PICTURING
COEXISTENCE
AND CONFLICT

Learning about the Other through Grassroots Comics
Picturing Coexistence and Conflict:
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a joint initiative of
International Centre for Ethnic Studies & World Comics India
Foreword

The wall poster and eight-pager comics in this publication represent the experiences and perspectives of school children, teachers, village leaders, members of village-level women’s groups, journalists, moulavis and monks on religious and ethnic coexistence in the Galle District of Sri Lanka. This was initiated by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in partnership with World Comics India (WCI) and is part of a larger effort to promote inter-religious harmony in Sri Lanka.

Comics are used as a means of creating a space for individuals to reflect on, articulate and narrate their (sometimes inexpressible) experiences, prejudices or understanding of coexistence and the ‘other’. They are also used to facilitate talking to one another across ethnic, religious and linguistic divides through different stories. Such stories or first-hand experiences, documented in the form of comics, are powerful visual tools of change where individuals become both storytellers and agents who help others recall and critically evaluate their own experiences of suspicion, insecurity and harmony.

Following learning sessions on religious coexistence, ethnicity, gender, critical thinking, conflict resolution and the use of comics to initiate dialogue on community issues, a group of Buddhist and Muslim individuals from the Galle district formed an association, the Society for Social Change (SSC). Their aim is to engage their communities in fostering religious coexistence through dialogue and a sharing of cultural practices. A number of comics workshops were conducted in different parts of Galle over the past two years and the comics in this compilation are the result of this engagement with communities that are vulnerable to incitement or are lacking in opportunities to engage with members of other ethnic or religious communities. Comics exhibitions have also been held amongst members of different religious communities in Galle which were followed by discussions. These discussions generated several questions which demonstrated a genuine interest in learning about the other.

The comics in this collection are introspective, self-critical and reflect multiple experiences of discrimination and coexistence. A common theme that cuts across most of them is discrimination due to ignorance about the beliefs and value systems of members of other religious groups and false assumptions that are drawn as a result. Conversely, another overarching theme expressed is that coexistence is the norm and not an exception, and communities most often do live in harmony which is disturbed by external actors.

The ICES and WCI recognise the need for inter-community dialogue at grassroots level as a way of minimising conflict and resisting violent triggers. This publication is a modest attempt at exploring the potential of innovative media, created by and for the community, as a means of fostering meaningful and productive dialogue across religious and ethnic boundaries. We encourage the use of this publication in peacebuilding ventures.

Mario Gomez
Executive Director
International Centre for Ethnic Studies

Sharad Sharma
Founder & Cartoonist
World Comics India
Culture Shock: Fathima studies hard and obtains a university degree. When she attends a job interview, she is told that she can be given the job if she agrees not to wear the head-scarf to work. She says that it is her ethnic identity and she cannot give it up. She does not get the job and sadly wonders what she has done wrong and why people discriminate based on ethnic and religious differences. Story and art by F. Nufla Nizahir, Galle.
The Trap: A hunter lays a net to catch birds and three birds of different sizes get caught. One bird suggests that they get together and fly-off with the net, but two of the birds start arguing about not being able to lift the net with the other bird because it is of a different size. While they are arguing, the hunter arrives and catches them. The owl on the tree says that if they had worked together to escape without arguing about their differences, they would not have succumbed to this fate. 

