

# RURAL POVERTY IN SRI LANKA

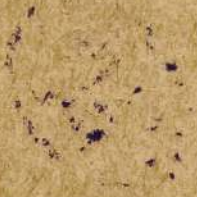
JPL



C470

ANDASENA RATNAPALA









**RURAL POVERTY  
IN  
SRI LANKA**





## **Books by the Author**

Laws of the Buddhist Order of Ceylon  
The National Heritage  
Study Service in Sarvodaya  
Community Participation in Rural Development  
The Sarvodaya Movement  
The Beggar in Sri Lanka  
Village Farms, Community Participation and the Role of Rural Credit  
Sarvodaya and the Rodiyas  
Tourism in Sri Lanka: The Social Impact  
Alcoholism in a Sinhalese Village  
Sinhalese Folklore, Folk Religion and Folklife  
New Horizons in Research Methodology  
Drug and Narcotic Dependence in Sri Lanka  
Police in Sri Lanka  
Crime and Punishment in the Buddhist Tradition (in print)



2307/21

Lat

✓

# RURAL POVERTY IN SRI LANKA

B

0

NATIONAL LIBRARY SECTION,  
MUNICIPAL LIBRARY SERVICES,  
JAFFNA.

Handwritten scribbles and lines in blue ink.

NANDASENA RATNAPALA

B



First Published 1989

© Nandasena Ratnapala (1989)

Published by the Author  
with assistance from  
NORAD

சென்னை	80173
சென்னை	362.5 RAT

The entire proceeds from the  
sale of this Book would go  
to form a Fund for Needy Students  
of Sociology at the  
University of Sri Jayawardenepura

Printed by  
Asoka Bataduwa Arachchi  
Deepanee  
464, High Level Road,  
Gangodawila - Nugegoda.  
Sri Lanka.



75163

To

**Professor Dr. P. Thoenes**

**\* A Noble Friend and a Great Source of Inspiration \***

NATIONAL LIBRARY SECTION,  
MUNICIPAL LIBRARY SERVICES,  
**JAFFNA.**







## CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	ix— x
INTRODUCTION	xi—xvi
CHAPTER I	01
The Grammar of Poverty	
CHAPTER II	
The Measurement and Definition of Poverty: Understanding Poverty in Sri Lanka.	20
CHAPTER III	
Etiology of Poverty	52
CHAPTER IV	
The War against Poverty: An assessment of Strategies adopted to fight Poverty and the impact of such Strategies.	67
CHAPTER V	
Causes of Rural Poverty: Theory and Practice	93
CHAPTER VI	
The Nine Villages	110
CHAPTER VII	
Looking back after Ten years: What insights could we gain from other countries?	213
Bibliography	231
Corrections	235



CONTENTS

1	Introduction
15	Chapter I
35	Chapter II
55	Chapter III
75	Chapter IV
95	Chapter V
115	Chapter VI
135	Chapter VII
155	Chapter VIII
175	Chapter IX
195	Chapter X
215	Chapter XI
235	Chapter XII
255	Chapter XIII
275	Chapter XIV
295	Chapter XV
315	Chapter XVI
335	Chapter XVII
355	Chapter XVIII
375	Chapter XIX
395	Chapter XX
415	Chapter XXI
435	Chapter XXII
455	Chapter XXIII
475	Chapter XXIV
495	Chapter XXV
515	Chapter XXVI
535	Chapter XXVII
555	Chapter XXVIII
575	Chapter XXIX
595	Chapter XXX
615	Chapter XXXI
635	Chapter XXXII
655	Chapter XXXIII
675	Chapter XXXIV
695	Chapter XXXV
715	Chapter XXXVI
735	Chapter XXXVII
755	Chapter XXXVIII
775	Chapter XXXIX
795	Chapter XL
815	Chapter XLI
835	Chapter XLII
855	Chapter XLIII
875	Chapter XLIV
895	Chapter XLV
915	Chapter XLVI
935	Chapter XLVII
955	Chapter XLVIII
975	Chapter XLIX
995	Chapter L



## PREFACE

The field research on Poverty was completed in 1978-79. The Report was written immediately thereafter. I have published the study as it was without changing anything except the addition of the Chapter 7.

I am grateful to Mr. B. E. Fernando who was the Director of the World Vision International then. Mr. Fernando supported me in my field work. The Manuscript was lying with him until I went on sabbatical leave to U. K. few years ago. Some of my friends who happened to read it there suggested that I should publish it. When I came back I found the interest in Poverty alleviation programmes gaining ground. I believe that in this atmosphere my study could contribute at least a minimum to the understanding of Sri Lankan Poverty.

NORAD came to my assistance in publishing this study. If not for their help I would not have been in a position to see this in print. I am therefore grateful to NORAD. According to their wish and also mine all the proceeds of this book including the royalties would be deposited at the University of Sri Jayawardene-pura to help needy Sociology students. I hope in the future to add to this Fund by way of publishing such Research works with the help of wellwishers such as NORAD.

My attempts would have been vain if I did not get the support of Mr. W. M. Leelasena at the Norwegian Embassy. He went through the book and suggested that I should add a new chapter. I willingly accepted his suggestion. Chapter 7 is the result.

My thanks are due to all the villagers who helped me in this task. They were understanding and cooperative. When I mention their social problems here it is done in order to understand the



village or the settlement in totality; this in no way minimises the value of the noble life they lead. All of them are nice human beings ever ready to help others.

My research assistants did their job exceedingly well. The students of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology assisted me a great deal. Mr. Asoka Bataduwa Arachchi with his printers did a satisfying piece of work.

I am fully aware of my own limitations (for which no one else is responsible) including the printing mistakes caused by frequent interruptions to printing. May I request the readers to point out any omissions or mistakes here so that I could gratefully correct them in a subsequent edition.

N. R.

22. 08. 89



## INTRODUCTION

Poverty has intrigued me ever since I first became a student of Anthropology and Sociology. Even in my young days I attempted to understand why some people are poor and why others are rich. Is there a way by which we can precisely measure the difference between the rich and the poor? Can we define poverty in a given social cultural context and attempt to understand what is it that had gone to create poverty? How successful are our strategies devised and sharpened to attack poverty?

It is in poverty that both Politicians and Governments are interested in all the time, at least as far as our developing countries are concerned. The political parties and politicians thrive on poverty. If not for poverty they would not be where they are now: the message they convey is for the most part to the poor who constitute the majority of the population of the country. They speak of how the sufferings of the poor could be reduced or totally eliminated, if only that particular party is elected to power. Once the Government is elected, it is again always devising policy and programmes to alleviate the sufferings of the poor until the next elections. The game goes on indefinitely and the unfortunate and luckless poor remain where they are perhaps becoming poorer than what they were at the beginning while the rich for whom no such devices or strategies are openly promulgated automatically become richer and more powerful often at the expense of the poor.

This indeed is not a position that any given political party or any government would consciously or unconsciously like to maintain. They would indeed desire that through their programmes the objective of lessening the burden of poverty would take effect. If they could alleviate the sufferings of the poor at least to a measured degree, then certainly they could concentrate on other matters of importance which demand their attention. This, however, has



not taken place, and contrary to what they have expected, Government after Government has failed in their fight against poverty. Actually what was wrong in the Governmental policy which ended in such dismal failures ?

In order to answer these questions I thought it better to study the problem of poverty in a micro setting. Nine villages or village settlements were selected and they were studied for a period of two years. The method adopted was to study the village in toto with particular reference to poverty. First of all an average yardstick was formulated from what the people thought and conceived as poverty. The people's measure was important in understanding what poverty is according to them and perceived by them. With this yardstick in hand we attempted to understand what poverty is as experienced, understood and articulated by them.

Then we attempted to examine poverty from other academic standards. The relation of poverty to the possession of resources such as land and capital and means of production, income and other assets, the level of education and general health, possession of skills and such other knowledge, were carefully collated and examined. Then came the basic needs : This was already devised and utilised to carry out programmes in the villages. The ten basic needs were taken and an attempt was made to devise a measure which could be used to quantify the extent of the satisfaction of the basic needs in the villages. If the ten basic needs are satisfied the villages have passed the poverty line. All the villages were thus measured and the quantified results were made available. This gives us a worthwhile measure to gauge the extent of poverty in any given community. The details of measurement of one village is given exhaustively so that the reader will find the meticulous steps through which we arrived at the measure.

Thereafter another device was used to measure the distance between the rich and the poor. From pragmatic experience in the villages, it was seen, how the extent and spread of poverty had a close relationship to the extent and spread of affluence in a society. The distance between the income and assets of the average poorest



and those of the average richest would be an indicator as to how deep and powerful the problem of poverty is in a given situation. Consequently an attempt is made to understand poverty through this distance, both economic and social, between the richest and the poorest in a given locality. The success of strategies devised to fight poverty could be determined by the extent such devices have successfully reduced this distance between the rich and the poor.

These measures, however, should not be taken as perfect and the final means devised to measure poverty. They need applying into more and more situations, and should improve consistently under trying conditions so that at the end we may come upon a set of precise quantitative and qualitative measures that would finally serve our purpose.

The Methodology adopted in collecting data was put into effect by making the researchers live in the villages and the village settlements for a consistent period. I myself went there from time to time, spending my time as far as possible in the village. The researchers became almost like any villager feeling, observing and experiencing life in the same way as the villagers. University Students and Research Workers from the village or nearby localities were selected, trained and put to collect data. Thus there were four "streams" of data collection:

1. The villagers themselves who were encouraged to collect their own data actually as participants.
2. The University Students and other Research Workers who after a brief training were initiated into data collection.
3. The research workers who lived in the village for more than 3 months.
4. The research workers who were highly trained and who visited the area from time to time and collected data.

The data was thus coming to me from these four main sources. This enabled me to verify the authenticity of the data which came from four different sources. When there was a problem there was my own research experience in the villages that enabled me to



pick the closest to the truth. In a way, data straining from four 'sources' acted as a filter against each other and was a very useful 'built-in' mechanism to test the veracity of the information collected.

The methodology adopted provided me with an excellent insight. It was made clear at the initial stages of my research that poverty is closely interwoven into and inseparable from all aspects of life in a given community. One cannot understand, define or measure poverty without realising it from a historical, geographical, ideological, social, economic and cultural points of view. It is mandatory for studying poverty in any given social situation to approach poverty from these stand-points without which it cannot be understood.

Poverty is a complex phenomenon that does not show itself in its various dimensions unless examined together with the fabric and pattern of the total life of a given society. All the devices and strategies so far utilised to fight poverty had never taken this fundamental factor into consideration and hence their dismal failure in effecting results. The "culture of poverty" is a complex array of patterns of behaviour that is not easy to understand. The diagnosis of the malaise of poverty, if it is to be correctly made, has to be seen in the complex dimensions found in the pattern of life of the people.

I am happy that in this study I was\* able to further my living-in experience Methodology. The researchers lived in the villages and thus experienced the life as the villagers themselves. Here I was able to effect an innovation in my living-in-experience methodology.

The villagers who were actually 'living-in' there were made use of by me. These people were there from their birth and what they have seen and experienced cannot be experienced in toto by volunteers however much developed or sophisticated our methodologies are. The problem here for me was how to tap these experiences of the villagers apropos the main problems of poverty. This

---

\* Nandasena Ratnapala, *The Beggar in Sri Lanka*, Colombo 1979.



was done by making them define what they mean by poverty and also asking them to devise the means to measure it? For example when basic needs problem propped up, I went to them, motivated them to discuss it. "How many pieces of clothing do you actually desire? Three or four or five or even more?" I allowed them to discuss, encouraging every one to participate, allowing them to arrive at a decision by themselves. When the decision was arrived at by consensus and as many villagers as possible participated in it, I accepted it.

Then there were the University students and other research workers from the village and adjoining villages. These people too were there from birth, experiencing the complex life in the village and absorbing it in a way that we, outsiders, would never be able to absorb it. These individuals were given a basic training on the problem of poverty and how to gather data pertinent and incidental to it. There was a certain richness in their data because a fact unearthed by them had round it an aura of information which only they with their intuitive grasp of the village and their roots in the socio-cultural situation could give to me.

How effectively could my Methodology gather data from people who have actually lived the experience of abject poverty as seen in this study?. In my "Beggar in Sri Lanka" I had to live-the-experience, but here they have lived the experience and it was left to me to devise ways and means of tapping the right and appropriate kind of experience from their past for the purposes of my study.

It is true that my own research workers lived in the village and applying the 'living-in-experience' themselves gathered much insight and data. But this method alone would not have been completely useful in this kind of study. It would have needed at least 5 years for my team to gather the insight and data so far gathered if only this strategy of living-in-experience methodology was adopted. Fortunately as explained earlier we were able to adopt living-in-experience methodology in a rather 'ex-post-facto' way. We succeeded in tapping the right kind of data from the villagers, that is young men and women who had been living there



from their birth. It was not done through interviewing : these villagers and young men and women did the work of collecting data on themselves and their village by themselves. It would be appropriate to say that each villager actually "self-interviewed" himself for us : I do not know a better way to put it.

This analysis of the data is done in the light of experience encountered in these nine villages, although in the discussion the national setting, particularly the rural life in Sri Lanka as represented by her villages, is not completely forgotten. The selected villages, I am sure, represent a good sample and may be, in the study of poverty in these nine villages, we have spoken of poverty in general in rural Sri Lanka.

01-01-1980



## CHAPTER I

# THE GRAMMAR OF POVERTY

### Typology of the 'Areas' or Communities selected

In Chapter VI we have given a description of the 9 'areas' selected by us for our research study. Of these Dalukana, Kebilliwela, Mayilawalana, Mahawalawatte, Udagama, Wanduressa and Wasanagama are all rural villages or settlements. Angulana, although it is closer to Colombo is more rural in its social characteristics than urban. Chitra Lane settlement, in spite of the fact that it is situated in Colombo, exhibits again predominant rural characteristics. If at all the influence of urbanisation is noticed, such influences are more emphatic in Chitra Lane and also to a certain extent at Angulana than in other settlements.

Udagama and Wanduressa are two villages which the Rodiyas, a community regarded as the lowest in the caste hierarchy, have occupied for generations. They are both new settlements in the sense that new houses have been constructed by the Government and land allocated for the Rodiyas. At Wanduressa the Rodiyas have come from neighbouring villages and occupied the houses and land allocated to them by the Government in 1958. The situation is different at Udagama where new houses were built in order to initiate the Prime Minister's Village Re-awakening Programme. The houses and the land were given to the people. They were also provided with other amenities and every attempt is made to make them improve their quality of life.

PUBLIC LIBRARY



Although not inhabited by the Rodiyas, Wasanagama is also a village included in the Village Re-awakening Programme. Here people from neighbouring villages were 'uprooted' to settle them in this village. In this respect, i.e. as a village belonging to the Village Re-awakening Programme, Wasanagama can be grouped with Udagama.

Dalukana is a settlement village. The new settlement was carved out near the old village and only people from the old village and nearby settlements were allocated land in the new settlement. The people settled there, are believed to be the descendants of the primitive Veddas. As a settlement village it comes closer to Wasanagama where the people are settled in an identical manner. But the main difference here is that at Dalukana the people are more primitive than those at Wasanagama, although the majority are chena cultivators.

Mahawalawatta and Mayilawalana are two settlements which are more or less similar to each other. The settlers have come into these 'villages' in stages and these two settlements are comparatively larger in size with 104 families (576 people) and 265 families (1472 people) respectively in each. Chitra Lane is a smaller settlement different from these in two main characteristics : (1) the Chitra Lane settlement was never initiated or reinforced by Governmental action. i.e. the Government has taken no initiative to distribute land and build houses or provide other amenities to the people settled there or those who came from outside. In the case of Chitra Lane settlement the people were already there and with the exception of granting them a normal lease of the land, the Government has had no participation in distributing or allocating land. (2) Chitra Lane has a mixed Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim population and these people having settled in the urban areas for a considerable time have acquired significant urban characteristics.

All the villages are primarily agricultural with the exception of Angulana and Chitra Lane settlements. At Angulana the chief means of employment is fishing while at Chitra Lane where there is no land to cultivate, the people earn their living by engaging themselves in various tasks in the city of Colombo. In the two



Rodiya villages, Udagama and Wanduressa where land is available for agriculture, although the Rodiyas are not agriculturists by tradition, chena cultivation or the cultivation of paddy is intermittently practised.

Kebillewala, although a Sinhalese village, is in a class by itself. It is in the hill country and in this way much closer to Wasanagama in its social, economic and geographical characteristics. The village has had a long existence and it is neither carved out from an old village as in Dalukana, Wasanagama or even Mayilawalana or Mahawalawatte nor re-constructed at the site of the old village as in Udagama.

### Geography of Poverty

How far have geographical factors contributed to the understanding of poverty in these 'villages'? In other words what contributions have geographical factors such as rainfall, nature of the land and soil, availability of water, etc. made in the promotion of poverty?

The majority of the 'villagers' do earn their living by agriculture and the presence or availability of water is a significant factor in their development. Udagama, Wanduressa and Dalukana are situated in the Dry Zone where the rainfall occurs mainly in the months of October to February, i.e. with the North East Monsoon. The rest of the year is dry and unless irrigation takes place and water is provided by means of tanks or canals, there is no possibility of cultivation. The people of these villages have practised chena cultivation or 'slash and burn' cultivation which begins with the arrival of the monsoon rains. By this means only one crop could be cultivated in the year and during the rest of the year one has to eke out a miserable existence.

At Dalukana and Wanduressa there are two tanks which today are in a dilapidated state. If these tanks could be renovated, sufficient water for cultivation could be stored. The absence of water for cultivation is also a problem at Udagama and Wasanagama. A substantial sum of money was expended to provide the



people of Wasanagama with drinking water, but it is inconceivable how they or the people of Udagama could be provided with water for cultivation purposes.

It is a pity that at the time of planning, especially in the critical phase of planning for the settlement villages, inadequate attention had been given to the availability of water. If settlements could have been planned siting the villages near locations where water is available, the problem could have been easily resolved. Dependence on rain water would restrict people only to chena cultivation or cultivation of crops for one season only, thus limiting their productions to a great degree.

The extent of land available is sometimes not suitable for cultivation. Out of the land allocated for the Wanduressa settlement coconut could be grown only in 4 acres. The rest of the land is high in elevation. Soil erosion has played havoc with the land and even if coconut is grown, on account of the poor nature of the soil, the harvest would be insignificant.

Out of the paddy land given to the settlers (52 acres) only 13.44 percent is suitable for cultivation. The rest is all high land. Due to soil erosion which had taken place for decades, the humus soil is very thin. The relief of the land and the nature of the soil prevent water absorption into the soil and the water flows away eroding the soil. Even the water brought about by rain during the monsoon is thus wasted.

The extent of available land is an index to poverty to a certain degree in a given village or settlement. This is clearly evident in Angulana where in a very narrow strip of land 1007 people live huddled together. As they are mainly engaged in the fishing trade, they live close to the sea. Even the types of their houses are determined by geographical considerations. This characteristic is seen even in the Dry Zone villages or settlements where temporary houses are erected almost like huts built in chenas. There are no latrines because of the existence of the sea-shore for defecation purposes. Even in villages or settlements, the existence of forests or open land near the village often encourages people to use them



as 'latrines.' At Wasanagama, Udagama, Wanduressa and sometimes even at Kebillewela this characteristic is noted. At Udagama where the Government has constructed latrines for each house, only 2 or 3 families have used them. Instead they prefer the wood or the open, shrubby land rather than the narrow latrines which they say inhibit their psychological and physical movement.

Geographical limitations associated with poverty are noticed conspicuously at the Chitra Lane settlement at Narahenpita. Here the settlers had originally taken possession of the vacant land and as the settlers increased, the original land occupied by them had begun to dwindle in size due to the fact that it was utilised for different Government Schemes. As the extent of the land diminished the density of population has increased and this has contributed to poverty and other social evils among the inhabitants.

In the case of Wanduressa and Udagama one could say that instead of a geographical contraction, a geographical expansion has taken place. The Rodiyas who never did possess any land were settled in these 'villages' where land was given to them and where houses were also built for them. They got 'space' (land) where earlier the only 'space' they had was their hovels. But this 'expansion' did not lead to any noticeable improvement in their standards of living or pattern of life. Non-availability of water, the poor nature of the soil are the other geographical factors (there were also non-geographical factors) that contributed to the existence of the "poverty line".

The original land allotted to settlers was not extended although the population increased. At Mahawalawatta 50 acres were allotted to 104 families and at Mayilawalana (Bandaranayakapura) 265 families were given about 100 acres. Although in these villages the extent of the land was not reduced by 'squeezes' such as at Chitra Lane Settlement the growing population in the families exerted a squeeze on the available land. This internal squeeze ruled out cultivation of land as a means of livelihood for the people.



The intensity of the 'squeeze' was heightened by other circumstances. Non-availability of water for cultivation, lower level of education and the absence of inborn or acquired skills, lack of benevolent migration (when the villagers migrated to other areas and engaged in better means of livelihood) and the control of the economy by outside forces were the factors that increased the intensity of this 'squeeze.'

Geography determined the nature and extent of the indebtedness too. At Argulana during the monsoon rains the fishermen are forced to borrow heavily even mortgaging the one or two valuables they possess in order to feed their families. At Dalukana and Udagama again the situation is identical. Although the people are not fishermen they do earn 'something' from their chenas during the monsoons and during the rest of the year they borrow money often at a high rate of interest from money-lenders in the neighbouring villages.

At Angulana poverty is equally spread in the village and if one speaks of the geography of poverty, one cannot say that poverty is not found in at least certain sections of the 'village.' The entire village is poor, but the extent of poverty is not marked in certain houses than in others. Geographically, poverty always attracts poverty i.e. poor people tend to conglomerate together and abide in their poverty which appears to be socially infectious.

Nowhere is this more markedly noticed that at KEBILLEWELA which geographically shows the 3 areas where rich, the middle class and the poor people live. The poor people are new settlers and they abide together. They have been settling down in that part of the village which was unoccupied about 20 years ago. The Government has allocated 1/4 of an acre to each family. The non-availability of water is a perennial problem in this part of the village.

There are three main patterns of how the poor are distributed in rural areas:(1) They would be found in one area or a section of the village as found at KEBILLEWELA(2)The poor would be distributed evenly in the village as in Wasanagama, Udagama, Dalukana,



Angulana, Wanduressa etc. (3) The poor would be distributed together with pockets of rich in the village. e.g. Mahawalawatta, Mayilawalana.

The second pattern could deviate into two secondary patterns. (1) There is the Chitra Lane pattern where the entire settlement is poor and just outside the settlement the rich are found. (2) Wanduressa type where the poor are distributed in the settlement and where in the adjoining villages individual pockets of rich people do exist.

In all instances what interests one in understanding the geography of poverty is the inter-action between the rich and the poor either within the village or between the poor in the village and the rich living outside. How far do the rich in the village or outside it, geographically control the poor, contributing to their poverty is an interesting subject for study.

### **History and Poverty**

Have historical reasons been responsible for the creation of conditions that prompt poverty or exploitation of the poor by the rich? Or in other words could we discern in historical data the explanation of how and why a certain group of people or community has become poor? In the 9 'villages' we could clearly observe certain historical facts which are undoubtedly associated with their present life-style and the capacity to produce whatever goods they do desire.

Let us begin with Udagama and Wanduressa and see the historical process that is at work. Both these villages comprise Rodyias, traditionally considered to be of very low in their Caste Status. At Wanduressa a new settlement was created bringing Rodyias from outlying villages. Houses were built and land allotted to them. The Department of Rural Development was instrumental in bringing them together. The settlement is only three years old. At Udagama the Rodyias who lived in the village were assigned houses and land, and also provided with various other amenities before being settled according to the objectives of the village Re-awakening Programme.



In both these attempts the primary objective was to make the Rodiyas 'jump' several rungs in the present 'socio-economic ladder of development' and make them transform their traditional life pattern. They were traditionally beggars and begging was in a way well interwoven with the art of making rattan baskets, ekel brooms, wigs etc. The transformation was effected through the efforts of the Rural Development Department at Wanduressa and at Udagama under the Prime Minister's Village Re-awakening Programme.

As a consequence of these factors the Rodiyas have historically inherited a poverty which is indelibly interwoven with their pattern of life. Begging did not make the presence of any skill such as farming necessary. It did not presuppose such a formal or informal type of education. Even the art of making ekel brooms, rattan baskets etc. was subsidiary to begging i.e. baskets were woven in order to be carried while on a begging tour during which they were 'sold.' Then selling too did not give rise to the type of that relationship which one finds between a producer and a customer. The sale was, in a way, subservient to begging. You carry the basket, present it to a party ; but you do not quote a price. He gives you whatever he likes, in many an instance twice or thrice the value of the basket or ekel broom. There was no production for sale and production for which alone the skills were systematically trained. The rise of production and skills were historical accidents associated with begging.

At Dalukana before 1948, the present site where the settlement village is situated was covered by forest. The present settlers were living in a small village known as Wanigakumbura. The people in the village were descendants of the Veddas, without any skills or education, following the life-style of the primitive Vedda people. They lived by hunting and gathered for their food jungle roots and bees'honey. With the gradual opening up of the village what they did to earn a living was to sell the bees'honey and the flesh of animals whenever available to middlemen who come to the village from outside.

In 1948 another historical incident took place. The old tank at Dalukana was renovated and the land round it was distributed



to the villagers. Now it must be mentioned again that the villagers being descendants of the Veddas followed a life-pattern without any training in agricultural skills. The grant of land and the renovation of the tank had therefore no meaning to their life.

The land given by the Government was limited to 03 acres of paddy land and one acre of dry land. This was reinforced with a grant of Rs. 800/- to construct the house and another Rs. 600/- as assistance for agricultural activities. In addition to the people at Dalukana, the inhabitants of a nearby village Manampitiya too were given land there.

Agriculture, thus appeared to be the skill and vocation that they were forced to take to, if they were to survive. The historical fact that they were not following a life-style associated with agriculture was not taken into account. It is true that a few of them cultivated chenas, but this was done by them as a sporadic type of cultivation for which seasoned or developed skills were not necessary. Thus, historically, these descendants of the Veddas without any preparation at all or without any orientation in agriculture were transformed to become an agricultural community. This makes them lose both their worlds: the world in which they were hunting, gathering yams and bees'honey and the world which the Government desired them to enter i.e. the agricultural life.

There is also another historical factor that prompted a strange social situation at Dalukana. As the people were illiterate, the Government Officials invariably had their own way. The majority of government officials were Tamils and specially the Registrar of Births and Deaths being of the Tamil Community, they insisted that the children of Sinhalese parentage should have Tamil names. It could also be that some parents thought that Tamil names were in vogue and accordingly named their children. The Sinhalese who have Tamil names are those caught in this peculiar social situation.

Wasanagama historically goes back to the British times. The outlying villagers were exploited by the owners of the rubber plantations that covered the present village. The owners were first British then Indian, and finally the Sri Lankan Government.



In 1973 when the land was vested in the Government no one took an interest in the rubber plantations. The Administrators sent to superintend the plantations were said to have neglected the trees, cut them down and sold them for fire wood. Finally the entire land about 1450 acres, became totally barren.

In this barren land the village of Wasanagama was constructed. People from 13 nearby villages were given land and houses. Historically the selection of the site itself has created problems. Is the site capable of sustaining the village in the future? Are basic needs such as water provided? Historically the problem of selecting people for the village arose. For what purpose do you select these people?; and once selected and settled down, do you think that they could integrate into one cohesive community?

The people chosen for this village are all poor people by any standard. Out of these 75 able-bodied men and women do not have any form of employment at all. They have not had a worthwhile education, a training or acquired skills. Forty men and women are chena cultivators who go out into the jungle and engage in slash and burn cultivations. What are the alternative means of employment provided for these people? The historical problem is that a group of poor, skill-less, helpless people are transformed from one locality to another. Poverty which was diffused in a number of villages is now heaped and collected together in one place, without any visible means of improving upon it.

The transformation of poverty thus diffused in one physical location has been a significant feature in Sri Lanka's modern history, specially the history of settlement villages. The poorest of the poor chosen and turned away from their physical and cultural surroundings, are deposited in one place which provides them no alternative or hope of improvement. The life pattern of the people, their skillless-ness, their lack of education — none of these factors — are taken into account in forming development plans for them. It is indeed an irony of history for the unfortunate people to inherit the problems from one social situation to another.

At Chitra Lane and Angulana history has repeated itself frequently: The strip at Angulana in which they have settled



themselves in the sea beach that belonged to nobody and so was the land at Chitra Lane. As the neighbouring areas developed round Chitra Lane their land was diminished in size. They have in the meantime introduced their relatives and friends into the area and settled them there. This historical factor of poor people conglomerating together, increasing the pressure on the land and unconsciously adding more weight to their pattern of poverty is a frequent occurrence. Take for example the situation at Angulana where employment opportunities in sea fishing are relatively limited. A new family invited there by another already settled would bring a number of historical problems. Among them the opportunities available for engaging in some form of employment recedes with every addition of an outside person into the group.

### Economics of Poverty

The extent of poverty in these villages could be understood when the people living in these are observed in relation to production, consumption and distribution. What have they produced in the past? What are their patterns of consumption and means of distribution? What relationship is there between their life-style and their means of production, distribution and consumption?

The nine villages do produce the following products which are also distributed and consumed in the following manner. At Wanduressa they produce vegetables and coconuts for their use in the village and some of which sometimes they sell outside. Rattan baskets are produced together with ekel brooms and wigs. Raw material for rattan baskets is brought from far away areas. The income that the entire village has earned for three months in 1979 — 80 are given below :

Total amount of money earned from vegetable and other products	Rs. cts.
.. .. .	508.00
Total amount of money earned from the sale of coconuts	1,804.00
.. .. .	
Total amount of money earned from the sale of rattan goods, ekel brooms and wigs	1,202.00
.. .. .	
Money earned from the production of other types of goods (e.g. the musical instruments)	416.00
.. .. .	
TOTAL	<u>3,930.00</u>



At Wanduressa the entire earnings by means of production for three months is Rs. 3,930.00. This being for 476 individuals in 97 families.

The land is unproductive and the people do lack skills or training and motivation for cultivation. Take the 52 acres of paddy land allotted to the people of Wanduressa. Out of the entire land only 13.46 percent could be cultivated with paddy because the rest is situated on high elevations where no "water could be brought." On the other hand out of the 97 heads of households who were questioned as to how many of them were cultivators, answer received was nil. But when asked how many of them had engaged themselves in the cultivation of chenas 14 replied in the affirmative. Even here when asked for how long they had been cultivating successively only 2 said that they had done so for 3 years. The skill and the training necessary for cultivation is lacking and the motivation is almost lacking. When asked whether they would prefer cultivation to other work only 09 youngsters answered 'Yes !' The rest were not interested in cultivation at all.

Cultivation and production enterprise associated with it needs training, motivation and skills. For generations the Rodiyas life-style was nurtured with objectives other than those of cultivating wet or dry crops. Today in the village they produce illicit alcohol and there are 6 or 7 men who are engaged in the production of such alcohol. The skill and the training for such productions are earned easily in an informal way and they earn about an average of Rs. 500 — 600 per month. The alcohol is sold in the village as well as outside.

At Udagama the situation has been identical. After the inclusion of the village as the initial village in the Prime Minister's Village Re-awakening Programme, a Rattan Production Centre was established where the villagers were employed to produce rattan goods. A trained teacher's services were secured for the Centre where it was attempted to cultivate the spices, weaving of baskets and the production of other rattan goods. The Centre also served as a place to market goods already produced in their homes.



Before the village was included in the Village Re-awakening Programme the production of rattan goods was done by the people together with their other traditional occupation—begging. The total earnings of 16 such families from rattan productions in three months of 1979 was Rs. 876.00. On an average each family received about Rs. 55/-. Although the skill in rattan production was evident it served as a part of the life-style devoted to begging. When the Centre was established a ready market for goods too was found by means of the intervention of the Department of Small Industries.

The main problems associated with Rattan Production are as follows : (1) The difficulties of obtaining rattan from the Manampitiya area. As the cane that is grown is collected by the people and as no attempt is made to protect and nurture it, what is available is not sufficient to meet the growing demands (2) Although the rattan goods produced there were bought by the Small Industries Department and the producers paid immediately, when the Department did not buy it, the producers were not accordingly paid and they became disillusioned. (3) As mentioned earlier rattan goods production is not an independent economic activity but associated with the process of begging. To think of rattan production apart from the process of begging needs a complete break away from the traditional thinking and the need to produce such rattan ware to suit the modern market.

The land allocated by the Government is not fully cultivated by the people. Some of the villagers have earned money by opening up chenas and growing cash crops there. This could only be done once a year, that is at the time of the monsoon rains. As chena cultivations depend on the opening up of raw virgin land each time a new chena is cultivated, the Central Government discourages it. Even the few villagers who have been used to chena cultivation are not in a position to continue it.

Life-style in these two 'villages' of Udagama and Wanduressa is identical. The people dependent on begging are considered as ritual beggars and supported by the Society. They are also considered as occupying the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy, thus despised and ostracised. Without education and



skills they are compelled to beg to exist, and every other activity is made subservient to begging. In the recent past even their mode of dress was determined by the so-called high Castes. The women were not allowed to cover the upper part of their bodies. The elementary right to enter religious shrines too was denied to them, although this is a direct contravention of Buddhist ways of thinking. Even a dwelling was not considered an immediate need and it was enough if they could find a place [where they could be 'safe from sun and rain.'

In order to understand their consumption pattern and basic needs the data provided by the inhabitants of those two villages would be of much importance. The elderly villagers were asked what they needed in the past. The needs were succinctly forwarded by them.

1. a good and satisfying meal at night (this means a good quantity of rice, dry-fish and another curry.)
2. two sarongs or two pieces of clothing.
3. a mat and a pillow to sleep on.

They had no way of realizing their basic needs and this is indeed a tragedy in many a village. From generation to generation they were made to understand that these are their only basic needs and they could get nothing more, even if they desired them.

Asked why they preferred a cadjan hut which is temporary, an elderly villager explained :

“Most of the time I and my family are out of the village. We go on begging and also to fetch raw material in order to produce rattan goods. If we build a better house, who is there to look after it ? Then those who see our house will not consider us as beggars. It is the same if we dress well. Then we lose all chances of securing alms. We drink a cup of tea and go along some distance and eat whatever we get from others. When at home we prepare the main meal at night.”

When people are made oblivious to their real basic wants and when this conditioned 'forgetfulness' is culturally ingrained into



their pattern of life and way of thinking, it is indeed almost impossible to awaken them again. Here the basic problem is not economic but social. How could one create an awareness of their position and worth as human beings and their potentialities? How could they be made to realize their real basic needs? It is only then that a way to solve the economic problems could be found.

It is unfortunate that in spite of the vast changes taking place outside, in rural areas such as Dalukana the effects of such changes were not felt by the people. They have continued their pattern of life oblivious to all changes from outside. Now all of a sudden we are attempting to make them take to sophisticated agriculture whereas their pattern of life and modes of production are still those of the neo-primitive times. Their thinking has remained the same without any formal or informal education, without beneficial social changes or coming under modernisation.

Compared to the two Rodiya villages where the Rodiyas were forcibly prevented from receiving an education, at Dalukana such social inhibitions were not found. In the village school there were classes only upto the 6th grade and if one wants to continue his or her education it was necessary to go to an outside village. The mounting pressure of population in the family acted as a deterrent to education. When the younger children increased in number, the elder children were perforce kept at home to look after the younger children. Lack of education contributed its share in keeping the village where it was fifty years ago.

The basic economic problem here is how to modernise means of production and ensure the people a better deal in life. The tank was constructed and water provided for cultivation. Land was allocated and even houses built and assistance for agricultural activities provided. The expected modernisation has so far not taken place. Instead much of the land allocated is lying idle. People are ingrained in debt. The great leap forward expected by the provision of modern facilities has, in short, not taken place.

At Wasanagama where with all the good intentions in the world all possible facilities were made available to the people and with all these the great leap forward has not been successful. The



philosophy in the Village Re-awakening Programme is to provide the basic necessities and stimulate or motivate people to learn to help themselves.

The people selected as settlers at Wasanagama were all poor people. They were provided with land and a house as well as other amenities. Very few with any trained skills are found there. The land allotted to them may be able to support them with the subsidiary food items they need. But most of them being traditional chena cultivators with large families, more land would be needed to make them produce adequately to get over the line of poverty. Having put them together as one community there are two fundamental economic problems to solve, if we are desirous of enhancing their standards of life: What sort of skills do we intend generating in them so that within a short time they would be able to produce more and thus better their quality of life? How far could we extend the already available skills such as the ability to cultivate chenas and modernise it so that better results could be obtained?

In the case of Kebillewela the problem of poverty is concentrated in one section of the village. This is comparatively a new settlement and here the economics of poverty indicate the following characteristics: (1) the people have come here being 'spilled out' from other areas and settled down here. 'spilled out' here means that they are landless, skillless and people with a minimum level of education who are virtually thrown out from an area and were 'compelled' to settle down here. (2) Here the land is not sufficient for them. Comparatively large families eke out a living and their lack of skills do not contribute to an improvement in the modes of production.

'Spilling out' people have invariably come to occupy many a settlement in Sri Lanka. This 'spilling out' is either voluntary or caused by external agencies. But whoever that 'spills out' is practically of no economic use to that locality to which he is newly attached. At Chitra Lane and at Angulana the entire composition of the settlements was made up of such 'spilled out' people from other areas. Even where the Government established settlements,



unaware though it may have been, what the Government did through its procedure of selection was to collect 'spilled out' people from the settlement and settle them in another.

