

# The Role of Religious Textbooks in Sri Lankan Schools in Promoting Social Relationship

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**Abstract:** Sri Lanka is a multicultural country composed of the societies such as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Catholics and Christians. It is seen that the contemporary society diverges from the footing of social reconciliation due to the responsiveness to violence, disparity, and economic inequity and affected by the disparity in region and ethnicity. This concept of reconciliation should be educated among individuals, families, and society. The hypothesis of this study is that if this concept of reconciliation is sowed during the childhood, the future of Sri Lanka is prosperous. The objective of this study is to assess and analyse the concept of reconciliation defined in the religious text of Grade 10 and recommend the strategies and suggestions to build up the ethnic coherence. The data used in this data are collected from the primary and secondary sources. It is found in this study that there is an exclusive unit seen in the textbook of Buddhist religion. The ethnic reconciliation is sowed directly and indirectly in five places and three places respectively in the textbook. In the textbook of Hinduism religion, the concept of ethnic reconciliation is seen indirectly in the three places. It is seen straightforwardly and indirectly in the three places and in the four places respectively in the textbook of Islamic religion. In the textbook of Christianity, the concept of ethnic reconciliation is stated directly and indirectly in the three places and in the two places respectively. In the textbook of Catholic religion, the ethnic reconciliation is stated directly and indirectly in one place and in the three places respectively. In addition, it is found that it indicates the insufficiency of the concept of ethnic reconciliation in the textbooks of the religion. It is recommended to design an exclusive subject for the ethnic reconciliation in the school textbooks and suggest educational tours in the schools motivating the ethnic reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Sri Lanka, Religious Subject, Textbooks, Ethnic Reconciliation, School

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is a country with the multi ethnic groups. Therefore, the activities to maintain a good interpersonal relationship among the multi ethnic groups in Sri Lanka initiated from the ancient times. Ethnic reconciliation means “the various ethnic groups live with the peace and harmony” (Somanda N.D)<sup>1</sup>.

In general, it is hard to find a definition for ethnic reconciliation in the report of Reconciliation Commission (2011), the terms such as reconciliation and ethnic reconciliation are used in substitution of each other. Further,

according to Abeyakunasekera and Kunaratne (2012), it is defined as the strategy which minimizes the root causes without raising the repeated conflicts; succeeding the mind and hearts of fighters; building the peace and harmony among the affected communities<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the reconciliation is stressed among the various ethnic groups.

The many of the invasions were carried out into Sri Lanka. The education is the strategy which is used by Portuguese to disseminate their language and religion in Sri Lanka in 1505. They commenced schools to introduce their catholic religion among the people. After that, the Dutch who conquered Sri Lanka in 1658 used a strategy of compulsory education in order to introduce their religion.

All of them under the age of five wanted to be educated. Women education, curriculum development, leave, and the basic qualification of teachers are included in the education. The British (1798 - 1930) generated the constant legends in the education. After the first School Commission was initiated in year 1948, Sri Lanka gained its strength step by step in the political power. After the independence in 1948, a considerable number of graduates are passed out from the university after 1970. Accordingly, employment problems existed as the path to education was open. The various reforms such as the education reforms in 1972 and 1997 were enacted in Sri Lanka. C.W.W. Kannagara introduced free education in 30<sup>th</sup> May 1944 with long address. Religious education was introduced with the report of the special committee of education reforms in 1943<sup>3</sup>. The cabinet approved the religious education as compulsory and as a subject in GCE (O/L) on 11.11.1981. The objective of this study is to assess and analyse the concept of reconciliation defined in the religious text of Grade 10 and recommend the strategies and suggestions to build up the ethnic coherence.

### *Islam*

The word “Islam” means peace, harmony, obedience, and perfect dedication. The Muslims believe that Prophet Mohamed is the last messenger of the Almighty, the Prophet Adam is the first messenger of the Almighty, and the only one God is the Almighty Allah who created the universe and

<sup>2</sup> Sajeetha, T.F. (2017). *Ethnic Harmony in Post-war Sri Lanka*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318348515>.

<sup>3</sup> Nahiya.A.M.(2018) *Muslim education thinking of Shafi Marikar and contribution in Sri Lanka, Colombo*.