Story and art by N. Ajith, Galle.
Unity that Emerged from a Fire: Two different kinds of birds argue about their right to live in a forest. The birds who live in the forest are suspicious of the immigrant birds and say that they do not want them to settle there. The immigrant birds say that they have a right to live anywhere they want. They start fighting among themselves. While this conflict goes on, there is a fire and the whole forest is burnt down. The birds get together on one tree and realise how meaningless it was for them to fight and kill each other over the forest. Story and art by Jayaweera, Galle.
Who Doesn't Know the Way? Two friends are traveling on a bus. They do not know where their stop is, but they are not afraid because they see other members of their ethnic community in the bus. One friend asks a passenger from her community for directions. The passenger laughs at her and asks her why she got onto the bus without knowing the way. The two friends feel betrayed by their own community and wonder what to do. One man calls to them and tells them that he will show them the way. The friends agree that even though the man who helped them belongs to another ethnic group, he is a good person. Story and art by Fawza, Galle.
A Cunning Man: A man sees a Muslim boy hitting a Sinhalese boy on the road. He says "I should go tell this to my master and chase Muslims away from this country." He runs towards the village shouting, "Our religion is going to be destroyed. Is there no one who will challenge this?" The villagers believe him and rush with knives to the Muslim boy’s house. Another man, who had witnessed what happened, explains that the Muslim boy is not at fault. The villagers apologise for being hasty and the troublemaker leaves in shame. Story and art by Rishad, Galle.
Shadowed Fear: Twenty six year old Mohamed had been living in harmony with everyone. When he told his Sinhalese friend Ravi that he had got a new job, Ravi was happy. Two days later there was a clash between the Sinhala and Muslim communities. When Mohamed went to work the next day, he noticed something different. When he greeted his colleague, the colleague accused him of not being a true Sri Lankan as Sri Lankans do not grow beards or wear caps. Mohamed ponders on the unfairness of the Sinhalese upholding their identity while belittling his identity. Story and art by Nasreen, Galle.
Help Needs No Religion: Fathima is hit by a drunk driver. Another motorist takes Fathima to the hospital. At the hospital, Fathima’s family condemns Sinhalese people as the drunk driver had been Sinhalese. One man reminds them that it was Sanath and Kapila (two Sinhalese men) who had brought Fathima to the hospital and donated blood. Story and art by Nafly, Galle.
Pride in Flames: Danapala and Ashrof are neighbours and one day Danapala accuses Ashrof of breaking his fence that marks the boundary between their property. Ashrof denies it, but offers to help Danapala to repair the fence. However, Danapala refuses his help and asks him to go away. One day, Danapala's house catches fire and he and his family are homeless. Ashrof invites them to live with him and Danapala bitterly regrets accusing Ashrof. Story and art by Thilanka Sampath, Galle
Language Barriers: A man hears on the news that there is peace in Jaffna and the place has become a major tourist attraction. He thinks he too should go on a tour to Jaffna with his pets, a cat and a dog. He reaches Jaffna after a 10 hour journey, but finds himself stranded because all the sign boards are in Tamil and he cannot read Tamil. His cat and dog also wonder why their master goes into restaurants but comes out without buying anything to eat. The dog says that their master does not know enough Tamil even to buy something to eat. The cat regrets coming on this tour with their master. Story and art by Delika, Galle.
Advice to a Daughter: A poor Sinhalese widow with three children decides to seek employment abroad as a housemaid. She is dismissed from her new workplace in Dubai because of her inability to speak the language. Her friend Nalin, who lives in Dubai, helps her to find another job. She writes a letter to her daughter telling her that a Hindu man helped her find a new job and advises the daughter that not everyone discriminates based on race, religion and language. Story and art by Deema Rafeek, Galle.
What Did I Do Wrong?: Amra relocates to a new town with her family and has to change schools. Her new principal tells her that she is welcome, but that her hijab is not permitted in school. So she attends a government school where the hijab is permitted, but the girls in this school treat her like an outsider because she was previously convent educated. Confused as to why she is being treated differently, Amra stops going to school. *Story and art by M. A. Ruhuma Ameer, Galle.*
From a Storm to Coexistence: Thangamani is a little girl whose family lives in a Sinhalese village. One day there is a storm and their home is completely destroyed. Thangamani’s father also injures his leg when a branch of a tree falls on him. The Sinhalese community gets together, and in two months, builds a home for Thangamani’s family. Thangamani is so happy that they have a shelter from rain and she can go to school. The Sinhalese community is happy that they could come together to build a home for this Tamil family. At the house-warming function Thangamani’s father says, “We should unite regardless of ethnic and religious divisions and not allow any ‘storm’ affect our village.”