At Mahawalawatte and Mayilawalana because of the limited nature of available land, agriculture as a means of living could not be sustained. One third of an acre or less is not sufficient to grow food that would bring a sizeable income capable of sustaining 5 or 6 people. The only alternative is for the people to develop skills that could be utilised for meaningful productive purposes.

The villagers are employed in different jobs. At Mahawalawatte we find labourers, drivers etc. and their list provides the nature of the economics of poverty in this village :

**Those in Government Service**

Clerical	..	01
Labourers	..	15
Drivers	..	02
Masons	..	02
Office Aides	..	02
Security Officer	..	01
Technicians	..	01
Pensioners	..	01
		—
		25
		—

**Those in the Service of Private Establishments**

Trade Oriented	..	02
Factory aides	..	02
Pharmacists	..	02
Technicians	..	02
Drivers	..	02
Carpenters	..	01
Labourers	..	01
Domestic Aides	..	01
		—
		13
		—



### Those in "Self-employment"

Trade ..	..	02
Technicians ..	..	01
Cultivators ..	..	04
Carpenters/Masons ..	..	06
Labourers(casual and otherwise)		104

The approximate break-down of employment at Mahawalawatte shows the character of the malaise in a graphic way. Lack of education and the absence of training and skills keep the people within the starvation line. They have no way of improving themselves. It is indeed a tragic situation that is common to many a village. The people are caught in this vicious net and they find it extremely difficult to escape from it.

The situation is apparently not better at Mayilawalana where 150 are labourers. Of the 53 employed in Government service the majority are in low-income generating jobs. The traders and those in technical jobs are better off than others whereas the 27 house-aides do not earn sufficient income to rise over the poverty line.

### Politics and Poverty

The role that politics has played in sustaining poverty needs a brief comment here. During the colonial days the rural areas did not receive the attention they deserve because the objectives of the Colonial Administrations were not directed to the upliftment of Communities in rural areas. After Sri Lanka gained its Independence, it was gradually realized that, in the overall attempt made to develop the community, sufficient attention had to be devoted to Sri Lankan villages.

Although this important fact was realized, the way in which strategies were formulated left much room for improvement. Specially in the decision-making process, the Central Government thought it fit to take decisions affecting the country without understanding the conditions of the village. For example it was thought that by the introduction of modernising agencies and extending



assistance to the villagers, the village could be transformed into a viable economic unit. In this hasty process the life patterns of the people together with the nature of their historical and social evolution and the economic means of production to which they were accustomed was overlooked. The Government desired the villages to jump a 'great leap forward' or in other words wanted to revolutionize the means of production, without at the same transforming the quality and ability of the people.

The Political decision-makers from 1948 onwards were without an understanding of the rural people and even to this day, it unfortunately remains so. The extension services of the Governments, mass media and all other agencies at the service of the Government attempt to develop the people without understanding the people. The political decisions made from time to time about villages were taken in total ignorance of problems that exist in rural areas. It is difficult to understand a village with all its cultural and social ramifications. It takes time, patience and research. Only by such a painstaking understanding could the decision-makers of today and tomorrow make the correct decisions in politics pertaining to rural life.



## CHAPTER II

# THE MEASUREMENT AND DEFINITION OF POVERTY: UNDERSTANDING POVERTY IN SRI LANKA

Various attempts have been made to define and measure poverty. As expressed by some scholars, "Thanks to the painstaking research work done in recent years by economists, we now have knowledge about many aspects of poverty." Although this may be the case in other countries, in Sri Lanka hardly any studies on poverty have been carried out and due to the paucity of research data, we do not possess a comprehensive understanding of poverty as it operates in our country.

Poverty cannot be considered solely as an economic phenomenon nor could one define or measure it only in economic terms or yardsticks. A pre-condition for understanding poverty in Sri Lanka is the understanding of the target community whose poverty we are attempting to define in different dimensions. The community or communities have to be studied historically, and their geo-physical context examined. Thus the economic and political decision-making, culture, education, religion and social structure/stratification together with the community's relationship to others around it, the pattern of communication etc. have to be carefully studied. Poverty is inextricably interwoven with each of these phenomenon and one has to unravel each thread and also know the complex pattern of all threads with their diverse colours and texture to understand the entire concept.



Poverty is not a separate phenomenon that could be leisurely studied without considering other socio-cultural factors. In the present study nine representative samples of Sri Lankan villages are selected and an attempt is made to understand them in all possible dimensions. On the basis of this understanding an identification of the patterns established by poverty in respective communities is then made. Thereafter a minute examination of the history of poverty, the economic and social factors, together with any other factor which have a bearing on poverty are studied.

Poverty cannot be understood by statistics alone. Obviously statistical data do play a very important role in giving us an idea of a community or village, such as the number of people who are employed, their income level, the extent of their land holdings, the number of inmates in their family etc. These data are only one aspect of poverty, and if one looks at them arriving at conclusions attempting to establish the poverty line with the help of such data only, it would indeed be self defeating. In the study of poverty the significance of such 'dry data,' could be understood only when they are observed as 'living data.'

Let us make our concept clear at this point. One illustration is sufficient to make the point understandable. Let us assume that in a given village all the people earn more than Rs. 1,000/- each per month and they have sufficient land holdings for each family. Let us say that each family has about 3 members on average. These statistics as they are would enable us to conclude that the villagers here are living much above the poverty line. The data we used are all 'dry' data (statistical only) which have to be examined in relation to living life so that its significance or relevance could be better understood.

What are the practical aspects of land holdings? Although legally the land belongs to the family and it appears that the land is sufficient for earning an additional income for the family members, in actual life, it may not be cultivated because of the peculiar system of land tenure existing in this village. The complex tenurial



system is a fact in their life which has to be 'felt' only by living with the people. Even if they earn more than Rs. 1000 per month in practical life, it could be that the majority of some of them would be still in debt. These debts could be due to the system of values they cherish as in one village where we found 38 percent of the land owned by the people was at one time or another "mortgaged in order to raise loans for marriages, sometimes to be given as dowry to their daughters and sometimes to celebrate sumptuous marriage feasts." The mortgages are contracted on 'paper' and also by word of mouth. But unless one lives with them and gets the 'feel' of this living data, or data as it affect their everyday activities, one important dimension in poverty would be for ever lost.

### Poverty-line: the Definitions

Poverty is an elastic concept and for ever it may remain elastic. There is, first of all, the subjective interpretation or definition of poverty i.e. how the villagers themselves define poverty. The difference in the interpretation of definition from one village to another would mostly depend on their subjective experiences, level of culture and knowledge. The most common definition is "if we have a good meal a day, a cloth to wear, some land to cultivate which gives an income that keeps us out of debt, then we are happy." This indeed is no worthwhile definition of poverty ; but it significantly defines the poverty line in the village, as conceived by the villagers.

In our nine vilages we requested samples from each village to give their definition of poverty, (in actual fact all of them defined the so call poverty line) and these definitions could be categorised in the following manner :

Stage 1 — "good meal a day, a cloth to wear and land to cultivate which yields an income to keep us out of debt" (i.e. Rs. 300/- per month)

Stage 2 — "Two meals a day ; 2 — 3 pieces of clothing for each one in the family, house to live in (a hut) land to cultivate which gives and income to keep us out of debt." (i.e. Rs. 400/- per month).



Stage 3 — “Three meals a day ; 3 pieces of clothing for every one in the family ; land for cultivation or other forms of employment (i.e. Rs. 500/- per month); a house to live in (two or three rooms) and some money in case of illness or family celebrations (marriage etc.)”

The simple definition of the line of poverty were available from the samples in the nine villages. From these we were able to establish a tentative line of poverty as conceived by the people for all the villages. This line of poverty obviously has to be expanded on certain occasions in view of the increasing number of family members. But taken as the average and limiting it to families having 5 or 6 children, the standard could be utilised to define poverty from the people's point of view.

The poverty line according to the people's view comprises :

- (1) Three meals a day — Here the people are not concerned about nutrition. What is necessary is to satisfy one self that “the stomach is full,” three times a day keeping the family away from hunger.
- (2) 3 pieces of clothing for each member (male and female) of the family
- (3) land say about 2 acres of paddy land and 1 acre of dry land with irrigation facilities or income from other sources upto Rs. 500/- per month.
- (4) presence of some savings (say Rs. 500) to be used in emergencies or in cases of family festivals (i.e. marriage etc.)
- (5) a house that shelters them from sun and rain.

### The ‘Poor’ and the ‘Rich’

Before applying this measures to all the 9 villages let us see what people mean by the ‘Poor’ and the ‘Rich’ in the respective villages. Although the majority of the people were not able to conceptualize poverty precisely, when asked what they do mean by the word ‘poor’ they generally said “it means those without means and those who are feeble and who need support” (*neti beri minissu*). This term itself is intriguing because it implies that the poor do not enjoy ‘means’(i.e. resources) and “they are feeble and they are in need of support.” When asked to define the rich they



did define the rich as "those with some means and those who are powerful (*Yamak Kamak Tiyena Balawath Minissu*)". Those who have nothing to eat (*Kanda adinda neti*) and sometimes "those without a dwelling" (*Inda Geyak Neti*) are other common attributes of being poor. In addition to these concepts the ownership of resources (land, capital, equipment or productive capacity etc.) are visualized. In the case of poor these are absent, and they are present in the case of rich. The poor are in need of support : but from whom ? Naturally from the rich. Here the implication suggests a method to lessen the impact of social and economic inequality. Even in religion the rich are expected to place their resources for the benefit of those who are not rich and without such resources.

The final characteristic of being poor is the non-possession of resources. Such resources endow one with power (may be economic or social). Those who are rich are thus defined powerful while the poor are defined as feeble and without power.

The poor or those living just above or at the level of the poverty line are also described as "those who do not have means to have even a meal" (per day) "*eda vela kanda Neti Minissu.*" The term 'poor' is in Sinhalese "*duppath*" that is those who are in receipt of suffering or those who suffer. They do suffer because they do not have the means or resources and because they are feeble or powerless.

In this context, it is interesting to recaptulate how the gap between the rich and the poor in the village was bridged in the past. Buddhism which became the dominant religion possesses the Law of Karma : You reap as you sow. You have become rich (i.e. come into possess material and non-material resources) because you have equitably shared those resources with others in the past. You have become poor because you have never allowed others to share your resources. The Karmic law understandably gave rise to the principle of sharing and this made the rich share their resources with others.

The sharing was done in multiple different ways as demanded and facilitated by culture. There was the temple in the village for which land and other means or resources were donated by the rich.



What is given here was utilized for religious, cultural and social activities. Poor people often without meals come to the temple and partook of a meal. Not only at Buddhist temple but also at different other shrines of local gods and deities the 'sharing' (dana) took place. On occasions of national festivals or personal celebrations such as marriages and commemorations, the sharing was again implemented. The principle "that those who are hungry and thirsty should be fed and quenched ; what is asked for by others should be given to them" are the logical outcome of the theory of Karma.

The positive outcome of the theory is the belief that resources should be equitably distributed. But unfortunately the law had its negative side too. Here some people accepted the law declaring that their poverty was due to bad or evil action in the past and there is nothing about it that they could do now. They cannot change it. This negative attitude demotivated people, reversing the springs of energetic action and making them socially and culturally a 'static' type of people.

Common law and practice on the otherhand, legitamatised the distribution of resources as far as possible. Even in the Buddhist ecclesiastical law it is stipulated, how and in what proportion the products of the land owned by the temple should be distributed among the people who work in the land. Even in the case of one's tenants an equitable way of distribution was found among the people. In all cases it was obligatory for owner of the land to ask "are you satisfied with what you have got." It is generally believed that if the worker or the recipient is not satisfied nothing but evil would ensure from such an act.

The term '*pohosat*' which in Sinhala denotes the 'rich' means in practical terms those who are 'capable of.' It is commonly used with the term '*danavat*' (rich) and the usage explains the real implication of the term in Sri Lanka. It would be interesting from the social stratification angle if we proceed to include the other terms commonly associated with them too. They are '*kulavat*' (of good or high caste) and '*balavat*' (powerful).



## Measuring Poverty with the Peoples' Yardstick

Now let us take the measure provided by the people which we stated earlier and use it to find out how many people in these villages are above this Poverty Line. According to this measurement the people (or each family) should have the following attributes to be above the poverty line.

1. They should have three meals a day (according to them a light meal in the morning and two heavy meals necessarily rice at noon and for dinner) to keep them out of hunger.
2. 3 pieces of clothing for each member of the family.
3. About 2 acres of paddy land and one acre of dry land with water or such other resources or employment which ensure a minimum of Rs. 500/- per month.
4. Presence of some savings (say Rs. 500/-) to be used in an emergency (to keep them out of debt).
5. A house that shelters them from sun and rain.

Let us take Udagama where houses are given to all and see how many of its inhabitants are above the poverty line.

- (a) None of the families at Udagama enjoy three meals a day; many of them here do have the 'wolf' hunger still at their door.
- (b) Only 5 individuals at Udagama have 3 or more pieces of clothing.
- (c) None has the stipulated amount of land or other resources or employment which ensures a steady income of Rs. 500/- or above per month.
- (d) Only one family has savings upto Rs. 500/- that could be utilised at any time.
- (e) Although they lived in huts earlier (which were obviously exposed to sun and rain) all the families now have houses allotted them by the Prime Minister's Village Re-awakening Programme.



According to the people's measurement, all the inhabitants of Udagama live below the poverty line.

At Wanduressa the situation is similar. Forty nine houses were built for the families in 1962 and most of the other houses look like hovels. None of the inhabitants except those who brew illicit alcohol earn more than Rs. 500/- and none possesses the minimum amount of land. Two have more than three pieces of clothing and none has savings.

At Chitra Lane the entire population live below the poverty line. At Wasanagama all are below the line of poverty. At Mahawalawatte, only 3 families are above the line, while in the case of Mayilawalana only five families live above this line. At Angulana all are below this line.

### **Traditional Measurements of Poverty**

It is usual to measure poverty by taking into consideration a number of economic factors (1) The extent of ownership and the utilisation of land (2) levels of income from employment and other sources (3) the nature of the house, household equipment and other accessories (4) the general life style as evident from ownership of cars, lorries and the standard of living etc. (5) the extent of indebtedness and savings (6) the level of literacy or education and the evaluation of skills or abilities (7) prevalence of illness (such as malnutrition.) or the general standard of health.

Let us take these yardsticks and briefly go through our villages so that an impression could be created in our minds as to the nature and extent of poverty found in these villages. For a moment let us also have at the back of our mind a working definition of poverty as the absence or the under-utilization of material and non-material resources for the basic satisfaction and well-being of all human beings. It would give a direction to our examination of these seven attributes.

Land is the primary source of wealth and production. In the past the Ruler, whoever it may be, owned it and the people leased it out from the absolute owner in lieu of a payment, small or great,



either in kind or service. The ownership of the King was reflected in the ownership of local rulers who later became chieftains. The conglomeration of the property of land in the houses of local Chiefs or Lords and then in the socially powerful groups was a direct result to the ownership of land by the King. The land at Mahawalawatta was formerly owned by one family and so was the land at Mayilawalana. The Wasanagama land was included in the rubber estate first owned by the British planters and then by the local successors.

In most of these village settlements because of the fact that land was re-distributed among the people, all the inhabitants got an equal portion of land. This was in the case of the villages included in the Village Re-awakening Programme such as Udagama and Wasanagama and also in such villages as Wanduressa, Mayilawalana, Dalukana, Mahawalawatta and also at Kebillewala where the land in the area inhabited by the poor was once allocated on an equitable basis by the Government.

The distribution of land in each of these villages was done in the following manner :

**Udagama** — 21 families each were given  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of land.

**Wanduressa** — 49 Rodiya families in 1959 — each given 2 acres of land. Today there are 97 families and among them they share 150 acres of land.

**Dalukana** — 49 families living there. At the initial stages each family was given 03 acres of 'wet' and one acre of 'dry' land

**Kebillewala** — of the 440 families 350 have less than one acre each, and there are 69 families without any land at all.

**Mahawalawatta** — 101 families — at the initial stages each family received  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an acre.

**Mayilawalana** — 265 families— $\frac{1}{3}$  of an acre given to the early settlers.

**Wasanagama** — 85 Families (of which 57 are settled receiving  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre each)



**Chitra Lane and Angulana** — No land at all other than a few square feet in which they have put up the 'huts.'

The land may have no productive value due to various reasons. At Wanduressa the majority of the land given for paddy or rice cultivation cannot be utilised due to the difficulty of obtaining water. Both at Wanduressa and Udagama, the life style of the people for generations had not been associated with agriculture and although land is given, systematic cultivation cannot be carried out by them. At Dalukana in spite of the fact that water is made available by the renovation of the tank, the people who were the descendants of Veddas have not absorbed the art of cultivation in to their life-pattern in a manner that they could profitably make use of it.

At Kebillawala few rich people own land and the majority do not possess land that they could utilise for cultivation purposes. The land allocated at Mahawalawatta, Mayilawalana and Wasanagama are for the purpose of constructing and growing home garden crops and it cannot be utilised for profitable cultivation of food or cash crops.

At Angulana and Chitra Lane there is not enough land even to put up a latrine and even the houses or huts have been built almost touching one another.

To make the problems still worse one has to take into account the increase in the population of the families. The average per family is almost 5 or 6 children and the original land space becomes increasingly insufficient for use. There is another interesting phenomenon that increases the demand on land. The inhabitants do get down their friends or relatives in to the new settlements accommodating them even when they know that such accommodation would create problems.

This aspect of behaviour is in a way a social and cultural accommodation of one's own kith and kin. It has had its baneful impact at Chitra Lane and Angulana where such 'cultural and social accommodation' brought people into a very narrow strip of land ever dwindling in size. This 'cultural accommodation' is the



prime cause of the increase of population in rural and urban settlements that contribute its share to the already pressing problems found there.

In the 9 villages very few people do have a steady source of income from one source or another. At Udagama before the village was included in the Village Re-awakening Programme only one family earned more than Rs. 200/- per month. All families without exception received social aid through food stamps. Even after its inclusion in the Village Re-awakening Programme and the establishment of the Rattan Centre, though for a few months the villagers earned a fair income it was not a steady income. The average income was about Rs. 300/- per month.

At Wanduressa the situation is almost identical. The Heads of 69 families are engaged in rattan production. All of them earn less than Rs. 300/- a month. Even this is not a steady income, for in some months they have to "lay off" because of the difficulties of obtaining the raw material. Of the remaining families 12 bread-winners make ekelb rooms, 09 work as sanitary labourers, 02 turn out musical instruments, one is engaged in bringing out ornamental ware while 05 are involved in begging. The majority of family members including the head of the family are unemployed.

The number of unemployed or under-employed in Udagama and Wanduressa are quite considerable. Of the entire population at Udagama 51.4 percent (specially the youth) are even now unemployed or under-employed. They have been included in this category when they themselves have said that "they have nothing to do or little do do." It shows the extent to which they are devoid of finding useful means of employment. At Angulana of the 475 able-bodied individuals, both men and women, only 214 are gainfully employed. They do not earn more than an average of Rs. 400/- a month. The income is sustained only during the fishing season and during the rest of the year they have to depend on other sources of income or by borrowing money. Of course there are occasions, when the catch is good, they earn Rs. 500—800. But such occasions are seldom found. The boats are not owned by them and the major part of the catch goes to the owner of the boat.



At Chitra Lane there are 75 families with a population of 418 people. Out of this 227 able-bodied men and women only 92 are gainfully employed. Of this 92 only 27 are in permanent Government Service and the average monthly income of these people ranges from Rs. 350 — 475. The rest (65) are employed in odd jobs receiving a monthly income of Rs. 150/- to Rs. 350/-.

At Mahawalawatta there are 104 families and a population of about 576. The average income of those employed ranges from Rs. 250/- to Rs. 600/-. About 41.6 percent of the able-bodied are not employed or under-employed. Some families earn more by engaging in petty trades and such other activities. Forty nine families earn less than Rs. 350/-, 17 families from Rs. 350—600, four families from Rs. 600 — 800 and 3 families over Rs. 800/-. Those 3 families are considered the only rich families in the village.

At Mayilawalana about 64 percent of the able-bodied men and women are without means of employment. Of those who state that they are employed, about 150 are labourers receiving an average monthly income of about Rs. 350/-. The 53 individuals in Government Service and in technical services receive monthly income ranging from Rs. 300 — Rs. 600. Twenty seven are domestic aids working for a very low salary. The 03 individuals engaged in agriculture receive an income just sufficient for them 'to exist.' The state of their poverty is noticed in the 218 families (the total 265 families) who are considered as eligible to receive food stamps.

At Kebilewela out of the entire population nearly half of the 6% of able-bodied men and women are without visible employment. Of those engaged in agriculture (93 individuals) about 6 receive incomes of Rs. 1000—3500 a month. The others earn between Rs. 600/- to Rs. 1000/-. There are also teachers, clerical servants and traders who in addition to their monthly salary (Rs. 400 — 800) earn money from other sources as well.

The general life style of a group of people exhibits their pattern of consumption in fine relief. In a community this life-style is



evident in the type of material possessions the people enjoy. What are their houses like? Are they large, pompous and ostentatious? What sort of house decor and furniture do they have? Cars and valuables like Air Conditioners, fans and such electrical items, refrigerators. Do they indicate a level of living from which the style of life could be gauged? What sort of festivals or celebrations do they organize and enjoy? Are such occasions conducted on a lavish scale?

At Udagama, Wanduressa and Wasanagama the houses are constructed by the Government. There is hardly any worthwhile furniture in the houses. In most houses there is not even a chair to sit on. The situation at Dalukana is almost the same. The style of life in these villages is punctuated not by leisure or festivals or celebrations, holidays, gatherings of friends, outings, parties etc. but by the incessant struggle to eke out an existence. Thus they do not have time or strength left to find something to wear or even to repair their houses. Long before the Government constructed houses at Udagama and Wanduressa and today at Dalukana, their houses look dilapidated, cadjans or hay laid on the roof often exhibiting the sky, thus opening the house to elements at all times.

If at all they possess any worthwhile items they are confined to a few radio sets, sewing machines or bicycles. At Chitra Lane there are 14 bicycles, 01 cassette player, 25 radio sets, 05 sewing machines 01 kerosene cooker in addition to a few items of furniture such as beds, cupboards etc. The items such as radio sets, bicycles are found in such 'high' numbers because Chitra Lane is in Colombo. In the case of other villages the situation is different. At Udagama there are 3 radio sets, at Wanduressa 02, at Dalukana 01 and at Wasanagama 05. The number of sewing machines and bicycle in these villages total 06. Yet at Kebillewala there are 32 radio sets, 18 sewing machines and 14 bicycles. At Mahawalawatta and Mayilawalana 06 and 05 radio sets, 04 and 03, sewing machines and 08 and 09 bicycles.

The life style at Wasanagama is not different very much from that of Dalukana except for the fact that the people at Wasanagama have cultivated some land which they put to better use than those at Dalukana. But on the whole this is also punctuated by an incessant struggle to earn the next meal.



The majority of the houses at Mahawalawatta and Mayilawalana are constructed on a temporary scale. At Mahawalawatta only 20 percent of the houses are built on a permanent basis. On the whole only 38 families have 'buildings that could be called houses'. The rest are made out of cadjan — both the roof and the walls. Over 50 percent of the houses are not fit for human habitation.

The level of education or literacy rate in the villages is extremely low. At Udagama and Wanduressa over 95 percent of the adult population had not gone to school. At Mahawalawatta 193 adults are illiterate. Of the literate a significant number are those who have continued upto Grade 5 while there are a very few who have received the benefits of going up to Grade 8 or 10. At Mayilawalana 118 people have not learned to read and write. Even here the majority (from the rest) have continued their education upto Grade 8. At Dalukana only 67 percent of the people are literate. Of these who have attended school 56 (out of 92) have reached the 9th standard in school.

As a rule the educational attainments of these people are comparatively very low. They do not possess any acquired or trained skills at least in order to compensate for the lack of educational attainments. At Udagama we had 16 males and one female who had had a training in rattan basket weaving, although the numbers have increased now. There were 9 people who could make ekel brooms and wigs. The existence of skills of this type is not equally spread among the villagers. At Wanduressa there were about 93 individuals with the ability to make rattan baskets or ekel brooms. There were two who could make musical instruments.

Although human resources are available in plenty in these villages, there is hardly any worthwhile trained or acquired skill. The low level of education precludes them from learning a worthwhile skill. In 'villages' such as Mayilawalana, Mahawalawatta, Chitra Lane, Angulana, Dalukana and Wasanagama there are no opportunities available for the fostering of such skills. Even skilled carpenters and masons are very few. Their number is limited to 3 or 4 in each village.



The rattan basket weaving or the making of ekel brooms is carried out in Udagama and Wanduressa as a traditional skill. It is cultivated as part of the life pattern of Rodiyas and in this life pattern begging occupies a central place. The skill is thus not transferred for the purpose of helping the people to earn by it alone. Therefore, the transfer of the skill from generation to generation has had no impact on the economic life of the village.

Even the few carpenters and masons in these villages have acquired the skill not in the village but through outside contact. They were led outside the village by circumstances and there they have learned the skill. In the village there are no facilities to acquire even such basically useful skills as carpentry and masonry.

Let us briefly look at available trained skills and the availability of opportunities for the development or fostering of such skills in these nine villages :

**Wanduressa — at present the number of individuals who possess the following skills :**

- (a) Skill in weaving rattan baskets.  
140 (75 males and 65 females)
- (b) Skill in making ekel brooms  
25 (18 males and 07 females)
- (c) Skill in assembling musical instruments  
02 (males)
- (d) Skill in making various household artistic items  
02 (women)
- (e) Skill in spinning traditional plates (artistic achievement)  
07 (women).

Of these a b & c are skills traditionally practised but always associated with the chief vocation of Rodiya life — begging.



### Udagama

(a) No. of people trained in the skill of making rattan baskets.

17 (16 males and one female)

(b) making of ekel brooms

08 (07 males and one female).

### Wasanagama

Number of people trained in :

(a) Traditional Agriculture 35

(b) Masonry 01

(c) Carpentry 01

(d) Handicrafts 02

(e) Technical work 01

Those engaged in agriculture have been following it for generations. The training mentioned here is not one they have acquired formally but informally from their parents by working with them.

### Dalukana

(a) Those who know the art of making rattan baskets 14

(b) Masonry .. .. 03

(c) Carpentry .. .. 01

(d) Brick making .. .. 01

The makers of rattan baskets learn the trade like those in the villages of Udagama and Wanduressa from their elders in the family. Unlike in the case of the above two villages, the people of this village need not go very far in order to fetch the raw material, as it is available close by. Yet as mentioned earlier the demand for rattan has exceeded the supply and today the people are faced with the problem of an ever dwindling supply.

### Kebillewela

(a) Those 'trained' in traditional agriculture, electrical and semi-technical work .. .. 93

(b) Those trained in timber factories .. 40



(c) Carpenters	..	..	..	07
(d) Smiths	..	..	..	01
(e) Sawers	..	..	..	01
(f) Masons	..	..	..	12
(g) Those engaged in other technical enterprises	..			08

There are two tea factories, two paddy husking centres, eleven small scale industries. Animal husbandry is practised together with agriculture and since the practice had been there for generations, the 'skill' is generally passed on from father to son. Dairy farming is the occupation most favoured by these people and in the entire village one finds 130 heads of cattle.

### Angulana

(a) Those trained in the traditional art of fishing	..			96
(b) Carpenters	..	..	..	13
(c) Masons	..	..	..	04
(d) Smiths	..	..	..	04

The younger members of the family as they grow older get trained in the only skill available to them, namely fishing. They follow their elders into the sea in boats and master the trade. The carpenters, masons and smiths are those who have gone out of the village and trained themselves. They are rarely engaged in work outside the village.

### Mahawelawatta

(a) Masons	..	..	08
(b) Technicians	..	..	04
(c) Carpenters	..	..	01
(d) Pharmacists	..	..	01
(e) Traders	..	..	03

### Mayilawalana

(a) Technicians	..	..	..	21
(b) Traders	..	..	..	06
(c) Those trained in other small scale industries	..			05



In this village 53 individuals are employed in Government Service. Out of these the majority are teachers or clerks. There are a few individuals engaged in gold and silver craft, iron work and other occupations. They are trained in the family and the knowledge is traditionally not acquired outside but extended from father to son.

### Chitra Lane

(a) Technicians	..	05
(b) Carpenters/Masons	..	03
(c) Plumbers	..	01
(d) Traders (petty)	..	06

From this analysis it is seen that there is no opportunity or even a motivation for people to acquire formal skills or a training necessary to practise a skill. What skills they have or acquired are so gained in the traditional way. Agricultural skill is learned from the parents and there is no systematic method to improve it in the light of modern knowledge. Some such skills like basket making etc. are entwined in caste-beliefs and caste-structure. Even the prospect of continuing or fostering such skills is an open question in the face of the dwindling supply of raw material. The skills in technical work are mostly associated with motor mechanism or electrical work. Few other technicians such as pharmacists have been trained formally. Carpenters and masons fall into the following categories : (1) Those trained informally in the traditional families in the manner of other arts and crafts. (2) Those trained outside in a more formal way.

At Wanduressa, Udagama and Dalukana the majority are those trained in the families in the village. In the other villages they come from outside, inspired perhaps by the motivation to migrate, learn the trade and either come back to the village or settle outside. In more recent time with the exodus of trained carpenters and masons to the Middle East coupled with the boom in construction work, carpenters and masons are in an enviable position where they could earn more than any others trained in similar occupations.



Standard of health could be easily gauged by the rate of normal life expectancy, average death rate from various illnesses, the prevalence of malnutrition, the availability of an atmosphere conducive to health (presence of clean water, latrines etc.) and such other factors. At Wanduressa, Udagama and Wasanagama none of those conditions conducive to sound health existed before the settlements were initiated. At Wanduressa 49 houses were built as early as in 1959 — 60 and at Udagama and Wasanagama houses and other facilities were provided including pure water and latrines.

It is very difficult to ascertain precisely the life expectancy in these villages. The people being illiterate do not know even the year of their birth. When they notify death, they generally do not give the exact age. But from a meticulous collection of sample data we found that at Udagama, Wanduressa, Wasanagama and Dalukana the men die at an average age of 52 and women live a little longer. At Mayilawalana, Mahawalawatta, we were unable to gather precise data. Being closer to Colombo and being open to Governmental extension work in health, usually the people here do enjoy a longer life here than in the above 3 villages. Chitra Lane and Angulana are also open to such health facilities which are available in the city of Colombo and their life expectancy could be closer to the national average.

It is interesting to notice the type of illnesses that these villages are exposed to. From our research data a number of illnesses surfaced; hook-worm and bowel diseases are prevalent in all the villages. Scabies finds itself among children and adults. Common colds and fever are a recurrent symptom. Malaria is endemic at Udagama, Wanduressa and Dalukana. The constant internal migration of these people, especially the Rodiyas who as beggars visit areas far away, act as the primary factor in the spread of these diseases. Eye diseases ranging from night blindness to other types of "blindnesses" are found among them. In a period of three months in 1980 in all the villages we observed the following number suffering from different illnesses:



<i>Type of diseases</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>No. of individual ailments</i>
Whooping Cough ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	125
Measles ..	1-2-3-4-6-9 ..	33
Mumps ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	201
Diphtheria-Dysentery ..	1-4-5-8 ..	41
Diarrhea ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	246
Night-blindness ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	63
Short-sightedness ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	141
Scabies ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	108
Hook-worm ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	316
Malaria ..	1-2-3-4 ..	104
Convulsion (children) ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	216
Polio ..	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 ..	48

Very few people utilise the extension services provided by the Health Department. There is no motivation to utilise them and on the other hand there is no motivation on the part of the officials of the Department to make the people realise the full benefits of these services. In these villages the percentage of the users of Health Services when quantified ranged from 04 percent to 31 percent. This shows that there is much more that could be done to secure the benefits of these services of the Government.

### **Ten Basic Needs : A New Measurement of Poverty**

Poverty is a fluid or relative concept which can mean something in one village and carry quite a different meaning elsewhere. Therefore in understanding and measuring poverty, it is essential to take stock of this fluidity or relativity in defining it. Mainly prompted by this consideration, we attempted to devise a new measurement to gauge poverty.

Sometime back a representative gathering of villagers were asked by us to list their basic needs, and also to divide these needs again according to sub-needs. The needs and sub-needs which presented a formidable list were then reduced to



ten basic needs, with ten sub-divisions comprising every need. Ten points were given to each sub-need according to the extent of its fulfilment in a given village and each need thus got 100 points. According to this score the extent of the fulfilment of each basic need in each village was made. On this computation it was possible to determine how far the 10 Basic Needs are satisfied in the village.

The ten basic needs and the extent of their satisfaction was adopted by us first on a pilot basis in determining the basic needs of people in 12 villages near Ambalangoda.

After applying it practically, certain short-comings in the method were discovered and the 'measure' modified to fit into accord with practical realities in research and village life. It was used in all the 9 villages studied by us separately from other data collections and also by different Research Workers.

**The Ten Basic Needs are as follows :**

**No. 1 — *A clean and pleasant environment***

In this which was sub-divided into ten, the primary objective was to find out how healthy, aesthetically beautiful and ecologically beneficial an individual environment is.

**No. 2 — *Water***

Do people have sufficient clean water for drinking, and for other purposes including agriculture and industry ?  
Is it free from pollution or contamination ?

**No. 3 — *Clothing***

Do people possess at least 3 pieces of clothing to cover and protect themselves ?



No. 4 — *Food*

Do they receive an adequate and nutritious meal?

No. 5 — *Dwellings*

Do they possess adequate and healthy housing ?

Do they possess a house where they could be free from the ravages of weather and other elements and enjoy a healthy life ?

No. 6 — *Health*

Do they basically enjoy good health ?

No. 7 — *Transport and Communication facilities*

Do they have the minimum of transport and communication facilities ?

No. 8 — *Fuel*

Do they possess sufficient fuel and energy ?

No. 9 — *Education*

Is a minimum of educational facilities available ?

No. 10 — *Spiritual and Cultural needs*

Is a minimum of spiritual and cultural needs satisfied.

The extent to which the 10 Basic Needs are satisfied at Kebillewala has already been referred to. In the identical manner the other 8 villages were also researched and points allocated. The extent of the satisfaction of basic needs in these villages could be had from the following table.

**The extent to which the basic needs have been satisfied in the 9 villages is as follows:**

Each basic need is given 100 points and 1000 points are thus allotted to each village. This again is divided by 10 and presented in the following table :

1. Udagama ..	..	28.01 %
2. Wanduressa	..	29.03 %
3. Dalukana ..	..	31.12 %
4. Wasanagama	..	33.10 %
5. Mahawalawatta	..	40.01 %
6. Mayilawalana	..	38.01 %
7. Kebellewala	..	55.58 %
8. Chitra Lane	..	31.33 %
9. Angulana ..	..	30.01 %



If one considers the minimum satisfaction of the ten basic needs as the accepted line of poverty, then certainly one can see how far below the Poverty Line these people do live.

In order to substantiate the basic-need approach and also to make the data varied and more graphic, a series of other probes were made from time to time in these villages. One such probe was about the health of children and expectant mothers. Children between 0 — 5 years and expectant as well as lactating mothers were studied in all the villages. These studies were made by university students living in the neighbourhood and these students were asked to be as close as possible to the villagers, especially village mothers. Female students were able to live with the families and observe the mothers and infants first hand and record their observations.

The following conclusions were extracted from the findings thus made. In the village the following percentage of infants and children were given a diet which is not at all adequate from any accepted standard.

**The Nutrition level of infants and mothers :**

(1) Udagama	98.02
(2) Wanduressa	98.01
(3) Dalukana	97.0
(4) Wasanagama	96.04
(5) Mahawalawatta	92.02
(6) Mayilawalana	92.01
(7) Kebillewala	96.01
(8) Chitra Lane	96.02
(9) Angulana	96.04.

This means that malnutrition is rampant in many such villages. Out of the pregnant and lactating mothers only an average of 3.6 percent breast feed their children, 51.9 percent add imported milk powder which they receive from the Social Service Department or through Voluntary Agencies to the diet of children. The diet of lactating mothers and pregnant mothers shows no difference



from that of others. 83.06 percent of such lactating and pregnant mothers do not enjoy at least one nutritious meal a day. Of this, if the knowledge of nutrition could be made available to them at least 15 — 20 percent would be able to prepare a nutritious meal with what is available in the village ; but in the case of others their economic conditions unless drastically improved do not permit such a meal at any time.

The present increase in prices specially of food items has robbed them of whatever nutrition they gained from their frugal meals. The rise in the price of sugar meant that 75% of the families have a cup of tea without sugar in the morning. The most pathetic side of this is that it has robbed the children of sugar in their tea which they used to have earlier. A cup of tea was the least costly item in their life in the past being only about 8 or 10 cts. It cannot now be purchased with sugar even for 80 cts. milk is completely out of the question.

Bread or meals made out of flour for example was eaten in 98 percent of the houses at Chitra Lane. But after the increases in price only in 4 or 5 houses do they eat bread or a meal made out of flour in the morning. In 14 houses they merely satisfy themselves with only a cup of plain tea and that too without milk. At Mayilawalana the price increase has robbed the cup of tea with sugar from 61 percent of the houses and the bread or flour-made-meal is now no more taken in 49 percent of the houses.