<sup>1</sup> Somananda, V.O. (N.D). *Role of social work in building ethnic harmony through religions practice*. <http://www.bpu.ac.lk/resources/170/>

created all the living beings and is only qualified to be worshiped. The almighty Allah says in his Holy Quran in Chapter 112 as follows:

“1. Say, “He is God, the One. 2. God, the Absolute. 3. He begets not, nor was He begotten. 4. And there is none comparable to Him.” (Al Quran)

The Islam wishes to develop the reconciliation and peace among the people with the prime consideration of the mankind. The population of the Muslims in the world is 1.8 billion. In Sri Lanka, the population of the Muslims is estimated at 9 per cent. The textbook, Islam Grade 10 consists of the theory of single god, prayers, the fundamentals of Islam such as Holy Quran and Sunnah, sub fundamentals, human rights, and neutrality.

### *Hindu Region*

Not like other religion, no body created the Hindu religion. There is no a central organization to control it. This is the religion which is composed of various beliefs, traditions, and religious books. The Hindu religion is based on the spiritual instructions of the religious leaders. All the religious activities based on the beliefs, love, and stability leads finally to the same personal feelings. Therefore, the Hindu religion encourages observing the compromise connected with the various religious thoughts and beliefs. This thought is a driving force to a Hindu to define the “permanent donation”<sup>4</sup>. The Hindu religion is considered as one of the important region and very old in the world, originated in India. This is the third major religion being followed by 950 million Hindus in the world. The textbook of Grade 10 consists of the principles of God, the values of life, Thepavelli, the traditions of Hindu marriages, and the folk literatures.

### *Christianity*

The Christianity is the religion with the concept of one God. It is based on the old Testaments with the life of Jesus Christ and his sermons. It is the largest religion in the world with the population of 33.3% of the world population. The Christianity consists of various sub divisions<sup>5</sup>. Like Judaism and Islam, the Christianity is derived from Abraham. The textbook of Grade 10 consists of the birth of Jesus Christ, Jewish traditions of the Jesus Christ, and the basic principles with the various units.

### *Catholics*

The term “Catholics” is used for the theories, the principles of charity, the holy worships, and the spiritual development. Even if this term is used for the Christianity and the Christians, it is in general used to refer the Christian Missionary. However, others are using this term to refer the Christian Missionaries since the first century.

Textbook of Grade 10 consists of the kinds of Old Testament books and New Testament books, literatures, love, and social worshipping year.

### *Buddhism*

This is the religion based on the sermons and principles of Gautama Buddha. According to the traditions of Buddhism, Buddha lived in the Indian sub-continent during 4-6 centuries. The religion Buddhism does not ensure the existence of God. The world is functioning based on the Karma criteria. The Buddhism rejects everything other than the Karma. Accordingly, this religion insists on Anicca (all the things are changing), Anatta (there is no spirit), and Dukkha (the nature of unhappiness and sadness).

Buddha is not a God. He is an independent human being. The Buddhists do not worship Buddha. But, they are respecting or memorising. In Buddhism, two divisions are allowed: elder’s school and great vehicle<sup>6</sup>.

The textbook of Grade 10 consists of the arrival of Buddha, our rights and coexistence, the Karma and its categories, and the sermons of Buddha, and good characteristics. Sri Lanka is the country with the multi ethnic groups, which currently needs the coexistence and reconciliation among the people. Even if the country got independence in 1948 from the British, it lacks the development. The reason for the under development in Sri Lanka is the ethnic conflict. The recent conflict generated in Sri Lanka is directly and indirectly leading to the ethnic conflict.

Sri Lanka government included the religious subjects into its education policy. It declared the religious subject as the compulsory. Designing the scheme of subjects with the experienced teachers, it is implemented by the government for 40 years. It exclusively recruits the teachers for the subjects. The concepts of coexistence and reconciliation should be disseminated among the students in order to make conflict free Sri Lanka. The core problem of this study is the measure of the concept of ethnic reconciliation being taught through the textbooks in the schools.

### *Objectives of the study:*

To assess and analyze the concepts of ethnic reconciliation depicted in the religious textbooks of Grade 10

To analyze the concepts depicted in the religious textbooks of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Catholic of Grade 10.