Story and art by Upul, Galle.
Sisterhood: Nayana, Fathima and Krishna belong to Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil communities respectively and live in the same village. Krishna’s father is transferred to Jaffna and her family settles down there. Soon, war breaks out in Jaffna and Krishna’s family has to return to their former village. Both Nayana and Fathima welcome Krishna and say that they will live in harmony like children of one mother. Story and art by Malka Madubashini, Galle.
A Sip For Me Too: Ahmed, who has just been discharged from hospital, is traveling on a bus with his friend Casim. It is time to break their fast, but they do not have any water. A man seated nearby offers them a drink, but Casim warns Ahmed not to break his fast with a drink offered by a Sinhalese as it would be haram. Ahmed ignores Casim and accepts the drink. The Sinhalese man asks Ahmed why he accepted the drink despite his friend's warning. Ahmed apologises for his friend and reminds Casim that he is alive today because of the blood donated by a Sinhalese person. Casim realises his mistake and accepts the drink. Story and art by Isbahan, Galle.
Let’s Help Our Neighbours: The Helping Hands Association issued a notice that dry rations will be distributed to all poor Muslim families during the period of fasting. The next day, a Moulavi sees this notice and advises the association that it has to distribute rations to poor members of all religions and not just the Muslim community. Accordingly, dry rations were given to the poor irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation. This created a sense of unity among the community. Story and art by Muhammed Azhar, Galle.
The Secret of Unity: One day, my sister and I got onto a bus and occupied seats reserved for the clergy. When a Buddhist monk got onto the bus, we immediately offered him our seat. The monk and another passenger expressed their appreciation of our action. We replied that our religion teaches us to respect leaders of other religions. Story and art by Nusrath Shafeek, Galle.
Social Change: Two friends, one Muslim and the other Buddhist, are talking. The Buddhist girl complains that the prayers broadcast by the mosque five times a day are a nuisance. The Muslim girl reminds her friend that the temple too broadcasts sermons and the Muslim community does not complain. "But, this is our country and other communities should be under our control," the Buddhist girl replies. "Don't you think our country will prosper if we are all united?" asks the Muslim girl. The Buddhist girl thinks and then agrees that immediate action must be taken to establish unity. The Muslim girl is happy that her small question led to a significant change. *Story and art by Fazeena Nasly, Galle.*
Everyone Has Rights: The arts day is approaching and a teacher asks her students what they would like to wear this year. The class agrees to dress up as aliens. A Muslim girl asks whether she could wear her uniform instead. The student next to her retorts, “That’s not possible, we all have to dress like aliens.” The teacher consults the principal and he explains that Muslims should be allowed to follow their religious stipulations and should not be compelled to come in fancy dress. He puts up a notice in the school saying that all students have the right to express their opinions and live by the teachings of their religions. Story and art by M.A.F Fareeha, Galle.
Respect Diversity: During assembly, the principal of a school asks all the children to place their palms together for worship. A Muslim boy tells this to his mother. His mother explains to the principal that Muslims cannot place their palms together and pray. The Principal says, "It's good that you informed me." She accepts this difference and announces the next day that while Buddhist students can place their palms together to worship, students of other religions can engage in their own religious activities. Story and art by M.M.N. Mansoon, Galle.
Patriotism: A Muslim and a Sinhalese are standing for the national anthem. The Sinhala man notices that the Muslim does not sing the anthem and asks why. The Muslim explains that he knows it is the anthem, but he does not understand what the words mean. This angers the Sinhala man and he is about to hit the Muslim man, when someone stops him and explains that if the national anthem were sung in Tamil, the Muslim man would understand and sing along. Story and art by F. Risla Faiz, Galle.
Equal Rights: Shamila and Nuhaiya are walking home from school when a boy on a bicycle approaches them shouting “You can’t walk down this road wearing hijabs.” He grabs Nuhaiya’s hijab and tries to pull it off. Another man stops him and says “We should respect others’ religion like we do our own.” He also calls the police. *Story and art by M.N.F. Nafasa, Galle.*
Equal Rights: Faris and his friend wonder why their salaries have not been increased. “Is it because we are Muslim?” his friend wonders. “They haven't allowed us time to pray either.” They tell the manager that they will not come to work. The owner of the company learns of this and scolds the manager for mistreating his Muslim staff. He orders the manager to increase their salary and allow them time for prayers. The manager realises his mistake and the Muslim colleagues return to work. Story and art by M.N. Riyas Mohamed, Galle.