One interesting point is noticed in the use of kerosene oil as this was cheap for lighting purposes it was used almost in every house. The increase in price drastically reduced the buying of kerosene. At Udagama it was reduced by 89 percent ; at Wanduressa 88.6 percent ; at Dalukana 87 percent. In the other villages except at Angulana and Chitra Lane where the reduction is about 60 percent, the buying was enormously reduced often over 80 percent.

### **By-products of Poverty**

Poverty as it grows causes, promotes or sustains many by-products that are socially unproductive or even socially destructive. Crime is such a by-product, although except at Angulana and



**Chitra Lane** we are unable to notice a significant increase in crime from available official statistics. In these two settlements we know how a number of youths in the village in association with criminal elements engage in such acts as stealing, use of narcotics, sale of illicit alcohol and extortion. Narcotics are used by youths both at Chitra Lane and Angulana. We are aware of 6 youths at Chitra Lane and 11 at Angulana who peddle narcotics in order to earn a living.

In these two communities and also to a certain extent at Wasanagama, Mahawalawatta and Mayilawalana criminal acts are being perpetrated. The brewing and sale of illicit alcohol is found in all these villages and at present even at Udagama, Wanduressa and Dalukana. The only reason why people do not indulge in such criminal behaviour on a large scale is found in the social control established by the ancient religion and culture.

The society, especially the culture and religion establishes a control on individuals as well as groups and this control in most instances dissuades them from resorting to anti-social behaviour. The doctrine of Karma for example is taught and believed as a law : you reap what you sow. If you steal today, you cannot escape punishment today or later. This sort of belief acted as constraints on anti-social behaviour. But although this is so in traditional villages, in settlements close to towns this belief is gradually breaking down due to various influences.

This social control leads people to find socially accepted outlets to earn their living rather than seeking refuge in anti-social acts. At Dalukana for example, the people, at least one representative from each house, come to the Dimbulagala temple where tourists and pilgrims converge. There they wait for food which is given to them and in this way they satisfy their hunger. Receiving alms at a religious shrine enables the giver to accumulate merit. The recipient therefore is a person who helps one to accrue merit. This role, although a passive one, is socially accepted and it keeps the people away from taking to socially unacceptable or harmful acts.



Another by-product of poverty is the gradual fostering of the feeling of being helpless and thus becoming 'objects' of power in the hands of the powerful people. Take for example the people of Dalukana who are regarded as descendants of the primitive Veddas. The well-to-do people in the neighbouring villages bring tourists and earn money by "exhibiting" the Veddas to them. Here the people in the village themselves do not receive any worthwhile benefits. They are being miserably utilised as 'pawns' in the game of social and economic exploitation by outsiders.

The poor, as mentioned earlier, are powerless or feeble. At Angulana we observed how all the fishermen 'lease' the boats from rich men who reside outside the settlement. The best part of the fish here thus goes to the man outside and the fishermen do not receive enough for their sustenance.

Poverty could spread in two ways : it spreads in a horizontal manner, very infectious in its spread. Poverty thus attracts poverty; very quickly. Then it could spread vertically that is by becoming more and more intense in the small group for example the family. If they could meet their basic needs with Rs. 200/- a month, in the next month for this same purpose they may need Rs. 350/- — borrowing the Rs. 150/- entering into debt. That means poverty has gone deeper into them. When it spreads from one family to another and then to another one deprived family attracting another, the horizontal spread is markedly seen.

In the case of these 9 villages poverty has spread both vertically and horizontally. When there is one house where poor people live, the next time another poor family settles down there. When poverty weighs in vertically that is increasing its weight on the family, it could also hasten the horizontal spread. This has happened in the villages or settlements studied by us.

### **Measuring the Distance between the Rich and the Poor**

In a given community or village if we could establish a precise means to measure the distance between the rich and the poor, an idea of the nature of the poverty existing in the community or



the village could be formed. The distance is at its best when measured between the richest and the poorest in the village and the community. The average income of the poorest in the village, for example, could thus be compared with that of the richest living there.

In order to render the picture provided by the comparison of the income of the rich and the poor more meaningful, the total assets of the rich and the poor should also be obtained. Such assets include land, houses and other property. A careful obtaining of all such assets in the case of the poor and the rich provides us with a starting point to compare the 'strength' and 'poverty' of the assets owned in a comparative light.

At KEBILLEWELA which we studied the average income of the poorest people in the village was Rs. 125.00 a month whereas the average income of the richest was Rs. 1,350.00. The disparity in income is visibly noticed here. The value of assets, both movable and immovable of the richest and the poorest was then compared. The average assets owned by the richest at KEBILLEWELA was Rs. 85,550.00 and that of the poorest was Rs. 2,350.00. The distance here is much greater in comparison to the distances between monthly incomes.

In the case of other eight villages and settlements there were no 'rich' people living in the villages or settlements. The rich were actually outside the chosen village or settlement and therefore in such instances the rich people living close to the village, affecting the village by their presence most, were identified. This identification was done in two ways : (1) The people in the village or settlement was asked to identify the 'rich' people and also those rich who in some way 'affect' their life in the village (2) The life of the village people was observed by us and through such careful observation the data provided by the people was confirmed.

At ANGULANA and CHITRA LANE all the people in the village were, very poor. But within a few yards from their 'settlements' very rich people do live in both these 'villages.' The average income and assets of the very rich thus living, very rich who affect the



village in every possible way, was thus identified and comparing it with those of the poorest, the precise distance between the poor and the rich is established.

This was also the method followed in the case of the settlement villages of Udagama, Wanduressa and Wasanagama as well as the villages of Dalukana, Mahawalawatta and Mayilawalana. The rich as identified such by the people and who 'affect' them most, were living outside the village or settlement. When considering the assets of the settlers at Udagama, Wanduressa and Wasanagama, the value of the new house given to them by the Government is not added to it. This had to be taken into consideration when computing and understanding the distance between the rich and the poor in these settlement villages. Today the cost of such a house is about Rs. 25,000.00. The following table indicates thus the distance between the rich and the poor in these villages or settlements :

<i>Village</i>	<i>Monthly Income</i>		<i>Owned Assets</i>	
	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Rich</i>
	<i>(in Rupees)</i>		<i>(in Rupees)</i>	
Udagama ..	88..	850..	380..	35,600
Wanduressa ..	85..	720..	375..	36,400
Dalukana ..	85..	720..	380..	32,200
Wasanagama ..	110..	980..	420..	38,500
Mahawalawatta ..	108..	805..	1,200..	65,000
Mayilawalana ..	110..	812..	1,100..	62,000
Kebillewala ..	125..	1,350..	2,350..	85,550
Chitra Lane ..	80..	2,880..	625..	6,24,000
Angulana ..	85..	2,550..	750..	2,75,000

The distance between income and assets thus computed between the rich and the poor could serve as a useful yardstick in measuring poverty in our villages or settlement villages. Whatever measures designed to improve the lot of the poor should affect the poorest people living in the village and the effect or impact of such measures could be judged by the contribution such measures could make to reduce the distance between the rich and the poor.



In addition to the economic distance thus measured, a more complete picture of poverty in a given situation could be had by measuring the social distance between the rich and the poor along with it. This could be done by examining the social life of the rich and the poor along three significant aspects :

- (1) The social distance between the rich and the poor in matters pertaining to the 'households' of the richest i.e. what sort of behaviour do the poor exhibit in 'going to' the houses of the rich ? Are they admitted to these houses after an appropriate ritual or and following a particular social behavioural pattern ? How are they treated i.e. what sorts of seating arrangements are provided to them ? Are they given higher low seats ? How are they fed i.e. are they given special cups and saucers. Where are they entertained ? In the garden, kitchen or in an outhouse ? What is the form of language used ? Does it suggest a ritual or social distance between the rich and the poor ?
- (2) What sort of relationship do the rich have with the poor in everyday activities ? If agriculture is the main occupation, how are the roles of the rich and the poor spelled out in relation to agriculture ? Do they work as slaves, serfs or paid labour hands ? or tenants etc. ? If tenants, what sort of traditional agreement do they have with their land 'lords.
- (3) What is the relationship of the rich to the poor on significant ritual occasions such as birth of children, attainment of age, marriage and death ? Do the rich and the poor participate as equals in these rituals ? If so what are their specific roles ? How different are the roles ascribed to them ? How low or high do they stand to each other in role performance ?

The social distances when computed in this manner indicates how far the richest in the village are to the poorest ? The wider the distance is, grave are the results of all attempts to eradicate the burden of the poor which do not take this distance into conside-



ration. Any economic measure intended to alleviate the suffering of the poor should contribute its share to the lessening of this social distance too. In our nine villages we measured the social distance between the richest and the poorest. We categorised it as very very far, very far, far, close, very close, very very close. When the categories were made and appropriate tests applied in the pilot stage we found out that "close ; very close ; very very close" stages are absent in these villages or settlements. We then decided to concentrate on the negative side of the distance between the richest and the poorest and in order to make the distance more vivid divided it into further divisions.

1. Very extremely far : Here the distance is so far that it is difficult even to think of a day in the near future when it could be reduced.
2. Extremely far : Here one could imagine that one day the distance is probable of being reduced.
3. Very far :
4. Moderately far :
5. Far :

The social distance between the richest and the poorest when measured accordingly in our Nine 'villages' gave the following table :

**The social distance between the richest and the poorest.**

<i>Name of Village</i>	<i>Very extreme</i>	<i>Extreme</i>	<i>Very far</i>	<i>Moderately far</i>	<i>Far</i>
Udagama	..	✓	..	..	..
Wanduressa	..	✓	..	..	..
Dalukana	..	✓	..	..	..
Wasanagama	..	✓	..	..	..
Mahawalawatte	..	✓	..	..	..
Mayilawalana	..	✓	..	..	..
Kebillewela	..	✓	..	..	..
Chitra Lane	✓	..	..	..	..
Angulana	✓	..	..	..	..



Out of the 9 villages the social distance between the richest and the poorest in two villages is 'very extremely far' and in all others it is 'extremely far.' This is almost parallel to the economic distance measured earlier in terms of economic assets and earnings per month.

Another aspect that would enrich our knowledge and understanding of poverty is found in the process of decision-making done at the village level and the role the richest and the poorest play in making and implementing such decisions.

It must be mentioned here that decision-making in local level planning although given lip-service both by administrators and planners has no place in reality. All planning is done at the top and the implementation of plans are also very seldom given over to the villagers. Yet the richest in the village by virtue of their economic and social power do find a better say in planning and implementation. How far is it possible for the poorest to share with the rich and powerful this power of decision-making and plan implementation even in a limited sense?

In all these Nine villages the rich are the socially and economically powerful and they do share the power of taking decisions affecting their village to a limited degree, as such power is delegated to them from the Central Government. But no where did we see in them a desire to share this power equally with the poor. Thus in all possible matters of decision-making, it is the richest or the economically and socially powerful who help in the taking and implementation of decisions. The power in this sense is not diffused but centralised in the hands of the richest. Unless and until strategies are found to share it with the poorest, no appreciable dent in the problem of poverty could be achieved.

The distance between the rich and the poor thus could also be measured in their relation to the process of decision-making for local level planning and development. Who are the closest to the decision-makers or who make the decisions in political, economic, cultural or social matters or activities in the village? The following table indicates this distance between the richest and the poorest *visa vis* the exercise of the power of decision-making :



## The relationship between the Poorest and the Richest in decision making

The distance is measured from the hypothetical decision-makers who are invisible i.e. the Politicians, Central Government, Administrators etc.

<i>Name of Village</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Closer</i>	<i>Closest</i>	<i>Far</i>	<i>Futher</i>	<i>Furthest</i>
Udagama	..	..	the richest	..	..	the poorest
Wanduesssa	..	..	"	..	..	..
Dalukana	..	..	"	..	..	..
Wasanagama	..	..	"	..	..	..
Mahawalawatte	..	..	"	..	..	..
Mayilawalana	..	..	"	..	..	..
Kebillewala	..	..	"	..	..	..
Chitra Lane	..	..	"	..	..	..
Angulana	..	..	"	..	..	..

The richest are exerting influence in decision-making (elosest to the decision-makers) or they themselves are the decision-makers. The poorest are in no way participants in decision-making being very far from such decision makers. They always move outside the periphery of local political, social or economic power and are day by day thrust further and further away form the orbit of such power or influence. The impact of the rich and the powerful outside the village who invariably exploit the villager lay bares another miserable aspect of village social and economic life.



### CHAPTER III

## ETIOLOGY OF POVERTY

What are the causes that create, prompt, stimulate and sustain poverty in rural Sri Lanka? In our study of the nine village settlements we found first of all the historical causes of poverty. History as it is often said, repeats itself and consequently parallel or similar historical situations that gave birth to poverty could thus be observed in a number of such villages or settlements.

History in a way has created poverty : The people in every one of these settlements had been poor, their parents had been poorer, the grand-parents even more poorer. They have thus inherited poverty through history and they will go on making it an inheritance for their children and grand children in the future.

The villagers at Dalukana were historically the descendants of the primitive Veddas. These primitive men and women were primarily hunters and fruit gatherers. They never utilised or developed new skills. Although their skills or knowledge did not develop, the society round them transformed itself vigorously. Today they are unable to carry on their hunting and gathering tasks, and if they are to exist modern agriculture has to be practised by them. But how could they, who historically are the descendants of the Veddas without any knowledge or experience in agriculture take to agriculture and develop skills to profit by agricultural activities.

The identical historical situation is observed both at Wanduressa and Udagama. The villagers are of the Rodiya tribe (or caste),



the so called out-castes of Sri Lanka. They are historically beggars, a tribe who adopted the art of begging as a means of living. Any other skill they learned such as the art of making ekel brooms, rattan baskets etc. was incidental to the main vocation of begging. But later such arts became an integral part of the begging life.

Historically these villagers were in a way anachronisms of the past. Social change has rarely touched these villages and for generations they remained historically what they were. Although the villagers moved gradually away from the life-pattern of their ancestors, this change was not fast enough to cultivate modern skills in them to fit the changing society. They were like a set of primitive men suddenly landed in the changing twentieth century.

Historical poverty is perpetuated by the inability to understand the historical process that gave birth to this poverty. At Wanduressa when they were settled having encouraged them to come there from outlying villages the idea was to make them live as one coherent community. It was thought that if they lived as one community being a tribe or caste that was together for generations, a better social cohesion could be achieved. That they belonged to one caste or tribe was the reason why they were wedded to a certain way or pattern of life in which begging was the principal means of earning a living. This fact was conveniently forgotten. Nothing was done to break the fetters of caste and ultimately poverty, born out of historical remains, began to remain so, sustained by historical reasons.

At Udagama, which is incidentally the first village coming under the Village Re-awakening Programme this historical truth was recognised and accepted. Even the old name of the village was changed and the huts which symbolised the pattern of Rodiya life were replaced by two-roomed houses. An intergated programme was launched to facilitate the transformation of the Rodiya people to the modern times.

The growth of poverty could be observed as if inside a laboratory test tube if one examines the history of Chitra Lane settlement. The land was used as the dumping ground for garbage and at the



beginning one or two families who had migrated to the city began to settle there. They invited their poor relatives and friends to this place. They were all from outside Colombo, mainly from rural areas. They brought with them no worthwhile skills but their over-burdened poverty and large families. Poverty proliferated here again due to historical reasons.

The poor locality at Kebillewela was also formed following the identical historical process. The land was owned by 'no one' and the poor people from the neighbouring areas began to settle there. The Government land close-by was divided and given over. Even this was given to the poor and poverty thus strengthened itself there. A parallel process of the same nature is seen today at Nawinna, on the road from Colombo to Maharagama opposite the Arpico Factory. By the side of the road sometime back, one man settled down having built a temporary hut. As time went on about 30 families have settled on this strip of land between the road and the fields. All are poor families. Poverty has thus found another breeding ground.

At Wasanagama the majority of the people are historically chena cultivators. When the new village settlement was created they were given a house and land about 1/4 of an acre in extent. But for generations they had lived by 'slash and burn' cultivation. What could they do with the land given to them? They would prefer to cut down the trees as in the past and continue the cultivation of chenas. They are unable to do it now. Nor are they trained in any other skill even in traditional agriculture except chena cultivation.

At Angulana, the people are fishermen and the majority earn their living by fishing in the deep sea. Their entire pattern of life is thus geared to fishing. Men are out on fishing the whole day through and may be even the entire nights. The understanding of the historical process which affects them and what they are is necessary to understand the poverty in which they find themselves. They fish only during one part of the year. Due to rough seas the rest of the year is spent in idleness thus creating another breeding ground for secondary poverty.



Ecological factors contribute very much to the creation and stimulation of poverty. At Wanduressa although there is land, no paddy could be grown because of the poor soil and lack of water. At Udagama, except during the rainy season, no cultivation could be sustained for the lack of water. At Wasanagama again although drinking water is available, irrigation facilities are not adequate to encourage cultivation.

The ecology of a village or settlement plays a dominant role in promoting the factors that encourage poverty or those that eradicate poverty. There are geographical or natural factors like the richness of the soil, availability of water, freedom from floods etc. which stimulate people to engage in agricultural production. It is a pity that, except at Kebillawela, such geographical or natural factors were almost absent in the other 'villages.'

The absence of natural resources has been one of the fundamental reasons for the sustained poverty of the people. Water is such a natural resource of which we have already mentioned. Especially in the Dry Zone, in the past man-made irrigation networks were established in order to store water and utilise it correctly. Wanduressa, Dalukana and Udagama are situated in areas which benefited, from such irrigation schemes in the past. The irrigation schemes, with the massive tanks, wherein water was stored and distributed by a system of canals, which served almost as arteries, were also part of the culture which existed at that time.

At Dalukana one notices how the ancient tank has been renovated. But the culture of which the tank was an integral part is lost among the people. It is this culture that sustained the tank, gave life to agriculture and made food available to people. Now the culture is no more ; the renovated tank has no place in the present day life of the people. This tank is an anachronism in their way of life.

At Wanduressa and Udagama the villagers have practised the art of making baskets out of rattan. The raw material was brought from far away places where it grew wild. Even some of the villagers of Dalukana were such makers of baskets. The naturally



grown rattan was used and now it has come to a stage where the raw material has come to an end. As no one grows it, but almost every one is intent in cutting it, today there is a dearth of raw material for such basket-ware.

Of the material resources land is the source of produce for the majority of the people. The unequal distribution of land very often leaves them with no land at all. At Udagama and Wandurissa the majority of the inhabitants did not possess any land. But with the introduction of the settlement schemes they were given land. At Wasanagama they were again allotted a portion of land. Considering the increase in their numbers the land is not sufficient to sustain them unless adequate measures are taken to increase the yield.

..At Angulana and Chitra Lane except the few square feet in which the huts are built, there is no land owned by the people. From one house, one can almost touch the other. The scarcity of land increased owing to a number of factors. At Chitra Lane, the pressure from outside has 'squeezed' the land already available. The land was gradually taken over for various purposes and day by day the settlers were "squeezed" into the smaller and smaller area. On the other hand the pressure of the population on the land increased as the families gave birth to children while their friends and relatives from outside began to come and settle down there. The outside squeeze and the inside squeeze acted as a major cause of the dire economic and social straits in which they exist now.

At Mahawalatenna and Mayilawalana the land allocated to them became relatively useless in the face of the growing increase in population. The growth of pockets of extreme poverty as at Mayilawalana where poor people began to 'usurp' land not owned by others added more problems to landlessness. The identical problem is seen among the majority of the people even at Kabillewala which in a way typifies the land use "pattern" in traditional villages.

At Kabillewela the land is owned by 12 families of which six own more than five acres each. Sixty-nine families do not own any



land at all while 292 families own less than half an acre. The resource of land is thus in the hands of a few families who control it, enjoy its fruits while the rest of the population do not enjoy any land at all. This pattern is re-produced in almost everyone of the traditional villages where the resource of land is enjoyed and owned by a powerful few and where the majority do not own any land of appreciable size.

In the settlement villages the pattern is different. The settlers at Udagama and Wanduressa did not own land earlier. But at the time of settling they were given a portion of land. Some of the settlers at Wasanagama did possess land ; but at the time of settlement each family was allocated a portion of land. At Dalukana land for cultivation was given to each family. In the two villages of Mayilawalana and Mahawalawatta each family was apportioned a piece of land.

The use of the land as a resource was beset with various problems. There was the primary difficulty of obtaining water for cultivation, Then particularly at Mayilawalana and Mahawalawatta, even if the land was intensively cultivated, it was not sufficient to maintain the ever increasing large families. The fertility and the size of the land did not keep pace with the fertility rate and the size of the family. The abilities of the people and motivation did not encourage them to make the maximum use of the land. The people at Dalukana for example did not have the cultivated ability to practise agriculture or the motivation to sustain it, because through generations they had been following the life pattern of gathering and hunting.

Human resources are the most important source material abundantly found in these villages and settlements. But in very few instances do we have trained or cultivated skills in these villages. The only cultivated skill in Udagama, Wanduressa and Dalukana is the art of making rattan baskets. In the case of the earlier two villages the art is part and parcel of their begging life to which they as a caste(or tribe) traditionally dedicated themselves. In the other villages carpentry, masonry or technical skills do exist and that too at a microscopic level. At Angulana they have the skill in fishing but it is confined only to the traditional methods.



The limitation in skills, especially in traditional skills which are learned by repetition and sustained by repetition, very often contributes to the non-improvement of their economic or social situations. The fishermen learn the trade from their elders and this learning is done by repetition and imitation. The son does what his father has done and there is no considerable imaginative innovations or profiting by knowledge coming from outside. Thus fishing today except for one or two changes, is what it was two generations ago. Agricultural skill in villages is also comparable to this. The young people learn to cultivate chenas and even here other than repeating what their elders do, there is no imaginative innovations or utilisation of accumulated knowledge or experience from outside.

Poverty is sustained by the lack of skills and also of the absence of general education leading to the cultivation of skills. In all these villages as we have seen, the functional literacy rate is extremely low. Although once they had learned the art of reading and writing, an average 53 percent of the villagers do not utilise the skill. The high drop-out rate in schools as well as the high non-school attending rate of children is due to a number of factors ranging from the lack of motivation, lack of means to send children to school, absence of an awareness of what education could do, ill health and other factors. But above all this, is the feeling that attending school is 'useless'.

Education is in a way functionally useless to the people in the village because it, as felt by them, does not help to create abilities or skills in them which are immediately of use to them. When in a survey made by us we asked from a sample of parents what they would like their children to learn at school the answers we received could be categorised in the following manner :



## What would you like your children to learn at school ?

(Percentage of the sample given)

Name of village	Reading and Writing	Some skill that could be used in the village	Better knowledge to do the present work more profitably	Ans: None
Udagama	19 ..	46 ..	06 ..	29
Wanduressa	13 ..	57 ..	05 ..	25
Dalukana	27 ..	61 ..	08 ..	04
Wasanagama	12 ..	59 ..	06 ..	20
Mahawalawatta	22 ..	60 ..	05 ..	13
Maiyalawalana	28 ..	58 ..	12 ..	02
Kebillewela	14 ..	62 ..	08 ..	16
Angulana	13 ..	61 ..	06 ..	10
Chitra Lane	11 ..	64 ..	03 ..	12

Even though the parents are functionally illiterate, they prefer their children to go to school and learn. Although they came up with a host of reasons why a child is being stopped from continuing education in school, the real reason is that education as it is imparted in the rural school is of no immediate practical use to them.

Taken as a whole in all these nine 'villages' there are two predominant views about education. People do believe that education is necessary but the ultimate objective of such education is to 'make their children gentlemen' i.e. those who wear trousers, secure government jobs (white collar) and enjoy a high standard of life. Then the second view is that whatever they learn should be immediately useful. Otherwise that education is meaningless to them.

In Kebillewela, Mayilawalana and Mahawalawatta the predominant view about education is the first one whereas in the rest of the villages the majority subscribed to the second view. The first view is common to all traditional villages. They believe that education as if by magic transforms a man and elevates his social status. In the past this social status was symbolised by the Government clerk, school teacher, hospital nurse etc. But now it is



symbolised in the figure of a Bank clerk (with a more affluent life-style) Corporation employee, high-up official in Government service etc.

These two concepts or ideas about education have contributed their share to the prevailing conditions that lead to poverty. When people do believe that education could get their sons and daughters a better social status as if by magic they are constantly lured by this concept. Children are motivated to learn, inspired by this. When they reach the 9th or 10th grade this idea takes hold of them, alienating them completely from the vocation and the life-style of their parents. But in the majority of cases such dreams are not realized and the children, disillusioned and disappointed, fall back to the rural life and live as 'parasites.' They are neither here nor there but 'just floats' in a system which has taken them victims.

The villagers who look at education as a process that should help them in their daily chores find that the education their children receive is of no use to achieve these aims. "Can they cultivate a chena or construct a tank after getting themselves educated in the school? Only thing they will learn is to read useless newspapers and write endless applications for jobs which they don't get." The wastage of man-power through a process of meaningless education which never identifies the skills needed and the cultivation of these is one of the fundamental causes of poverty in rural Sri Lanka.

Education in a broader sense should make them learn more about their environment, and utilise it to their maximum benefit. This shortcoming in education is no where observed as in the field of health. They are poor because they are not healthy and again not healthy because they are poor. The vicious circle goes on and it is interesting to notice how even after the necessary knowledge is imparted to them it is not adopted in practical life.

Illness eats into their strength, resources and time. Even if they are asked to select the most nutritious food available locally, being used to a pattern of life practised over decades, they do rarely



change their dieting habits. The bowel diseases which constitute about 51 percent of their reported afflictions could be drastically reduced if they are made to drink clean and boiled water and use latrines. Their life pattern does not allow them to incorporate this useful knowledge in to their daily practices.

At Udagama, although they are provided with latrines they do not use them. In the past it was customary for them to utilise the open space for defecation and they practise it even now. At Wasanagama the majority still do not use the latrines. The situation is the same at Angulana and Chitra Lane. At Angulana for generations the sea-shore was their 'open latrine' and at Chitra Lane again it was the open space although now the gradual contraction of such space has forced some to utilise make-shift latrines, albeit unwillingly.

The increase in the number of family members who had to depend on decreasing or static material resources has inevitably been another factor that added its weight to the problem of poverty. As it had been shown the number of children per family in these villages is comparatively high. They are the descendants of a social and cultural system that laid a heavy emphasis on the value of children. In the past where man-power counted very much for agricultural work, each addition to the family was a blessing. The extended family system provided a means of socialization and the children were never regarded as a burden. But things have changed today. The scarce material resources are hardly sufficient for the already living members of the family. The land is limited. Avenues of employment are more limited. The opportunities for the creation or promotion of abilities are even more limited.

Large families are what the villagers have inherited from the culture and that is now fostered by their ignorance and the absence of avenues of recreation and social enlightenment. They believe that large families are necessary. They take great pride in saying "I have 10 children." Socially they look upon elder children to socialize the younger ones. The extended families have broken down. But the era of the nuclear independent family has not fully emerged. In the "in-between" period, the elder brother or sister



is substituted to socialize the younger ones. The parents, very often both of them, leave the house in the care of the children and go to work. Grandmother, Grandfather, Uncle, Aunt etc. the relatives who formed the extended family being there no more, the brothers and sisters take over the task of looking after the younger ones.

The people in these villages hardly enjoy means of recreation or meaningful ways of spending their leisure. Their daily pattern of life leaves them free in the evening and except for a few bent on drinking and gambling others do spend their time at home. Usually they sleep early and in recent times due to the high cost of fuel, specially kerosene, this sleeping time is advanced. Sexual intimacy is thus their only means of escape from time which weighs heavily on them. As a consequence of such intimacies pregnancies do occur frequently and women very often have to give birth to a child a year, ruining their health on one hand and adding a sizeable weight on to their already heavy burden of poverty.

Ignorance undoubtedly plays a decisive role in both creating conditions in which poverty grows, also stimulating it. It is ignorance which keeps them static both socially and economically. They believe that it is their Karma to be born poor or in socially inferior castes. Although Buddhism does not teach such a doctrine they interpret Karma as fate and tend to accept their poverty and social position as one of inevitability. Change or improvement is impossible and one should not strive for it. They thus became both economically and socially stagnant or immobile which is one of the primary causes of their present position. The worst is the belief they have that under any conditions they cannot improve.

Even in non-economic fields this social and cultural stagnancy prevails. What is the use of education, for even if you receive education you remain in the same social and economic position. You cannot shake-off the heavy burden of social or economic inferiority placed on your back. Entrepreneurship which economists so fondly affirm, does not rise from within the village. If at all it comes, it arrives with outside exploiters, petty or big who would utilise the village resources indiscriminately to their own advantage.



This stagnancy is reflected in their attitudes towards illness or other sufferings. A pestilence would be accepted as a manifestation of the wrath of God. Personal illness could be caused by an evil spirit or some one who is angry with you, by means of black magic. These attitudes motivate you, to be stagnant, patiently accepting them and never complaining. Even the birth of children is regarded as the effect of Karma or what God has decreed. The stagnancy drains you of the motivation or inspiration necessary to move forward, change and improve yourself.

The values sustained by the community often act as a constraint in moving forward to better themselves. This is visible in their desire to spend beyond their limits on meaningless ceremonies and rituals, specially at puberty in the case of girls, marriage and death. The villagers however poor they be, value the splendour of such ceremonies and rituals and if they have no money they do not hesitate to borrow money, get into enormous debt and celebrate these occasions on a lavish scale. The debt thus incurred may have to be paid back perhaps throughout a long period of time. At one village a father who owned a small house and 1/4 acre of land had mortgaged the house for Rs. 1000/- in order to celebrate the ritual of his elder girl attaining age. He had eight children and about a year after the celebration, as he could not redeem it during the stipulated time, the house and the land went into the hands of another man. The owner thereafter went to live in a hut and even today he is not repentant or sorry as to what he had done. He speaks of his daughter's puberty ceremony as the most colourful one they had in the village. "I don't regret losing my house and land. It was indeed a beautiful ceremony. People speak about it even now."

These values which have become part and parcel of their life make them poorer and poorer with the passage of time draining their meagre resources. The values are not confined to one aspect of life : they touch every possible area or aspect of their life. The value or attitude is ingrained in their socio-cultural system and unless and until changes are made in the entire system, no isolated attempt could contribute to their gradual removal from the folk mind.



Employment opportunities are limited in the village. No attempt has been made to make the maximum use of potential employment opportunities, both in the village and in the immediate environment. Lack of employment opportunities encourage villagers to engage themselves in socially negative or destructive type of activities such as gambling, production and sale of illicit alcoholic beverages, sale of local narcotics such as ganja etc. These socially negative or destructive activities are observed in the villages surveyed by us. These activities although they bring money to those engaged in their production, contribute to the poverty of individuals who become gradually addicted to gambling, drinking, drugs and prostitution.

The extent to which these activities have contributed to the existing poverty of the people would show or perhaps lay bare a set of causes that contribute and stimulate poverty in rural areas. The following indicates the number of individuals presently engaged in these socially negative activities. When they are engaged in gambling, production and consumption of illicit alcohol, drug trafficking and drug addiction, and prostitution, no doubt whatever money they earn is spent on these activities. When they are the bread winners of families, the situation becomes worse because they spend whatever they earn in gambling and drinking, borrowing on a very progressive scale until no one is able to reclaim them from the quagmire of debt.

The covert aspect of their social life could be understood by the extent to which these negative practices are found among them. It is again a vicious circle i.e. they are poor and because of poverty (poverty is not always the exclusive reason) they mainly drift into such negative practices. Because of these practices they become more poor. e.g. anxious to earn more money quickly, they gamble even pawning or mortgaging what they possess and losing them to become engulfed in debt.

Poverty is thus a composite pattern of life. This pattern is woven intricately and ingeniously by a complete conglomeration of historical, ecological, economic, social, political and cultural causes. The pattern cannot be identified and understood by following one single economic or cultural or social thread. It has to be realized in its entire totality understanding the relationship



TABLE SHOWING PARTICIPATION IN NEGATIVE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

		Gambling Organisers/ participants	Illicit alcohol Organisers/ participants	Prostitution Organisers participants/ Prostitutes/ Customers	Drug addiction Traffickers/ addicts.
1.	Udagama ..	05/18	03/34	01 02/06	02/08
2.	Wanduressa ..	06/23	08/47	03 05/14	02/07
3.	Dalukana ..	03/15	03/21	02 01/05	03/08
4.	Wasanagama ..	04/26	04/43	03 06/11	04/13
6.	Mahawalawatta ..	04/20	05/52	04 04/21	06/51
5.	Mayilawalana ..	05/21	06/58	04 05/24	08/53
8.	Kebillewela ..	02/16	02/14	01 02/06	03/13
7.	Angulana ..	06/63	08/71	03 05/28	04/57
7.	Chitra Lane ..	06/73	07/81	04 08/42	06/67



of various aspects — some small and some large — to each other. It is this understanding that shows the centrifugal forces which set in motion the dynamics that create, stimulate, promote and sustain poverty.

One may not be successful in pointing out at one cause or even a number of causes as to the existence of poverty. It is better to understand that the people's total pattern of life in which such a multitude of causes are found give birth to poverty and sustain it. The exploitation of the rural people by outside forces is totally beyond their control. It is to the advantage of such forces to keep the rural people poor because the exploitation becomes successful only when the rural poor could thus be sustained in poverty



#### CHAPTER IV

## **THE WAR AGAINST POVERTY : AN ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO FIGHT POVERTY AND THE IMPACT OF SUCH STRATEGIES**

Poverty was considered a number one enemy by the State and Society as a result of which various strategies were adopted to fight poverty. In this Chapter it is our desire to identify such strategies, particularly those important strategies used or employed to fight poverty in the localities and communities selected by us and assess the role and impact of such strategies in eroding the basis and structure of poverty.

The Central Government through its varied extension services and social welfare schemes has attempted to deal with the problem of poverty from the dawn of independence. During the Colonial times extension and welfare services were in existence, although the purpose of primarily promoting the welfare of the rulers were their objectives. Since independence was regained in 1948, the extension services of Government were re-organised and sometimes re-structured with the basic desire of fighting poverty particularly providing social welfare in the rural areas.

In our nine villages the Government extension services were visible in the following areas of community life and the local officers were appointed to deal effectively with such extension work and welfare programmes:

- (1) Education ;
- (2) Health ;



- (3) Agriculture and irrigation ;
- (4) Banking, lending and credit organizations ;
- (5) Forestry ;
- (6) Tea and Rubber Production ;
- (7) Coconut production ;
- (8) Small Industries ;
- (9) Housing ;
- (10) Electricity ;
- (11) Social Services ;
- (12) Law enforcement ;

Education is planned by the Central Government. The policies were framed by those in political power and translated into action by the administrators. The basic flaw in policy making and policy implementation is observed in the inability of the policy-makers to take into account the practical nature of problems of rural life. Even here one cannot speak of an uniform rural area because rural nature and rural life differed from one locality to the other. The characteristics peculiar to Udagama might not be found in a village such as Kebillewala. Educational policy thus becomes useless in the implementation because the peculiarities found in different regions are not accounted for and accomodated in these policies.

The regional educational office is only a bureaucratic nerve centre that facilitates administration in a given region. This may be a given district or even a smaller area than a district. But the actual relationship between the district office and the village (school) is very 'distant.' The teachers in the school are appointed, transferred, and involved in the implementation of the educational policy by the Education Ministry through the regional office. May be certain basic services in addition to the provision of teachers are provided by the Education Office.

Education plays a dominant role in changing the people's patterns of life and making them ready for change. This could only be done by an educational system that takes the sharp realities of the village situation into recognition. In none of our villages do we notice this aspect of education taken into account. The policy



is imposed from above and there is no participation of the village people either in its formation or implementation. The drop-out rate is high because education is not understood as something which is of immediate practical use to the people. The literacy rate is low because people do not consider education as useful.

The school teacher who comes to the village is a man or woman sent in from an area which is perhaps a hundred miles away from the village. Very often he comes to the village against his wishes, just because he is transferred there perhaps as a result of punishment. His family is miles away and in the village he may not find a proper place to live. Even his basic needs cannot be satisfied in the village. From the day he arrives there he is an unsatisfied man always looking for an opportunity to go home. This lack of interest and motivation are common to almost all village teachers in these schools. Consequently they do not become dynamic agents of change. On the contrary they make education a non-attractive process and the people already disillusioned may find their expectations, if they do have any, again destroyed by the complacent attitude of teachers.

The school, the teacher, the local education office and its agents hardly touch even the periphery of the problems in the village. The local education office and its agents, very frequently the Education Officers, do visit the school at certain times. These are routine visits and such official visits only serve out as opportunities for authority to exhibit its ugly head in the village scene. Education is thus an useless and a meaningless process as far as the villagers are concerned. Until this attitude is changed no significant break in the battle against poverty could be made.

Education or educational services are limited to the teaching of the art of reading and writing to children. In none of these village schools the educational curriculum takes into account the real needs of the people of the village. No opportunities are provided to offer facilities to the villagers to learn certain skills which they could cultivate profitably later. Educational system is not geared to the basic wants of all but confined only to the school and the



young who choose or care to attend. The needs of the adults who should also undergo a process in education are not keenly felt and attempts should be made to satisfy such needs.

Health is a basic problem in the village. The Medical Officer of Health through Public Health Inspectors, Public Health Nurses and Midwives serve in the rural areas. A Medical officer of Health has not actually visited many of these villages. At Udagama, it is only after it was taken under the present Village Re-awakening Programme that the Medical Services of the Government got itself involved in the village activities. Even at Chitra Lane which is in the heart of a populous urban area, the Public Health Inspectors do not show an interest in carrying out health programmes.