To analyze and compare the assessed concepts of ethnic reconciliation

To recommend the strategies and suggestions to build up the ethnic coherence through the religious textbooks

<sup>4</sup> Faleel.M.A.(2001). *Reconciliation between pluralistic social cultures in Sri Lanka. Kalmunai. Golden Press P:27-34*

<sup>5</sup> Faleel.M.A.(2001). *Reconciliation between pluralistic social cultures in Sri Lanka. Kalmunai. Golden Press P:35-43*

<sup>6</sup> Faleel.M.A.(2001). *Reconciliation between pluralistic social cultures in Sri Lanka. Kalmunai. Golden Press P:13-26*

### Significance of the Study

The researchers foretell that this concept of reconciliation is sowed from childhood, the future of Sri Lanka will progressive. Accordingly, his study is significant that this sort of study is not carried out before and the proposes of this study lead to establish the ethic reconciliation at school level.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the descriptive analysis by using the religious textbooks of schools. The primary sources used in this study are the discussions conducted with five subjects' teachers. The data are collected from the subject teachers over the telephone calls.

The secondary sources are listed as the religious textbooks of Grade 10, the teacher's guide, books, research papers, journals, web-based documents, and newspapers.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Even if the previous studies on ethnic reconciliation are carried out in the different angles, some of the studies are identified in relation to this study. In the literature review, the books, journals, research articles, and the various documents connected with this study are reviewed.

Fahri, MAM (2017), "*The good relationship between multi communities and guidance of Prophet Mohamed (Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam)*",

This research article is based on the objects of understanding in a correct angle the guidance of Islam connected with the good relationship among non-Muslims and propounding the Islamic guidance for the good interrelationship between the multi ethnic groups from the life pattern of the Prophet Mohamed (Sallallahu Alaihi wa sallam). This study concludes that feelings of conflict between the civilizations, politics, safeguarding economic benefits, the power of majority are the prime factors that led to the gap between the ethnic groups in the world. It is recommended in this study that the open discussion is repeatedly needed to minimize this gap.

Habeebullah, MT (2019), "*The contribution of Muslim Religious Organizations on building up the ethnic good interpersonal relationship and peace: A Study on the activities of ethnic good interpersonal relationship and peace of Kinniya Jammiyathul Ulama*",

Analyzing the contribution of Muslim religious organizations functioning at social level, recognizing the role of Kinniya Jammiyathul Ulama at activating the concepts of ethnic good relationship and peace, the challenges faced by Kinnya Jammiyathu Ulama at implementing them, and recommending the suggestions to empower their activities are the objectives of this study. It is concluded that the activities of the Jammiyathul Ulama to establish the ethnic reconciliation and peace are essential in Sri Lanka.

Risfa, MSF (2019), "*The role of Muslims to establish ethnic reconciliation in the contemporary Sri Lanka: A Study based on the Muslim community in Kalutara*",

The objectives of this study are to find the factors which are detrimental to maintain the good relationship of the Muslim with other community in Sri Lanka and recommending the ways to live with the ethnic reconciliation through the Islamic sermons. This study suggests that the good interpersonal relationship with other community can built up by activating the various ways to change the Muslim Community in the country.

Sindu S Piriya (2016), "*The contribution of Pramma Kumarikal Irrjeyogam Center to improve the social reconciliation: A study based on the Jaffna district*".

The objective of this study is to bring out the contribution of Pramma Kumarikal Irrjeyogam Center to improve the social reconciliation. Even if the awareness programme and seminars are conducted, we can't say that how these are effective to reach the society. It is concluded that when these are published through newspapers, radio, and television, the objectives can be achieved.

## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Objective

To assess and analyze the concepts of ethnic reconciliation depicted in the religious textbooks of Grade 10.

To analyze the concepts depicted in the religious textbooks of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Catholic of Grade 10.

Buddhism Grade 10 Textbook – New Syllabus

“səməva:jo' ɛvəsa:ɠu” - Unity is strength

“nəməkka:gə ko:ɠəba:jə vɪvəɠəɠə” – Unite, don't criticize.

əbe' kəm səfia: səɦədʒi:vənəjə Unit -11, p:62

“According to the teachings of Buddhism, we must be away from ill doings in order to establish unity, peach, and reconciliation and we have to develop good thoughts. The Buddhism rejects anger and revenge. The Buddha guided to behave with the religious people”

əbe' kəm səfia: səɦədʒi:vənəjə Unit -11, p:62

This curriculum explains completely about the reconciliation. At first, it is mentioned that the reconciliation means peace, harmony, and coexistence. The Buddhism mentions that these are the highest characteristics that must be equipped with the people.