故事和插图：法里斯和他的朋友想知道为什么他们的工资没有增加。"这是因为他们是穆斯林吗?"他的朋友想知道。"他们不让我们有时间祈祷。"他们告诉经理，他们将不去工作。公司的老板知道了这件事，责备经理对待穆斯林员工的不公正。他命令经理增加他们的工资并允许他们祈祷。经理意识到自己的错误，他的穆斯林同事开始上班。故事和插图由M.N. Riyas Mohamed在加勒制作。
Mutual Understanding: Two friends are travelling on a bus and one friend notices that a monk and a moulavi are seated next to each other. “Those seats are reserved only for monks and not for other religious leaders,” he says. “This is the way it is in Sri Lanka.” The other friend disagrees saying that Sri Lanka is a country where different religions and ethnicities coexist. His friend thinks about it, agrees and says that Sri Lanka should set an example to the rest of the world, and each person should attempt to make this a reality. Story and art by M.I.M Izadeen.
A Lesson from a Violent Conflict: A group of Muslims try to build a mosque near a Buddhist temple and the Sinhalese in the area oppose it. This dispute leads to a violent conflict between Muslims and Buddhists and 20 people are killed. The number of deaths teaches a lesson to both sides and they regret their violent behavior. Story and art by Erandi Madhushani, Galle.
Compassion: In a Buddhist temple, the chief monk and others are planning a Dansal (almsgiving) for the upcoming Vesak festival. The chief monk suggests that a mosque be built for Muslims in a rural village. When the monks visit the village, the Muslims get scared and inquire about the nature of the visit. The chief monk tells them their plan. All the villagers oppose this plan, but a Moulavi appreciates it. After building the mosque, the chief monk says, "We all are Sri Lankans." The Muslims also see that Buddhists are kind. Story and art by Gammaththegoda Srirathana Thero, Galle.
Clarity: Ravi has to buy some groceries and his friend Kamal directs him to a good shop, but Ravi refuses to patronise the shop because it is run by a Muslim. “Don't you know that they plot against us in the mosque?” he asks Kamal. Kamal takes Ravi into the shop and asks Qadar, the shopkeeper, whether Muslims do in fact plot against the Sinhalese. Qadar says that it is not true though there are some Muslim individuals who have biased opinions and that this is an internal problem. Ravi realises that he had made an error in judgment and starts to befriend Muslims. Story and art by Najathulla, Galle.
**A Change of Heart:** Shivani has a nice home garden with all kinds of vegetables. Mala tells her mother about Shivani’s garden and the mother replies, “We do not need vegetables from Tamils. There are enough vegetables in the market.” One day Mala gets sick and the doctor advises her to eat more organic and hygienic vegetables to avoid stomachaches. Shivani’s mother gets to know of Mala’s situation and gives some vegetables to Mala. Mala’s mother realises her mistake of disliking people of other ethnic groups. *Story and art by K. H Madushika, Galle.*
Unity is Strength: There is an ethnic dispute among students in a class. When a competition of Vesak lanterns is announced, the Sinhalese students in the class work on their own and do not invite the Muslim students to help make lanterns. Despite this, the Muslim students help and the class wins the competition. The teacher explains that unity leads to victory.

