, Kant, William Penn, and so on represent a long history of human thought and concern about the problems of war and peace. (Boulding, 2002, p. 140)

With that intellectual background, the innovative ideas that the Quakers pursued were actually very legitimate, as they called for peace in Europe and later in other parts of the world. What was thought in the beginning to be about Christian peace was applied to human relationships in general and became a humanist movement that related to all humanity.

Philosophers like Morris Mitchell and Kenneth Boulding took this movement as a movement for human betterment and pacification of warring communities. They brought this idea into discussions about positive scenarios of social and political development. Although applying it in many non-Quaker contexts, their ideas of human betterment, “come into the socio-economic dialogue from this Quaker source. It is another Quaker meme.” (Helmuth, 2014, p.3) Thus, Quakerism has become a movement to soothe rebellion and promote peaceful norms.

Furthermore, Quakerism appeals for perfection of doing such works, as the Quakers are still considered perfectionists. They believe that “life without sin can be lived on earth and they set about rather deliberately to organize a society to do this. It was this aspect of Quakerism which so shocked its more pessimistic contemporaries.” (Boulding, 2002, p. 9) It is a lifestyle one chooses for himself or herself, one that is worth living even in conflict-hit areas.

Further, Penny Collony argues Quakerism promotes constructive change across four dimensions: personal, relational, structural and cultural, which when they occur can transform war into peace and make that peace sustainable for a long time. The actual Quakers can “contribute towards the constructive and peaceful resolution of conflict.” (Collony, 2013, p. i) Its motto is about converting thoughts of war to conceptions of peace and its peaceful propagation.

John Bellers, a veteran of Quakerism, elucidates what is required for human betterment for sustainable peace in the war-threatened society. He discusses the value of universal education, vocational training, public healthcare, social fairness, good governance, international peacemaking etc. Discussing his work, Collony asserts, “He sees the beginning of the potential of Quakerism with regard to influencing the common good of the human prospect.” (Collony, 2013, p. 1) This vision of right relationship among different ethnic groups permeates the entire ethical horizon of spiritual development, which evokes a sense of equilibrium and calls for a peaceful existence.

The Road to Elephant Pass, an Outcome of Ethnic Conflict

The plot of the novel is set against the background of the Sri Lankan civil war between the government security forces, led mostly by Sinhalese, and the Tamil separatists called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE). The beginning of the novel shows the arrest of the Tamil militant Kamala Velaithan, “a senior woman activist who has turned against the movement,” by Wasantha Ratnayake, a captain in Sri Lankan army, “at a checkpoint near Pallai on the main road from Elephant Pass to Jaffna.” (De Silva, 2006, p. 1) With an intention to deceive and harm the security forces, she says she has some important information about her leader Pravakaran, which she will disclose to his superior officer at the army headquarters in Colombo. He is assigned to take her to the headquarters in a jeep.

As their journey begins, the Tigers attack them and “gunfire raked the vehicle.” (p. 9) After leaving the broken vehicle, they cross rebel territory and face many other terrible incidents on their way to Colombo. They pass through the dry zone and dense jungle full of wild animals. They suffer hunger, thirsts and injuries, and encounter other ethnic rebels.

Along the way, they share their bitter experiences of the civil war. Kamala describes how her family was killed by the Sinhala army. As they have arguments and come to understand each other’s feelings they come closer to each other, and when they finally arrive in Colombo they have the dream of living together.

Kamala had been given a secret plan to accomplish, but she could not keep it. She reveals it to Wasantha, which makes him very angry with her, but for the sake of love, he forgives her. Now his concern is only her safety, but that he is unable to tell the truth about her to his officers. They end up both betraying their higher authorities. Both characters develop compassion for each other’s communities. He is able to send her Canada and safety, while he has to go back to Elephant Pass to fight against the Tigers, where he goes missing at the end of the novel.