Further, the Buddhism mentions not to damage other religious places and not to oppose the observances of other religions. In addition, it outlines how the people other religions must be treated. It is mentioned as follows:

“It is taught through the Buddhism and the teachings of Buddha that the same rights in which we have to follow our religion are also entitled by other religious people to enjoy. We have to behave with other people with unity and brotherhood.”

*abe' kam sahia: sahadjiv:vanaja Unit -11, p:63*

“The Buddha does not deny the teachings of other religions. However, he respected other religions along with the peace and neutrality. He said that we would be respecting other religions and would not harm other religions.”

*abe' kam sahia: sahadjiv:vanaja Unit -11, p:63*

While we look into the Grade 10 Buddhism religious textbook together, unlike any other religious textbook, there is a separate unit and four places point out directly about the ethnic reconciliation and the four places point out indirectly about the ethnic reconciliation.

Grade 10 Hinduism Textbook - New Syllabus

Of precious soul with body's flesh and bone,  
The union yields one fruit, the life of love alone.  
Explanation: They say that the union of soul and body in man is the fruit of the union of love and virtue (in a former birth)

Therefore, we must maintain love and affection with each other. We must maintain mercy on all the living beings. Those who are behaving with love and affection will get friends all over the world. The more we show love and affection, the more you can get love and affection from others.

*Values of Saivism, Unit - 3, p:16-17*

“All the good deeds done towards all the human beings and other living beings are called as cow charity”

*Dharmaa of Saivism, Unit - 25, p:157*

The above paragraph explains about the love and affection with each other and the love and affection with all the living beings. Through it, the ethnic reconciliation is mentioned indirectly.

The above statement mentions all the good deeds done towards all the human beings and other living beings are considered as a good charity. Here, the ethnic reconciliation is mentioned indirectly.

“The love and affection are the fundamentals of offerings. Since all the members of our family are embedded with the love and affection, we all act to the good deeds. Likewise, if we must maintain the love and affection with all the living beings, we will do the good deeds towards all the living beings.

“It is our duty to support and help all the human beings and other living beings”

*Dharmaa of Saivism, Unit - 25, p:158*

According to the above paragraph, helping all the human beings and other living beings and maintaining the love and affection with all the living beings are leading to the coexistence of all the human beings. This paragraph shows the ethnic reconciliation indirectly.

While considering the grade 10 Hinduism religious textbook, as we are maintaining the love and affection with others, others will maintain the love and affection with us. All the good deeds towards all the human beings and other living beings are considered as charity. Helping all the human beings and other living beings are our duties. All these statements are leading to establish the ethnic reconciliation.

Grade 10 Islam Textbook - New Syllabus

“Showing the love and affection on another person and other living beings does not reduce anything. Instead, one can get the lover and respect of others and the love Almighty Allah. It establishes the unity, reconciliation, and peace and harmony happiness, coexistence at social level”

Those who are maintaining love and affection can be categorized into two:

01. Maintaining the love and affection on the Almighty Allah.
02. Maintaining the love and affection on the living creatures.

*Good Characters on Islamic Perspective-2, Unit - 12, p:49*

The above paragraph explains that showing the love and affection on another person and other living beings is leading to establish the mutual understanding, happiness, unity, reconciliation, peace and harmony. The ethnic reconciliation is directly explained by this paragraph.

“The next stage of the showing love and affection is to show the love and affection on oneself, one’s parents, one’s relatives, neighbors, and non-Muslims”

*Good Characters on Islamic Perspective, Unit -12, p:50*

In this paragraph, it is stated that we must show the love and affection on the neighbors and non-Muslims. It insists clearly and directly on the ethnic reconciliation.

“All the human beings are equal before the law. They cannot be differentiated by the ethnicity, place, race, colour, and appearance.

All the human beings! Your Almighty is the one  
"Oh people, remember that your Load is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a black person has no superiority over a White person nor a white person has any superiority over a Black person except by piety and God consciousness (thaqwa). Indeed, the best among you is the one with the best Thaqwa.

*The Human Rights, Unit -26, p:122*



In the above paragraph, the racial differentiation cannot be generated by the race, place, colour, and appearance. It clearly and directly mentions the ethnic reconciliation.