It is only a motivated Medical Officer or Para-Medical Officer who actually goes to a village and identifies himself with the activities in the rural areas. This motivation, we have observed, may come when dedicated voluntary organizations are at work. Otherwise the officers confine their work to routine activities. This is due to different reasons. First of all the officers feel that there is no recognition given to them for any good work done. In promotions or in case of salary increase such services are not counted. Perhaps a word in the ear of the 'correct' Politician may become more useful than a bagful of credits collected through such work. Secondly they feel or come to the conclusion that the villagers do not look for such health extension work. An example is the spraying of Malathion in order to control Malaria. People do not like the spraying of Malathion on the walls of their houses due to various reasons. This 'inertia' and 'unwillingness' in the people is reflected in the medical and para-medical officers too.

In the services, if you begin to work, the majority of officers who do not like such work may see in you "a person who is against them." A Medical Officer is covering a large administrative area and travelling in the area would result in great inconvenience. The Public Health Inspectors due to one reason or another again may not like to visit all the villages coming under their surveillance.



One Officer who does it, may evoke the hostility of other officers. They would ask : "Why do you do this ? You can well remain drawing the same salary without incurring such unwanted troubles."

Take the case of Angulana and Chitra Lane. It is very seldom that Medical Officers or Para-Medical Personnel visit these villagers. The sordid health conditions prevailing there thus remains as such. The only type of health education they receive is confined to the screening of a 'health film' on the occasion of a village festival. In the other villages too, except for some efforts made by voluntary organizations no systematic approach is being made to impart health education to the people.

The Public Health Midwife is the closest health worker to the people in the village. Her services are needed by every family. In these villages if she could visit the houses and if her motivation is there, she could function as a very successful change-agent. The health habits of the people could be gradually transformed by her. But unfortunately her role is not being interpreted to include these aspects and in the majority of cases the Public Health Midwives do lack such motivation.

Education in health is a must for all the villages, if an appreciable change in the quality of their life is to be achieved. This could never be done without at first understanding the village. The Public Health Inspectors, Public Health Nurses and Midwives should be made the pivotal officers directly in charge of health activities in the village. Especially in villages such as those studied by us where health conditions are indeed very unsatisfactory, it would be useful to station such officers even for a temporary period of time in the village itself. They must be given a training in village activities, understanding of the village society, its culture and provided with a motivation wherein their work is appreciated and rewarded.

Agriculture and irrigation go hand in hand together. Although much has been done to improve agriculture and facilitate irrigation, it is very rarely that the villagers are understood and such activities initiated on their behalf. At Dalukana for example before the



medieval tank was renovated and the land was distributed to the people for the purpose of agriculture, it would indeed have been useful to have enquired whether the descendants of the primitive Veddas, the Dalukana people, are really motivated to engage in agriculture and develop that skill. As a result of this obvious lapse, the Dalukana inhabitants who never possessed developed agricultural skills did not make any use of the water made available or the land given to them.

The close relationship between the pattern of life and the vocation practised can be understood in the following example. In the past in the dry zone areas, it is through the ingenious systems of tanks and irrigation channels that water was provided to the fields. The people appear to have cherished five significant principles in the construction and maintenance of a tank : (1) The tank should be so constructed that it should have waves and sunlight reflecting on the water in all parts of the tank. (2) Fish should be allowed freely into the tank and under any circumstances not killed or harmed. (3) Tortoises, swans and such other creatures should be allowed into the tank. (4) On the bund of the tank herbs and plants should be grown. (5) Each tank was devoted to a particular God and as such no one should commit any act that desecrates the God. The tank and its precincts were thus kept unscrupulously clean.

The five principles are closely interwoven with the people's pattern of life in which agriculture was the main vocation. Without water no agriculture was possible and the tank thus became the 'heart' of all agricultural activities. The water could be the breeding ground of insects particularly larva that spreads diseases such as Malaria. It has sometimes been stated by more than one scholar that the medieval civilization of the dry-zone was destroyed mainly by Malarial epidemics. The five principles illustrate how the water was kept 'pure' from such creatures hostile to man. The taboo against killing fish in a tank is motivated both by religious and practical considerations. Even today killing of such fish is regarded as a terrible sin. The present policy of the Government to culture fish in tanks is thus a contradiction of this philosophy which was woven into the life-pattern of the people and which struck a right balance between man and his ecology.



Take for example the principle that one should keep the tank and the area round it clean, because it is dedicated to a particular God. Here cleanliness was made a ritual and in a society where ritual is predominant, this is the only way to make them free from illness. For miles and miles every one attempted to keep the environment clean because if not it would invariably offend God. One should not defecate near tanks or urinate into it. Such an act would raise the fury of the God. In a Jataka it is stated how the people were asked not to defecate in the open. When they did it the gods punished the people. Even here we notice how health habits are institutionalised by the insistence on ritualistic behaviour.

The Agricultural Extension Officer, the Irrigation Officer and the Cultivation Officer and more recently the Vel Vidane (water distributor) are those engaged in Agriculture and Irrigational Extension work in the villages. In Angulana and Chitra Lane one does not come across such officers because agriculture is not practised there. At Udagama again with the inclusion of the village in the Prime Minister's Programme, Agricultural and Cultivation Officers have come into the scene. In the case of all other villages these officers are 'Nonexistent' as far as the village is concerned. They do not come to the village and in the case of recently appointed Cultivation Officers, due to the nature of the Political appointments we find the majority of them not properly motivated to do cultivation work.

Agricultural Extension Officer and his Office often limits itself to the offering of advice and sometimes to the selling of seeds and fertilizer. The potential role of such Officers in changing the pattern of life in a village is significant. Their role should involve primarily motivation work, dynamic house-to-house activity, not just sitting in one place (in the Office) and biding his time there. They should impart an education on the 'spot' which is what is lacking today. The Officer could also be another Change Agent, transmitting the vast body of newly acquired scientific knowledge to the villagers. In order to do this, he should first of all understand the sociology of the villages and the life-pattern of its inhabitants and also become a ready and sympathetic receptacle to such scientific as well as traditional knowledge.



The Agricultural, Irrigation or Cultivation Officer is like any other Government Officer, a person with authority made to sit down in an Office sometimes with a quota of field work. For the right type of officer, with proper motivation and dedication, even a small physical space is sufficient to discharge his duties well. But for the majority this relatively limited structure only contributes to the dampening of their energy and the crushing of motivation which finally leads them to a non-activating (passive or dormant) stance.

Education, Health and Agriculture (irrigation) are the fields in which extension services of the Government could function more effectively in stimulating development. Next comes Banking and Credit facilities. Banking as an institution has not affected any of these villages and the villagers have established no close link with any other credit Institutions. Bank loans for agriculture are being obtained only by a very few selected people. The majority being unaware, or even if they are aware consider Banks and such other lending Organisations as the prerogative of only the rich in the village and in the nearby villages and towns. The structure of the Bank, its location in a town, the way it functions, particularly the bureaucratic procedure, the attitude of the officials transform the Banks to become elite institutions accesible only to the rich and the influential.

The Bank and Credit Organizations have not been able to study and understand the pattern of savings found among the village folk and fashion their strategies accordingly. For example the "Seetu" System which is the ubiquitous rural practice of saving money has not been identified and harnessed to attract them to the Banking and lending Organizations. The Banks have also only haphazardly attempted to answer the charge that they serve only the rich and they do not play a decisive role in the economic life of the average villager. The life-pattern of the village especially in relation to its economic activities is again not completely comprehended by the Banks. The villagers, after the harvest tend to follow a life-pattern in which the main characteristic is spending money specially in the buying of luxury goods or indulging in socially negative practices such as gambling, consumption of alcohol etc.



The Bank, if it is to succeed as a potentially successful lending institution promoting social change and economic development, should fashion a strategy by which it is able to go to the village, accommodate itself to the life-pattern of the people, feel the pulse of the villagers and win their confidence as an institution of their own. A Bank would be viewed by them not only to transact commercial activities but also as an institution to provide capital for their production activities and to invest their money collected seasonally from harvests. The interest rate of the Bank found in the urban areas has to be reduced in rural areas and assume a new role in which the expectations and objectives of the rural people are taken into consideration

From the time Sri Lanka gained independence little attention has been paid to its forests. In the medieval ages forests were regarded as part and parcel of people's lives and the ecological system. If one cuts a tree, another has to be planted. This is given almost a ritual status with the respect and regard paid to Bodhi trees (*ficus religiosa*) and to all those trees that ooze milk. This respect paid to trees and this balance between ecology and man had not been consistently sustained. The forestry extension services looked after forests classified as government preserves. The people cleared valuable forests and started their 'chenas' at will. Extensive areas of land around the villages of Udagama, Wasnagama, Dalukana and Wanduressa have been destroyed because of the practice of clearing land for chenans.

The importance of forests in Sri Lankan culture is evident from classical as well as folk literature. The Sandesa poems for example invariably include descriptions of forests in almost every one of them. Symbolically the forests are referred to as 'Forest Kings.' To the folk poet a forest is an integral part of human life. The manner in which forests are depicted show the respect and veneration accorded to them. The religious spirit also helped in the protection of forests because they are considered as part of holy



life according to which religious men (monks and even ascetics) go to forests in search of quiet places for meditation. A peaceful moment in life could be found in the forest for those with religious zeal, and for those with poetic imagination nature is fully symbolised in the great forest.

The rural forests carefully protected by the people and the kings of the past are now gradually destroyed by the ignorant who carry on the 'slash and burn' cultivation and more by those eager to earn a fast a buck by exploiting their timber. In the villages selected by us we saw how exploiters from outside come to the villages or areas close by and begin to cut down the lovely forest for timber. They do often come there under the guise of official protection. Officials in various government departments and even certain unscrupulous politicians do help and assist them. The end result is the rape of our rural forests. The experiences we had in these villages show us how all these officials and politicians get together to destroy this valuable natural asset appreciated and protected by the Sri Lankan people at all times.

Small Industries are encouraged by Extension Services especially by the Department of Small Industries. Even here if more emphasis is laid on the cultivation of appropriate skills that would be of practical use to the people, a better service could be achieved. At Dalukana, although rattan ware are produced, there is no attempt made to cultivate the skills or improve the already existing skills. The situation at Wanduressa is also the same. Encouragement of skills by providing a means for the cultivation of such skills and the improvement of existing skills so that market-oriented skills could find a place in the village, should be the main objective of any such extension service.

Small Industries specially those related or ancillary to agriculture or agro-based small industries are a felt-need in the majority of these villages. The Government Extension Services on these lines could identify such industries and prepare the ground for the promotion of these traditional and non-traditional industries. At the present time except at Udagama and to a certain extent at



Kebillewela, no attempts have been made to capitalize on this situation which could undoubtedly lead to a proliferation of industrial skills in the villages.

Government extension activities in Social Service and Social Welfare start from the grant of food subsidies in addition to different types of people and other aid. In all these villages the majority of the people receive food stamps i.e. the stamps which entitle them to procure a definite quota of food and other essential items free. The grant of such food items or subsidised items which include food as well as other essential things had been a common practice in the past. Usually food stamps are issued to all families that receive an income of less than Rs. 300/- per month. The income of the family is assessed by the Grama Sevaka (comparable to the Village Headman in the past or the Government Servant who is in charge of all information about rural administration, and quasi-judicial activities in the village). Even though a family has an income of less than Rs. 300/- if they have incurred the wrath or the displeasure of the Grama Sevaka there is every reason for them to be eliminated from such a subsidy system. For these reasons the list of those eligible to receive food stamps prepared by the Grama Sevakas is not always true and accurate. Very poor and needy families could be left out of such lists and thus deprived from receiving the benefits of welfare measures intended for the poor.

The extent to which poverty has got its deep roots in these 'villages' is noticed by the number of families the Grama Sevakas have 'thought' fit to receive food stamps. At Mayilawalana out of a population of 265 families 218 do receive food stamps. At Chitra Lane nearly 65 families do receive food stamps. In the other villages the extent of the population receiving such social welfare aid was as follows : 47 families out of 101 are receiving such aid at Mahawalawatta, 75 families out of 240 receiving aid at Angulana (although the real number who should receive such aid should be higher than this), 44 families (benefit 167 individuals) out of 49 at Dalukana, nearly 90 percent of the families at Wanduressa are eligible for food stamps and at Wasanagama more than 70 percent are eligible.



One interesting example is provided by the settlement village of Angulana. Here the villagers have no contact with the Grama Sevaka and as such his recommendation which is needed to receive food stamps is not given to them. Although the majority of the families appear (except about 18 families) qualified to receive food aid, due to the absence of this rapport with the Grama Sevaka, they are not given the benefit of such aid. This is a characteristic feature of such grant of food stamps almost everywhere and it also brings to our attention the ineffective role of the Grama Sevaka at the village level.

The Grama Sevaka is at the bottom of the Government administration and represents the administration at the village level. Earlier it was the Village Headman who represented the Central Administration, and later the office of the Grama Sevaka superseded that of the Headman. In the case of the Headman, the job was in many instances a hereditary one, depending very much on the social stratification to which he belonged. He was entrusted with the duty of representing the Central Administration in all its aspects, particularly in the aspect of peacekeeping and police work. The office of the Grama Sevaka on the other hand is nowhere precisely defined or his role unambiguously articulated. His role is an almost impossible one of being the information collector to the Central Government, direct representative of the administration by being responsible to the Assistant Government Agent of the area, in charge of peace-keeping activities and of sundry other work including that of supplying intelligence information to the Government. For the villagers his sanction is necessary to obtain social welfare aid ; to prove their residence in the locality for any matter where such proof is required, and to bear witness as to their character.

The Grama Sevaka's Office is the saddest of all such offices of Government at the village level. In none of the 'villages' studied by us, do the Grama Sevakas play the role in a way beneficial to the village and the community. The grant of food-stamps depends on the goodwill of the Grama Sevaka and there are instances where he does not do his work impartially and where he simply neglects such principles. His office could co-ordinate all develop-



mental activities at the village level. To do this he should reside in the area officially 'accredited' to him which is not always commensurate with the village. The Grama Sevakas do not always live in these areas. They ply their 'offices' often with a nameboard in the area allocated and sometimes it is very difficult to meet them. One of the problems all our villagers had was the inaccessibility of the Grama Sevaka at the needed time. Thus the contact between the Grama Sevaka and the villagers is in practice almost minimal.

The Office of the Grama Sevaka becomes successful when the Grama Sevaka considers himself as one of the people themselves. His character and training play a dominant role here. Secondly instead of the complex array of duties ascribed to him, the Government should define clearly a set of duties that he could effectively perform. The objectives of the Office of a Grama Sevaka has to be defined in terms of Rural Community Development. Thirdly the training giving to him should measure up to these specified objectives. The Grama Sevakas too are devoid of any meaningful training that goes hand in hand with their duties. They hardly have an idea of what Community Development is, the task to which they should really be dedicated.

The travails of the Grama Sevakas themselves on the other hand need careful attention in order to reap maximum results from the performance of this role. He is frequently transferred and like other Government Servants he is at the receiving end of political vendetta. His area of 'administration' sometimes, is too extensive for him to form direct liaison with the people. He may lack office accommodation or a suitable dwelling house, although he is asked to reside in the locality. Further more he is one Government Officer at the grass-roots level who is not provided with any incentives or promotion in his office. His role in development, if made meaningful could exercise a considerable influence in the Government extension and welfare activities at the wellage level.

The social welfare activities represented by food aid and subsidies programmes are both necessary and detrimental to village development. They are necessary because the majority of the village



population, as seen in our example, live very much below the poverty line and with their basic needs not satisfied. If the social welfare which is now not distributed in a fair manner but which at least supports many a life hanging on to such aid by means of subsidies is removed one cannot imagine the massive burden that would come on them. They do not have material resources they could exploit nor human resources in the way of skills that could be put to use. For example if the present food-aid and subsidies are taken away from the villagers (let us take Dalukana, Udagama and Angulana for example) the poor people who receive such aid will have to manage with only what they have. It is impossible to conceive how families with 5 or 6 children could find new avenues of earning if the present aid and subsidies are taken away. According to our computation, if it happens, the rate of malnutrition which is very high, would double or treble itself. The susceptibility to illness would increase by over 60 percent. School attendance would drop appreciably. At Dalukana people who eat only one meal a day will have to forgo it and satisfy themselves with only a meal in two or three days. Although at present in these villages stealing etc. are not major problems, the people in the future will be compelled to take to such socially destructive activities impelled by the motive to satisfy their basic needs.

But practically speaking how could one do away with such aid and subsidies? This has to be done in the future and there is no doubt that a growing economy cannot indefinitely carry the massive burden of social welfare and aid which is hanging like a mill round its neck. A correct balance between on one hand the grant of such aid and on the other village realities has to be found. Instead of removing such aid and subsidies at once, a realistic programme to improve the lot of the people well below the poverty line has to be initiated. With the success of the programme and the gradual moving away from the poverty line the aid as well as subsidies could be commensurately reduced.

Law enforcement activities in the village are in a way partly symbolised in the office of the Grama Sevaka. He is in short the liaison between the Police and the village. But the role of the Grama Sevaka depends very much on his character and tempera-



ment. He will impartially perform his duties or become partial in which case the significance of his role is lost and confused completely. Law enforcement involves the prevention of crime and the arrest of crime. The Police as well as the Grama Sevaka are bound to achieve these two objectives in order to create the peaceful condition and the atmosphere necessary for development.

The villagers in our study are faced with anti-social problems although such problems have not assumed enormous proportions in these village settlements. Yet there is no guarantee that these problems will remain in the present shape without assuming a greater magnitude in the future. With the development of the economy and the society, it may be, that the conditions that gave rise to these problems would wither away, or on the other hand they may accelerate themselves in a neo-poor society ; this is a society which has passed the poverty-line or satisfied its basic needs and is fast emerging to be a modern society but still relatively poor. In either case the role of the law enforcement officers, especially in the task of crime prevention, should be re-defined and made to fit in with local level developmental activities.

We have examined the role of Governmental Extension work as a strategy employed to fight poverty and found a number of shortcomings. The most pathetic of all is the low level of extension services functioning in the village. Even in the present conditions if hundred percent use is made of Governmental Extension Services, it would indeed be a remarkable contribution to the improvement of the unfortunate lot who live below the poverty line.

This inability to exploit to the full the extension services of the Government, at least in the case of these nine villages, is due to the following main reasons: (1) the lack of knowledge or awareness about such extension services in the village people themselves and the absence of the knowledge about the ways and means of securing such services for their own benefit; (2) the absence of motivation in the officials who are accredited to carry out such programmes. This lack of motivation depends on the type of their character, temperament, training and the background from which they come;



(3) the inability of the policymakers especially the the top level politicians to understand the significance of the extension services with their basic realities without confusing it with national or local party politics.

The villagers become hardly aware of such extension programmes in these localities except by accident. Better strategies of emphasising the importance of extension services have not been devised. No systematic research vis-a-vis the knowledge and awareness of extension services has been carried out and ways and means of bringing such an awareness into the people discovered. Mass media has been used, but very ineffectively in a way that the message does not sink into the hearts of the people. The people being unaware of such extension services which are indeed foreign to them are not motivated to seek the help and assistance of such services without fear, doubt or hesitation.

The officers of the extension services need to be selected to fit into this task of development especially at the village level. Their background should fit in with the task, as well with their character and temperament. They should be carefully selected and very carefully trained. The training curriculum for any one of these officers who hail from various areas should contain the provision of a fund of knowledge about the rural structure, institutions and the pattern of life. This orientation would equip them with the motivation necessary to kindle the desire to reap the best from extension services. In a way their enthusiasm engendering interest in the extension services by making the village people aware of it, should be infectious.

The most pitiful aspect of the entire process is the absence of this particular ideology in the minds of the policy makers and especially the politicians—the concept that the extension and welfare services should be geared for development. The politicians at the national level as well as at the local level tend to think of development in personal political terms : i.e. “what has to be done for development should be initiated by us in our own way and not by our opponents and all plans for development should be nurtured by our people and not by others.” The extension and



welfare services should not in any way reflect a political ideology. Whatever Government comes into power, the extension services should be geared to the same task, perhaps with a little more emphasis on one or more aspects or facets of development that become important to the policy makers. But to run away with the idea that only "our man could carry out our policy" is indeed a detrimental one. This has led to the appointment of unsuitable officers to extension services, meaningless transfers or non-rewarding of capable ones and general dissatisfaction in all fields of extension services leading to a Malfunctioning Ethos as far as quality of work is concerned.

Governmental Extension and Welfare Services if coordinated and put into function at the village level could achieve much more in the war on poverty than the meagre outcome they do achieve now. In order to do this a living philosophy of extension service should motivate both the Politicians and Administrators. The glow of this philosophical light should in turn fall on the people, enlighten them and make them aware of the usefulness of such extension services. In a way one could appreciate the attempt made by the Udagama or Village Re-awakening Programme as a right step in the correct direction. We could see in it, how a dynamic and comprehensive philosophy is used as an apt strategy to motivate both policy-maker, administrator and the people. Since the maximum utilisation of Extension Services is one part of this programme, let us examine the various strategies utilised in this connection and see their impact in Community Development.

### **Village Re-awakening Programme : Re-building the Nation with a Philosophy**

The strategy of the Village Re-awakening Programme is based on motivating the people to help themselves in their fight against poverty. In order to provide a basis of this self-help, a basic need such as housing is identified. This need is identified by the people and their participation is envisaged at all stages in its implementation towards development. In providing this need, the extension and welfare services as well as the cooperation from various Government



Departments is solicited by motivating the officials in them. In order to strengthen such activities Voluntary Organizations are harnessed to motivate and inspire the people and build their individual and community character in order to ensure the re-awakening of the village as a self-supporting unit as far as the reality of the situation would allow it.

In order to emphasize the importance of the Programme it is envisaged that it should begin work with the 'lowest of the lowest.' This is a reverberation of the Anotodaya Programme of Mahatma Gandhi. The Programme has to begin with those at the extreme end of society and move forward from this level. The least powerful and the lowest poor (those steeped in abject poverty) are those who are in need of help and assistance first. The Village Re-awakening Programme adopted this principle, and selected Badalgama (Udagama), a very backward village peopled by the lowest caste (or tribe) in Sri Lankan Society — the Rodiyas.

The houses are built for the people who do not have such houses and land given to them. The philosophy is to enlist their help at the time of the construction of the houses and make them participants in the entire process. In the selection procedure no political considerations other than the fact that they are the lowest in the economic and social ladder, are to be taken into account. Material for the construction of the houses is provided by the Government and the people are expected to construct the houses through their own individual and collective effort. Although in the initial period of the Programme houses were constructed and given to them, later on their participation in every aspect of construction was anticipated and encouraged.

The strategy was based on the following significant points :

- (1) Identification of villages or Communities at the lowest strata of Societies and Communities whose basic needs are not satisfied
- (2) Selection of allottees ; the selective principle being their lack of Basic Needs.
- (3) Provision of material to construct houses and other amenities such as water, land etc.
- (4) Making available infra-structure and other requirements with which they could begin their march towards



development i.e. Community Halls, Market, Industrial Units etc. (5) Provision of Educational, Health and other aid so that better skills in line with modern development could be cultivated and traditional skills refined. (6) Making new knowledge and experience available to them through mass media and other means so that they would become psychologically prepared for development. (7) Through the effort of voluntary organizations and by invoking the aid and assistance of age old tradition with their roots in culture and religion, to motivate and to inspire the people to mobilise each other's help to become an unit self-sufficient in its needs to the maximum extent possible.

The strategy in the village Re-awakening Programme, to a great extent, is reminiscent of the Gandhi's and Vinobha Bhave's Philosophy and Strategy. The term Gramodaya or Village Re-awakening as well as other terminology utilised show a Gandhian and Bhavian flavour. But what is significant in this Programme is the syncretic character in it according to which the ideal of self-reliance is fused with that of the aid and assistance of Government offered to its minimum capacity, and the motivation of the people who are made to participate in every aspect. The Programme receives its dynamism from the dynamic character of the Founder of the Scheme itself and whatever success it has so far achieved devolves on this dynamism found in the Scheme.

This strategy, where the Government's efforts are harnessed to those of the Community in order to develop the village, wherein development is practically defined as the material and spiritual development of man where man's Basic Needs are satisfied and everyone lives happily as a community, is so far one of the best strategies devised and sharpened to fight poverty at the grass-root levels. But unfortunately due to various reasons the Programme is not reaping the harvest it should have gathered.

The reasons for this failure to harvest the desired results in the Village Re-awakening Programme could be enumerated as follows: Firstly the lack of a firm grasp of the Udagama





Philosophy in the minds of many Parliamentarians. Unless and until one understands the Programme in all its aspects the working out of the Programme in a village would be extremely difficult. Although some M.Ps do understand it correctly, many look at it as a Scheme where only houses are given to the people. Thus they lose the import of the Programme and attempt to steer it along sans its spirit, the people's participation and self reliance.

Secondly the officials both at the national and local level need a training and experience as to the important implications of this strategy which they are expected to put into effect. Except in the case of a few, even the Government Agents or Assistant Government Agents who are pivotal to the successful implementation of this programme, are not completely aware of the intricate but practical and dynamic philosophy behind it. If a means could be found where they could be properly trained and subjected to that experience where they understand what is expected of them vis-a-vis this programme, then the Village Re-awakening Programme will undoubtedly achieve better results.

Thirdly the villagers should be carefully selected which was in the early stages entrusted to the Researchers who then made a searching study and made their report which was taken into serious consideration. But at certain times villages were selected at random and even though they did not have even the basic facilities such as the availability of water, they were 'baptised' as Udagamas (model villages). If this sort of practice could be carefully avoided in the future and local or immediate political advantages are overlooked, the Programme could strengthen itself.

Fourthly what is most important at the local level is a body entrusted with the task of continuing the work already done. If a village level committee in which all Governmental and Extension Services as well as representatives of Voluntary Organizations are represented, it could be entrusted with the task of continuing the follow up work. What is needed in these villages is to streamline the follow-up work and structuralise the basis from which such follow-up action could enamate and sustain itself.



The Voluntary Organizations which are harnessed to do the 'building up of the people' should expedite their task with greater speed. They should be provided with room in the village, from the beginning if possible or at the time of the selection of the site. Local M.Ps should work hand in hand with such organizations without recourse to divisions of caste, creed, race or politics and also carefully learn the intricate philosophy behind the strategy. The success of the Programme depends on the degree of understanding and enthusiasm for the Programme evinced by Government officials, Politicians, Administrators and the motivation and inspiration generated in the people to better themselves by helping each other.

The Village Re-awakening Programme would perhaps fail to accomplish all these enviable tasks expected of it. But as it has a realistic objective for minimising economic, social and psychological suffering of the people it can achieve these worthwhile objectives at least to a certain extent. No Programme is complete in itself, but it completes itself by identifying imperfections or shortcomings and correcting them as it moves forward. The desire to identify such shortcomings is imminent in the creation of the Programme and there is no doubt that this desire is also underscored by the motivation to rectify such shortcomings. All this augurs well for the Programme and one only hopes that without emphasising speed, it would gradually gather a national momentum and help the people to better themselves.

### **Local Planning and Poverty**

Local planning is now a well used and often articulated concept. Decentralisation is the other concept usually associated with it. Planning earlier, whether at local or national level, was done at the top. Then came the nebulous theory of People's Participation of which much is spoken about. Now the new thinking is towards decentralisation leading to more local planning involving a greater degree of people's participation in such planning.



Let us study the Government strategy of decentralisation and planning at the local level in relation to these 9 villages and draw some conclusions that would be helpful to re-structure this strategy in a more meaningful way. As far as village decision-making is concerned vis-a-vis development, none of the villagers in these localities do have a say. They exercise their civic right of electing a representative to the Parliament once in five or now in six years or elect their local representatives to the Village Committees which are now defunct and replaced by Development Councils, of whose precise role towards village level planning is still obscure to us. The role performed by the people at general elections and at village council elections appears as just a ritual exercise and not a meaningful participation in decision-making or plan implementation.

Village development, if it is to take place should re-discover strategies to make the people really participate in decision-making and in the implementation of such decisions. As far as political decisionmaking is concerned there are no structures present today for people to articulate their desires at political decision-making. The Development Councils work at district level and a better strategy to replace local governmental institutions has to be sought. Whether this problem would be realistically solved, we never can say until the Government takes steps towards the solution of the problems.

The basic short coming in the concept of decentralisation is the idea that power is concentrated in a monolithic structure at the centre, and thus divided in a top to bottom arrangement. On the other hand lip-service is paid to the real seat or repository of power which is regarded as the people. The idea of recognising the people as the supreme repository of power would be expressed and limited to the conditioning of people more and more to the ritual exercise of this role in general elections held at frequent intervals. In this context, whatever said and done, it is unrealistic to suppose that those in power are anxious to transfer that power or a part of it to the people for their (people's) own gain.

The people in the village should be allowed a certain leeway to take decisions affecting them at a local level and to be participants



to an appreciable degree in implementing such decisions because the programmes are for themselves and their responsibility for sustaining the results of such programmes is pivotal to the existence of such programmes. If this leeway could be allowed and a certain definite break in the local power structure (in which only the rich-high-born elite now enjoy power) could be made, then undoubtedly a recognizable dent in the war against poverty could be achieved.

How could these practical objectives be realised? First by providing a local level political structure for people to give expression to their opinions, feelings etc. but not based on a particular Political Party or ideology basis. These political structures should have as their base the objective of unifying people, making them finally evolve into a conglomerate unit where they respect and help each other. In the past people did sponsor such institutions : although these institutions in the past do not fit into the society of today, one may see in these, examples worthy of inspiration and emulation.

The strengthening of voluntary organizations on the other hand could enhance their opportunities of decision-making and implementation of local plans. These organizations would provide a training ground for future leadership and decision-making. Perhaps the adroit fusion of voluntary organizations with Government Departments so that they could work together each complementing and supplementing one another.

In the nine villages what the successive Governments have done in local planning for development show the following shortcomings :

- (1) Settlers were brought from outside and in the decision-making or Planning stages the villagers were never involved in it. Take the tank renovation executed at Dalukana or the Scheme for the under-privileged initiated at Wanduressa. Here the thinking was done by the Central Government, perhaps by officials out of touch with the pulse of life in the village. (2) The implementation of the Plan is also done by outsiders. The feeling therefore in the village is that they are not wanted or the resultant products of the plan is 'Not



ours,' They, thus motivated by 'Not our' feeling, would not help to sustain it. (3) Whenever plans are made and executed even on a local scale where villagers are involved, it was only the few rich and powerful who were consulted.

The idiosyncratic behaviour involved here could be illustrated from an example in a village not included in our study. A canal was planned to be constructed in a village close to one of the villages involved in our study. The path was marked out and the canal partially constructed. The path of the canal was traced by engineers. There is a powerful man of the village community whose prosperous boutique was to be demolished by the planned path of the canal. He influenced the Government and got the path changed. So the entire canal was re-structured in order to satisfy the whims and fancies of this powerful man of the village regardless of practical considerations. This led to the overflow of water in the neighbouring terrain to outside areas and not to the area for which it was planned and made the entire exercise an useless one.

### **Role of Voluntary Organizations**

Voluntary Organizations can be broadly divided into two categories: (1) Those who devote themselves to the task of performing social welfare activities such as providing some immediate succour to the poor, and the needy. For example if they do not have houses, these organizations build the houses for them. They would provide milk or other items of food to the poor people. Anyhow these voluntary organizations expect nothing more than doing some good and they are thus 'the good Samaritan type'. (2) Then there are a few who include such welfare activities in their strategies but they do not consider the provision of welfare activities to the poor or the needy as their only objective. They expect to change man and thus change society too and their goal is the transformation of the society in which self-reliance and mutual help are the basic principles.

The first category of voluntary organizations, however good and beneficial they may be, and although they deserve appreciation and encouragement, do not play a vital role in solving the problem



of poverty. The strategy is more emphatic in times of crises such as a cyclone, a major flood or such other disaster. It relieves mental pain or suffering at the moment but does not help them to fight poverty however desirable such aid and assistance are for the moment. Thus in the context one should think of long term strategies that could be implemented utilising even such aid or assistance.

The second category of Voluntary Organizations are devoted to motivate man to help others and by such help to create a better society. There is a philosophy behind it, and a strategy fashioned out of experience. It is the practical philosophy and the eclectic strategy which show us that these voluntary organizations can go a long way in fighting poverty. Such organizations in the villages perform an unique role in motivating people while at the same time analysing themselves and their Community.

### **A New Strategy at Work**

At the conclusion of this Chapter it is opportune to bring to the reader's notice a new strategy planned to achieve development in a realistic way. The proposal is from the Ministry of Plan Implementation. The Ministry is desirous of making the people participate in the decision-making and Plan Implementation Process. In order to achieve this three areas represented by three Assistant Government Agents are selected : viz. Karandeniya in the South, Deraniyagala in Sabaragamuwa and Hewaheta in the Kandyan area.

The strategy has as its basic concept the mobilisation of the people in all aspects of Planning and Plan Implementation. In order to achieve this, the Government is relying on voluntary organizations. Once these organizations have mobilised the people, the Government Officials whose expertise is available, will meet together with the people and make their plans. All Ministries and Government Departments in those areas will form a Committee co-ordinated by the A.G.A. and the representatives of the voluntary organizations. It is hoped that where plans are



thus made, the people would be motivated to implement them and benefit from them to the maximum degree. The Political Authority here is represented by the M.P. of the area who has pledged to give his cooperation devoid of party politics. The Scheme by far, at least on paper, appears as one of the best strategies fashioned out to fight poverty. If it succeeds in achieving its objectives, perhaps it may give us a better strategy to fight poverty in the entire country. But one has to wait and see how the plan works out in actual practice because there are glaring pitfalls in the way of implementation of such plans at the local level. A perfect 'marriage' between Governmental Services and Voluntary Organizations is here visualized : As the 'marriage,' if not properly consummated and sustained, would lead to the detriment of both Government and the Voluntary Organization concerned extra caution on both parties is warranted in order to strengthen the bonds of wedlock and ensure better results.



## CHAPTER V

# CAUSES OF RURAL POVERTY : THEORY AND PRACTICE

Poverty as it exists in our rural villages cannot be simply traced to a single cause. It is a condition created by a multiplicity of causes complex in nature and often not visible easily at first glance to outsiders. In order to understand this complex array of causes one has to experience poverty as it really exists in the village.

It is a futile exercise to attempt to understand it in the context of ideas of poverty developed in the west, based solely on their economic theories and experiences. Western economic models, although useful, need re-interpretation and re-adjustment before they could be profitably utilised in our country. An economic theory with objectives clearly defined, based on our own thinking awaits development in the future. Even the research methods that deal with poverty, although they could gain much from Western methodology, should understandably give way to the development of a research methodology of our own that can gather sensitive data on rural poverty getting more and more close to the people. The emphasis should be placed more on human beings than on any other aspect of material life.

The rulers of Sri Lanka in the past realised the importance of understanding poverty from the point of view of the village people. One need not undergo much trouble to come across the examples of such past Sri Lankan kings. Maha Parakramabahu (1153-1186 A.D.), Dutugemunu (107-177 A.D.) and Gajabahu (174-196 A.D.) are such well known kings who from time to time went to the people in disguise in order to experience from first hand the



conditions of the country. It was on such an occasion that king Gajabahu heard the laments of an old woman and learned from her how her son together with thousands of other youth from the country were taken as captives to India by the Invaders. He then organised his force, invaded India and brought back the unfortunate Sri Lankans taken there by the invading Indian army.

In the past poverty was considered as an illness or disease. That was also the attitude of Buddhism. Of all aspects or attributes of poverty the most serious was hunger. It is a fire that burns in all human beings and also in all living creatures and it needs to be quenched. It is the worst of all human afflictions. Until that burning fire is quenched all our efforts to solve the problem of poverty is absolutely useless.

The attitude towards hunger is illustrated by the story of a man who came to listen to him one day. The poor man had gone all over the countryside looking for his bulls but he could not find them. In this pursuit he had no time for food and when he came to the Buddha's temple he was overcome by intense hunger. The Buddha by looking at him at once understood how hungry he was then. Immediately the Buddha asked the monks first to give some food to the man. It was only after the man was fed and his hunger satisfied that the Buddha preached to him.

In the Buddhist doctrine there are four basic necessities mentioned. They are food, clothing, housing, and medicament. These basic necessities are needed for monks as well as laymen. The satisfaction of these four basic needs is therefore absolutely essential for all human beings. For the community of monks a minimum of such basic needs should be satisfied. Calculating from this basis one may compare abject poverty to the absence of these minimum needs in a particular community of people. Once the basic needs in a given community are satisfied at the minimum level, taking into consideration the nature of the community and its own major objectives or goals of life, one could develop the various standards of relative poverty.



In certain religions poverty is sometimes raised to a necessary virtue. The vow of poverty that is taken by adherents of some religions is known to all of us. In a way one can say that religions wanted to attack poverty by raising it to a sanctified stage. Such a stage compel us to treat poverty not as something ugly but a dignified and almost a divine phenomenon. Only the poor are the inheritors of heaven. It is very difficult for the rich to go to heaven. The poor experience no such bars or difficulties. When one treats the poor by satisfying their needs the way to heaven or a better life afterwards is thereby made. The adherents are enjoined to experience poverty in order to understand God or higher aspects of a particular religion.