In most ethnic conflicts, the basic sources of resentment and aggression are issues related to ethnic identity that are amplified by political and economic discrimination. Sri Lanka is no exception. A religiously and ethnically heterogeneous land, it has faced a dangerously lethal identity crisis ever since it was declared free from British colonization in 1948. The minority Tamils live under discriminatory laws imposed by Sinhalese majority and have been badly treated in the terms of political and economic resources for many years. The lack of equity led the Tamils to take up arms in the form of the extremist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), which raised demands for full autonomy and secession. Elucidating the consequences of the conflict, Asoka Bandarage writes,

The armed struggle between the Sri Lankan government and the secessionist LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, also known as the Tamil Tigers) has turned Sri Lanka into one of the most dangerous places on earth. A vicious territorial struggle has been going on in the northern and eastern regions, while the entire island is threatened by suicide bombings and other deadly attacks. Since 1983, 70,000 people, the majority of them Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslims civilians, have been killed due to the conflict. (Bandarage, 2009, p. 1)

The conflict has continued for more than thirty years and caused the deaths of thousands of Sri Lankans, including some prime ministers and other important leaders. Delineating the root causes of the Sri Lankan conflict, Sehar Mushtaq explains, “Identity is one of several fundamental human needs that underlie many intractable conflicts. Identity is the primary issue in most racial and ethnic conflicts.” (Mushtaq, 2012, p. 202)

Many Sri Lankan writers have been illuminating this issue, including Shyam Selvadurai, A. Sivanandan, Punyakante Wijenaik, C. Suriyakiranan, Arthur De Zoysa and Nihal De Silva. They have written some good novels about the ongoing conflict, like *Funny Boy*, *When Memory Dies*, *An Enemy Within*, *Kilali Crossing*, *No Longer My Child*, and of course, *The Road from Elephant Pass*. Thus, Nihal De Silva’s *The Road from Elephant Pass*, written against the background of the Sri Lankan civil war between Sinhalese and Tamils, brings out how issues related to ethnic conflict have been handled in fiction.

Specifically concerning this novel’s theme of the possibility of reconciliation and harmony, Thangarajah Jeevahan states:

The main aim of this novel was to bring out through fiction how the issue of ethnic conflict can be overcome. The novel can be analyzed as presenting the view that by developing mutual understanding among communities, all the barriers like race and ethnicity can be wiped out. This novel’s highlighting how both its main characters, Wasantha and Kamala, were reformed after love and mutual understanding arose in them points to the hope that similar reformations can occur within the communities and create ethnic harmony. (Jeevahan, 2014, p. 414)

One thing that can be noticed here is the author’s skillful representation of the ethnic conflict through the viewpoints of both Kamala, a Tamil rebel whose only mission is to dismantle the foundation of Sinhalese government and who is fighting for a separate state, and of

Wasantha, a loyal nationalistic military officer who sees his duty as saving ordinary citizens from the attacks of the rebels and bringing peace to prevail across the nation. The effectiveness of the characters' rhetoric is "enhanced by presenting opposing views on the conflict" (Hinriksson, 2014, p. 152). This is the novelist's aim: to present through the conflict between Kamala and Wasantha the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese.

The Road from Elephant Pass: a Search for Peace

The over-arching Quaker perspective on peacebuilding is to approach it by seeking transformation to a constructive harmonious relationship. This fits well with literature on building sustainable peace. In contrast to the traditional Western-centric paradigm of peacebuilding, Collony argues, "the four aspects of Quakers' approach: truth, equality, peace, and solidarity in peacebuilding put social reconstruction to the fore and embrace universal humanitarian ideals." (Collony, 2013, p. ii). Such outcomes are characteristic of the peace building process practiced by the Quakers, a lesser-known non-proselytizing religious movement whose tradition is rooted in personal, social and political transformation. Their work contributes to the mounting body of evidence that religious actors, given certain constraints, have the potential to contribute towards the constructive and peaceful resolution of conflict.

Within this view, it is important to note that one should not confuse human betterment with the idea of progress. The latter has generally been seen as the continual availability of an increasing diversity of consumer goods, the pursuit of ever-increasing convenience, and the attainment of ever-higher levels of personal care and security. And now, one must add, instantly available and continuous entertainment as an emerging category in this utopian dream world that is consuming the planet.

The Road from Elephant Pass was written in 2003, and that year it was awarded the Gratiaen prize and the State Literary Award for the best Sri Lankan literary work in English. The Gratiaen Trust which awards the prize was set up on the initiative of Michael Ondaatje after his book *The English Patient* was awarded the Booker Prize. (Jeevahan, 2014) Let us look at the novel's plot line more closely.