Story and art by Thaleema Ifham, Galle.
Humanity: A group of Muslims goes on a trip and their vehicle breaks down. Some Sinhalese take them to a Buddhist temple and request the monk to help the Muslims with accommodation and food. The Muslims are initially unsure as to whether it is right to accept food from the monk, but they realise there is nothing wrong in doing so. They appreciate the monk's hospitality and the help extended by the Sinhalese people. *Story and art by Athulapathe Chandima Thero, Galle.*
A True Man: A man is walking on the road when he sees a Muslim and is disgusted by his beard. Suddenly, the man is hit by a car and falls on the road in pain. The Muslim assists him and the man realises that he was wrong to judge by appearance. Story and art by Risna, Galle.
Preaching on Facebook: Anwar creates a Facebook page and tells his friend that he is going to start a Facebook group which speaks ill of Buddhists. His friend discourages him saying that one Muslim's rash deed blackens the whole community. "But, there are a lot of Buddhist groups which spread hate speech about Muslims," Anwar retorts. "Not all Buddhists are like that. The ones who create such groups are as misinformed as you," his friend replies and advises Anwar to enlighten misinformed groups on Facebook instead. Story and art by S.M. Fawsan, Galle.
Racist Politics: Two politicians, one Sinhalese and the other Muslim, are campaigning among people of their own ethnic communities. The Sinhalese politician says, "Muslims are trying to take over the country. Vote for me to see an end to this. We will not hand our country over to the Muslims. We'll chase them out of this country. " The Muslim politician addresses his community saying, "If Muslims are to live in this country, you have to vote for me. We can protect our religion only if we unite." This causes conflict between the two communities and both Buddhists and Muslims attack each other. While this is going on, the Muslim and Sinhalese politicians are sharing a drink. *Story and art by S.A. Safras, Galle.*
Be United and Don't Argue Unnecessarily: A mosque announces that there will be a Haj festival event the next day and, at the same time, a Buddhist temple also announces that there will be a ceremony to invoke blessings the next day. The Buddhists ask the Muslims to reduce the volume and the Muslims refuse. This leads to conflict between the two groups. The Buddhist monks and moulavis call the two groups together and ask them to stop the violence and negotiate an agreement. The monk reminds the Buddhists that true followers of Buddhism do not espouse violence. Then, he agrees to postpone the Buddhist event to the following day and the Muslims also agree to have their event as planned. Story and art by Keeriwalawe Sangarathne Thero, Galle.
A Sermon from the Police: Two mosques in Beruwala are in conflict. Each mosque accuses the other of being contradictory to Islam and tries to drive the other out of the town. A policeman approaches the two groups and says, "If, you fight amongst yourselves, how can you expect the other communities in the town to live peacefully with you?" The Muslims realise their error and decide to unite. Story and art by A.M. Abdul Azeem, Galle.
Misunderstanding: A family is living in abject poverty because the breadwinner has fallen ill. One day the wife of the breadwinner sees a notice which says, 'If you convert to Christianity we will wipe out your sorrow.' She meets a Christian priest, shows him the notice, and tells him that her family wants to convert to Christianity to be rid of poverty. The priest warns her not to be deceived by false information and offers to help her family. Story and art by Delika, Galle.
'Qurban' (Animal Sacrifice): Two Muslims belonging to different mosques meet and ask each other how many cows they would sacrifice this Hajj. "What is it to you how many cows we slaughter? Why should I tell you?" says one. The other replies, "You slaughter several cows because of the foreign funds your mosque gets and this is why people of other religions misunderstand us." This turns into a fight and they decide to consult a moulavi. The moulavi agrees that the competition between mosques as to the number of cows they sacrifice causes grievances with members of other religious communities. "In future, let us sacrifice only what is necessary to feed the community". They all agree.
The Importance of Language: Nimal and his friends meet after a long time and start discussing politics which leads to an argument. In the middle of their dispute, Ijas suggests to his friend, "Let's go home," in Tamil. Nimal and his friend misunderstand it as an insult and are about to start a fight with Ijas. Luckily, the shop owner, who can understand Tamil, explains what Ijas said. Then, Nimal realises the importance of learning the Tamil language. Story and art by Zamil Zayan, Galle.
Let's be United Forever: Ruwan and Raheem are best friends and spend every evening playing together. When Raheem's mother calls him to go to the mosque, Ruwan asks his mother whether he can also go to the mosque with Raheem. Ruwan’s mother agrees and suggests they all go to the mosque, and that Raheem’s family can go to temple with them too. Even in their adulthood, Raheem and Ruwan continued this practice.