Buddhism possesses no such vow of poverty. But it adopts a very dignified attitude towards the poor. The poor should never be looked down upon or condemned. It is due to a complex conglomeration of factors including one's lack of initiative, Karmic effect, the impact of the environment, the social and economic influence etc. that poverty is caused. Buddhism says that the conditions which create poverty can be changed : this requires the correct understanding of what poverty is and the application of the appropriate techniques to deal with it. Among such techniques one's capacity for tireless striving against great odds is again and again emphasised in Buddhistic teachings.

In the Buddhist society there were different strategies adopted to deal with abject poverty. It is necessary first of all that the rulers whoever it may be to understand the problem correctly and take structural measures suitable to solve the problem, Among such structural measures suggested is the need to help and assist those engaged in agriculture. They should be provided with sufficient land, seed, manure and all such necessary encouragement. The traders living in the country should be provided with a structural foundation that facilitate the smooth practice of their activities. They should have the necessary capital, means to transport their material and opportunity to sell them in peace and security both for their benefit and that of the people in the country. The rulers should see that the traders do not exploit the ordinary people by charging exorbitant prices. Those engaged in public services such as the government servants should be provided with adequate



salaries and such other support to carry out their work without want, fear or partiality. Those involved in religious work such as the clergy need support to minister to the spiritual wellbeing of the people.

The ruler should be careful not to impose burdensome taxes on the people. Justice should be carried out with strict impartiality and without fear or favour. The ruler should always have a group of learned and wise ministers or advisers available for him. He should seek their advice and try his best to make his people happy. On occasions of natural or manmade disasters the ruler should extend whatever support he could and see that his people are out of danger. Small and big communities living in the land should be carefully organised to help one another at all times.

The individual effort made to help oneself is greatly emphasised in Buddhistic teachings. One should always try to overcome his poverty by tireless striving. In addition to this individual effort what one does for others is also of great significance. Helping the poor by whatever means that are available enables one to accumulate merit for oneself. The kings and the wealthy in our past societies always attempted to distribute the wealth they possessed in giving to the poor whatever they needed in life. Food, clothing and medicament always occupied an important place among such items given to the poor by the rich.

The importance of distribution of such alms as food, clothing and medicament (found not only in Buddhism but also in other religions) underscores the emphasis laid on the practice of social distribution motivated by religious considerations. The religious motive always kept the distribution as a social act undertaken solely for the eradication of poverty by meeting the needs of the poor. It may have had in it the desire to better one's life in the future by being born in a higher plane of existence (such as heaven). It is very different from the expectations of the people who are engaged in social acts of this kind today : For them such acts are steps to exhibit public sympathy for the poor and win their votes at the next election or seek social recognition.

We cannot forget the misconceptions formulated about our poverty which are believed not only by foreigners but also by our own people. Of these the belief that people are poor because they are idle is



even today given utterance to in the public media. There was a tendency in the past to believe that all black or coloured nations are idlers and therefore no one could help them out of poverty which is nothing but a condition created by their own physical nature.

If we look at the people in these nine villages and settlements we cannot say (based on our experiences) that these people are idle in any sense of the word. The men and women get up early and throughout the day they go on with their work which need great physical exertion. A careful observation of the household work done by the women folk showed us how industrious they are. Except in a few idlers whom one find in any society or community the majority of these men and women are diligent. They work hard regardless of whatever work that come in their way. Even the Rodiyas of such settlements as Wanduressa and Udagama used to walk very long distances to fetch the raw material for their cane ware and then to sell them again. They also "coupled" begging to these journeys which are very long and arduous.

There is no doubt that concepts such as the attribution of poverty to idleness found among the natives was something we inherited from the way Westeners who as our masters observed our poverty. It is true that subsequently our own scholars began to imitate this way of observing poverty. There are similar examples of such concepts which we borrowed from our colonial masters and which still are current among us. The belief and the explanation of Karma in Buddhism is another such example.

The Westeners who first came into contact with Buddhism began to equate Karma with Fate. This was something that they coming from a theistic background could easily understand. But Buddhism never equalled Karma with Fate. According to Buddhism Karma is one among five factors that condition life. Past Karma could be modified by present action and there is nothing in Buddhist Karma theory to suggest that it possesses a deterministic flavour. The five factors or Niyamas that condition life according to Buddhism are : 1. Order or Heredity 2. Order of Seasons 3. Order of Norms 4. Order of one's psychological past 5. and the Order of Karma.



The Buddha opposed determinism in all its varieties in his teachings. This categorical condemnation of theistic determinism, natural determinism and finally Karmic determinism are found emphatically stated in the doctrine of the Buddha. How then could we explain this contradiction not only found in foreign scholars but also of in our own intellectuals subscribing to the theory that Karma is fate? The belief is even sustained by some people living in both towns and villages in our country (even in our nine villages).

In order to understand this contradiction it is necessary to look at a peculiar sociological process in our social thinking. Our country came under colonization both from the West and East. The Western colonial domination actually began with the Portuguese and reached its heyday during the British rule. The ideas propagated by the Western rulers particularly the British took root in our society. Some of our scholars under colonial domination tried their best to imitate the colonial masters. When the British left granting independence in 1948 new colonialism specially by way of ideas propagated through mass media and reinforced by economic power and education took hold in our society.

The majority of the Westerners did not understand our religions in the way we understood them. For them Karma was nothing more than Fate which they understood as found in most theistic religions. The idea expounded by them (of course there were a few who correctly understood it) was soon emulated by our own intellectuals. When they studied in western universities they were eager to emulate the western intellectuals in every possible way. It was this eagerness that prompted them to interpret Karma in the identical way as the Westerners. Even today some of our own scholars in their desire to identify with the western elite equate it with fate. This interpretation coming from the elite in society soon took hold of even the common people and that is how today we find even Buddhists speaking of Karma as nothing but fate. They ascribe their poverty to Karma and declare that such conditions cannot be changed because it is their Karma.

This social process involves the transformation of powerful elite opinion to the masses and the eventual acceptance of that opinion as their own by at least a convinced section of the people. When



we initiate action against poverty in our society this social process has to be identified and recognised in order to conduct our activities successfully. We observe how this social process brought to the masses the wrong interpretation of Karma at first propagated by the elite. When this happens the masses become so convinced of the interpretation they have inherited from the elite and it becomes indeed difficult to make them believe that their opinion is not what the Buddha meant as the Karma.

A careful examination of the context in which our villagers use the Karma theory in practice show us further how in spite of such intellectual penetration they still possess certain shades of belief in Karma which can be explained by the peculiar social contexts in which they are placed. It is common place for the villagers to use Karma as a psychological compensation. Take the case of a natural disaster such as a flood or drought or an earthquake or fire. When such a calamity takes place in the enormous loss that come in its wake the psychological compensation to ease the mind and then to summon the necessary strength to inspire or motivate oneself with the requisite courage to fight is available in the practical application of Karma : this is my Karma and I have to accept it. But now I must summon enough courage and work again for my own wellbeing. In these villages this interpretation of Karma as a psychological compensatory factor was observed by us together with the tendency to equate Karma with Fate.

We cannot forget that the mighty shadow of India is at our back all the time. Our present culture owes much to India and the Indian influence was there both during times of peace and in times of war. The Indians forced their culture on us during times of war and in times of peace their culture penetrated into ours. Karmic determinism was part of the Indian heritage which reached us through them. It is also quite possible that most Western scholars who came into contact with India first learned about Karma from Hinduism and then with that deterministic view attempted to understand Karma in Buddhism.

Any strategy to deal with rural poverty in Sri Lanka (if we are to take a cue from our field study) should begin with direct assis-



tance given to those overcome by abject poverty. These people do not have even the minimum of their basic needs satisfied. They do lack at least a satisfying meal a day to fill their stomachs. The majority of our villagers in these villages and settlements are those placed in the abject poverty standard and even in the case of the majority of the rural poor this is the situation found. It is difficult to motivate these people by any other means : their poverty has to be reduced to the minimum satisfaction of their basic needs. It is only then that we could talk of the other needs and about relative poverty. As long as these people do not have even a complete meal at least once a day it is meaningless to talk of development or any other strategy with them.

It is only after the first phase of taking the people out of abject poverty is accomplished that we can move on to other activities as helping them to help themselves. Here relative poverty from one area to another has to be carefully identified. In these villages structural organizations necessary to move people out of such poverty are absent. At least in the urban areas one finds trade unions or some sort of a base for political activity that help even in a limited manner to motivate the ordinary people. In these villages such democratic structural facilities are totally absent. The people know only of seasonal ritual general or local elections. Even here in most cases although they go to vote they are actually either cajoled or forced or "cheated" to vote for some one. Free choice is not theirs because they do not possess an education equal to the correct exercise of this democratic tasks. The grassroot democratic organizations facilitating the practical exercise of their rights are not available. The villagers are thus passive in every sense. The democratic education necessary to make them active and the democratic structure to give a meaning to their participation are indeed vital in this battle against poverty.

The majority of these villagers do not have land. In the Udagama and Wasanagama the Central Government had intervened and a small block of land as well as a decent house is given to each family under the Village Reawakening Programme. This is possible because the villages were included in the Village Reawakening Programme. The problem of landlessness is thus to a certain



extent solved by the exercise of the political will of the Government in power. There is no other visible solution, for this the problem of landlessness in these villages. The limited land given to the inhabitants of such villages as Wanduressa did not bear fruit due to the absence of this political will and foresight. The land was given to the Rodiyas in the late fifties and thereafter this grant was not reinforced by follow-up political action. No one was there to see that the people make the maximum use of the land. The infra-structure supplied to the people at Udagama and Wasanagama and the political will that was available in the case of these two villages to make best use of such infra-structural facilities are not available at Wanduressa.

For any governmental act to bear fruit the political will of those in power and the foresight of the Government existing side by side are very necessary. The provision of the infra-structural facilities is strengthened by the presence of these two factors. It is only then that the local as well as national decision-makers take serious note of the facilities provided and consciously help the villagers. The decision-makers found in governmental extension services and in the NGOs would be motivated to help the villagers only when the existing political will and foresight is observed and felt by them.

At Wanduressa the Government gave land to the villagers in which the Rural Development Department took an active part. This Department carried out much work in the village aided by many a Non-Governmental Organization. Such work date from the late 1950 s. However the work done was carried out on a sporadic basis i.e. from time to time and according to the topical interest created. Because of this, the work lacked consistency and the form of a well articulated plan prepared with foresight. The Non-Governmental activity was also piecemeal in nature. If the political will as exemplified at the Udagama vis-a-vis the Village Reawakening Programmes was available at Wanduressa much could have been achieved by way of poverty alleviation in this village long ago.

The provision of land alone would not solve the poverty problem in the village. Even if all available land is given to the people it would not be possible to solve the problem because in the future



there would be more people than the available land. Here the solution would be to limit land only for the construction of their dwellings and concentrate on more and more intensive agriculture. This with agro-based industries would help to solve the employment problem if carefully planned education in useful skills is also carried out along with it. In this way perhaps the purchasing power of the rural villager could be increased and a dent in the poverty problem thus could be made.

In all these villages as more and more strategies to lift the rural people out of poverty are planned, careful consideration should be given to the balance between man, animal and nature. This is an aspect rarely considered by today's planners but which would be very important tomorrow. The western countries are already realising the follies that they have committed in sacrificing their environment to ill-conceived strategies to increase their wealth. We have sufficient studies and examples on this line available to us from developed countries. With these examples we can plan our strategies to lift our rural poor out of poverty in a more meaningful way without contributing to disturb the balance between man and nature and committing the same mistakes as the west. There is much here that we could learn from our own past tradition if only we take time and expend some energy on the problem.

In reinterpreting the nature of assets such as land and then reorganising it for the benefit of the society, careful consideration particularly should be paid to different local conditions. Each locality has a set of different problems which need solutions in the particular social and economic context. Take the case of Kebilewela in our study. This is a village where the majority possess less than an acre each. Only a few have more than four or five acres. Unless one finds land outside the village or touch the valuable forest reservations it is impossible to find land sufficient enough for distribution among all the people. One way of solving the problem is to initiate corporate farming where all inhabitants of the village owning one or more acres (or even half an acre) get together to farm as a group. This would have another advantage because it is then not necessary for every villager to look after his small farm individually. A small group from the village could be selected and given a training in farming and entrusted



with the work. Perhaps those who have so far gained experience in farming could help the common farm thus created. Even the help and assistance from the governmental extension services is then easy to be secured because of the already formed corporate body. Even the little land owned individually when thus put together with their pooled human labour would provide a capital worthy of serious investment. The common farm could be managed along lines acceptable to the village people and their participation in all decision making and implementation could thus be secured.

The increase in the purchasing power of the people is necessary to help them out of poverty. This could be done by improving their general education which is to be followed up by providing them with opportunities to develop whatever skills they possess. A careful planning of the development of such skills together with the support extended by political decision making would be useful. The discovery of various skills that the people are likely to develop in the future has to be made carefully. This is not an easy process as many would imagine. In the first place one must have an idea as to the skills traditionally practised by the people with profit. Then some idea about the informal educational process of the people also should be known to such planners. A comprehensive understanding of the people in varying age groups would give more meaning to such planning. The younger generation just out of school and in schools have to be carefully taken into account. What would be the village society like in ten or twenty years hence? A vision of this nature would alert the planners to the problem of tomorrow which the today's young people would inevitably have to face. Any planning for such young people need future vision without which the entire process would have very little significance.

The overall health of the village is invariably associated with poverty. In this context the real practical meaning of health education provided at the formal and informal levels cannot be ignored. Mass media except the Radio has not reached these villages in the sense such media has come to the urban areas. At Udagama there was only one person who read the newspapers at least once a week. Even in other villages and settlements the number of people who read newspapers is significantly small. It is



only at Angulana and Chitra Lane and to a certain extent at Mayilawalana and Mahawalawatta that people were exposed to the information supplied by the newspapers at least by way of communication. If facilities for reading such newspapers could be developed and the newspapers are also made conscious of the responsibility that they had to bear in serving as vehicles of informal education the impact of newspapers would be considerable. On the other hand it appears that in all these villages the people are used to the Radio and even though they may not possess a radio set they go to another place to listen to their favourite programmes. It is not difficult to identify such programmes and since Radio is owned by the state it is also not difficult to plan the informal education process to help and assist these villagers. It is very necessary for the state owned radio to keep in mind that the fruits of such an informal process of education cannot be measured only in terms of financial "input" and "output" (i.e. in terms of money).

Very few planners in the rural areas have given thought to the potential in informal education in directing development in the village particularly in the fight against poverty. Informal education can be added to any social, economic or cultural context or situation in the village. It should not or ought not appear as education at all. Take a simple health habit as that of drinking boiled and cooled water. In people's cultural habits there is the traditional cleanliness as depicted in religious rituals. When they offer flowers they clean their hands and strain the water offered to the Buddha or gods. The Buddhist monks have with them a water strainer which is an integral part of their eightfold necessities. If one is aware of such habits of cleanliness and drinking clean water the informal educational process could be carefully adjusted to include these. Today the problem is to make the villager practice the knowledge he had gained. He may learn the value of boiled and cooled water but may not make it his habit to drink such boiled and cooled water. The only way to make him do it is to ingrain it as a ritual habit in him by bringing it via religion or cultural behaviour to him.

Poverty can be successfully attacked when the great potential in this informal educational process is correctly understood by our planners. There is no strategy or weapon fit enough to attack



poverty with assured positive results than informal education. But to assure such positive results the planners as well as the implementators should be aware of village life in all its complex aspects. They must know when and where to use such informal education, the appropriate context and the method to be employed in order to reap the maximum results.

The role of informal education in changing the total pattern of village life when understood would indicate how the maximum use could be made from family health and family planning programmes. To the villager, family health is something very important. If family planning by way of propaganda gets into the village without this umbilical connection to family health and devoid of any consciousness on the part of the planners on village cultural susceptibilities, the ensuing danger would be enormous. A careful view of such propaganda had to be taken and thoughtful measures introduced to improve their family health through informal education. The overall improvement in their economic position would eventually result in better planned families.

Social control is one aspect that anyone involved in the battle against poverty should be interested in. If we are to lose the social control we possess now, then we would realize that the social cost of the absence of such a process of social control would be enormous i.e. absence of social control would create enormous harm. It is therefore very important for us now to identify the factors that help and assist in this social control and take steps to strengthen them. So long as the present social control is there we would not realise the importance or the value of it. It is only when we lose it one day that all of us would be seriously worried about it. The social cost and even the economic cost in re-institutioning it would shock even the most conservative in our society.

There are factors in our society today which point out to the gradual erosion of this social control. One only has to go to a school to observe how the formal education system is gradually weakening and this social control is slipping away from us. The teacher is no more at the helm of affairs at school. The respect and regard for him is no more there. School discipline is day by day going down. We who are interested in reducing poverty



should before it is too late carefully examine how social control is gradually slipping from our grasp. Why are children getting out of control of the parents? Why is the family no more and institution to "cohere" its members? Why has religion lost its magnificent cohesive force and command it once possessed?

Poverty reduction or elimination needs a careful study into all these aspects of social control. Without social control exercised by means of social institutions, values and norms etc. no society could undertake any programme to improve itself. Peace and stability and the existence of a minimum of social problems are invariably due to the control that a society positively exercises over it. Today problems such as alcoholism, drug dependence, prostitution, suicide, violent crime etc. are increasing. Among such increase a society which thus has lost its moorings will not be able to think of fighting poverty successfully.

The poverty in any area need attack both from the intellectual and material fronts. The village need information and knowledge for their intellectual edification. Books are rarely read in the rural areas not only because they are costly but also they are not available. In the past we had village temples and in each such temple there was a place where at least books on religion were available. Books were treated with great respect calling them "Pot Vahanse," that is almost equivalent to respected religious monks. All sorts of books both for information and knowledge are a must in our rural villagers. It is a pity that the earlier plan to build a library in each Reawakened Village did not follow suit with the passage of time. The important role that books and information could play in establishing social control has to be carefully considered by Governments against the enormous social cost that will ensue in case of a country losing its bearings when the social control it already possesses withers away.

Leisure is something which none of these villagers really enjoy. They have no leisure because they do not know what it is. It is a word or term that they do not have in their day to day vocabulary. The importance of leisure as far as their overall mental and physical well-being is concerned is beyond their grasp. Recreation is also something that is alien to the villagers. In none of these



villagers did we find people engaged in any meaningful recreation. The young people sometimes take pleasure in taking part in one or two traditional games or in improvised games (new year festival) once in a while. Their lives would become more meaningful with recreation being added to the daily time table.

The role of the NGOs in reducing the weight of poverty on the rural people has to be recognised. But unfortunately today we do have a multiplicity of such NGOs working in the village scene. They work often as rivals duplicating each other's efforts unnecessarily. The NGO work at the village level needs coordination, if at all we are to succeed in our battle against poverty. Otherwise it would result in an unnecessary drain of resources in duplicated work. It is also the duty of both the Government and the Donor Organizations that grant funds to the NGOs to see such unnecessary duplication does not take place. Even in the case of governmental work lack of coordination is present not only in the village but also in urban areas. Much could be achieved in the fight against poverty by careful planning, coordination and non-duplication of work.

In our traditional village we do have at least a skeleton of a voluntary organization by way of a religious society or even a funeral aid organization. Informal and formal NGOs are thus a part of our heritage. Social service in times of natural calamity and also at other times had been an aspect of Sri Lanka's social life. These NGOs at first collected their resources from themselves depending on their local "input". Today the position is different with NGOs with massive international connections and funding coming to the field. The funds thus pumped need channelling to the poor and not to groups above them in the already top-heavy NGO official structure. If this fact is realised and the NGOs critically look at themselves while bracing themselves to carry on this vital battle against poverty much could be achieved by all of us.

The Rich, Politically Powerful and the Intellectuals owe much to the society which gave them riches, transferred political power to them and granted knowledge to them. Sacrifices on the part of these three groups are vital for well-being of the majority of the



Sri Lankans who are steeped in poverty. If the Rich keep quiet taking steps to increase their money day by day without regard to the millions who buy their products then they cannot blame anyone on the day the society turns topsy-turvey and seek revenge from them. It is their unconcerned moneymaking and affluent life style that would be the main spring for reverse action by the majority. The politically powerful who attempt to stay in power for ever by transferring such power craftily to their kith and kin will find one day that the society has cruelly overtaken them. It would then be too late for them to do anything. The intellectual elite who very craftily live in riches but show to the people that they are with them and thus succeed in this deception should not think that this strategy would for ever help them. One day their hypocrisy will be eventually exposed. If all these three groups who are in a powerful minority realise their role now and get together to help their less fortunate poor brethren, the Sri Lankan society would be a pleasant place to live. The three groups will then earn the majority gratitude and blessing of every one concerned.

Technology and Modernisation are two forces which could be fruitfully utilised in the battle against poverty. If properly handled these two forces could contribute to the overall improvement of the quality of life of the poor. But this has to be done choosing the appropriate technology involving modernisation that does not contribute to an ill-balance between ecology and the village. The tradition in the rural areas has to be recognised and whatever technological and modern innovations introduced should be done in this context taking great care not to contradict the tradition without a definite purpose. Whenever such tradition is contradicted or violated steps should be taken to introduce an equivalent aspect in place of what is already being violated or removed. This would enable the technology or any modern concept or innovation to fall in line with rural life without seriously disturbing it.

Rural life as we have seen in the majority of these villages and settlements is still worth preserving because it has in it a cohesiveness rarely noticed elsewhere. It is this cohesiveness supported by rural values and ways of life that sustains the stability and social control seen today. The introduction of different aspects of



propaganda and information beginning from commercial to political is now taking its toll of village life. Very soon even the fragile foundation of the relatively stable society we see now would not be there. This salient fact has to be carefully taken into account by us and appropriate action taken now to lay the foundation for a better society with an improved quality of life—a society in which poverty is reduced to the minimum.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE NINE VILLAGES

#### 1. Udagama (Badalgama)

In 1978 Badalgama (in the Kurunegala District) was selected as the first village in the Village Re-awakening Programme. This village in which members of the Rodiya Community live comprises 21 families with a total population of 107 individuals of which there are 55 males and 52 females. These 107 are divided according to various age-groups in the following table :—

<i>Age-group</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>F.</i>	<i>Total</i>
0—05	14	15	29
06—10	07	11	18
11—15	09	02	11
16—30	17	16	33
31—50	05	07	12
50 +	03	01	04
	— — —	— — —	— — —
	55	52	107
	— — —	— — —	— — —

This shows that the majority of the inhabitants (91) belong to the age-group below 30 years. Another interesting feature about these Rodiyas is that the majority of the young people above the age of 15 are married and maintaining families.

Before the new village was created in order to initiate the Village Re-awakening Programme the Rodiyas lived in insanitary huts made out of cadjans or straw. These huts were demolished (except for one which is maintained upto now there for the purpose of preserving such a house for posterity) and 21 new houses were built. As far as the housing is concerned the inhabitants of Udagama now do not have any



major problems. The houses contain a verandah, a visiting room, sleeping quarters and a kitchen complete with a toilet. Pipe-born water is also supplied to them.

This village therefore is different from all the other villages so far discussed by us. One of the important problems i.e. housing is solved for the people. Land to the extent of 1/4 acre is given to each family. This 1/4 acre is not sufficient for them to cultivate and earn a living and the Rodiyas do not have the necessary skill or experience in agriculture.

The entire village was engaged in begging from the past. The Rodiyas were traditional beggars. At the Udagama some of them had "mixed" begging with the production of rattan baskets. They used to carry such basket ware and visit far away places. In such places they did two things : The baskets were sold and they did their begging too. Such activities were carried out by the entire family.

In 1978 when a survey was carried out in the village the Rodiyas who were able-bodied listed their occupations as follows :—

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Manufacture of Rattan Production	07	—
The production of wigs	—	03
The production of ekel brooms	04	—
Begging	12	20
Agriculture	02	—
Labourers	02	—

The manufacture of rattan products was carried out as a traditional form of household industry and it appeared that it was more or less confined to menfolk. Today, after innovations introduced there are 17 men engaged in this craft for which a number of incentives are provided by the Government.

The production of wigs out of discarded hair had also been a traditional occupation practised by the Rodiya women from the past. Even in their folk poems references are made to these beautiful wigs. It is a domestic industry confined mainly to women. Ekel brooms are made at home and taken to different areas for sale in order to earn a living. There are two Rodiyas who say they practice agriculture, although in the past no Rodiyas ever made



any attempt to cultivate and even if they wanted to do so the society never sanctioned it. They were considered as those belonging to one of the lowest castes and ritually condemned to beg and live. The two labourers in Government service are those engaged as sanitary labourers.

Of the able-bodied men and women today the distribution of employment as given by them is as follows :—

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Rattan production ..	16	01
Cottage industries ..	07	01
Production of wigs ..	09	—
Begging ..	05	05
Agriculture ..	02	—
Labourers ..	02	—
No permanent employment ..	01	08
	—	—
	42	15
	—	—

If we tabulate the income of these 21 families of Rodiyas living in Udagama we get the following tables :—

*Monthly income*

Less than Rs. 100/- ..	06
from 101 — 150 ..	04
151 — 200 ..	04
201 — 250 ..	04
251 — 300 ..	02
301 — 350 ..	01
	—
	21
	—

There is one man in the village who lends money and who also has a boutique in his house. He is well off by Rodiya standards and many of the villagers are indebted to him. His interest rate is 10 — 20 percent per month and he accepts various items pawned by the villagers beginning from ear-rings to bicycles and radios although such items are rare among these people.



When considered from the point of view of their earnings all the Rodiyas here are extremely poor. Even when engaged in begging which some still continue, they do not earn a sufficient income to lead a comfortable life. The modern Rattan Production Centre was established by the Government in order to enable the Rodiyas to impart their traditional skills and training to others and establish a ready market for their products. A trained teacher in rattan production was brought as an instructor to the Rattan Centre. There were 21 producers of rattanware at the Centre in 1978 — 79 and the earnings they collected in the last six months of 1978 are indicated below in the attached Schedule.

Although there is an appreciable income generated from the rattan production centre, at the beginning this income could not be sustained with the progress of time. At the end of 1978 the cyclone prevented the people from moving into areas where rattan was grown. As it was the practice to go to these areas which are in the Polonnaruwa District, cut the rattan that is grown there, collect it and bring it, no attempts were made to foster the cultivation of rattan. Due to repeated cutting the rattan already available was decreasing and at the present time there is a dearth of raw material.

On the other hand problems of marketing too have surfaced. Earlier the production was bought by the Department of Small Industries. As time went on the collection of produce at the Centre was not bought for months and months. The workers could not be paid although they had already produced a vast amount of rattan ware. Consequently their enthusiasm waned and some of them reverted to their old trade of begging giving up work at the rattan Centre.

In addition to the work at the Centre, each household was given a certain quantity of raw material. With this material they produced items which they brought to the Centre. Due to the lack of money at the Centre, the work thus allotted to each household could not be fully purchased. The people became disillusioned and gradually they gave up production.



**UDAGAMA**

**The Salaries received at the Rattan Centre**

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.
K. K. Chandrasiri	80.00	29.00	23.00	158.00	36.00	..
S. Gunadasa	127.00	99.00	123.00	244.00	173.00	..
K. Pemasiri (Kota)	80.00	104.00	108.00	214.00	90.00	..
H. Alensuwa	28.00	18.00	30.00	12.80	54.00	..
P. H. Piyadasa	56.00	17.00	20.00	—	08.00	..
S. Bandiya	48.00	43.00	02.00	02.00	64.00	..
K. Mendis	140.00	165.00	134.00	139.00	137.00	..
M. Sampathiya	17.00	—	86.00	33.00	102.00	..
K. K. Somapala	59.00	42.00	36.00	60.00	—	..
N. Pemiya	75.00	73.00	71.00	74.00	85.00	..
P. Jayaratne	34.00	47.00	02.00	46.00	06.00	..
K. Seneviratne	32.00	54.00	108.00	208.00	71.00	..
K. Kiriya	85.00	38.00	30.00	42.00	64.00	..
K. Surasena (Kota)	49.00	32.00	34.00	171.00	120.00	..
L. Heenamma (Alensuwa)	37.00	30.00	16.00	66.00	75.00	..
H. Sumandrapala (Horatala)	95.50	110.00	70.00	203.00	58.00	..
B. Somapala (Buriya)	16.00	48.00	78.00	118.00	73.00	..
H. Pemiya	06.00	—	—	—	—	..
P. Pinadesa (Pinsara)	—	—	—	—	—	..
R. Rattarana (Rupasinghe)	—	—	—	—	—	..
L. Premadasa (Lansuwa)	—	—	—	—	—	..

Because of the cyclone no raw material was not available from December 1978



Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Rs. cts.	Ts. cts.
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
54.00	74.00	—	76.00	—	—	—	65.00	50.00
42.50	104.00	75.00	137.00	12.00	47.00	—	—	43.00
—	—	50.00	—	—	—	—	—	32.00
—	—	46.00	—	—	—	—	—	35.00
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.00
06.50	151.00	142.00	114.00	—	—	—	—	—
30.00	15.00	104.00	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	70.00	94.00	25.00	—	70.00	—	95.00
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	55.00	18.00	—	—	—	14.00	—
19.50	74.00	—	125.00	11.00	—	—	—	06.00
49.50	109.00	84.00	100.00	08.00	133.00	157.00	108.50	99.50
18.00	73.00	66.00	100.00	07.00	—	24.00	08.50	66.50
27.50	66.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	21.00
21.50	98.00	56.00	90.00	—	—	60.00	08.00	70.00
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
18.00	25.00	42.00	79.00	07.00	16.50	—	—	—
—	—	45.00	90.00	06.00	44.50	76.00	58.50	77.00
—	—	—	26.00	03.00	35.00	11.00	—	—

Because of the cyclone, raw-material was not available in January — hence, no work.



In the rainy season 1978/79 (November — February) the Rodiyas were encouraged to cultivate their land. The produce was bought by the Government and the earnings of the villagers during this season are given below. These are tabulated under earnings from cultivation of dry and 'wet' (paddy) lands.

**Income derived from cultivation in the Maha Season 1978 — 79**

	<i>Dry</i>	<i>Wet</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>Rs.</i>
1. Rattarana ..	30.00	160.00	190.00
2. Jayaratna ..	135.00	80.00	215.00
3. Piyadasa ..	36.00	240.00	276.00
4. Senaviratne ..	140.00	640.00	780.00
5. Sugatapala ..	362.00	120.00	482.00
6. Gunadasa ..	196.50	620.00	816.50
7. Mendis ..	160.00	680.00	840.00
8. Alanmsuwa ..	224.00	400.00	624.00
9. Sampathiya ..	399.00	240.00	639.00
10. Buriya ..	351.00	650.00	1,001.00
11. Pinsara ..	336.50	60.00	396.50
12. Brahmaraja Wallige ..	246.00	240.00	486.00
13. Chrandrasiri ..	296.40	60.00	356.40
14. Gunapala ..	48.00	160.00	208.00
15. Kiriya ..	55.00	240.00	295.00
16. Kapura ..	42.00	60.00	102.00
17. H. Pemiya ..	149.00	240.00	389.00
18. Lensuwa ..	183.50	160.00	343.50
19. Huratala ..	156.50	160.00	316.50
20. Koti ..	158.00	320.00	478.00
21. K. Pemiya ..	579.00	240.00	819.00
22. Somapala ..	60.00	—	60.00

The total income received by these families is in no way sufficient to keep them above the 'poverty line.' With this income they are unable to eke out a living and when one looks at their possessions, the pattern of their meals and savings, this fact becomes much more significant.



None of the families do possess furniture, clothes or ornaments of their own. The entire furniture or household items are limited to one or two earthen-ware pots used in the kitchen, two or three mats for sleeping and a minimum of clothes. In about 3 or 4 houses we found radio sets. They are being bought by the younger generation mainly as a means of amusement. Only ten families have some gold or silver ornaments.

Out of the 21 families not a single family possesses sufficient clothes to wear. The men usually wear the sarong and shirt. The women wear cloth and jacket. If we categorise the men and women according to the number of pieces of clothing they possess, the following percentages are obtained:—

those with three pieces of clothing (cloth & jacket or sarong & shirt)	..	05 percent
those with two pieces	..	49 percent
those with only one piece of clothing	..	46 percent

Very often even the two pieces of clothing they possess are fairly old and although they are in need of new clothes, they are unable to buy them.

The pattern of meals is such that no family takes the mid-day meal. This may have been the practice from the past, mainly due to the nature of their occupations they were engaged in, such as the cultivation of 'chenas' or begging or fetching rattan and weaving baskets. It is a truism that they do take only one meal a day, that is in the evening when all the members of the family come home from their daily chores. The morning meal is usually a cup of tea, a slice of bread or yams whichever is available. With the price of bread going up and together with it, the price of sugar, now the majority of the families try to limit their morning meal to something which they could obtain locally such as yams. But unfortunately as yams are not available all the year round, most families do pass the morning with only a cup of tea without sugar. The following table indicates the nature of their meals all families at the present time :—



	<i>No. of families</i>
Only a cup of tea (with sugar) for breakfast ..	02
Cup of tea (with sugar) & bread ..	01
Cup of tea (without sugar) only ..	13
Cup of tea (without sugar) and some local substitute like yams ... ..	05
	—
	21
	—

The evening meal usually comprises rice, a vegetable or dry fish, although every family does not cook a meal of rice each day. Out of the 21 families only 11 prepare meals of rice everyday whereas the other families do enjoy a rice meal only once in two or three days. The evening meal, although taken in bulk, is not nutritious as it should be. The tendency is to eat a good portion of rice without including even locally available nutritious food items such as green leaves.

Out of the population in this village 72 individuals do not know how to read and write and they have never been to a school. Even today after the establishment of a Pre-school and a primary school, quite a number of children do not attend either of them. It is remarkable that from the adult population only one woman could read and write.

Udagama is a village in which as we have already indicated, the Central Government has launched the Village Re-awakening Programme. Through this Programme which is directed to the transformation of people's attitudes to life and thereby instil in them the desire for self-help, it is hoped to rejuvenate the village. As this strategy was first experimented here, in a village where the inhabitants are economically and socially handicapped, it would be interesting to see how far the Government Programme will succeed. The help and assistance of Voluntary Agencies, NGOs, is also available to the Government in this task of transforming the villages in addition to the dedicated political will of the Government.



## 2. Wanduressa

Wanduressa is situated about 64 miles from Colombo on the Kurunegala - Chilaw road in the North - Western Province. Considering the average temperature and rain-fall one could easily categorise it as a "Dry-Zone" village : The Wanduressa colony is about 150 acres in extent, of which 98 acres are high-land and 52 acres are paddy land. Out of these paddy land, only 7 acres could be cultivated.

The history of the village is an interesting one. The people state that the village was colonised twice, first in 1959 and then again somewhere in 1961. When the people were initially settled in the colony 49 families were placed in 98 acres of high land of which two acres were given to each family. Although each family received 1 acre of paddy land, as this land too came from the high land, no difference could be seen between the high and paddy lands. Moreover there was the scarcity of water and it was almost impossible to cultivate paddy in the high land, except during monsoons when rainwater helped such cultivation.

The original 49 families who were settled in the village came from the following 9 neighbouring villages :

Kanatholuwa	19 families
Haderawalana	9 families
Diganwila	6 families
Pothuhera	6 families
Meegaspitiya	3 families
Manawa	2 families
Galgamuwa	2 families
Mallige	1 family
Siyambala Kadawara	1 family

The original 49 families have since increased to 97 families who live in 78 houses. The original 49 houses for the early settlers constructed by the Government were of a permanent nature while the other houses were semi-permanent ones erected from time to time. The distribution of population of the Wanduressa settlement village is given in the following table :—



<i>Age</i>		<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>
0 — 05	..	41	..	36	..	77
06 — 10	..	40	..	50	..	90
11 — 20	..	64	..	67	..	131
21 — 30	..	40	..	36	..	76
31 — 45	..	27	..	30	..	57
46 — 55	..	10	..	11	..	21
Over 55	..	16	..	09	..	25
		—		—		—
		238		239		477
		—		—		—

The number of individuals belonging to one family is as high as 10 or 12—

1 Family with	1 member
12 Families with	2 members each
17 Families with	2 members each
31 Families with	4 — 5 members each
31 Families with	6 — 8 members each
4 Families with	9—10 members each
1 Family with	12 members

As in the case of the other rural settlements and villages although there are comparatively a large number of members or dependants in a family, there is only one bread-winner who has to support the entire family.

As mentioned above there are only 78 houses for 97 families in the settlement of which only 49 houses can be classified as permanent ones. Although the number of families has increased to 97, no extension of land had taken place. Some had built small huts in the land of their parents after getting married. There are 19 such families who live with their parents and 34 families live in 15 houses. The following table indicates the distribution of these 34 families in 15 houses :—

<i>No. families in each house</i>		<i>No. of houses</i>		<i>Total of families</i>
2	..	12	..	24
3	..	02	..	6
1	..	04	..	4
				—
				34



The houses in which these settlers live fall into 3 main types. First, there are the permanent ones constructed by the Government at the time they were initially settled in this village. There are 49 such houses. Then there are wattle and daub houses, without doors, of which there are twelve. Finally, the third type, comprise huts made out of cadjan, very much like temporary huts erected in the chenas.