The novel opens with Wasantha, the Sinhalese army captain waiting for the woman LTTE activist Kamala Velaithan who has supposedly turned against them. The opening scene is set in Elephant Pass, a key place in the battlefield which controlled the Vanni district (an area under the control of the LTTE) and the Jaffna peninsula. The first meeting of Wasantha and Kamala was not a pleasant one for either of them.

This beginning shows clearly how the novelist brings out the central issue, namely the ethnic conflict that is a crucial problem where there is a lack of mutual understanding and peace in the country. This is in line with what Montemaggi says, namely that people of diverse religions and identities and who are fighting for recognition still need to be understood, as they might be indifferent to religion or believe without belonging. (Montemaggi, 2018)

Here we can see the relevance of Quakerism, because "the fundamental character of Quakerism today is of prescriptive pluralism, where 'truth' can be known only "personally, partially, or provisionally." (Dandelion, 1996, p. 35). Hence, we can have an idea of how these two people who were enemies as individuals can forget the feud in which they are enmeshed and can start a new life together.

The idea of the Quakers is to search for truth. This can be seen in the Sinhalese captain Wasantha, whose task is to take the rebel, Kamala, to Jaffna and from there to Colombo, where he is to hand her over to the army headquarters. The vehicle in which they are travelling comes under attack, and Piyasena the driver and the woman soldier who accompanied them are killed on the spot. Wasantha and Kamala escape fortunately. Without a vehicle, Wasantha and Kamala take various modes of transport to reach Colombo. During twelve nights when they have to spend all their time together, they discuss various issues, including the central issue. Each describes how Sinhala army and Tamil rebels respectively destroyed each other's property and took as many lives as they could.

It is this seeking that is prescriptive for transformation. Thereby, the "possibility of seeking in multiple directions and subsequent pluralism and difference within the group becomes a norm and a boundary." (Dandelion, 2008, p. 83). The emphasis on individual experience allows diversity, as long as it is framed within a continuous spiritual search rather than any form of certainty.

As the time gets on, having criticized each other's people's actions, they commence understanding the compulsions of both sides and realize that not all people in their enemy's groups are vicious. What the novel suggests is that only by repenting for what has been done and forgiving the other for what has happened can they begin to restore peace and harmony between the communities. This is illustrated through the words of Kamala: "I'm sorry, captain... You say, there's been no violence against Tamils in seventeen years, so it is ok. Forget about the past, you can live here peacefully as long as you behave yourself." (De Silva, 2003, p. 154).

Later on, the novel lifts up the one important concept that mutual understanding between the two ethnic groups can lead to a solution for the conflict; that war is not the solution that will end the problem and restore peace and harmony in the country. The key point is that beyond ethnicity and enmity, what wins at the end is humanity and love. These are essential to do away any kind of discrimination from the warring groups.

As Quakers corporately express their life of faith by refraining from war and opposing it time and again, Kamala and Wasantha are also seen to be refraining from the war. They are behaving in their personal life like the Quakers, who have "conscientiously objected to military conscription, engaged in civil disobedience directed at war and its preparation, and supported processes of reconciliation and recovery" (Rosen, 2022, p. 1). In modern Quakerism, this corporate expression of faith is known as the 'Peace Testimony.'

The use of the survivor motif as a means of revealing the protagonists' characters in the novel sounds good. After they have gone through life-threatening encounters in the jungle, during which they save each other's lives, the two protagonists unwittingly come to understand each other and care for each other. Reaching across cultural and ethnic boundaries in order to survive transforms their previous alienation and enmity into intimacy and understanding. This emphasis on the possibility of a renewed amity and peaceful coexistence between the two warring ethnic groups sound pleasant at all.

Significantly, the reader is presented with a gallery of images of the male ego depicted in heroic proportions where male supremacy is highly accentuated. Applauding this condition, Arny Aurangasri Hinriksson writes, "The heroic metaphors create the impression that the Captain, although a military officer, has never slain wantonly or stained his hand with innocent blood but only in self-defense." (Hinriksson, 2014, p. 157) Violence among men for the cause of chivalry is a traditional gender marker, and this is demonstrated by the Captain killing the attempted rapist to save Kamala. What the captain has done to save Kamala's dignity opens the possibility of unification and pacification of their rivalry.