“Further, one as a Muslim must show the love and affection on the relatives, friends, neighbors, orphans, restitutes, employees, those who live under one’s control, and non-Muslims”  
*Good Characters on Islamic Perspective, Unit -12, p:51*

In the above paragraph, it is mentioned that one must show the love and affection on the relatives, friends, neighbors, orphans, restitutes, employees, those who live under one’s control, and non-Muslims. Accordingly, the ethnic reconciliation is clearly and directly stated.

O believers! And (do) not insult those whom they invoke from other than Allah, lest they insult Allah (in) enmity without knowledge. Thus, We have made fair-seeming to every community their deed. Then to their Lord (is) their return, then He will inform them about what they used to do.  
*The Human Rights, Unit -26, p:122*

(There is) no compulsion in the religion. Surely has become distinct the right (path) from the wrong. It shows the individuals are able to follow any religion of his wish. It is the right of following any of the religion he wishes.  
*The Human Rights, Unit -26, p:123*

According to the above paragraphs, the individuals are able to follow any of the religion he wishes and it mentions by insisting on the rights and the protection of the feeling of following any of the religion and also it states the ethnic reconciliation indirectly.

“The Holy Quran mentions the preferential order of the peace and war. It prefers the peace instead of war. In Islam, the peace is compulsory and the war is exceptional. In the marriage, we have to give the preference to the believer other than disbeliever (2:21). We have to give the preference to work for the next world other than this world (16:30). These are some of the evidences.  
*Fiahul Awlavivvath. Unit -30, p:138*

In the above paragraph, the peace is preferred other than the war. In Islam, the peace is the essential and the war is exceptional. This states about the ethnic reconciliation indirectly. While looking into the Grade 10 textbook, the ethnic reconciliation is mentioned at three places indirectly.

Grade 10, Catholic New Syllabus

The services of St. Michael Rodrigo show the ethnic reconciliation of his projects, voicing for the peace and harmony is important.

“Establishing the peace and harmony between the Buddhism and Christianity religions”  
*The model of sacrifice life, Unit -15, p:75*

“Voicing for the peace and harmony”

*The model of sacrifice life, Unit -15, p:76*

In the above paragraph, the ethnic recollection is mentioned by establishing the peace and harmony between the Buddhism and Christianity.

In the list of the activities against fifth order,

“Not coming forward to establish the peace”

*Let us protect human resources, Unit -18, p:102*

Here, the ethnic reconciliation is taught considerably through the statement of “Not coming forward to establish the peace”.

“He is used to meet the people who are living in the slummy areas. He shows his mercy, love and affection for the people who are on the verge of passing away, the deserted people, the orphans, and the patients without any discrimination of religion”

*The model of sacrifice life, Unit -15, p:73*

While mentioning about Mother Theresa: The ethnic reconciliation is mentioned indirectly based on the love and affection without the discrimination of race and religion.

In the annual programme of the Church, a new suggestion of Grade 10 students was put forward. Accordingly, a programme was organized to gather the students who are unable to read and write in order to teach them. The students enthusiastically engaged with the learning activities with the approval of teacher. The people who saw the interest and enthusiasm of the students to learn provided refreshments, cool drinks, foods, and learning materials. Other children of the village who listened the messages of these students participated at this programme without the discrimination of race and religion. The teachers and the villagers felicitated the attempts of these students and encouraged further”

*Types of New Testament texts, Unit -02, p:07*

Here, the statement of “without the discrimination of race and religion” states the ethnic reconciliation.

While considering the Grade 10 Catholic religious textbook, the ethnic reconciliation are stated in three places in directly and in one place directly.

Christianity, Grade 10 New Syllabus

“As Sri Lankans, we have our own cultures and traditions. Even if they are no owned by the Christians, they are required to maintain the social relationship and identity (for example, some of the traditions connected with the Sinhala and Tamil new year, beginning of learning, naming, celebrating Pongal, Home coming, laying foundation, hanging the leaves while being infected, etc.). While the Christians are following such traditions, we have to avoid to act against the believes and sermons of the Christianity. We have to give the first place for the God and we should not give the place only owned by the God to any other objects. As Sri Lankan, we have to behave with other people to maintain the peace and harmony.