The settlers, belonging to the Rodiya Community, are regarded as those who earn their day to day living by begging. Even today in spite of many changes made both in the structure of the village and in their life-pattern, we still find a number of families who continue the traditional ritual of begging. Traditionally they were also engaged in the manufacture of rattan products and both men and women do engage in the production of baskets and such other items from the rattan which they procure from outlying areas. Out of the 191 able-bodied men and women, 110 men and 81 women stated that they are in employment of some kind. Only 16 men and 34 women (able-bodied) did declare that they are out of employment.

A rough idea of the distribution by employment is given in the following table.

<i>Type of Employment</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Production of rattan goods ..	75	65	140
Production of ekel brooms ..	18	07	25
Production of musical instruments ..	02	—	02
Labourers ..	10	—	10
Tapping Coconut trees ..	01	—	01
Production of house-hold items	—	02	02
Working as domestic Aides ..	01	01	02
Begging ..	03	06	09
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	110	81	191
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

In addition to these main forms of employment, there are other subsidiary occupations in which some are engaged.



	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
The Theti Karakevima (A form of amusement provided by the dextrous art of spinning a type of earthen vessels) ..	—	07	07
Begging ..	45	64	109
Extra Labour work ..	05	—	05
Manufacturing wigs ..	02	21	21
Agriculture (Paddy) ..	07	—	07
Agriculture (vegetable growing) ..	03	—	03
	<hr/> 60	<hr/> 92	<hr/> 152
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

On a rough estimate the following number of families depend on the income earned from the employment indicated below :—

<i>Type of Emplpyment</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
Rattan Manufacture (baskets) ..	69
Manufacture of Ekel brooms ..	12
Begging ..	05
Employed in Government Departments (as labour hands) ..	08
	01
Ornamental or fancy ware ..	01
Manual labour ..	01
	—
	97
	—

In 1963 a school was temporarily established in the settlement although prior to that no attempt had been made to educate these unfortunate people. In a way due to their under-privileged position in society, they were not encouraged or even allowed to seek education by getting themselves admitted to a school. There were about 130 — 140 students who attended school in the 1960 — 1970 decade. Even today the school has classes only upto Grade 6 and there are 108 children.



The 108 are distributed according to grade in the following manner:—

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Total</i>
Kindergarten	..	9	..	15	.. 24
Grade I	..	19	..	14	.. 33
Grade II	..	12	..	12	.. 24
Grade III	..	9	..	9	.. 18
Grade IV	..	2	..	3	.. 5
Grade V	..	1	..	3	.. 4
		—		—	—
		52		56	108
		—		—	—

In addition to these children who come to the school from the village there are about 9 (4 males and 5 females) who come from areas outside the Wanduressa village.

Of the children in the village (about 235 are below 15 years of age) only 108 do attend school. The rest of the population except a few do not know the art of reading and writing. There are 3 or 4 young individuals between the ages of 15 – 20 who know how to read and write. The rest are (except for 2) illiterate. Although some say that they can read and write, when asked to do so, they failed to exhibit their skill, even in the most elementary form.

The Rodiyas marry at a very young age and this has contributed to a number of problems. There are 16 families in which 13 females and 3 males are below the age of 16 and in addition to this there are 26 families in which 14 females and 12 males are under 18. The marriageable age for girls appeared to be so low as 12 or 13 and it is customary to give a girl in marriage as soon as she has attained puberty. Boys usually marry when they are 15 or 16. But fortunately with the influence of outsiders as well as mounting economic problems the tendency to marry young is gradually fading away.



### 3. Dalukana

Dalukana, a dry zone village, in the Polonnaruwa district, has a population of 233 of which 110 are women and 123 are males. The following table shows the distribution of population according to age :—

Age	Female	Males	Total	Percentage
0 — 14	56	51	107	45.9
15 — 55	53	63	116	49.7
Over 55	01	09	10	4.4
Total..	110	123	233	100.00

It is very significant that out of the total population 45.9 percent are those below the age of 14. If we add those who are over 55 to this and treat all of them as dependants the total population of dependants is 50.3 percent. The total potential labour force is 116 out of which 53 are females (and who are obviously again dependants), and this 116 have to support the rest.

The population, if classified according to race and their religion, gives us the following results. All the villagers are Sinhalese and Buddhists by religion. The majority are the descendants of the primitive Veddas and few others are those who have come there from nearby villages. In the past being exposed to Tamil influence, they have undergone certain changes both in their Language and Culture which exhibit some Dravidian Cultural traits. Except for these obvious traits they can be considered as Sinhalese Buddhists now, although they trace their descendancy from the Veddas.

Another cultural trait that indicate their Vedda origin is their close association with Primitive Gods respected by the Veddas. Although they call themselves Buddhists, their practised religion appears to be closely parallel to the religion of the Veddas. The popular Gods as Pattini have come to occupy a prominent place in their religious life. The shrine dedicated to the Goddess Pattini, the Goddess of Fertility, indicates the extent of this belief in Gods among the villagers. Even at the shrine dedicated to this Goddess



the so called ornaments of the Goddess kept in a box are reminiscent of such boxes or containers of ornaments of Gods found among the Veddas.

The distribution of the population of the village according to each family is given below :—

<i>No. of Individuals in each family</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Total population</i>
1 ..	05 ..	05
2 ..	04 ..	08
3 ..	09 ..	27
4 ..	09 ..	36
5 ..	05 ..	25
6 ..	05 ..	30
7 ..	02 ..	14
8 ..	07 ..	56
9 ..	01 ..	09
10 ..	— ..	—
11 ..	01 ..	11
12 ..	01 ..	12
	—	—
	49	233

As there are 49 families with a total population of 233, one may say that each family has an average of 4.76 members.

The distribution of members of each family shows the following significant characteristics :—

- (1) There are five families with one unmarried person each family
- (2) The number of families with 2 — 4 members per family is 22 and they have a total population of 71.
- (3) There are 22 families with more than 5 members each.
- (4) There are 10 families with more than 8 members each.
- (5) Two families have 11 and 12 family members in them.

All the 49 families live in “temporary houses” or hovels. Accordingly there are some houses with more than two families living in them. The average population per house is thus 5.42. This, however should not be taken as indicative of a clear picture



of the village. The houses as we shall show later are hovels or huts with one room or two. In them the family members live huddled together in insanitary conditions.

The picture could be graphically illustrated if we take one example viz. the house No. 12. This has only a hall about 12 feet long. The Lions under cyclone relief schemes have assisted them with timber and zink sheets for the roof. But so far the owner has not been able to complete it. In this hall which is about 40 sq.ft. 8 individuals live. Another house (No. 16) has two rooms. There are 12 people living in it. In House No. 6, there are two families with a population of 11. There is one room in it, approximately 200 sq.ft. in extent.

Even now only 54 children attend school although there are 107 children under the age of 14 living in the village. Of the total population only 23.2 percent do attend school. Of the children who attend school, the majority are those of the young age-groups as indicated in the following table :—

**Children of the village who attend school at present**

		<i>No. of children</i>
upto Grade	5	.. 48
	6 — 8	.. 05
	9 — 10	.. —
	11 — 12	.. 01
Higher Education		.. —
		—
	<b>Total</b>	.. <b>54</b>
		—

There is only one student studying in the 11 — 12th Grade.

The following table indicates the level of education of those who are not attending school now. Those mentioned here are individuals who had gone to school and who had given up their education at some point due to various reasons. The remaining villagers have not been to any school at all.



**Table of educational attainments of those who have been  
to School once**

Upto Grade V .. ..	56
Passed Grade 5 .. ..	03
6 — 8 .. ..	26
Passed 8th Grade .. ..	02
9 — 10 .. ..	04
Higher education (11 — 12) .. ..	01
	<hr/>
	92
	<hr/>

This individual who had studied upto Grades 11 — 12 is a person who had come to the village from outside. Among these villagers there is not a single person who has passed the grade 10. It is strange that those who have reached the 5 — 10 grades are also those who have come there from outside. Out of those 92 individuals only 67 can read and write at present. This indicates how functional literacy operates in a village. Although the villagers had gone to school some time or another their ability to read and write gradually fades away due to constant disuse. Our survey indicates that 54.1 percent of those who attended school in this village cannot read and write now. The majority of them have attended the primary classes, become drop-outs after some time and forget the ability to read and write.

If given in one simple table the educational standards of the villagers could be indicated as follows :—

(1) The number of those who attend school at present ..	54	—	23.2 %
(2) The number of those who went to school in the past, but are not attending now including the drop-outs ..	92	—	39.5 %
(3) The number of those who have not gone to school at all ..	43	—	18.4 %
(4) Those who are below school going age	44	—	18.9 %
	<hr/>		
	233		100.00
	<hr/>		



Of the 44 children who are below school-going age, 16 are fit to attend a pre-school. But unfortunately the absence of a Pre-school in the village precludes these children from receiving the necessary socialization there.

The houses in the village fall broadly into two types. There are only two permanent houses. Of the houses or huts 37 look temporary, made out of cadjans or earth, with cadjan or zink roofs. Six appear semi-permanent with daub and wattle walls and better roofs.

The following table shows the make and structure of the huts or hovels :—

	<i>Structure &amp; Make</i>	<i>No. of houses</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>The roof</b>	(1) Cadjans ..	.. 26	
	(2) Hay ..	.. 03	
	(3) Aluminium or zink sheets ..	.. 09	
	(4) Zink sheets/cadjans ..	.. 02	
	(5) Cadjans/tin sheets ..	.. 03	.. 43
<b>Walls</b>	(1) Wattle and daub ..	.. 32	
	(2) Cadjans ..	.. 07	
	(3) Wattle, daub/cadjans ..	.. 02	
	(4) Lime/wattle & daub ..	.. 02	.. 43
<b>Floor</b>	(1) Cow-dung ..	.. 31	
	(2) Sand ..	.. 05	
	(3) Cement ..	.. 04	
	(4) Cow-dung/cement ..	.. 03	.. 43

The table indicates that out of the total of 43 houses, 26 have cadjan roofs. It is interesting to observe here that the cyclone of 1978 damaged these houses and the cadjans were given to the villagers by Sarvodaya, a voluntary self-help organization. The Lions have repaired and completed 08 houses.

After the cyclone the Lions were the first voluntary workers to come into the village. They have donated timber for the construction of the structure of the house. The villagers themselves were expected to construct the walls with wattle and daub. Forty zink sheets per house were donated by the Lions for the roofs. A labour camp was organized by the Lions to help the villagers.



It was a sorry state of affairs to note how at a later date, some people had taken out the sheets and sold them to others. Having done this they had gone to live in dwellings elsewhere.

Although those who came from outside reckon the housing problem as a serious challenge, the villagers themselves pay little attention to it. None of them, when questioned, considered the lack of a house as a serious problem. What they wanted to have was only a roof over their heads. Approximately 30 houses are there with only one room or one hall.

<i>No. of rooms in the house</i>	<i>Number of houses</i>
One hall only ..	.. 14
One room only	.. 16
02 rooms only	.. 05
03 rooms only	.. 05
04 rooms only	.. 03
	—
	43
	—

Their kitchens, sleeping quarters are also found in the “hall” in the “one room” apartment. In House No. 4 even the roof is only half-covered with cadjans. There is not a single article of furniture inside it. The inmates do sleep on the floor. It is typical that in the majority of houses the entire belongings are confined to a few kitchen utensils, a number of mats and clothes.

The majority of the people do actually own their houses. There are families who do not own any home but live in other people’s houses. They are all relatives and they live there not as tenants but as members of one family.

The kitchen is located in 18 houses in the main part of the house itself. In 21 houses it is separately constructed away from the house. In the case of 04 houses, the kitchen is in the “open” i.e. they cook in an open fire place outside the house.

The distribution of employment of the bread-winners of the 49 families is given in the following table :—



<i>Employment</i>	<i>Nature of Employment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Total</i>
In Govt. Service ..	Labourers( Permanent) ..	02 ..	03
	Labourers (temporary) ..	01 ..	
Commercial activities	General traders ..	01 ..	
	Petty traders ..	04 ..	
	Rattan manufacturers ..	01 ..	10
	Dairy product makers ..	02 ..	
Labour work ..	Cutting wood and cutting stone	22 ..	22
Agriculture ..	Fields & Chenas	14 ..	14
		—	—
	<b>Total</b> ..	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>
		—	—

The three individuals engaged in Government Service are all labourers. They do not receive sufficient income to maintain their families.

Of those employed as traders, except for the man engaged in general trade, all the others do not have sufficient income to support their apparently large families. The general trader has come to the village from outside and he is exploiting the villagers by selling goods at fancy prices. He is also a money-lender and thereby his hold on the villagers is tenacious. All the other traders earn about Rs. 100/- per month, except for the illicit alcohol manufacturers who earn about double that amount. The rattan maker collects rattan from the forest, make rattan baskets and other ware and manage to support his family. The two families who rear cattle, sell the milk to the Government Milk Board and earn a living.

The 22 labourers are engaged in either cutting wood or working in the stone quarries 'breaking' stone used for the construction of roads. They do engage themselves in these activities because there are no other available means of earning money to support their families. The firewood collected by them is brought by outside traders who sometimes make a hundred percent profit.



The labourers who 'break' stones do so for the payment of Rs. 3/- per basket. The contractors from outside come there, get the people to 'break' the stones, and take them away.

There are 14 families engaged in agriculture living in the village. Each of these families has been given 3 acres of paddy land. Because of the non-availability of water, paddy is cultivated only in the monsoon season that is once a year from September to January. In addition to these difficulties the lack of buffaloes to plough the fields has added to their problems. Due to the increase in the price of fuel, the charges for the hire of tractors have gone beyond their meagre means. The tractor owners from nearby villages demand Rs. 500 to plough one acre and the poor villagers who do not possess any capital or even savings cannot accede to these demands. Consequently what they do is to lease the fields for Rs. 30/- or 40/- per year to others from neighbouring villages. There are less than five families in the village who cultivate their paddy lands. Having leased out the land, they earn their living by hiring their labour to others.

The slash and burn or chena cultivation carried on in the past is no more there. The Mahaweli Development Board has prohibited the felling down of trees, and the chenas in which various grains and vegetables were grown do not exist at present. Some people do home garden cultivation growing cereals and vegetables there. It appears that the majority of the villagers have lost their zest for cultivation. Some of them speak fervently of collecting honey from the forest, a form of livelihood which they, as descendants of the primitive Veddas, were accustomed to.

In 1948, it has been stated how land was given at Dalukana to these people. The procedure adopted was to give 03 acres of paddy land and 01 acre of dry land (for the construction of the house and cultivation) to each family. In this way 14 families have benefited from this Scheme. There are a number of families who have illegally cleared the land and settled there. The type of ownership of land, as it is today, is indicated in the following table :—



<i>Type of Holding</i>	<i>The size 3 acres of paddy</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Total</i>
Legal Holdings ..	01 acre of dry land	.. 14 ..	
	02 acre of dry land	.. 01 ..	16
	01 acre of dry land	.. 01 ..	
Illegal Holdings ..	01 acre of dry land	.. 18 ..	20
	02 acres of dry land	.. 02 ..	
No land ..		.. 13	
		—	—
		49	49
		—	—

This shows that out of the 49 families living in the village, legally owned land is available only to 16 families. Two such families do not have any paddy land at all. The paddy land owned by the 14 families are not put to profitable use as stated by us earlier. Eighteen families hold land illegally and 13 families do not possess any land at all.

The social and economic aid extended by the Central Government to the villagers indicate the extent of the contribution :—

- (1) Those who have received food stamps, one or more for each family .. .. . 44
- (2) The total population of those who possess food stamps 167
- (3) Those who do not possess food stamps .. 05
- (4) The total population who do not receive food stamps (although qualified) .. 49

The food stamps enable the poorest segment of the population to procure their essential food items free. In addition to these food stamps, one family receives social security aid (Rs. 15/- per month).

The village apparently possess no assets of a worthwhile nature. The assets such as bicycles, radio sets, etc. are given in the following table :—

<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No of families</i>
Bicycles .. ..	08	08
Motor Cycles .. ..	01	01
Hand Carts .. ..	—	01
Carts (with bulls) .. ..	03	01



Even in the case of 'household items' there are hardly any personal assets worthwhile mentioning other than the following :—

Sewing machines	..	02
Radios ..	..	07
Almirahs	..	01
Beds ..	..	06
Tables ..	..	14
Chairs ..	..	19

The seven radio sets are owned by the seven families who are economically better placed than others. In the majority of village houses one does not see even a chair to sit on. On a rough count, it can be said, that 15 families do not have either a chair or a table in their houses.

The extent of personal savings is given in the following table:—

(1) The Savings Bank Books of a Government Pensioner : (he is engaged in selling milk) 3 Books for the family members	..	..	..	03
(2) The Savings Bank Book of the trader (owner of house No. 9)	..	..	..	02
(3) The Savings Bank Book of the family of the trader at No, 2	..	..	..	02
(4) The Savings Bank Book of a cultivator	..	..	..	01
			—	
				08
			—	

All these individuals are those who have come to the village from outside and 3 families are engaged in sundry trades.

According to our information 13 families of the village are excessively in debt. They are unable to pay back the debts, because they do not earn sufficiently even to keep the families above subsistence levels. The 13 families owe money to others in the manner indicated:

(1) To the Government and Banks (cultivation loans)	..	06
(2) To individuals	..	05
(3) Mortgages made on property	..	01
(4) Gold ornaments pawned	..	01
		—
		13
		—



Indebtedness is the rule in the village rather than the exception. The money-lender is one of the traders and on certain occasions the people do go to neighbouring villages and borrow money at high interest rates (for e.g. 10 percent each month ).

The people as a whole do not have any idea as to what personal hygiene means. Of the 49 families 47 do possess no latrines at all. The two families that do have latrines are well-to-do families from the village standard. The villagers are used to the practice of going to the forest for defecation and this is indeed a practice that is difficult to eradicate or motivate them to abandon. The little children defecate in the compound and excreta is thrown a little distance away or allowed to dry there.

There are two wells in the village. One is sunk to provide water for the villagers and the other for the school. There are only 4 families that do possess a well for themselves. The villagers, as a whole, obtain water from the above mentioned two common wells.

(1) The number of families that obtain water from two common wells	.. ..	35
(2) The number of families having their own well	..	04
(3) The number of families who obtain water from other people's wells	.. ..	10
		—
		49
		—

The majority of the families go to the 'stream' near the mountain for their bathing and washing purposes. This is situated about 1 1/2 miles from the village.

There is no doubt that the entire village suffers from malnutrition. Of the children, a sample of whom was studied by us, 91.3 percent suffer from chronic malnutrition. The people very rarely enjoy a nutritious meal and out of 49 families only 4 families could boast of 3 meals a day. Twenty nine families exist on two or one meal a day and even this meal is extremely deficient in its nutritional contents.



Out of the voluntary organizations that were started in the village only the Rural Development Society functions now. Sarvodaya activities were started and a Pre-school was established, but somehow the organization has fallen into abeyance. The Rural Development Society has been instrumental in providing material aid to the villagers. The villagers who live below the subsistence level do require material aid and as long as this material aid is provided the society could function. The moment such material aid ceases, the motivation of the people would disappear and the society would inevitably disintegrate.

#### 4. Wasanagama

Wasanagama, another village included in the Village Re-awakening Programme is in the Badulla District and has a population of about 317 people of which 162 are males and 155 females. These 317 people do belong to 85 families. Actually of these 85 families only 57 are permanently settled in the village although in the case of the others 26 families are temporarily settled in the village. Two families to whom lands and houses are given in the village have not come there at all.

The hesitancy in the case of 26 families to come and settle down in the new village permanently is due to a number of reasons. They are not sure as to whether the new village would in the end "prosper" and provide them with a better means of living than that which they are enjoying at present in the old village. The present occupation in which they are engaged could be carried out better from the old village than from the new village. In addition to this there is also the nostalgic feelings about the old village and it is not easy to give up the old place to which one had been accustomed for generations in the past.

The population of the village could be divided according to age in the following manner :—



<i>Age-group</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
0 — 2	12	09	21
3 — 5	29	19	48
6 — 15	43	41	84
16 — 30	45	64	109
31 — 50	26	18	44
Over 50	07	04	11
	162	155	317

The settlers for this new village were chosen from villages in the vicinity up to a distance of 17 miles. There are two main castes in the villages : i.e. the cultivator caste comprising 87% of the population and Smith caste comprising 13 percent. Caste system does exist with all its social ramifications in the village and the two castes rarely mix with each other. Caste taboos are strictly maintained and the differences in caste are brought out in the process of socialization of the children in the two caste-groups. When they are very young they learn about caste and even at this tender age caste attitudes and prejudices are sharply ingrained into their minds.

The majority of the villagers do learn their livelihood by cultivation, mainly the cultivation of chenas or slash and burn cultivation.

The following table indicates the distribution of different occupations in the village :

<i>Type of occupation</i>	<i>No. employed</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	
Chena cultivation	35	05	40
Labourers	11	09	20
Technicians	03	—	03
Watchers	02	—	02
Masons	02	—	02
Traders	01	—	01
Carpenters	02	—	02
Pre-school teachers	—	03	03
Disabled	05	—	05
Unemployed	14	61	75
	75	78	153



Approximately of 154 able-bodied men and women in the age range of 16 — 55, 75 are out of any useful employment. They earn their living by engaging in odd activities such as cultivation of various crops during the rainy season and offering their labour to others in return for a stipulated sum of money each day. The extent of their deprivation is shown by the fact that nearly 80 percent of them do receive food stamps. Roughly speaking the monthly income of the villagers is indicated in the following table :—

<i>Income (monthly)</i>	<i>Percentage of villagers</i>
Less than Rs. 100	.. 16 percent
Rs. 101 — 200	.. 20 percent
201 — 300	.. 32 percent
301 — 400	.. 10 percent
401 — 500	.. 10 percent
500 — 600	.. 12 percent
Over 600	.. None

Of the population 68 percent do earn less than Rs. 300/- per month. The absence of anyone earning more than Rs. 600/- per month shows the general standard of living in the village. The majority of the people are thus indebted to others specially money-lenders in outlying villages. Only 16 percent did state that they are not indebted to a degree that they do not foresee the chances of paying back their debts in the immediate future. Over 57 percent have found the expenses incurred in building the new houses, especially the debts incurred to pay the carpenters and masons, an added burden.

Of the population of 317 people 75 are those who do not know to read and write. Sixty seven of them are those between the ages of 16 — 50. The educational attainments are shown in the following table :—

<i>Educational attainments</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Those who have not gone to school .. .. .	29	46	75
Those who have not gone to school but who know how to read and write .. .. .	02	—	02



Those who have been to Pre-school .. .. .	11	08	19
Studied in — 2 Grades .. .. .	32	24	56
3 — 4 „ .. .. .	16	16	32
5 — 6 „ .. .. .	17	16	33
7 — 8 „ .. .. .	15	10	25
9th grade .. .. .	14	15	29
11 — 12 grades .. .. .	—	01	01
	136	136	272

There are about 25 children who are in the school-going age who do not attend school at all. Of these 8 have not gone to school at all while others, having attended school for sometime, had given up schooling due to various reasons.

Some understanding of the objectives of the Government in implementing the Village Re-awakening Programme could be had from the excerpts gleaned from a survey of the new settlement village made by the Public-Relations Officer attached to the Government Agent's Office.

“I carried out a survey of the new settlement village on 15.06.1978, 18.06.1978 and on the 23.06.1978. The following findings on the present state of Wasanagama and my recommendations are given in this Report.

### House and Latrines

“At the time of our survey we came across the following houses and latrines constructed :

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| (1) No. of houses in which roofs were fixed .. .. .                     | 93 |
| (2) No. of houses in which roofs were not fixed .. .. .                 | 06 |
| (3) No. of houses the roofs of which were blown off by the wind .. .. . | 05 |
| (4) No. of houses in which doors and windows were fixed .. .. .         | 82 |
| (5) No. of houses in which doors and windows were not fixed .. .. .     | 18 |
- (for these houses windows and doors have already been given to the allottees)



(6) No. of houses the floors of which are not cemented	20
(7) No. of houses the walls of which are not plastered ..	31
(8) No. of houses without latrines .. ..	90
(9) Completed latrines .. ..	04
(10) Half - completed latrines .. ..	06

“Sixty-six houses are constructed out of blocks made with cement. Each house needs 750 such blocks and the total number of blocks needed for all the houses is 49,500. As only 45,800 such blocks are supplied, the scheme needs 3,700 more blocks.

“In the same manner for the construction and completion of 34 houses, 19,000 bricks are needed.

“For the completion of 81 latrines, sand and bricks are needed.

“In these 32 houses there were no owners (actually the owners have not come to occupy them). There are obvious reasons for it: (1) the houses are apparently not completed, (2) in the new village one does not find ways of satisfying common needs, (3) difficulty of communication. (4) the inmates of the new houses are employed elsewhere, (5) there is no permanent means of livelihood

“There are moves by some to sell the houses to others.

“The water service is not complete. The pipes are being damaged by unscrupulous elements from time to time. In spite of their short-comings every house is provided with drinking water.

“The two ponds constructed for bathing purposes are not completed. As there is no other place to bathe, the completion of these two bathing places is eagerly awaited by the people.

“The building intended for the Local Cooperative Stores is also not completed. As there is no ‘Stores’ to buy what the people need, the completion of the Cooperative Building is a necessity. One has to travel about 03 or 04 miles out of the village to buy the provisions.

“The Community Hall is completed, but locked and not used”.

“The school is initiated but educational activities do not function”.

“The access road to the village is not yet completed.”

“The bus service to the village is now discontinued.”

“Some inmates have started growing vegetables in their home gardens. Some others are engaged in anti-social activities such



as thefts and the damaging of Public Property.”

“The following recommendations cover their needs :

(1) “The completion of activities already started.

(a) “The Community Hall is now completed and therefore it should be immediately opened for public use.”

(b) “The building intended for the local Cooperative Stores should be completed and utilised.

(c) “The already defunct bus service from the village to Badulla should be re-started.

(d) “The Educational activities in the village school should be immediately started.

(2) Rural Development activities :

“A Rural Development Society for the village should be started and local developmental work should be channelised through this Society.

(3) Community Work :

“The Government Officers should visit the village at least once a month and establish a close rapport with the people. Mass media should be utilised to transform the attitudes of the people. They should be involved in the decision-making process by enabling them to participate in group discussion, meetings, dialogues etc. . . . a pre-school should be started.”

(4) Health :

“A Programme should be initiated to improve the health standards of the people together with the Department of Health.

“As there is a playing ground in the village opportunities should be provided to get the villagers interested in games and also to provide the necessary training wherever wanted.

(5) Means of Livelihood :

“It is very necessary to provide the villagers with a permanent means of earning their livelihood. Already attempts are being made with the help of the Ceylon Tobacco Company and the Bank of Ceylon to make them take to the cultivation of tobacco and such other Cash-crops. The provision of a



permanent means of livelihood is the only way to make people settle in the village permanently. In order to implement such a plan it is useful to appoint a Committee comprising representatives of various Government Departments involved in such work at village level.”\*

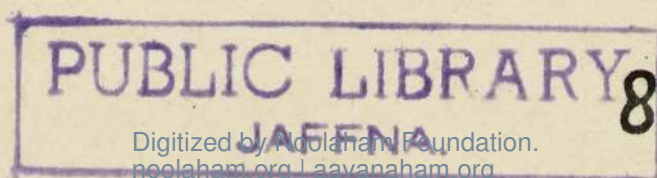
**Mahawalawatte (Tittapaththara).**

In this settlement village (jn the Gampaha District) there is a population of 576 of which 291 are males and 289 are females. The village has 104 families which according to the number of inmates per family could be tabulated in the following manner.

<i>No. of inmates in Family</i>	<i>No. of Families</i>
01	02
02	02
03	11
04	23
05	16
06	18
07	14
08	10
09	05
10	01
11	-
12	01
13	01

Approximately one can say that there are 5 members per family. The distribution of the population according to age gives the following table :—

\* Excerpts are taken from the Report of the Public Relations Office. Badulla Kachcheri. The Report was submitted in July, 1979. No. of the Report a/7/2.





<i>Age</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>
0 —1	..	11	..	09
1 —12	..	86	..	96
13 —30	..	109	..	100
31 —50	..	59	..	65
Over 50	..	26	..	15
		—		—
		291		285
		—		—

Out of the 104 families, 100 are Sinhalese Buddhists and four are Sinhalese Catholics. There are 25 individuals belonging to these families. They go to the Church at Tittapaththara for the religious activities.

The educational attainments of the people are given in the following table :—

Those who are able to read & write	..	379
Those who are unable to read & write	..	98
Those who have never been to School	..	55

Those who have been to School sometime have also lost their ability to read or write mainly due to the “disuse” of that skill. Of children who are of the school going age, but who do not go to school, there are 04 of the age group 5 — 10.

Those who have received some education but who are now not attending school can be categorised in the following manner :—

Studied up to the 5th Grade	..	126
Studied up to the 8th grade	..	90
Studied up to the 9 — 10 grades	..	30
Passed the 10th grade (GCE)	..	17
Studied in 11 — 12 grades	..	01
Passed 11 — 12 grades ..	..	00
		—
		264
		—



Although 379 say that they can read and write, they had not been to School (only 264 have attended school). Some of them have learned the art of reading and writing from Buddhist monks, at the Monastic Establishments known as Pirivenas or at the feet of individual teachers. In order to satisfy ourselves we analysed a 10% sample of these 105 individuals and tested them. Only 2% of them could actually read and write. The functional literacy rate is therefore extremely low among the villagers.

The children who go to school fall into 3 main categories. There are 127 children attending classes between 0—8 grades, 19 students studying in 9—10 grades and 02 students in the 11—12 grades. The closest school is half a mile from the village and there are also two other schools within a radius of two miles. The number of drop-outs is relatively high as in most other villages. It is stated that there are 37 children attending the Pre-school started by Sarvodaya.

Water is a problem in the village and at the time when the settlement was initiated the problem was not given sufficient attention. Today 47 families do possess wells of their own. But these wells are not all well protected. Fifty seven families obtain water from the wells of their neighbours. As the wells have to be sunk deep piercing the granite structure of the earth and as this creates problems the villagers are not motivated to engage in the task of sinking wells. For bathing purposes they walk significant distances to rivers and rivulets. Only 12 families told us that they utilise boiled and cooled water for drinking.

Of the village families 42 do possess permanent latrines, 56 have temporary latrines and six share the latrines of their neighbours. Of the semi-permanent latrines, the majority are in which two planks are kept and those covered by a curtain of cadjans. They do not appear sanitary at all and the people do lack the motivation to keep them clean.

In the village where 104 families do live, there are 102 houses. These families live in the houses of their parents and thus form part of the extended family system. There are only 18 permanent



houses while 82 do appear non-permanent. Of the houses only 24 have permanent walls. The floors of only 41 houses are made of cement ; the majority (83) being made out of earth and cow-dung. Eighty nine roofs are made of cadjans and 82 have walls of wattle and daub.

The situation of the kitchen presents an interesting picture. In 72 houses the kitchen is found inside the house. To be exact in most of these one or two roomed houses one cannot speak of a separate kitchen. Usually in a room a fire-place is made and a few kitchen utensils are kept. This serves as the kitchen. There are 21 houses where the kitchen is separately constructed and again in 11 houses, it is only a make-shift contrivance usually outside the house, with a fire-place made out of three stones and a temporary hearth.

The extent of poverty among these settlement villagers is noticed by the nature and poverty of household items (furniture and other equipment) they possess. In 13 houses one does not find a single item of furniture, not even a chair to sit on. In the majority of the remaining houses one finds one or two pieces of furniture except in the houses of the well-to-do where more items are found. On the whole the following list provides a detailed description of furniture and other equipment found here :—

Radios	58
Bicycles	14
Sewing Machines	17
Almirahs	33
Cupboards	46
Beds	137
Chairs	314
Tables	100
Hand Carts	01

The majority do not possess even the minimum number of kitchen utensils that is sufficient to cook their food. Nearly 76 percent do not have the minimum amount of clothing (at least three pieces of whatever dress he or she wears) considered necessary.



The earliest settlers belonged to the Washerman Caste. In addition to them there were also people of the Cultivator Caste. In the village one also finds people of the Hakuru Caste. Although people of 3 different castes live here, caste distinction does not play a significant role in the village social stratification. In other words caste attitudes are much less rigid here than in other villages.

Although the villagers are Buddhists, they pay great respect to popular Gods such as Ranwala Deviyo and Huniyan Deviyo. The worship of popular gods is part and parcel of the village religious life. In addition to the above Gods Pattini and Kiri Ammawaru are the other Gods to whom offerings are made and whose protection is asked in times of trouble. Annual or seasonal rituals in honour of these popular gods are carried out in the village. In addition to this the villagers do have a close relationship with the temple to which they go for Buddhist activities and provide alms-givings to the Buddhist Monks.

The majority of the people who live in this village are engaged as labour hands and they earn their living in this manner. The two main occupations in which they are engaged are: (1) the tapping of rubber for latex (2) and the collection of sand from the river for construction purposes. The rubber trees do not belong to them and they tap these trees on a daily-paid basis or on the understanding that they receive half or 1/3rd of the proceeds. The sand is taken out by contractors for the construction of buildings and they are paid daily for this work. Both these activities cannot be carried out during the rainy season during which period they suffer from the lack of employment.

The following enumeration indicates the approximate number engaged in various occupations :—

Agriculture	..	..	04
Labour hands	..	..	120
Government Service		..	25
Traders (petty)	..	..	04
Technical workers	..	..	04
Household industries	..	..	09
Carpenters/masons	..	..	09



Except for a very few of these people, the others eke out a hand to mouth existence. Although there are 20 people who are in permanent employment, the majority of them are in Government jobs which do not secure for them a comfortable income to feed and clothe their relatively large families. Out of 104 families in the village 57 are considered as eligible to receive food stamps. In addition to this 5 families receive social security benefits.

The monthly income of (approximately) 75 families is between Rs. 300 — 350 or less. Considering the number of dependants, it is difficult to understand how they could exist on this meagre income. These families do not enjoy even a meal a day to satisfy their hunger. There are some families which enjoy a rice meal only once in 4 or 5 days. There are only 10 families who receive more than Rs. 500/- per month.

The following table furnishes us with a close-up view of the monthly income of these villagers :—

<i>Gross Income in Rupees</i>	<i>No. of Families</i>
No visible income	.. 04
Less than Rs. 100/-	.. 22
100 — 150 ..	.. 08
151 — 200 ..	.. 12
201 — 300 ..	.. 17
301 — 400 ..	.. 17
401 — 500 ..	.. 09
501 — 600 ..	.. 03
601 — 700 ..	.. 01
701 — 800 ..	.. 03
Over 800 ..	.. 03

In the past two years we were able to measure the increase in income of the village people, especially those of the lowest ranks (the poorest) and the rich. There is no visible increase in the income of the poorest segments although the cost of essential food items have gone up. But the income of the 03 individuals who earned more than Rs. 800/- per month has doubled in the past. They are all businessmen and contractors.



As each family has only a limited extent of land (about 50 perches for each family) no land is available for cultivation, specially paddy. In the land allotted, once the house is constructed, no commercially profitable cultivation could be carried out. There are only 2 families who possess one acre of land. All the others have less than 1/3 acre of land. Even the four families who earn their living by agriculture do cultivation work as labourers in the land belonging to others outside the village.

Although this village is a settlement, the villagers are closely associated with the Buddhist Monk in the nearby temple i.e. Tittapaththara Dakshinaramaya. The villagers accept the Monk's leadership and when there are faced with problems, it is to the Monk they all go for advice and guidance. In addition to the Monk, the previous Village Headman, Mr. Suriyapperuma, was another ascriptive local leader. The present Grama Sevaka, the one time representative in the Village Council as well as the present Officer-in-charge of cultivation are other leaders of accepted by the people.

The village has a number of social and economic problems. Alcoholism, gambling and the use of Narcotics are serious problems at the present time. Due to gambling and the use of alcohol frequent conflicts leading to physical assaults do take place in the village. The most important aspect of such activities is the increasing involvement of young people in gambling, narcotics and alcohol. The brewing of illicit alcohol takes place in the village in addition to Government manufactured alcohol brought and sold illegally.

At the present time there are 6 individuals involved in the brewing of illicit alcohol in the village. The clientele in the village is approximately 50 — 75, of which there are about 18 young men between the ages of 16 — 24. Two "brokers" sell items such as "ganja," the locally available variety and about 40 to 45 people are "addicted" to it. Even here the constant increase of the young clientele is indicative of a dangerous trend in the future. In the village gambling is done openly and about 30 — 35 people usually take part in gambling. There are 3 houses of "illfame" in the village and the women of these houses do go out to nearby towns in order to earn a living by the sale of their



bodies. Although the villagers have even assaulted the outsiders who visit these houses, brisk business goes on uninterrupted regardless of social censure.

The entire village settlement, except for the few well-to-do people, is in incessant debt to others especially to the outside money-lenders who lend money at exorbitant rates of interest, sometimes ranging from 15 to 20 percent per month. There are seven families in the village who lend money to other villagers and generally these amounts do not exceed a few hundred rupees at the most.

There are 3 families who have obtained loans from Banks. These loans amounted to Rs. 1,000/-, Rs. 2,800/- and Rs. 500/- each. All these loans have been obtained for consumer purposes and never put to productive purposes. The poorer families have obtained loans from various sources upto Rs. 100/- and they cannot borrow more than that as they do not possess the earning capacity to pay back. They borrow up to Rs. 100/- and within a short time pay it back with interest and borrow again. This borrowing process takes place all the time and they are incessantly in debt.