In this manner, the Captain is not presented as a ruthless soldier crushed in spirit by the brutal regimentation of military life; neither is he embittered by the deception, hypocrisy and cruelty that one finds in pursuit of war aims. This opens the way for feelings of love and pacifying emotions to arise within him. In his eagerness to use masculine imagery, the author further "imbues the Captain with virtues close to Western ideals of masculinity." (p. 157) This ultimately rescues both to undertake the path of struggle together.

Gradually, the hatred and misunderstanding between them falls away and mutual understanding and love evolves. This is clear when Wasantha says, "She started giggling. It spoiled the whole mood, but I think that was when the barriers between us finally came down." (de Silva, 2003, p. 348). The key message is the reformation within the rival communities that will lead to a solution to the ethnic conflict and end all the hatred and misunderstanding. The dialogue spoken by Wasantha better clarifies this:

How many thousands of my countrymen and their children, parents and lovers taken in for questioning in the same way? How many real people, each loved and cherished by someone, had been taken away to be broken and brutalized? And all in the name of security! How many victims had found it useless to scream out the truth because no one believed them till they had been taken to the unbearable limit of pain? (p. 410)

The novelist is successful in bringing out the fact that love and compassion can solve the long-standing problems that have prevailed in the warring communities. Towards the end of the novel, when both meet at the headquarters, their conversation clearly shows the concern towards each other and pain of separation in their minds.

“You worried about me, didn’t you?”

“Yes... I wouldn’t want to live through the last two days again.”

“I am so sorry Wasu... I have caused you so much pain and it was all my fault.

“That’s all in the past. I’m just happy you are all right.” (p. 423)

When Wasantha told her that he had to go back to Elephant Pass and join the troops there, the reply of Kamala, “Please Wasu, please take care! Don’t try to be a hero. Just come out of there alive” (p. 424), reveals her love and concern for him. In the end, both of them had to confront feelings of separation and think about whether there would be any possibility of a future life together.

In the beginning, when presenting the first physical release of their love, both seem to have brave illusions about each other, especially as the character of the Captain has been established as that of a chivalric soldier and Kamala as an antagonistic force to him. Explaining their pathos and duality, Hinriksson further elaborates, “Although he has played the part of a heroic protector during the most part of the journey, they do not take a vow of eternal fidelity nor give the impression that a vital marriage is imminent or even possible.” (Hinriksson, 2014, p. 160) The resolution of the confusion over the question of peace between them is seen when this final joining of body and soul is depicted as “an erasure of earlier discord, stemming from ethnic prejudices, and finally as a kind of epiphany.” (p. 160).

Once the emotional height of the moment has worn off after their brief sexual encounter, Kamala’s safety and welfare again become the Captain’s prime concerns. The Captain’s concern also reinforces his own gratifying role as the protector, and thus a subtle finesse is accorded to his character.

He knows that her situation as a traitor to her leader and a deserter of the movement is potentially dangerous: “The Tigers would summarily execute any villager suspected of collaborating with government troops.” (de Silva, 2003, p. 419) She is also presented as cognizant of the risks and the repercussions that her actions would invariably entail. This yields some positive outcomes. As their friendship gets stronger, they learn to trust each other and discuss their family backgrounds, their personal pasts and their ambitions for the future. She too becomes “concerned about the dangers that he will face while fighting the terrorists in the North.” (Hinriksson, 2014, p. 160) One can easily anticipate that their proximity to the warring rivals would lead to horrendous situations in the future.

While looking into the essence of the plot, de Silva is seen unrelentingly in pursuit of an elusive future in a predominantly violent landscape; his view is trained on the possibility of pacification of enmity. In doing so, “he moves us increasingly to dangerous realms, into the unknown, to an unpredictable terrain where no assumptions are possible.” (p. 157). The mental and emotional state of the main characters, from which the reader would only expect lethal consequences, gradually aligns with positive ones, due to the common, savagely threatening circumstances that they face together in the unfamiliar surroundings of the forest park.