Story and art by Pushpa, Galle.
Realisation: The Buddhist community considers the mosque broadcasting prayers over loudspeakers as a nuisance. To compete with them, they decide to play pirith over loudspeakers which creates a lot of chaos in the community. The head priests of the mosque and the temple explain that the purpose of broadcasting prayers over loudspeakers is to inform the entire community to pray together. Story and art by Erandi, Galle.
Book Shop: A Tamil boy enters a book shop and asks for something in Tamil which the Sinhala vendor does not understand. Since the boy continues to ask questions, the vendor gets annoyed. Another man comes to the shop and explains to the vendor that the boy was asking about a discount. The vendor realises the importance of learning the Tamil language. *Story and art by J. K. Dhanushka, Galle.*
Personal Issues becoming a Religious Issue: Saman and Fahim argue about who will become the next chairman of the multi-religious committee. Right after this incident, someone attacks Saman's house, and Saman thinks that Fahim did this. Together with his friends, he burns Fahim's house down. Just before it turns into a religious problem, a villager, who saw what really happened, explains that Fahim didn't attack Saman's house. This prevents further violence. Story and art by Rishad Ufail, Galle.
Seek Clarification: A girl watches a news broadcast about the violent activities of Muslims. She rushes to her friend, Nadeesha’s, house to tell her the news. Nadeesha is concerned and decides to ask her friend Sakira to explain what is going on. On the way to Sakira’s house her head is full of the horrifying information relayed to her by her friend. Sakira realises what is wrong and explains to Nadeesha that the media sometimes reports things without a proper and complete understanding of the situation, and that this leads to conflict. Nadeesha is happy that she sought clarification from her friend. *Story and art by Sakeena, Galle.*
Jihad: A mosque announces for people to come and engage in a jihad with their conscience. A non-Muslim hears the word ‘jihad’ and instantly associates it with violence. He runs to the town shouting, “We are in danger!” The townsfolk prepare to attack the mosque. On their way, a Muslim onlooker tells them to stop and explains that the mosque called for a war with the conscience and not for a war with man. In the meantime someone calls 119, the police arrive and the people request them to arrest the moulavi of the mosque. The moulavi explains that jihad does not mean violence, but self-control. Story and art by Isbahan Sharfdeen, Galle.
Let's Not Fight: A Sinhala boy is determined to love only the Buddhist people. Thus, he deliberately looks away every day when he passes by a shop which belongs to a Muslim vendor. One day, he meets with an accident and it is the Muslim vendor who takes him to the hospital. The Sinhala boy realises how prejudiced and ignorant he was. Story and art by Seetha Manel, Galle.

Let's Not Fight: ලින්කු මුහුණක හොරෝසී ලොකුවනි බදුලක්කු මැලි. පෙරමුණුතා මගින් මූලිකයන්ට අත් මොටෝකා කරන්නේ පිළිතුරු අතර උළෙලන්ට අනීතිය පෙරමුණුතා මගින් මොටෝකා කරන්නේ පිළිතුරු අතර. අමාමයේ මහෝ අතෝකා මොටෝකා කරන්නේ පිළිතුරු අතර පෙරමුණුතා මගින් මොටෝකා කරන්නේ පිළිතුරු අතර. එම ආණ්ඩ එම ආණ්ඩ ආණ්ඩ විශේෂයෙන් පිළිතුරු අතර.
The Unseen Heart: Two passengers belonging to two different religions sit together on a train, but don’t talk to each other. The Sinhala boy thinks that the Muslim boy is rude and the Muslim boy also hesitates to talk. When a pregnant woman gets onto the bus, the Muslim boy offers his seat to her. Then the Sinhala boy realises that the Muslim boy has a big heart and they become friends. *Story and art by G.A. Thilanka Sampath, Galle.*
**Humanity:** Two friends belonging to Muslim and Sinhala ethnicities are spending time together when another person poisons the Sinhala boy and asks him to stay away from the Muslim boy. Though the Sinhala boy completely rejects and ignores the Muslim boy, it is only the Muslim friend who comes to help him when he falls off a bridge. The Sinhala boy realises what a good friend he has.