The following table shows the extent of indebtedness among families which earn more than Rs. 300/- per month :

<i>Extent of Indebtedness in</i>		<i>No. of</i>
<i>Rupees</i>		<i>Families</i>
<i>Rs.</i>		
0 — 100	..	08
101 — 200	..	12
201 — 300	..	04
301 — 400	..	01
401 — 500	..	02
501 — 600	..	01
601 — 700	..	01
701 — 800	..	01
801 — 1,000	..	01
Over 1,000	..	01

Of these 23 families have obtained money at an interest of 20% per month whilst others have obtained on an interest of 15 percent per month.

Although there were 40 families with 60 savings accounts, these accounts do not reveal any significant sums of money saved. At



the most, except in the savings accounts of the well-to-do, the accounts show Rs. 10/-, 50/-, and some accounts do have even less than Rs.10/-. The prevalent method of saving money is by the "Seettu System" which is operated by five families.

#### 6. Mayilawalana (Bandaranayakapura)

There are 265 families living in this settlement village in the Gampaha district, although some families still live in their original villages in spite of the fact that they have received land here. This is indeed a very interesting phenomenon that one encounters in all new settlements. Somehow the people feel insecure in the new settlement, and having received land there, they yet keep on to their old villages, perhaps waiting to see whether the new settlement would succeed or not. Still others do send a "symbolic" relative to reside in the new village and again wait for sometime to see whether the village succeeds. If according to them it does not succeed, the exodus back to the old village takes place.

The distribution of population according to families is given here in the following table :—

<i>The No. of members in the family</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
01	.. 04
02	.. 12
03	.. 20
04	.. 32
05	.. 41
06	.. 51
07	.. 37
08	.. 25
09	.. 31
10	.. 06
11	.. 02
Over 11	.. 04

According to this, it is interesting to note that in 156 families, the number of family members is more than five.

The population which is 1,472 is distributed in the following manner :—



	<i>Age group</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>
	0 to 01	..	26	..	15
Over	01 — 12	..	232	..	192
	13 — 30	..	289	..	301
	31 — 50	..	131	..	150
Over	50	..	74	..	62
			<hr/>		<hr/>
			752		720
			<hr/>		<hr/>

As in the case of the other viillges, the majority of the population are in the younger age-groups, thus increasing the burden on the bread winners.

The people in the settlement village are all Sinhalese Buddhists. In this way the village is a homogeneous unit, although differences in caste exist there : The Four main castes found there are the cultivators or Goyigama (30%) the Wahumpura (30%), the Batgama (25%) and the Smiths (15%) (Badal). The villagers have developed caste attitudes, which are sustained by generations of tradition in spite of the fact they all being Buddhist are committed not to treat caste as a social factor in dividing human beings.

The inter-marriage between these castes does not take place in the settlement villages. The attitude towards caste has been one of the foremost barriers to the development of the village. The caste feeling or attitude surfaces everytime and show its dirty head even at parties or socio-cultural occasions and particularly at the time of general elections.

The educational attainments (of the villages) are indicated in the following table :—

Those who had not attended school at all	..	118
Those who have studied upto the 8th standard		774
From 8 — 10th Grade	..	173
Passed 10th Grade	..	17
Studied in 11 and 12th Grades	..	08
		<hr/>
	Total	1090
		<hr/>



From among those who state that they have been to school and studied from 1 — 8th grades, as significant number are functionally illiterate. They merely have learned the art of reading and writing but now they do not practise it and have lost the magic touch.

The present school going population is given in the following table :—

Pre-school children	..	..	39
Upto grade 8	..	..	277
Grades 9 — 10	..	..	49
Grades 11 — 12	..	..	17
			<hr/>
		Total ..	382
			<hr/>

The Sarvodaya runs a pre-school in the village and the village children attend it. In the Junior School, village children continue their education upto Grade 6 and thereafter those who desire further education have to attend school at Kirindiwela which is about one mile away.

There are 265 houses in this settlement village. Of the houses 77 do have permanent roofs and 94 permanent walls. Ninety eight floors are cemented while 198 floors are made out of earth and cow-dung. The walls are either daub and wattle and they have cadjan or straw roofs.

The settlement villagers at Mayilawalana (Bandaranayakapura) are employed in the following manner :—

Agriculture	..	..	03
Labourers	..	..	150
Govt. employment : clerical/labour	..	..	53
Traders	..	..	65
Domestic aides	..	..	27
			<hr/>
			298
			<hr/>

This shows that the people in the village are employed mainly outside the village and a significant proportion of the able-bodied men and women are not employed at all. In the category household industries we have included those having self-employment



such as carpenters, rattan basket makers, gold or iron ware makres (wtth techrieal skill) who worked in their own houses. Even here it appears that more women employ themselves gainfully in such household industries than men. Although there are 65 traders few possess developed formae trading skills.

According to income we may categorise the settlers in the following manner :—

*Monthly income (Approximately)*

Up to Rs. 200/-	42%
201 — Rs. 300/-	29%
301 — Rs. 500/-	25%
501 — Rs. 1,000	4%

The majority of the inhabitants (more than 91.36 percent) do not possess any significant assets at all.

The extent of deprivation can be seen from the fact that 218 families do receive Government Food Stamps, although the actual number who would qualify for the receipt of food stamps is much higher.

There is no evidence of savings although “saving books” are possessed by a number of them. These books were given to them or they were motivated to have them at one time. But there after the interest had waned and except for a few Rupees deposited in the heat of excitement they are not motivated to save money systematically. Of the 141 individuals who possess Bank Savings Books only eight have more than Rs. 1,000/- in them. Nearly 100 do not have more than Rs. 5/- in each of their savings.

One traditional way of saving money prevalent among them is by “Seettu.” That is a number of individuals get together, collect a stipulated sum of money each month, and according to a set out order of precedence, give the collection to each of the participants. Let us say that 10 persons collect Rs. 10/- each; then the sum of Rs. 100/- is given to one party this month, next month to another etc. The order of precedence is determined in different ways, i.e either by raffle or by auction. In the case of the auction the highest bidder gets it, but the bid is deducted from the total and it is distributed among other participants e.g. if we auctioned it



and "A" bids for Rs. 10/- and qualifies for it. The Rs. 10/- is deducted from the Rs. 700/- and "A" receives Rs. 90/- only. There are various forms of this "Seettu" system and it is a primitive way of saving money purely on trust.

In the settlement villages there are 59 such Seettus in operation. They are centred round 12 individuals, the majority (11) being women. The "Seettus" vary from those of Rs. 200/- to Rs. 2,500/-. The higher Seettus are operative among well-to-do people in the village. "Seettu" is the only conceivable way of saving money by the uninitiated traditional villagers.

The hand of the exorbitant money-lender is also noticed in the village. There are two such money-lenders in the village whose interest rate is as 20 per cent per month. In the neighbouring villages too, there are money-lenders to whom the people go in time of need especially on occasions of illness, weddings or funerals.

The extent of indebtedness is shown in the following table :—

<i>The Percentage of families</i>	<i>Approximate amount</i>
	<i>Rs.</i>
62 ..	500—1250
17 ..	1251—2500
13 ..	2501—5000

The loan money when it is for a short period is given on monthly interest of 10—% and if it is for longer period the interest varies from 30%—40% per annum. Only about 8% of the villagers have not incurred sizeable debts. The settlement, displays all the typical ailments that are common to settlement villages of this type.



## 7. Kebillewela

The village of Kebillewela (near Bandarawela) called Kebillewela South is about 486 acres in extent. These 486 acres are cultivated as shown below :—

<i>Crops</i>	<i>Extent (in acres)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Tea ..	45	9.25
Paddy ..	48	9.87
Fruits ..	40	8.23
Flowers/Vegetables ..	20	4.11
Timber ..	180	37.03
Grass (fodder) ..	13	2.67
Uncultivated ..	140	28.80
	486	97.96*

The village has 440 families of which 40 families do not possess houses of their own. The population is 2,800, of which 1335 are males and 1465 females. According to age groups, the population can be classified in the following manner :—

<i>Age-Group</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
5 and under ..	225	250	475
6—15 ..	330	350	680
16—24 ..	300	330	630
25—40 ..	240	260	500
41—55 ..	200	230	430
Over 55 ..	40	45	85
	1,335	1,465	2,800

It is interesting to examine the pattern of land holding by the villagers which shows that out of the total population 64 families do not possess any land of their own. About 297 families possess less than half an acre each. The pattern of land holding is seen in the following table :—

\* The remaining land is not cultivable.



<i>Extent of the land held</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
less than 1/2 an acre	.. 297
1/2 — 1 acre ..	.. 58
1 — 3 acre ..	.. 09
3 — 5 acres ..	.. 06
Over 5 acres ..	.. 06
No land ..	.. 64
	—————
	440
	—————

The majority of the people in the village are engaged in agriculture or they work as paid hands. Paddy is cultivated only in one season and during cold months vegetables are grown on the paddy land. The paid hands work on the tea estates in the neighbourhood and earn their living. A rough break-down of the pattern of employment is given below :—

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>the number of individuals</i>
Agriculture .. ..	93
Teaching .. ..	60
Clerical .. ..	45
Labourers .. ..	145
Traders .. ..	20
Animal Husbandry .. ..	45
Carpentry .. ..	07
Smithy .. ..	01
Weaving (hand operated machines) .. ..	04
Masonary .. ..	12
Laundry men .. ..	03
Sundry activities .. ..	80
	—————
	515
	—————

The village has 260 individuals who do not possess any visible form of employment. All of them are between the age of 18 and 25. Most of the able-bodied women in the village work at home engaged in very arduous day to day work and they do not regard



themselves as unemployed from their point of view. Of the above 260 we do have 6 women and the rest are males.

These 260 persons are distributed in the following manner according to their educational attainments :—

<i>Educational Standard</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Passed GCE (Advanced) ..	03 ..	06 ..	9
Passed GCE (Ordinary) ..	31 ..	66 ..	97
Passed the 8th standard ..	45 ..	71 ..	116
those who can read and write*	14 ..	13 ..	27
those who cannot read or write	02 ..	09 ..	11
	95	165	260
<b>Total ..</b>	95	165	260

The village has two tea factories, two small paddy mills, a centre for the production of household goods, and a workshop where wood and metal work is being carried out.

Cattle, goats and poultry are reared in the village. There are approximately 130 heads of cattle, 25 goats and 2,850 poultry in the village.

There is a Junior Government School, a monastic educational establishment and two pre-schools (Sarvodaya owned) in the village. In addition to these, there is a temple, two co-operative sales points, a sub-post office and the office of the Grama Sevaka of the village.

In order to ascertain more precisely the exact position of the villagers in Kebillewela we selected a random sample of 10% of the families (44 families) and examined the extent of their satisfaction of the Ten Basic Needs. Each Basic Need was divided into sub-needs and the results of our research are given below. These results indicate the extent of the satisfaction of the 10 basic needs and thereby serve as a serviceable parameter in measuring the poverty level of the people together with other suitable measures utilised at the present time :—

---

\* The precise educational attainments of these people are not known, but they could read and write. Therefore they are categorised under this type.



## Basic need No. 1 : a clean and pleasant environment

### 1.1 Do they have road access to their houses ?

cleared and clean road access	..	34	..	77.27
not cleared	..	10	..	22.73
		—	—	—
		44		100.00
		—		—

### 1.2 Home Garden :

		Culti-		unculti-		Total %	
		vated	%	vated	%		
cleared	..	13	29.55	14	31.82	27	61.36
un-cleared	..	04	09.09	13	29.54	17	38.64
		—	—	—	—	—	—
		17	38.64	27	61.36	44	100.00
		—	—	—	—	—	—

### 1.3 Extent of the home garden :

		No. of families		%	
less than 1/8 of an acre	..	05	..	11.36	
from 1/8 — 1/4	..	02	..	04.55	
1/4 — 1/2	..	29	..	65.91	
1/2 — 1	..	06	..	13.64	
Over 1	..	—	..	—	
no home garden	..	01	..	2.27	
no answer	..	01	..	2.27	
		—		—	
		44		100.00	
		—		—	

### 1.4 Is the home garden systematically cultivated ?

Yes	..	..	20	..	45.45
No	..	..	24	..	54.55
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—



1.5 Is there an attempt to utilise the available rain water ?

Yes	..	..	41	..	93.18
No	..	..	03	..	06.82
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

1.6 How do they remove garbage ?

					%
(a) Garbage pits	..	..	25	..	56.83
(b) Collecting and disposing of them by burying	..	..	04	..	09.09
(c) Throwing them here and there	..	..	02	..	20.45
(d) Combination of A & B	..	..	01	..	02.27
(e) No answer	..	..	05	..	11.36
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

1.7 The House

					%
(a) Generally clean, sanitary & pleasant			24	..	54.55
(b) Unclean, insanitary & unpleasant	..	..	20	..	45.45
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

1.8 (a) Does the house possess a Kitchen

Yes	..	..	43	..	97.73
No	..	..	01	..	02.27
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

(b) Where is it situated ?

In the house	..	..	32	..	74.42
Outside	..	..	11	..	25.58
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—



1.9 (a) Is there a well for drinking water ?					
Yes	..	..	09	..	20.45
No	..	..	35	..	79.55
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

(b) Is the environment of the well clean ?

Yes	..	..	06	..	66.67
No	..	..	03	..	33.33
			—		—
			09		100.00
			—		—

1.10 Latrines

Permanent	..	..	30	..	68.18
Temporary	..	..	10	..	22.73
No latrines	..	..	04	..	09.09
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

Basic need No. 2 : Water

2.1 Is there water available

		<i>for</i>	%	<i>for</i>	%	<i>Other</i>	%
		<i>drinking</i>		<i>cleaning</i>		<i>Purposes</i>	
Yes	..	14	31.82	17	38.64	17	38.62
No	..	30	68.18	27	61.36	27	61.38
		—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	..	44	100.00	44	100.00	44	100.00
		—	—	—	—	—	—

2.2 How do they get water ?

1. Well (owned individually)	..	7
2. Well (owned jointly)	..	2
3. Pipe-born water	..	1
4. Lakes, Ponds, tanks etc.	..	—
5. River, Stream	..	2
6. Rain Water	..	—
7. Small sprouts	..	2
8. 2—5	..	5
9. 2—6	..	3
10. 8—6	..	3
		—
		44



2.3 How is the (source) of water used ?

		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
(1) Only for drinking purposes	..	07	25
(2) Only for bathing	..	—	—
(3) Bathing & Drinking	..	21	75
		—	—
		28	100
		—	—

2.4 Cleanliness around the 'source'

		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Clean	..	14	50
Unclean	..	14	50
		—	—
		28	100
		—	—

2.5 Is there a separate bucket to draw water from the 'source'?

		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	..	11	39.29
No	..	17	60.71
		—	—
		28	100
		—	—

2.6 Is the well or 'source' located 50 feet away from a latrine ?

Yes	..	25	81
No	..	03	19
		—	—
		28	100
		—	—

2.7 Has the well or 'source' been so constructed or situated that the used water does not go back to it again

		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	..	22	78.57
No	..	06	21.43
		—	—
		28	100.00
		—	—



**2.8 How do you utilise water ?**

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
(1) Boiled & cooled ..	26	59.09
(2) Filtered ..	—	—
(3) Direct from the well or source..	10	22.73
(4) 1—2 ..	04	09.09
(5) 1—3 ..	04	—
	44	100.00

**2.9 Do you collect water and keep it covered and clean ?**

	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes ..	39	88.64
No ..	04	09.09
Cannot answer ..	01	02.27
	44	100.00

**2.10 Have you or your family-members at any time contacted diseases caused by unclean water ?**

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes ..	09	20.45
No ..	32	72.73
Cannot answer ..	03	08.82
	44	100.00



### Basic Need No. 3 : Clothes

#### 3.1 Do the family members possess a minimum number of clothes\*

	No.	%
Yes	24	54.55
No	20	45.45
	44	100.00

#### 3.2 Do those who are employed have sufficient clothes to wear ?

Yes	21
No	23
	44

#### 3.3 Do children who attend school have sufficient clothes to wear ?

	No.	%
Yes	19	43.18
No	17	38.64
No children who attend school	06	13.63
No answer	02	04.65
	44	100.00

#### 3.4 Are the clothes clean ?

	No.	%
Yes	32	72.73
No	12	27.27
	44	100.00

\* Three pieces of whatever clothing used is taken as the minimum for one individual.



3.5 Are the under clothes clean ?

	No.	%
Yes	25	56.81
No	17	38.64
No answer	02	04.55
	44	100.00

3.6 Is there a place to keep the clean clothes ?

	No.	%
Yes	40	90.91
No	03	06.82
No answer	01	02.27
	44	100.00

3.7 Is there a place to keep the dirty clothes ?

	No.	%
Yes	29	65.91
No	13	29.54
No answer	02	04.55
	44	100.00

3.8 How often do you clean your clothes ?

	No.	%
1 — 3 days	13	29.55
3 — 5 days	11	25.00
Once a week	02	04.55
When all clothes are dirty	09	20.45
Whenever one piece is dirty	09	20.45
	44	100.00



3.9 Do you wear clothes very tight or loose.

	No.	%
Tight	04	09.09
loose	40	90.91
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00

3.10 Do you place your clothes in the sun to dry after you have worn them?

	No.	%
Yes	33	75.00
No	05	11.36
No answer	06	13.64
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00

**Basic Need No. 4 : Food**

4.1 How many meals a day do you usually take ?

No. of meals	Families	%
1	—	—
2	02	4.55
3	32	72.73
4	10	22.72
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00



4.2 (b)	Type of Food	Morning	Mid day	Night	Additional
1.	Made of out of flour (other than bread)	10	01	03	05
2.	Bread ..	03	04	02	01
3.	Rice ..	—	14	14	—
4.	Butter ..	—	—	—	—
5.	Cereals ..	02	02	—	—
6.	Fish/Meat/Eggs	—	—	—	—
7.	Yams etc.	—	—	—	01
8.	Milk ..	—	—	—	02
9.	Fruits ..	—	—	—	—
10.	Vegetables Broth	—	—	—	—
11.	Light Meal	—	—	03	—
12.	1 + 5 + 3	—	—	01	—
13.	2 + 4 ..	01	01	—	—
14.	5 + 6 ..	01	01	02	—
15.	5 + 8 ..	—	—	—	01
16.	3 + 7 ..	01	02	03	—
17.	3 + 6 ..	01	02	03	—
18.	3 + 9 ..	02	01	—	—
19.	1 + 2 ..	02	—	02	—
20.	2 + 3 ..	02	—	—	—
21.	6 + 5 ..	03	04	04	—
22.	1 + 5 + 10	02	—	01	—
23.	1 + 3 ..	—	02	—	—
24.	3 + 5 ..	—	02	—	—
25.	Other type of meal not included here	09	02	02	—
26.	Not answered	05	06	04	—
Total ..		44	44	44	10



The following list indicates the preferences of the people:—

4.2	(a)	Type of Food	Morning	Midday	Night	Additional
1.		Made out of flour (other than bread)	.. 06	1	1	—
2.		Bread .. ..	.. 13	1	1	1
3.		Rice .. ..	.. 02	21	29	—
4.		Milk .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
5.		Light Meal .. ..	.. —	1	—	—
6.		Tri Posha .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
7.		Milk foods .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
8.		Vegetable Broth .. ..	.. 01	—	—	—
9.		Fish/meat/eggs .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
10.		Vegetables .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
11.		Jam etc. .. ..	.. —	—	—	—
12.		Sweets .. ..	.. —	1	..	1
13.		1 + 2 ... ..	.. 13	3	—	1
14.		2 + 3 .. ..	.. 02	4	04	—
15.		1 + 2 + 3 .. ..	.. 04	9	04	—
16.		2 + 4 + 3 .. ..	.. 01	—	01	—
17.		3 + 10 .. ..	.. —	1	01	—
18.		7 + 9 + 10 .. ..	.. —	1	01	—
19.		1 + 2 + 11 .. ..	.. —	1	—	3
20.		3 + 9 .. ..	.. —	—	01	—
21.		2 + 3 + 9 .. ..	.. —	—	01	—
22.		7 + 10 .. ..	.. —	—	—	1
		No answer .. ..	.. 02	—	—	1
			.. 10	—	—	—
<b>Total</b> ..			44	44	44	08



### 4.3 Do the infants receive adequate milk food ?

		No. of families	%
Yes	..	1	2.27
No	..	17	38.64
No infants	..	20	45.45
No answer	..	06	13.64
		44	100.00

A subsidiary of this question was asked : Do the mothers suckle the infants.

Yes	03
No	18
No answer	03
No infants	20
	44

### 4.4 For children, pregnant and lactating mothers, the sick and those who are involved in heavy labour — Do they prepare special food for them ?

- Answers :**
- 9 Families prepare special food items for infants.
  - 3 Families prepare special food for pregnant and lactating mothers.
  - 7 Families prepare special food for the sick.
  - 9 Families prepare suitable food for those involved in heavy labour.

In the case of infants it was milk or vitamins, while in the case of pregnant and lactating mothers it was food items prescribed by the physician. The identical pattern is noticed even in the special food items prepared for those involved in heavy labour.



**4.5 Do you get fresh and clean food items ?**

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	29	65.91
No .. ..	12	27.22
No answer .. ..	03	06.87
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00

**If not, what is the reason ?**

	No.	%
Economic difficulties .. ..	06	50
Not available in the village .. ..	06	50
	<hr/> 12	<hr/> 100

**4.6 Where do you keep the prepared food until you consume them ?**

On the table .. ..	12
On the floor .. ..	13
At the cooking place itself .. ..	04
On the wooden structure near the fire place .. ..	15
	<hr/> 44

**4.7 Do you keep clean the vessels that contain food ?**

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	41	93.18
No .. ..	03	06.82
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00



4.8 Do you grow your own food items ?		No.	%
Yes	..	13	29.55
No	..	30	68.18
No answer	..	01	02.27
		—	—
		44	100.00
		—	—

List the type of food items grown by you ?

Fruits	..	..	01
Yams etc.	..	..	02
Vegetables	..	..	03
Paddy	..	..	01
2 — 3 — 4	..	..	03
3 — 4 ..	..	..	05
			—
			15
			—

4.9 Do you face problems from insects, animals etc. in your cultivation ?

Yes	15
No	27
No answer	02
	—
	44
	—

What type of problems ?

Problems from :	1. rats and mice	05
	2. insects	05
	3. 1 — 2	05
		—
		15
		—

4.10 Is your income adequate for you to procure your food items ?

		No.	%
Yes	..	14	31.81
No	..	28	63.64
No answer	..	02	04.55
		—	—
		44	100.00



**Basic Need No. 5 : Shelter**

**5.1 (a) the place where the house is situated :**

	No.	%
In an area which is flood affected	02	04.55
in an area which is not affected	42	95.45
	44	100.00

**(b) Is there soil erosion ?**

	No.	%
No	29	65.91
Yes	08	18.18
No answer	07	15.91
	44	100.00

**5.2 In the house so situated that adequate drinking water is available ?**

	No.	%
Yes	12	27.27
No	32	72.73
	44	100.00

**5.3 Do you have road access to the house ?**

	No.	%
Yes	31	70.45
No	13	29.55
	44	100.00

**5.4 In the house adequate for all the people living in it ?**

	No.	%
Yes	18	40.91
No	09	20.45
No answer	17	38.64
	44	100.00



(a) The floor area of the houses—

	No.	%
Less than 100 sq.ft.	—	—
100 — 200	07	15.91
201 — 300	03	06.81
301 — 400	04	09.09
401 — 500	—	—
501 — 600	03	06.82
601 — 700	03	06.82
701 — 800	07	15.91
over 800	13	29.55
Answer not available	04	09.09
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00

(b) Number of rooms—

	No.	%
1.	—	—
2.	08	18.18
3.	07	15.91
4.	04	09.09
5.	08	18.18
6.	16	36.37
No answer available	01	02.27
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 100.00

(c) Number of family members—

	No.	%
1 — 3	05	11.36
4 — 6	16	36.81
7 — 9	14	31.81
10 — 12	03	06.81
12 —	05	11.36
Answer not available	01	02.27
	<hr/> 44	<hr/> 99.98



(d) The state of walls—

	No.	%
dilapidated ..	09	20.45
good ..	34	77.27
No answer available ..	01	02.27
	44	99.99
<b>Wall structure :</b>		
1. Wattle & daub ..	04	09.09
2. Rock/stone ..	01	02.27
3. Brick ..	14	31.81
4. Earth ..	03	06.81
5. Mud bricks ..	06	13.63
6. Lime plaster walls earth ..	06	13.63
7. Planks ..	—	—
8. Cadjans ..	—	—
9. Walls etc. ..	01	02.27
10. 2—3 ..	04	09.09
11. 3—6 ..	01	02.27
12. 2—3—6 ..	03	06.81
13. No answer available ..	01	02.27
	44	99.95

(a) Condition of the roof—

	No.	%
Dilapidated ..	12	27.27
Good ..	30	68.18
No answer available ..	02	04.54
	44	99.99



5.10 Is the furniture and other equipment in the house kept in some order ?

	No.	%
Yes	31	70.45
No	12	27.27
No answer	01	02.27
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	44	99.99

**Basic Need 4 : Health**

6.1 Do the family members use a latrine ?

	No.	%
Yes	36	81.81
No	08	18.18
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	44	99.99

6.2 Do the family members bathe or wash themselves daily ?

	No.	%
Yes	31	70.45
No	13	29.54
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	44	99.99

6.3 Do they wash their hands before meals ?

	No.	%
Yes	40	90.50
No	04	09.09
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	44	99.99



(b) Roof structure—		No.	%
1.	Cadjans ..	—	—
2.	Hay or grass ..	03	06.81
3.	Tiles ..	18	40.91
4.	Aluminium or zink sheets ..	18	29.54
5.	Other material ..	01	02.27
		—	—
		44	99.98
		—	—

5.7 (a) The general condition of the floor—

		No.	%
	Dilapidated ..	11	25.00
	Satisfactory ..	31	70.45
	No answer available ..	02	04.55
		—	—
		44	100.00
		—	—

(b) Floor Structure—

		No.	%
1.	Cowdung & earth ..	24	54.54
2.	Cement ..	18	40.90
3.	1 — 2 ..	01	02.27
4.	Answer not available ..	01	02.27
		—	—
		44	99.99
		—	—

5.8 Is there adequate ventilation and sunlight in every room ?

		No.	%
Yes	..	42	95.45
No	..	01	02.27
No answer available	..	01	02.27
		—	—
		44	99.99
		—	—

5.9 Are there permanent doors & windows fixed to the house ?

		No.	%
Ye	..	34	77.27
No	..	10	22.72
		—	—
		44	99.99



6. 4 How many hours per day, do the family members work?

Nature of work	Hours						over 11	
	2	2-3	% 3-5	%	5-7	7-9		9-11
1. Agriculture	—	—	6	66.66	1—25%	1—4.35%	1—7.69%	—
2. Sewing	—	—	—	—	—	—	1—7.69%	—
3. Hired Labour	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35%	4—30.76%	—
4. Technical work	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1—50.00%
5. Manual Labour	—	—	—	—	—	—	4—30.76%	—
6. Sewing work	—	—	—	—	—	13—56.52%	—	—
7. Clerical work	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35%	—	—
8. Estate Management	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35%	1—7.69%	—
9. Traders	—	—	—	—	—	—	2—15.38%	—
10. Teaching	—	—	3	33.33	1—15%	—	—	—
11. General Management	—	—	—	—	1—50%	—	—	—
12. Welding work	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35%	—	—
13. Masonry	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35	—	—
14. Drivers	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35	—	—
15. Dairy farming	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35	—	—
16. Nursing	—	—	—	—	—	1—4.35	—	—
Total..	—	—	09	99.99	40	100	13	100.00
						23	100.00	13
								100.00
								.02
								100.00



6.5 Do you have sufficient lesiure time ?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	30	68.18
No .. ..	12	27.27
No answer .. ..	02	04.54
	44	99.99

6.6. Are you addicted to alcohol, drugs or narcotics ?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	11	25.00
No .. ..	33	75.00
	44	100.00

6.7 Do you clean the vessels in which you eat your food daily?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	41	93.18
No. .. ..	03	06.82
	44	100.00

Do you clean your cups and plates daily ?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	42	95.45
No .. ..	02	04.55
	44	100.00

6.8 Have you taken measures such as immunisation/vaccination etc. to prevent the following illnesses :—

	No.	%
1. Whooping Cough, Tetanus .. ..	68	18.18
2. Polio .. ..	09	20.45
3. Small Pox .. ..	02	04.54
4. Typhoid .. ..	02	04.54
5. Cholera .. ..	02	04.54
6. T.B. .. ..	22	25.00
7. No answer .. ..	16	36.37



6.9 Are there public health programmes in the village ?

	No.		
(1) that of the Government ..	01	..	13.63
(2) those of voluntary organizations	05	..	86.36
No answer ..	38	..	—
	—		—
	44		99.99
	—		—

6.10 Is there a physician to whom you could go in times of illness in the village ?

No

### Basic need No. 7 : Transport Facilities & Communication

7.1 Is there road access to the village ?

Yes

7.2 Has the road access to public places in the village ?

The school	Yes
Post Office	Yes
Temple	Yes
Cooperative Stores	No
Other places	No

7.4 Do you get letters delivered at your house ?

Yes	33
No	10
No answer	01
	—
	44
	—



7.5 How do you normally get news about the village :—

(In the past when there was some important news the custom was to ring the Temple Bell.)

(1) * from the Temple Bell	..	—
(2) through oral communication	..	19
(3) through the tom-tom beats	..	—
(4) through printed media	..	03
(5) through other means	..	01
(6) 1 — 2	..	01
(7) 2 — 4	..	12
(8) 1 — 2 — 4	..	03
(9) 2 — 4 — 5	..	02
(10) No answer	..	03
		—
		44
		—

7.6 Do you read newspapers as a regular habit ?

(1) Yes	31
(2) No	13
	—
	44
	—

(\*Here we have included all those who read newspapers at least once a week)

How often do you read newspapers?

	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
1. Everyday	..	06
2. Thrice a week	..	05
3. On Sundays	..	20
(Rest no answer)		—
		31
		—



7.7. Do you have a place (a board for e. g.) where all important news pertaining to the village is displayed ?

Yes

How often do you read it ?

	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>%</i>
Once in 2 days ..	04 ..	12.5
Once in 4 days ..	01 ..	03.13
Once a week ..	23 ..	71.87
Very rarely ..	01 ..	03.12
Whenever possible ..	03 ..	09.37
(Rest no answer)	—	—
	32	99.99
	—	—

7.8 Do you listen to the Radio Broadcasts ?

	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes ..	25 ..	56.81
No ..	38 ..	40.90
No answer ..	01 ..	02.27
	—	—
	44	99.98
	—	—

Do you have a Radio at home ?

Yes ..	22 ..	88.00
No ..	03 ..	12.00
(Rest no answer)	—	—
	25	100.00
	—	—

7.9 Do you have a Library in the village ?

Yes

Although there is a village library, 20 families out of the 44 family sample were unaware of its existence. Out of the 24 families who were aware of it, only 09 families do make use of it.



7.10 Do you have transport facilities to your house ?

Yes	26
No	18
	-
	44
	—

**Basic Need No. 10 : Fuel**

.1 Do you get the fuel you require for your cooking needs without much trouble ?

			No.		
Yes	..	..	20	..	45.45
No	..	..	24	..	54.55
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—

What is the type of fuel you use ?

			No.		
(1) Firewood	..	..	35	..	79.55
(2) Kerosene oil	..	..	—	..	—
(3) Electricity	..	..	—	..	—
(4) 1 — 2	..	..	08	..	18.18
(5) 1 — 2 — 3	..	..	01	..	02.27
			—		—
		Total	44		100.00
			—		—

8.2 Do you get the fuel you need for lighting at night without trouble ?

			No.		%
Yes	..	..	41	..	93.18
No	..	..	02	..	04.55
No answer	..	..	03	..	02.27
			—		—
			44		100.00
			—		—



Only 04 houses do have electricity out of the sample and all the other houses do not utilise electricity.

8.3 Do you collect firewood from the village for your cooking purposes ?

	No	%
Yes .. ..	37	84.09
No .. ..	07	15.91
	44	100.00

8.4 Do you have sufficient trees in the village from which firewood could be collected ?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	36	36.36
No .. ..	27	61.36
No answer .. ..	03	02.27
	44	99.99

8.5 What else do you use for cooking and lighting other than firewood, kerosene, electricity and gas ?

coconut shells	02
nothing else	42
	44

8.6 Is the sum of money spent on food too much for you ?

	No.	%
Yes .. ..	09	20.45
No .. ..	35	79.55
	44	100.00

8.7 Do you think that you can continue cooking with firewood for a long time ?

Yes	03
No	43
	44



8.8 If you are to buy Kerosene to supplement firewood will the money spent on Kerosene be too much ?

Yes	42
No answer	02
	—
	44
	—

8.9 Has the Government or you or anyone else started a programme for the conservation of energy as far as your village is concerned :—

Yes	—
No	44
	—
	44
	—

8.10 Why don't you utilise electricity ?

(1) It is very expensive	28
(2) It is not necessary	10
(3) No answer	06
	—
	44
	—

### Basic Need No. 9 : Education

9.1 Do you have a School in the village ?

Yes

9.2 Do all those in your family who are of school going age, attend school ?

Yes	25
No	09
No children of school going age	10
	—
	44
	—



Why don't they go to School ?

(1) They don't like to go .. ..	..	01
(2) No one to look after the younger children at home .. ..	..	01
(3) Deaf & Dumb .. ..	..	01
(4) Economic difficulties .. ..	..	06
		—
		09
		—

9.3 Is there anyone in your family who has not gone to School at all ?

			No.	
Yes .. ..	..	20	..	
No .. ..	..	21	..	
No answer .. ..	..	03	..	
		—		
		44		
		—		

9.4 Are you aware of any Educational Programmes conducted for school leavers, and others in the village ?

Yes .. ..	..	15
No .. ..	..	15
Do not know .. ..	..	13
No answer .. ..	..	01
		—
		44
		—

9.5 Are there training programmes for different vocations in the village ?

Yes .. ..	..	05
No .. ..	..	39
		—
		44
		—



**9.6 Do you utilize modern methods in place of traditional methods in the practice your Vocation ?**

Yes	..	..	06
No	..	..	14
No answer	..	..	24
			—
			44
			—

**9.7 Have the adult members of your family received an education on family health and family planning ?**

Yes	..	..	24
No	..	..	18
No answer	..	..	02
			—
			44
			—

**Are you aware of any such programmes being conducted in the village at any time ?**

Yes	..	..	16
No	..	..	24
Dont know	..	..	04
			—
			44
			—

**9.8 Do you take part in any decision-making activity in Voluntary Organizations in the village ?**

Yes	..	..	06
No	..	..	38
			—
			44
			—

**9.9 Do you take part in development activities in the village either initiated by the Government or other Organizations ?**

Yes	..	..	26
No	..	..	18
			—
			44
			—



9.10 Do you speak any language other than Sinhala (your mother tongue) ?

Yes	..	..	21
No	..	..	18
No answer	..	..	05
			—
			44
			—

**Basic Need No. 10 : Spiritual and cultural needs**

10.1 Do you actually consider yourself as a member of any particular religious denomination ?

			<i>No.</i>		%
Yes	..	..	37	..	85.09
No	..	..	01	..	02.27
No answer	..	..	06	..	13.64
			—	—	—
			44		100.00
			—		—

Distribution according to religion :

Buddhists	..	..	41
Christians	..	..	03
			—
			44
			—

10.2 Do you practise and follow the religious activities of your religion ?

Yes	..	..	31
No	..	..	13
			—
			44
			—

Do you regularly attend temple or church ?

Yes	..	..	17
Once in a while	..	..	02



Do you follow religious rituals daily at home ?

Yes	..	..	11
No	..	..	33

10.3 In your home is there a separate place where you offer flowers or incense and practice your religious rites ?

Yes	..	..	24
No	..	..	20
			—
			44

10.4 Is there a temple in your village ?

Yes

The Church is not in the village because only a few Christians live there. They attend the Church in the town.

10.5 Are you closely associated with the religious places in the village ?

Yes	..	..	32
No	..	..	04
No answer	..	..	08
			—
			44

10.6 Do you support community religious activities in the village ?

Yes	..	..	39
No	..	..	03
No answer	..	..	02
			—
			44

10.7 Do you follow accepted traditional religious rituals on occasions of marriage or death ?

Yes	..	..	42
No	..	..	02
			—
			44



10.8 Are there social, cultural, religious or other such organizations in the village ?

Yes

Do you take part in their general activities ?

Yes .. .. 33

No .. .. 04

No answer .. .. 07

—

44

—

10.9 Do you have a common playground in the village ?

No

10.10 Is there a programme in existence for the purpose of counselling and rehabilitating anti-social elements in the village ?

No

The Basic Need approach presumes the existence of Ten Basic Needs which are further divided into "ten sub-needs." As it is difficult and cumbersome to measure the degree of satisfaction of these needs in all the 440 houses at Kebillawela, a ten percent sample was selected and the extent of the fulfilment of the "ten sub-needs" in each of the ten basic needs was measured. For example the Basic Need No. 1 stipulates the existence of a clean and beautiful environment. This need was divided into 10 sub-sections.

(1) Is there road access to your house ?

(2) Is your home garden sufficient ?

(3) Is the home garden kept clean and beautiful ?

(4) Have you cultivated the home garden to provide you with your food requirements ?

(5) Is the home garden devoid of soil erosion ?

(6) Is the water in the garden scientifically disposed of ?