Sometimes it happens that villainous circumstances support and enhance the sufferers. Such conditions arise when the protagonists are pitted in conflict with wild animals and renegade soldiers hiding in the park, and not against each other, which gradually pulls them closer. The full arresting imagery in the narrative of an attacking sloth bear, an encounter with a leopard, and with a herd of charging wild buffaloes helps to tie all the incidents all together. During their risk-laden trek, “Kamala saves the Captain’s life by alerting him to the close presence of a lone and enraged rogue elephant.” (Hinriksson, 2014, p. 157) There is increasing physical intimacy when they snatch each other from imminent harm, which leads them to further closeness. Thus, in the wilderness context the novel establishes significant sexual symbolism, from which it weaves the possibility of love. This symbolism points to pacification and intimacy among the rival groups, whereby people living in such communities can live peacefully in the future.

From the very beginning until the end, Wasantha is portrayed as Kamala’s savior who sacrifices himself for her. De Silva is able to weave a plot that captures their intimacy together with the ruthlessness of the ideologies of the Tigers and Sinhalese army. His concern about peace and solidarity can be seen from his dialogue, “‘What morality are you talking about? The civilians we saved that day were Tamils, every one of them,’ I told her. ‘Don’t innocent victims have rights as well? We had a duty to protect them. We saved their lives.’” (De Silva, 2006, p. 196). To follow the path of peace and reconciliation so that both ethnic groups can live together, Wasantha highlights a historical fact and appeals for solidarity when he says,

Even if, for the sake of the argument, we accept that the Sinhala came here first, do you think they can now claim exclusive rights to the entirety of the land, after both races have lived here for over two thousand years? Do you realize that by that argument the land should belong exclusively to the tribal people? (p. 153)

Here he is speaking the views of De Silva himself.

The most important scenario that unfolds at the end of the novel is that resolution of conflict and reconciliation of differences are feasible through mutual experience and regard to each other. This, in fact, is the principal teaching of Quakerism. Otherwise, it all would seem implausible. Apart from racial differences and enmity, what stands out in the story is humanity, pacification and love, the ultimate goal of all creeds. Enmity and ethnic difference disappear gradually in both Wasantha and Kamala, and finally they become reformed characters, a meme to those who still strive to live in turmoil.

On one level the novel deals with the theme of ethnic conflict and its impact on both the Sinhala and Tamil communities, but on the other hand it elaborates the enormous possibility of peace and love among the rival groups that have a long history of conflict. The novel vividly portrays the attitude of both communities regarding their grievances against the other; it highlights their viewpoints and their stands on the issues that sparked the conflict. Yet the novel also points to the essence of peace and the revolution in attitudes that can lead to it. It holds up the hope that mutual understanding between these communities can lead to a permanent resolution of the ongoing ethnic conflict, and it reminds us that killing each other is not a solution that can bring an end to the ethnic conflict and restore peace in the country.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the main purpose of this article is to bring out how the issue of ethnic conflict can be solved through spreading love and peace. This is the essence of Quakerism that cools the passions of hatred. The novel unfolds one great possibility, which is that only mutual

understanding and efforts at building positive peace among the rival communities can pave the way to lasting ethnic harmony. Hatred and enmity only lead to conflict and become crucial factors for division. Yet, their formation that took place between Captain Wasantha and the rebel Kamala during the course of their journey reveals that for ethnic peace and harmony to prevail, the same reformation should take place within communities.

The unbiased and balanced nature of the novel is an eye-opener for those who always see bad in the good. It is an appropriate and a valuable contribution towards the process of pacification of anger and hatred and for building bridges between the two dissenting communities. Despite the fact that Wasantha is Sinhalese, he sees that the attitudes of the majority of Sri Lanka is responsible for the sectarian violence that has spread across the country during the last decades. It is evident that his liberal judgment in characterizing the situation is delivered from a cultivated moral standpoint.

Above all, the novel conveys the message that truth, reconciliation, equity and pacification as well as resolution of the long-standing conflicts are best pursued through mutual understanding, communal collaboration, trust, love, compassion, and above all, peaceful reconciliation.

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