*Story and art by G.A. Thilanka Sampath, Galle.*
Realisation: A Sinhala and a Muslim father think that they can create a conflict by posting false news on Facebook. Once their children check the posts, they immediately start discriminating each other at school. The teacher and the principal call for a parents' meeting and inform the parents to be more responsible when using social media. The two fathers regret acting irresponsibly. Story and art by Wasana Ruwani, Galle.
Strategy of the Villagers: During the time of religious conflict in the country, a few members of different religions decide to take action to prevent conflict in their multi-religious village. They build a museum exhibiting the various practices, beliefs etc. of different religious groups. Children, in particular, learnt a lot after visiting this museum and this helped establish harmony in the community. Story and art by Jayaweera, Galle.
Be Cautious, Alert and Seek Clarification: The Sinhala and Muslim residents of a village live in harmony. One day an outsider asks the Sinhala leader what he thinks of the Muslim people. The leader responds that he finds nothing wrong with the Muslims and that they are good people. The outsider belongs to a political party and when he reports to his leader, the leader says that they must somehow create a rift between the Sinhala and Muslim communities of the village. "Only then can we succeed in politics," he says. The outsider goes back to the village and tries to incite conflict between the Sinhalese and the Muslims by showing the community leaders hate speech by the other community on social media. Story and art by A.C.M. Insab, Galle.
A Tamil family moves to a new village and their Sinhala neighbour greets them. The Tamil lady does not understand Sinhala, so she does not respond. The children of the two families study in the same school and are proficient in both Sinhala and Tamil. "Why doesn't your mother respond when my mother asks her a question?" the Tamil boy asks his Sinhala neighbour. "Is it because we're Tamil?" "No, please don't misunderstand," his friend responds. "My mother doesn't understand Tamil." Then, both boys decide to teach their parents Sinhala and Tamil. Soon the mothers are able to talk to each other. *Story and art by Fawza, Galle.*
Rumours: A shopkeeper is upset that nobody patronises his shop and is jealous that Nalir's shop is very popular. "I must do something about this," he says. He posts notices which say that Muslim shops sell products laced with infertility medicine. People see the notice and stop patronising Muslim shops, but they soon regret their actions because things in Nalir's shop are much cheaper than in other shops. Story and art by M.F.M. Naflly, Galle.
Gaps in Communication: Aroos is a Muslim youth working in a private company and has a very busy schedule. Halfway through his work, he realises that it is time for prayers. When he informs his supervisor that he is going for prayers, the supervisor tells him to finish his work before praying. Aroos realises that his supervisor is not aware that it takes only 5 minutes to complete prayers and he explains this to his supervisor. After that it is the supervisor who reminds him when it is time for prayers. Story and art by M.F.M. Nasreen, Galle.
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Aroos is a Muslim youth working in a private company and has a very busy schedule. Halfway through his work, he realises that it is time for prayers. When he informs his supervisor that he is going for prayers, the supervisor tells him to finish his work before praying. Aroos realises that his supervisor is not aware that it takes only 5 minutes to complete prayers and he explains this to his supervisor. After that it is the supervisor who reminds him when it is time for prayers.

Story and art by M.F.M. Nasreen, Galle.
Picturing Coexistence and Conflict: Learning about the Other through Grassroots Comics

The wall poster and eight-pager comics in this publication represent the experiences and perspectives of school children, teachers, village leaders, members of village-level women’s groups, journalists, moulavis and monks on religious and ethnic coexistence in the Galle District of Sri Lanka. The comics are introspective, self-critical and reflect multiple experiences of discrimination and communal harmony.

Initiated by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and World Comics India (WCI), this publication is a modest attempt at exploring the potential of innovative media, created by and for the community, as a means of fostering meaningful and productive dialogue across religious and ethnic boundaries.