*Jesus and the Jewish Traditions, Unit -05, p:21*

“We, as the citizen of the sovereign government, must act in the services with the dedication without any discrimination of race, religion, and cast”

*Citizens of the Lord, Unit -23, p:120*

“Like Jewish society, it is accepted that Sri Lankans respects others. Jesus Christ has explained how to behave with other people. Jesus Christ stated that when we are invited for a party, we should not sit in a prime place. He explained it through an advice”

*Guide for daily life, Unit -27, p:147*

Here, as Sri Lankans, the ethnic reconciliation is directly taught by the uses of statements such as living with other people with the peace and harmony.

“Jesus Christ preferred to generate the situations of love and affection and equity by avoiding the discrimination. We also will respond to it”

*New concept for the community, Unit -09, p:43*

Here, it is to establish and teach the equality within the religion by avoiding the discriminations in the society. Instead, it is evident that it does not teach the ethnic reconciliation.

The teachings and advices of Jesus Christ are very appropriate to the contemporary society. It is an appropriate guide to live with brotherhood, helping other people, being not selfish, the changes in the life. It is essential to work with the justice, not aiming discrimination, the effectiveness, and the truth in the society. While the mistakes are found, the duties of the good citizens are to try to correct the mistakes and to develop a society with the good characteristics.

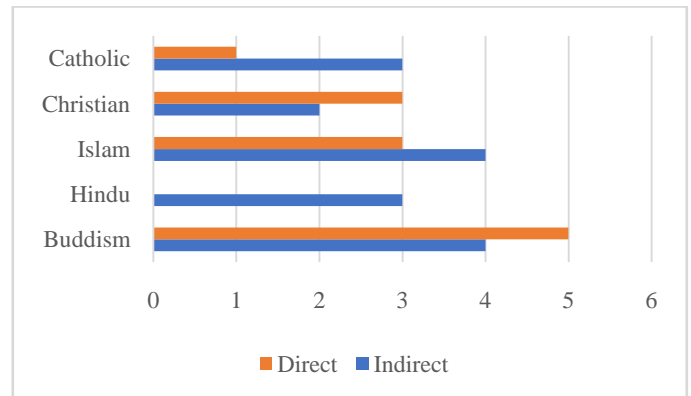
*Pioneering work, Unit -06, p:28*

Here, the uses of the words such as the brotherhood, justice, and developing the society do not lead to improve the religious reconciliation. Instead, it is to teach the social reconciliation.

While considering the Grade 10 Christianity textbook, even if the ethnic reconciliation is not a chapter or unit, in the three chapters, the ethnic reconciliation is indirectly mentioned and in the two chapters, it is mentioned directly. Therefore, the religious reconciliation is encouraged.

While the teachers of religion were interviewed, two of them told that the concepts of the ethnic reconciliation were considerably included in the Grade 10 religious’ textbook. Six of them suggested that they grieved the concepts of the ethnic reconciliation for not to be considerably included in the syllabus of Grade 10 textbook. Three of them suggested in order to include a separate unit in the Grade 10 textbook, representing the ethnic reconciliation. Three of them suggested in order to include the ethnic reconciliation as a subject in the syllabus of the Grade 10 student.

## V. CONCLUSION



The policy makers in the education prospect that the ethnic reconciliation can be established by generating the educationists and the nation can be built up by establishing the ethnic reconciliation. Their objectives should be reached to the students through the religious books. It is found that in Grade 10 Buddhism textbook, the concept of ethnic reconciliation is mentioned directly in the five places and in three places indirectly and there is one separate one unit in this book. Apart from it, the ethnic reconciliation is not mentioned in the other places. In the religious textbooks such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Catholic, there is no a separate unit. In the Hinduism textbook, the ethnic reconciliation is indirectly mentioned in the three places. In the Islam textbook, the ethnic reconciliation is directly mentioned in the three places and indirectly in the four places. In the Christianity textbook, the ethnic reconciliation is directly mentioned in the three places and indirectly in the two places. In the Catholic textbook, it is directly mentioned in one place and indirectly in the three places.

It indicates the insufficiency of the concept of the ethnic reconciliation in the religious textbooks.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

1. The concept of the ethnic reconciliation can be sowed at the understanding ages of the students through the schools by designing a separate subject for the Grade 10 students.
2. It is recommended to arrange the educational tours leading to the ethnic reconciliation.
3. It is recommended to have the seminars with the neighboring religious people in order to establish the ethnic reconciliation.
4. It is recommended to arrange the national conferences with the intention of establishing the ethnic reconciliation.

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