

The Struggle for a Multilingual Future

Transcript Exercise # 1: Belonging to a City

Read the following transcript from Chapter 4 and answer the following questions:

1. Why did Faiza feel like Nadira didn't have the right to joke that she wanted to bomb Kandy?
2. Why do Nadira and Faiza want to belong to Kandy?
3. What do they associate Kandy with?
4. Can you relate to any aspects of their argument from your experience in high school?
How did you show belonging to your town or neighborhood?

“Kandy is Our Place”

Nadira and Faiza came over to sit with me near the front of the grade 10 classroom, aware that my recorder was turned on. The Hindu and Christian girls had gone to their respective religion classes, but the Muslim girls remained because their Islam teacher was on leave. Speaking loudly enough so their classmates could hear, Faiza joked that their upcoming quarterly exams would be canceled if there was a bombing in Kandy. Nadira, no doubt to steal the attention of her classmates, said that she wanted to plant a bomb in Kandy (The girl's English is in italics):

1 Nadira: enakku kaNDiyila *baamb*

I want to plant a *bomb* in Kandy.

vekkoonu(m).

enakku kaNDiyila *baamb* vekkoonu(m),

I want to plant a *bomb* in Kandy, [but...]

[aanaa...]

2 Faiza: [kaNDi engaDa naaDu.]
niinga puttaLam.
kaNDi engaDa naaDu.
3 Nadira: *Hello, Hello.*
naanu(m) poRandadu kaNDi, *birth place*
kaNDi.
4 Faiza: *Birth place* kaNDi enDadukku
niinga puttaLattula poRandiinga.
5 Nadira: puttaLattula poRakkalla *birth*
place kaNDi.
enakku kaNDikku urima irukku.
DaDaa kaNDi, maaaa daa(n) puttaLam.
naa(n) ippa kaNDiyila daa(n) iikkiReen.
naa(n) kaNDikkudaa(n) viruppam.
niinga appaDi solla elaadu.... appaDinDa
niinga baTTikola.
6 Faiza: baTTikola vaa irundattukku naa(n)
poRandadu inga daa(n).
7 Nadira: naanu(m) poRandadu inga
vaLarnda *two, three years* inga daa(n)
irundeen.
Fourth-kku daa(n) anga poonee(n).

[Kandy is our (exclusive) place.]
You're Puttalam.
Kandy is our (exclusive) place.
Hello, Hello.
The place where I was born is also Kandy,
[my] *birth place* is Kandy.
You say your *birth place* is Kandy, but you
were born in Puttalam.
I wasn't born in Puttalam, Kandy is [my]
birthplace.
I have rights to Kandy.
DaDaa is Kandy, maaaa only is
Puttalam.
I'm now in Kandy only.
It's Kandy only that I like.
You can't say it like that... If it's like that,
then you're from Batticaloa.
For being in Batticaloa, I was born here
only.
I was also born here and I grew up here only
for *two, three years*.
On the *fourth* year, I went there.

8 Faiza: sari.

Okay.

Two, three years daanee.

Two, three years only.

naa(n) irukkavee illa baTTikola vila.

I've never lived in Batticaloa.

9 Nadira: *ippa five years*-aa irukkuRee(n).

I've been [in Kandy] for *five years*.

10 Faiza: kaNDi engaDa kaNDikku

Kandy, in our (exclusive) Kandy, if

maTTu(m) edaavadu naDanduchchenDaa

something happens, I will kill Nadira

nadira va daa(n) kolluvee(n).

only.

Faiza responds to Nadira (line 2) by telling her she does not belong in Kandy because she came from Puttalam. She likely felt that Nadira did not have the right to declare that she wanted to plant a bomb—and have it taken as a joke rather than a potential threat—if she were not actually from Kandy. Although it is common for students in Sri Lanka and elsewhere to wish for a disaster so they can avoid taking exams, Nadira's statement was a little extreme with tensions already so high. There had been a bus bombing in a nearby village just four days before and the grade 10 girls had been discussing a rumor that the LTTE was planning to bomb national schools. In this interaction we see Nadira's and Faiza's criteria for claiming Kandy status, as well as how they use different varieties of Tamil and English-inflected Tamil to make this claim. After discussing their parents' respective origins (I omitted this three-second segment because the recording was unclear), Nadira continued the argument by claiming they have the same status because they both have a parent from Kandy and a parent from another area:

11 Nadira: adee maadiri daa(n) engaDa

The same way only, mom is there,

mamaa anga, DaDaa inga.

Dad is here.

Same equal aahudilla.

But not the *same, equal*.

12 Faiza: *Equal* aahaadu.

It's not *equal*.

naa(n) ingayee poRandu, ingayee valandadu.

I was born and raised here.

13 Nadira: naa(n) inga poRandu vaLandee(n)
two years.

I was born here and raised here for *two years*.

14 Faiza: naa(n) enDa baTTikola enDu vaay
toRandu sollavee maaTTee(n).

I won't even open my mouth and say I'm
from Batticaloa.

15 Nadira: naanu(m) vaay toRandu solRa illa.
Class-ila puttlam *girl* yaaraachchu irukkuRaa
enDaa oo nadira enDa.

I also didn't open my mouth and say it.

In *class* if someone asks if there is a
Puttalam *girl*, they say, "Yes, it's Nadira."

naa(n) enDaa puttlam enDu iduvarakku yaaru
kiTTayu(m) sollavee illa.

Up to now, I have never told anybody that
I'm the one from Puttalam.

Only kaNDi daa(n) solRa(n).

I say Kandy *only*.

puttlam, *I hate*.

Puttalam, *I hate*.

16 Faiza: aanaalu(m) baTTikola aakkal
muuLa kuuDa.

Even though Batticaloa people are smart ...

17 Nadira: adu ungaDa ishDam.

That is your wish.

anda niinga sonniinga appaDiyu niinga
baTTikola enDiinga.

That it is you said you are from Batticaloa
like that.

18 Faiza: baTTikola muuLa irukku enakku.

A Batticaloa brain, I have.