(7) Is the house sanitary, simple and beautiful ?



- (8) Is the kitchen clean and healthy ?
- (9) Is there a safe well for drinking purposes ?
- (10) Is there a sanitary latrine ?

If one awards points to these sub-needs the 44 houses should receive 4400 marks whereas actually the score is 2585. If the entire village is computed in this manner as far as the Basic Need No. 1 is concerned, it will be seen that only 58.75% of the need is satisfied in the village.

The Basic Need No. 2 (water) is sub-divided into ten sections :

- (1) Do you have water resources for drinking and washing purposes ?
- (2) Is your source of water supply pure and safe ?
- (3) Is the way or manner you obtain water safe and clean ?
- (4) Is the environment of your water resources clean and safe ?
- (5) Do you utilise a separate bucket to draw water from your source (i.e. well, stream etc.)
- (6) Is your water source (the well etc.) situated at a safe distance from centres of pollution (i.e. latrine, pits etc.) ?
- (7) Does the excess water (water used for cleaning purposes flow back to the well or other resources ?
- (8) Do you collect water in a safe and clean manner ?
- (9) Do you drink safe and clean water (filtered, boiled and cooled etc.) ?
- (10) Have any members of your family suffered at any time from water-borne diseases ?

When one scores the points for each of these the total come to 2010. The average score is 50.75 for the entire village.

Basic Need No. 3 is clothing. It is postulated that each person should have 3 pieces of clothing which is considered the minimum necessary for an individual living in the village. Three pieces of



outer clothing and under-clothing are thus counted as the minimum essential. The points were awarded accordingly on the following aspects :—

- (1) Do you have minimum amount of clothing for all the members of the family ?
- (2) Do the members of the family who go to work have an adequate number of clothing ?
- (3) Do children who go to school possess a sufficient number of clothing ?

In these two sub-needs, it is stipulated that those who go to work and children who attend school require more than three pieces of clothing. The sufficient number is calculated taking into account the nature of work or schooling. The individual who attends to work in the village may consider 3 pieces of clothing as sufficient, whereas the person who goes out to a factory or office or school in the town would consider 5 pieces as the minimum. In such a case, the minimum necessary is calculated for each member of the family, having taken all his demands into consideration.

- (4) The cleanliness of the clothing worn (outer clothing)
- (5) The cleanliness of the under-clothing.
- (6) Do you have a separate place to keep the clean clothing ?
- (7) Do you have a separate place to keep the unclean (or soiled) clothing ?
- (8) How often do you clean your clothing ?
- (9) How do you wear your clothes ?

The question here is asked to determine the manner the clothes are worn. Sometimes, very tight fitting clothes are worn without regard to one's health. This is so in the case of women's wear. The aesthetic beauty too is considered here. In short, do you wear simple and beautiful clothes or do you just squander money on ostentatious and un-healthy garments ?

- (10) Do you usually place your used clothing in the sunlight and take them away thereafter ?

The calculation indicates that this basic need is satisfied among 69% of the people of the village.



## Basic Need No. 4 : Food

1. How many meals a day do you take ?

The postulation here is to ascertain whether the 3 basic meals are available to them.

2. The nature of the meal is : the nutritious value of the meal is assessed in this question.

The number of calories required for a child, an adult and an old man per day is computed and against it, the calory intake is measured. Points are given accordingly.

In order to provide the nature of the "ideal meal" as visualised by the people, what food items they would prefer for each meal are indicated.

3. How are infants fed ? Do they receive sufficient nutritious meals ?

4. What special types of meals are given to children, pregnant and lactating mothers, the old and the infirm ?

The objective here is to measure the nutritious value of food given to those various types and see how far the meals given at present fall short of an "ideal nutritious meal" in terms of calary-intake and in the provision of other essential requirements.

5. Do you receive fresh and clean food ?

6. Where do you keep your prepared food ?

This question is asked to determine how safe and clean the cooked food is kept.

7. Do you keep the prepared food closed ?

8. Do you grow your own food ?

9. Do you have problems from insects and animals in the safe keeping of food ?

10. Is your income adequate for you to buy necessary food for the family ?

The percentage of the satisfaction of this need is 41.22 percent.



## Basic Need No. 5 : House

The minimum requirement here is a simple dwelling house, clean aesthetically satisfying.

### 1. The location of the House :

The purpose is to find out whether the house is situated in an area often subjected to floods or regular soil-erosion.

### 2. Is there sufficient water for cultivation and personal use ?

In the earlier basic need, water was considered as one aspect. Here the idea is to see whether in the place where the house is situated one has sufficient water for cultivation purposes.

### 3. Has the house a road access ?

### 4. Is there sufficient space for all the family members to live a healthy life ?

This is studied in relation to the floor space of the house, number of inmates or family size and number of rooms etc.

### 5. How are the walls constructed ?

### 6. Of what material are the roofs made ?

### 7. How is the floor constructed ?

the material out of which the floor, the roof, and the walls are made does not matter to us as long as the floor, roof and the walls are strong, sanitary and aesthetically satisfying, although simple.

### 8. Is the house built in such a way as to enable adequate sunlight and fresh air to come into it ?



9. How are the doors and windows constructed ? Are there sufficient doors and windows ? Are they clean ?

10. Is the furniture and other equipment kept in an orderly manner ?

The percentage of the satisfaction of this Basic Need in the entire village is 73.35

### Basic Need No. 6 : Health Care

This need is classified under the following sub-needs :

1. Do you utilize a latrine ?

Here the question is devised not so much to find out whether they have a latrine but to ascertain whether all the members of the family make use of a latrine.

2. Do you wash and clean yourselves daily ?

3. Do you wash your hands as a habit before every meal ?

4. Do you have sufficient leisure ?

The question is designed to find out whether they have free time of their own which they could use for their own satisfaction.

5. Are any members of the family addicted to alcohol or drugs ?

6. Do you clean the vessels and plates you use for cooking and eating ?

7. Have you received the vaccination and injection to prevent prevalent illnesses ?

The question is designed to elucidate data as to whether they have taken measures to prevent prevalent illnesses such as T.B., whooping cough, tetanus, diphtheria etc.

8. Do you wash your hands whenever you have used the latrine ?

9. Is there a community health project in your village ?

10. Do you have a physician in the village ?

No

The percentage of satisfaction here is 69.75.



### **Basic Need No. 7: Communication and Information**

1. Is there road access to the village? Is it possible to approach the village through the road?
2. Is the road well-maintained? Are the bridges and culverts well-maintained?
3. Do public places in the village such as temples etc. have road access?
4. Are your letters delivered at home?
5. How do you get your news in the village? Are the communication facilities satisfactory?
6. Do you read newspapers, and how often?
7. Do you have a Common Notice Board for your village and are you aware of it?
8. Do you listen to the Radio Broadcasts?
9. Do you have a Library and do you use it.
10. Do you have facilities to transport goods?

The percentage of satisfaction of this Basic Need is 46.00%.

### **Basic need No. 8: Fuel or energy requirements.**

1. Do you get the fuel or energy requirements necessary for cooking without difficulty?
2. Do you get energy requirements for lighting and other purposes? What sort of energy do you utilise?
3. How do you collect fuel and retain it for use?
4. Have you grown trees and plants that could be used for fuel in the village?
5. What are the other types of traditional sources of energy you use in the village?
6. What modern types of energy do you use?
7. Do you spend a sizeable portion of your income on energy and fuel? i.e. is it beyond your means at the moment?



8. How far are you able to procure fuel ect. from your own village?
9. Is there a fuel or energy conserving programme in your village?
10. Do you feel that such a programme should be followed by you?

The questions were administered, it must be followed here, long before the recent price-hike in oil prices, particularly in kerosene. The percentage of the satisfaction of the need is above 68, although if asked today at least 60% of the people would state that the kerosene prices are now beyond them.

#### **Basic Need No. 9 : Education**

1. Do you have a school in the village?
2. Do all those of the school going age go to school and if not why?
3. Are there people who have never been to school?
4. Are there educational programmes for children, school leavers and adults in the village?
5. Are there vocational training programmes functioning in the village?
6. Are you substituting modern methods in place of traditionally practised methods?
7. Are the adults aware of the importance of family health and education in family health ?
8. Do you take part in the decision-making process in organizational and institutional activities in the village?
9. Do you take part in common village development activities?
10. Do you make use of a Second Language (other than your Mother Tongue)?

The satisfaction of Basic Need No. 9 is 46%

#### **Basic Need No. 10 : Cultural and Spiritual Needs**

1. Do you or members of your family practise a religion?
2. Do you daily follow the rituals of your religion?
3. Do you have of separate place of worship in the house?



4. Is there a temple/church in the village easily accessible to the villagers ?
5. Do you attend temple/church regularly and associate yourself with the activities there ?
6. Do you identify yourself with social welfare activities in the village ?
7. Do you follow traditional customs etc. on important occasions ?
8. Do you take part in the activities of religious/cultural/spiritual/social voluntary organizations in the village ?
9. Do you possess a common playground and do you take part in Sports ?
10. Do you take an interest in trying to rehabilitate anti-social elements in the village ?

Of this Need only 67% satisfaction is evident

An analysis of the Data collected on the Ten Basic Human Needs indicates in the following Table the extent to which each of the Needs is satisfied :—

	<i>Extent of Satisfaction</i>
Basic Need 1	.. 58.75%
2	.. 50.75%
3	.. 69.00%
4	.. 41.22%
5	.. 73.38%
6	.. 69.75%
7	.. 46.00%
8	.. 40.00%
9	.. 40.00%
10	.. 67.00%
	55.58

The total average of the satisfaction of the 10 Basic Needs in the village is 55.58 percent, which is not very unsatisfactory.



## 8. Chitra Lane Settlement (Narahenpita).

In an area of about 2 1/2 acres there are 75 families who comprise a population of 418 living together. According to age the population could be tabulated in the following manner :—

Age	Females	Males	Total	Percentage
0-14	78	90	168	40.19
15-55	109	118	227	53.30
Over 55	10	13	23	5.51
Total	197	221	418	100.00
Percentage	47.13	52.87	100.00	—

This table shows that out of the total population of 418, 227 are those belonging to the age category of 15—55. There are 191 individuals, who, because of their age had to depend on others. This category includes children below 15 and old men and women over 55. Actually speaking only 92 people are engaged in some form of employment either temporarily or in a permanent capacity. This leaves 135 individuals between 15—55 without any visible form of meaningful employment. In a way it is this 92 people who have to provide “rice” and “curry” to all others in the settlement.

The table shows that the total population is 418 and this population belongs to 75 families. Each family thus has an average of 5.57 children. Actually speaking there are only 38 families which have 5 or less than five children. The remaining 37 families have 6 or more than six children each. The pattern of the distribution of children in the families is given in the following table :—

No. of children in the family	No. of families	Total population in the families
01	01	01
02	04	08
03	06	18
04	12	48
05	15	75
06	17	102



07	..	06	..	42
08	..	07	..	56
09	..	04	..	36
10	..	01	..	10
11	..	02	..	22
Over 12	..	—	..	—
Total		75	..	418

Among the families there are a number of newly wedded couples and it can be surmised that, given the present rate of birth, there would be a sizeable increase in the number of children in the settlement within the next few years. The increase in the number of families and members of families on one hand with a corresponding decrease in the land available for settling down plus the limitation of available resources, present a real problem in the settlement.

Large numbers are noticed in the case of 37 families who have 6 or more children. Seventeen families do possess six children each, six families have 7 children each, four families have nine children each, one family has ten while two other families do possess 11 children each. Thus the burden of over-population in the family is one of the major problems faced by these settlers.

The distribution of the population according to race is given in the following table :

<i>Race</i>	<i>No. of Families</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Average number</i> <i>.. per family</i>
Sinhala	.. 49	.. 250	.. 5.5
Tamil	.. 17	.. 104	.. 6.1
Muslim	.. 09	.. 44	.. 4.9
Others	.. —	.. —	.. —
Total	.. 75	.. 418	.. —

According to religion the distribution is as follows:—

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Buddhists	.. 275	.. 65.8
Hindus	.. 58	.. 13.9
Christians	.. 41	.. 9.8
Muslims	.. 44	.. 10.5
Others	.. —	.. —
Total	418	.. 100.00



Of the Tamil population (104) only 55 are Hindus the majority being Christians.

The following table gives the distribution of families according to race and religion :—

	<i>Buddhists</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sinhala ..	49 ..	— ..	— ..	— ..	49
Tamil ..	— ..	08 ..	09 ..	— ..	17
Muslim ..	— ..	— ..	— ..	09 ..	09
Others ..	— ..	— ..	— ..	— ..	—
Total ..	49	08	09	09	75

The original land occupied illegally by the early settlers has diminished in size while the population has increased. Due to the illegal and temporary character of the dwellings even at present the settlers live here in a “temporary frame of mind.” They are not interested in constructing permanent dwellings. Even if they do want and desire it, the meagre land available does not warrant such a task.

The unfortunate history of these people shows three periods through which they have passed to reach the present stage. In the first period they lived in various parts of the city having come there from rural areas. In order to eke out a living they were engaged in sundry activities. The second stage began with the settlement in the present location. As mentioned elsewhere the families came here one by one. They first settled at Gorakagahapitiya and in 1973 when the Anderson Flats were constructed all of them were compelled to move into Chitra Lane where each family received a very small portion of land.

The following table indicates the approximate length of time these families were settled in this location :—

<i>No. of years</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
0 — 2 ..	06
2 — 4 ..	05
4 — 8 ..	10
8 — 12 ..	13
12 — 16 ..	06
16 — 20 ..	31
20 — 24 ..	01
Over 24 ..	03



The settlement has been named as "Korea" by the neighbours. The term "Korea" has come into popular parlance to indicate an area of settlement steeped in abject poverty. Even if one glances casually at the settlement one would not fail to notice the "look of poverty" in the make-shift shanties. In 57 such shanties, 75 families live. In some houses two families live, and in certain others one finds three families living together. Out of the 75 families 53 live in what they call their own make-shift houses, while 14 families live in shanties belonging to their relatives and finally 05 families do occupy shanties owned by others paying a monthly rental. Even though they say that they "own" the shanties, legally they have no way of establishing any claim to the land or the houses.

Of these 14 families who live with their relatives, the majority do live with their parents. One part of the shanty is generally demarcated and given over to the new family. There are 08 families who pay rent and live in an area of about 120 sq.ft. at the most. The rent paid per month ranges from Rs. 10 — 30. According to our investigations there is one family which pays Rs. 10/- ; two families paying Rs. 15/-, 3 families paying Rs. 20/- and one paying Rs. 25/- and another Rs. 30/-.

The roofs of the shanties are made out of cadjan or zink sheets. The floor is either half-cemented or made out of earth. Walls are either made out of cadjan or dilapidated sheets of zink or wood. The structure of the houses could be understood by the following table wherein we have divided the houses according to the material utilized to build the roof, walls and the floor :—

	<i>Material</i>	<i>No. of houses</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>The roof</b>	out of cadjan ..	41	75
	zink sheets/aluminium sheets ..	26	
	cadjan plus zink ..	08	
<b>Walls</b>	Wattle & daub ..	13	
	planks ..	43	
	zink sheets/aluminium sheets ..	05	



	wattle and daub/and wooden planks	06	
	wattle & daub/zink sheets	.. 06	
	wooden planks & zink sheets	.. 01	
	wooden planks/zink/wattle & daub	01	.. 75
<b>Floor</b>	Cow-dung and earth	.. 39	
	Cement	.. 27	
	Cow-dung earth/cement	.. 08	
	Sand	.. 01	.. 75

Out of the roofs 4 roofs had nothing but cadjan. It is interesting to observe how in the case of more than half of these roofs, the cadjan has almost perished. Even a drizzle is enough to drench all those inside the house. In the houses where the roofs are made out of zink or aluminium sheets, it must be mentioned that these sheets are sub-standard or used sheets bought cheap from somewhere and utilised for the roof. Today they look very old and rusted. Even the roofs covered by the so called sheets cannot stand rainy weather and the 26 families who live under these sheets are thus exposed to the wrath of the elements at all times.

The 8 families who live under roofs made of both cadjans and sheets are no better than the above two categories. The combination of cadjans and sheets is not an outcome of choice, but of sheer necessity. When the cadjans decay, half a sheet is borrowed or begged from somewhere and put on to the roof because of the lack of money to buy cadjans to cover the entire roof.

The walls as we said earlier are semi-permanent with cadjans, wooden planks or sheets separating one section of the house from another. Out of the 75 families, 43 live in houses of which the walls are made out of wooden planks. The planks come from discarded material used as soap-boxes and such other items. Thirteen families live in houses in which the walls are of wattle and daub. Five families have their houses made out of throw away zink or aluminium sheets.

The space allocated to each house and garden could be visualised if one takes into consideration that in an area of 2 1/2 acres 75 families are living with a population of 418. The average area of



each house or shanty is about 25 sq.ft. One does not find furniture such as chairs, tables, bed etc. Usually the girls, the mother and other females, live inside the house while the males sleep out. One cannot stand erect inside the house, because the roof is very low. Whatever scant furniture they have cannot be kept inside without taking up much useful space. There is only one house belonging to a Muslim family and that has a floor space of 200 sq. feet.

It has already been mentioned how in one house more families do come to live together. There are 15 houses in which more than two families live. An indication of the size of these families is provided in the following table :—

<i>No. of families in the house</i>	<i>No. of houses</i>	<i>No. of inmates in those houses</i>
01 ..	42	.. 42
02 ..	12	.. 24
03 ..	03	.. 09
	—	—
Total ..	57	75
	—	—

The already over-crowded houses are now faced with the pressure of increasing numbers.

The problem of space and the resultant pressure on this by the increase in population is observed if one examines the state of the kitchens in these houses. The space in which the house is constructed is so small that there is no more room to erect a kitchen. The kitchens in the 75 houses are situated in the manner indicated in the following table :—

<i>Where the Kitchen is situated</i>	<i>No. of households</i>
in the shanty itself in a corner ..	.. 37
in the verandah ..	.. 21
in an inner room ..	.. 09
adjoining the house ..	.. 06
in a separate section outside the house ..	.. 01
sharing with another ..	.. 01
	—
	75
	—



The Kitchen is separately situated outside the house only in the case of one house. As most of the houses are one "room" houses, the kitchen is usually placed inside the room. The kitchen is demarcated by two or three planks or bamboo-woods placed in a corner of the house. The entire kitchen is thus about 3 square feet in extent. The few pots and pans are kept in the house because the kitchen has no sufficient space. The table shows how in the case of 21 families the cooking is done in the only room available or in the verandah.

The houses are situated physically touching each other except in the case of three or four houses. There is no open space in the case of at least 15% of the houses. They invariably open on to Chitra Lane. As this is the case the children play on the road (i.e. in Chitra Lane). In short the one room houses are so constructed as to serve all purposes i.e. eating, entertaining, sleeping, sitting, cooking etc.

The shanties or houses involve only labour in their construction because the material appears to have been borrowed or "begged" from outside. Few zink sheets thrown away by somebody or a couple of cadjans borrowed from elsewhere are the raw material with which the houses appear to be constructed. The lack of privacy has led to sexual activity of the parents to be openly noticed by children and this too has led to serious problems in the shanties.

Of the population (418) the potential work force consists of 227 individuals (i.e. those between 15 and 55) of whom 109 are females and 118 are males. It has been already stated how only 92 of them are gainfully employed. The following table indicates the types of employment :—

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number of inhabitants</i>
In permanent Government Service .. ..	27
In casual government service .. ..	06
Labourers (in the employment of richmen living close by) .. ..	27
Labourers .. ..	12
Traders (petty) .. ..	06



Technicians	..	..	..	05
Carpenters/Masons	..	..	..	03
Drivers	..	..	..	02
Painters	..	..	..	02
Pensioners (former Govt. Service)	..	..	..	01
Plumbers	..	..	..	01
				—
				92
				—

Taken as a whole only 27 individuals are employed in permanent Government Service. The rest (65) although employed are not certain of an even monthly income and they have to depend on circumstances beyond their control to continue the work from month to month. Very often they are out of work and in these months, they find it difficult to feed their families.

The first category, that is, those who are in Government service permanently are engaged in jobs equivalent to clerical and other services. There are two individuals, one a Corporal in the Army and the other a Lance Corporal. The rest comprise the office workers and watchers.

Of the third category the majority are women. They work as paid hands in the houses of well-to-do people in the adjoining area. They receive as wages Rs. 100—150 each month. The 12 in the category of labourers are those employed in private establishments as workers. They receive about Rs. 7/- a day which is not at all adequate for them to eke out an existence.

The six petty traders run small tea kiosks and other sales-points earning a little money. One of them runs a fire-wood sales-point. They too earn meagre incomes and as they have to maintain large families, this income is not at all sufficient for a decent living.

If one looks at the personal items and property owned by these people, the following items and property come to light :—

Bicycles	..	14
Small shops	..	03
Work-places	..	02



The three small shops comprise a fire-wood sales point and two tea kiosks. The two work-places are for the purpose of repairing motor vehicles.

The other personal items they own are household goods. A number of such items owned by the settlers is given below :—

Radio Cassette players	..	01
Radio sets	..	25
Sewing machines	..	05
Almirahs	..	16
Cabinets	..	16
Small cupboards	..	08
Beds (modern)	..	42
Tables	..	40
Chairs	..	161
Cushioned chairs	..	02
Wall clocks	..	02
Cookers (Kerosene)	..	01
Table Mirrors	..	01

The person who owns the Radio Cassette player is employed as a watcher in a Court-house. The paucity of personal property owned by the people indicates the extent of their poverty.

The settlers receive assistance from the Government. Of them seven families receive assistance under the Widows and Orphans Aid Scheme. Food stamps are given to 172 individuals. On the whole the families have not saved substantially and the propensity towards savings and the motivation is minimal. Twenty three families possess 38 Savings Certificates.

The extent of indebtedness is seen in the following number of people who admitted that they have borrowed money on interest. Eleven families have borrowed money from Government Institutions, two from Banks and 33 from private money lenders.

There is no doubt that the settlers are engaged in the practice of mortgaging their private property.



The number of families who have mortgaged their gold and silver ornaments .. .. .				33
Furniture and other equipment .. .. .				03
Clothes etc. .. .. .				01
				<hr/>
Total .. .. .				37
				<hr/>

Around Chitra Lane and within a radius of about a mile, there are a number of recognised schools. Although schooling facilities do exist, the motivation of the Chitra Lane people to continue their children's education is minimal. Out of the 312 children of school going age 209 do not attend school. The 113 who attend school are distributed in the following manner :—

		<i>No. of pupils in</i>		
<i>The Grade</i>		<i>The Class</i>		<i>Percentage</i>
1 — 5	..	89	..	78.76
6 — 8	..	17	..	15.04
9 — 10	..	07	..	06.20
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		113		100.00
		<hr/>		<hr/>

There are only 17 pupils in the 6 — 7 — 8 grades and 07 studying in the 9 and 10th grades. There is none studying in the General Certificate of Education or Advanced Level classes.

The 209 who do not attend school are distributed, according to the education they have received, in the following manner :—

Out of the total population 240 could read and write and 178 are not literate. Even some of those who were once able to read and write are not able to exercise it now. Percentage wise, today **42.6% are not functionally literate.**



Basic sanitary facilities are lacking in the Chitra Lane settlement. The entire settlement possesses only 23 latrines and these latrines serve a population of 418 people in 75 families. Even these latrines fall into 3 basic types. Firstly there are latrines where one digs a hole and places an empty tin in it. There are no enclosures or coverings here. Secondly there are latrines where one digs a hole and covers the pit with cadjans on all sides. Thirdly there are latrines without a pit or a tin. Some cover a part of the compound with cadjans and use it as a latrine. The excreta is not taken out and treated here. These latrines are basically insanitary and the majority do not have a roof.

The 75 families when asked told us that they use latrines in the following manner. Twenty three families use their own latrines, 25 families share latrines of others, 26 families use the common latrines found on High Level Road, at a distance of about 1/2 a mile. One family frankly admitted that they use the "jungles," the use of open space close by.

There are two points in the Settlement where water is provided by the Municipality. In addition to this, there are 5 wells sunk in the Settlement area. The water in these wells is polluted and is not at all suitable for drinking purposes. The wells are not protected and even the water looks unclean. All the settlers supply themselves with water from the above two points at the "stand pipes". The settlers do their bathing too at these points, and it is not an un-usual sight to see men, women and children bathing together. All the washing is usually done with this water brought home.

General cleanliness is almost absent in the settlement. Personal hygiene is not taught or known to the settlers. The houses around the compounds are not kept clean even though such a task is easy and does not cost money. Elementary rules of hygiene are not known and sometimes even though known, not taken seriously. The odours that emanate from certain houses repel anyone going there from outside. There are few shanties which are kept clean and where the inmates have grown plants trees and such other crops in the small space available.



The pattern of food they take gives us an idea of the physical health of the settlers. Although 57 families did tell us that they take some kind of breakfast, they never gave us details about this meal. But by close observation we found that in the case of 41 families this breakfast is confined to a "cup of tea". The rest would bring one or two loaves of bread and eat it with sambol. This practice is now impossible because the price of bread and coconut has gone beyond their means. Today except 3 families, the rest do not partake of a nutritious meal for their breakfast.

The workers or those who go out to work usually have their meals at the work places. Sixty seven families stated that they "take" something for their midday meal. But by close observation, it was found that except munching something they do not eat an adequate lunch. One week's observation of 10 sample families showed us that they ate 2 meals of manioc, 3 meals made out of flour, and two meals of rice. Even here there was only one curry and judging from the qualitative stand point, the meal was extremely poor.

The main meal of the day is taken at dinner time when the bread-winners come home and all the other members are present. Cooking was noticed by us in many a house only in the evening. Usually two curries are prepared either with rice or bread. A vegetable, dry fish and sometimes fish serve as curries.

Malnutrition is quite apparent in the settlement. Out of the young population 72 percent are malnourished. As everything has to be brought from outside, the wages earned by the bread-winners is not sufficient to provide the basic needs of such large families. Qualitative or well balanced meals cannot be provided. A survey made by us on children who are under one year showed that they do not receive even one nourishing meal a day.

One redeeming feature of the settlement is the close cooperation that exists between individuals of three races and religions. Although marriage between different races or religions is an exception, there is no open enmity among the settlers. There is a strong neighbourhood feeling among them and they cooperate with each other in all community activities.



## 9. Angulana

Angulana settlement is occupied by fisherfolk who live in make-shift shanties constructed out of cadjans along a narrow strip on the sea-coast about 10 miles from Colombo. The demographic characteristics of the village are as follows : Males 480, Females 527.

		<i>Below</i>			
		<i>1 year</i>	01—15	16—55	<i>Over 55</i>
Males	480	.. 19	237	207	17
Females	527	.. 19	231	238	39
Total	1007	.. 38	438	475	56

Of the population 475 individuals comprise the potential labour force and 532 depend on them.

There are 218 houses here and 240 families live in these houses which are make-shift structures made out of cadjan. Except for one house along this strip, all the houses have cadjan as their roofs and their walls. The houses are huddled together for want of space and sometimes the distance from one to the other is about 4 feet.

The majority of the houses have only one room, i.e. a big room approximately 10' — 10' in extent, and a small kitchen. This room serves all purposes, the dining room, sleeping quarters etc. On certain occasions within this room one finds two families living together. On an average as each family has about 6 members one can understand the nature of their experiences in a make-shift house of this type.

There are no latrines in the houses because the people as a whole utilise the sea-shore for this purpose. Drinking water is obtained from wells nearby and it cannot be said that they enjoy an adequate supply of water both for consumption and other purposes. Although the houses are make-shift structures occasionally one finds such items as radios, radio cassettes and furniture bought with the money earned from a good catch of fish.

The majority of the available labour force employed in fishing during the season and unemployed during the " off-season " i.e. when the sea is rough and fishing activities are stopped. Only 208 individuals are employed " throughout " the year. They comprise



07 individuals employed as labourers in Government Departments, 02 as labourers in Private Establishments, 96 engaged in fishing, 41 selling meat, 10 traders, 13 carpenters, 04 masons, 31 labourers, and 04 smiths. There are 03 pensioners and 04 individuals receiving an allowance from the Government (i.e. Social Services Department).

Those engaged in fishing attempt to find subsidiary employment during the "off-seasons" when they are unable to go fishing. During the fishing season everyone including the children join in some economic activity associated with fishing. As even children can earn something there is no motivation to send children to school. Parents prefer to keep their children at home and give the former a helping hand in fishing rather than attend school.

Of the subsidiary forms of employment sought out by the fishermen during the "off-season" the sale of vegetables, fish (bought from outside) and meat occupy a prominent place. Some do employ themselves as traders. There are a few women who frequent the city of Colombo and earn their living as prostitutes. They do not engage in the trade openly in the village although almost everyone seems to be aware of their professional activities.

Some men have found an easy means of living by the sale of illicit liquor and ganja. There is a good clientele in the village who patronise liquor and ganja sales-points. It is not difficult to find two or three places where one can buy illicit liquor. Gambling is a popular pastime of which "House Belima" (Bingo?) is the most popular. For this game which appears to be of local origin the Organizer issues a card in which 76 squares are numbered i.e. one card may have 1-6-7 or 10. Each such card is sold for 25 cts. in the morning but in the afternoon a card costs Rs. 1.00. The game begins by dropping discs numbered from 1-76 into a tin and taking a number from it in the form of a raffle. If for example No. 10 is chosen it is announced and all those who have the number 10 in their cards mark the square 10. In this manner the game goes on until the 76 squares are filled. The card which gets the highest number of markings is considered the winner. As the game has to cover 76 squares it goes on for a long time and it is usual for men women and even children to wait patiently taking part in the game.



One cannot say that the inhabitants of Angulana have a regular source of income throughout the year. The fishermen sometimes may be fortunate to "have a catch" that enables them to earn about Rs. 200/- a day and there are days when they do not earn even a cent. During the "off-season" by engaging in various trades they may earn about Rs. 10/- to 39/- a day. Some who haul nets depend during the "off-season" on money extended to them by the owners of such nets mostly as loans.

It is interesting to observe their earnings especially in the "off-season". According to what we have noticed there are about 75 individuals who earn less than Rs. 300/- each month; 55 earn between Rs. 301/- and 400/- and 18 earn from Rs. 450/- to Rs. 600/- per month; 52 individuals did not give us any information about their monthly earnings. Among them are the traffickers in illicit alcohol and ganja as well as those who organize gambling. A very interesting observation made by us is the availability of money in the hands of men, women and children to engage in gambling. It shows that the saving potential is there, for if it is not, how could they "save" money (from Rs. 2 — 10) in order to indulge in gambling?

The educational level of the inhabitants of this strip of land is comparatively very low. There is no one in the community who has reached the level of higher education (i.e. 10 — 11th Grade in School). There are 178 men and women who had never attended a school. The rate of school drop-outs especially from Grade I to V, is comparatively high, there being 288 such cases. The following Table gives an idea of the school drop-outs and illustrates the poor school attendance of the people living in this strip of land at Angulana.

Grade	Grade	Grade	Up to Grade	Never attended
01-05	6-8	9	10	School
288	115	26	03	178

The following Table shows the number of students attending School at present :—

Grade	01-05	06-08	09-10	Above 10
	150	18	04	—

There are about 180 children of school going age who do not attend School.



The majority of the villagers are Buddhists, although one finds a sprinkling of Christians living there. There is no apparent enmity between them and as far as we could observe they spend their life in peace and harmony. The common means of earning a livelihood (i.e. fishing) in which they share the income has perhaps brought them close to one another.

The environment of the village is as a whole polluted. The lack of latrine facilities has been already mentioned. As a result of this the people pollute the sea-shore. There is no motivation to keep the compound clean and even when an animal such as a pig is killed one finds the throw-offs being deposited by the side of the house. The compounds are unclean and the use of clean or pure water for drinking is rather rare. No bathing or cleansing facilities are available except for the use made of by the sea water. The houses are constructed without any knowledge of sanitation and in the case of personal hygiene there seems much to be desired. Prevalence of malnutrition is observed and other illnesses especially bowel diseases are not an exception. In one of our surveys we found 80 percent of the children malnourished.

The inhabitants have no idea of a properly constituted meal merely because the procuring of a meal, whatever its constituents are, is a tremendous problem to them. Seventy eight percent of the people eat one meal a day and about 18 percent have a meal each in two days. Only 4 percent are fortunate enough to eat at least two meals a day. Most families eat the available meal at about 10.30 A.M. so that it would serve both as breakfast and lunch.

Of the inhabitants about 52 percent do not have sufficient clothing to cover themselves. The minimum clothing of three pieces, one to be worn at home, one at the place of work and one as an alternative wear, was not available to fifty two percent of the people. When the basic necessities are denied to a vast segment of the population, the problem of poverty confronting the villagers becomes acute.

The majority of the villagers do not possess any savings. Their philosophy is amazingly one of "let us eat and be happy today, why think of tomorrow?" This philosophy has discouraged the saving practice. The fishermen who haul and work at nets are



indebted to three people who own the nets. They borrow money from them and re-pay it during the fishing season. Therefore they are eternally in debt to the owners of the nets.

In addition to these there are one or two individuals who lend money to those villagers at a very high rate of interest. Almost every family has borrowed money from them at some time or another. During the period of our study over 62 percent were in debt to money lenders. Even when the fishermen haul a profitable catch of fish they do not think of settling the debts or depositing some money as savings. What they usually do is to spend the money on an extravagant purchase such as a radio or a radio-cassette, an expensive shirt etc. Some of these items they re-sell or mortgage later when faced with difficult times.

Although when questioned, the villagers do state that they have no leisure time, indeed, there are many periods of time which they utilise for gambling, drinking or smoking ganja. It is not unusual for a few of them to spend hours engrossed in scrutinising a sheet of racing news. They would sit in a group and spend hours and hours in the game known as "House Belima."

There are hardly any Voluntary Organizations existing in the village. Few individuals outside the village have organized a Social Service League which has a centre where certain welfare activities are carried out. Except for informal groups no Voluntary Associations have grown in the village. Although they are Buddhists most of them do not attend Buddhist Services in a nearby temple. When questioned as to their religious activities we are informed that except for the fact that they do declare themselves Buddhists there is no other activity of a religious nature carried out by them.

There is no organized leadership in the village. The men who own nets and who come from outside the village invariably attract some attention due to the economic power they command. As there are no educated people it has not been possible to organize leadership training programmes. Few individuals who indulge in the sale of illicit alcohol and ganja are recognized by some as leaders on account of the 'fear' they have of them.



## CHAPTER VII

### LOOKING BACK AFTER TEN YEARS

#### WHAT INSIGHTS COULD WE GAIN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES ?

“A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization”

Samuel Johnson, 1775

This chapter is written today — ten years after the research on rural poverty was completed. Much has happened since then changing the face of the country to a considerable extent. The life in these nine villages and settlements had undergone significant transformation. The recent introduction of the poverty alleviation programme adds more relevance to our research.

In this context we consider it useful to select at least two countries and look back at the efforts made by them to alleviate poverty. We could gain much from their experiences. U.S.A. was chosen because it is the richest country that formulated anti-poverty measures and carried them out. Yet pockets of poverty survive there still. U.S.A. is the country that had conducted a vast amount of research on poverty.

India is chosen because it is our neighbour country and we share many common problems with India. Our poverty is more comparable to Indian poverty than that found in any western country. India too has a rich tradition of studies on poverty. Anti-poverty war had been declared a number of times by politicians in this country.

In our country with each successive Government, attempts were made to fight poverty. Various strategies both capitalist and



socialist were adopted. But declaration of a direct war on poverty as has been done by the present President has no precedent in our recent history.

In U.S.A. the war on poverty was launched on a number of fronts. The Government first declared the policy destined to benefit the families in the lowest income bracket. This was followed by a tax system which had progressive features. A minimum standard of living was defined and to achieve this, Social Insurance and Social Assistance by way of payments were utilised.

In addition to this many States have elementary high schools and colleges where education is available free or for a nominal fee. The Economic Opportunity Act (1960) emphasised the abolition of poverty through a series of direct measures sponsored by the Government. The job corps sought to give the drop-outs remedial education and training in jobs. The teenagers who are just out of school or for those who needed money to stay in school the neighbourhood youth corps offered help or part-time work in the area. The local anti-poverty agencies were given financial support through the community action programmes.

The U.S.A. war on poverty as seen from above examples is a multi-faceted one. This is further to be noted when one observes how private effort was co-opted to support public strategies. Private firms were motivated to involve themselves in philanthropy. Business corporations made donations to welfare agencies such as hospitals. Through such ways, efforts were made to improve the living standards of the poor people.

In U.S. the income level that denotes the poverty line is defined by the size of the family with adjustment for farm and non-farm residency. In the Census Bureau's definition additional adjustment is made for sex and age differences of the heads of households. Computed this way the number of poor counted was utilised as a Social Indicator of welfare gain or loss.

In the U.S. much ground was covered in combatting poverty in the 1960 s. Poverty reduction achieved during this period could be primarily attributed to such anti-poverty measures. One



should not forget the sustained economic growth that took place at the same time. Some are of the opinion that during the 1970 s the interest in anti-poverty measures were dropped and as a consequence poverty increased. This shows the importance of carrying out anti-poverty measures over a fairly long period without confining them only to a definite short space of time. According to U. S. Census Bureau even after such anti-poverty measures 10 to 12 million Americans were starving or sick because they have little to eat (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1972).

U.S. President Johnson with his Great Society philosophy and the open declaration of war on poverty gave significant budgetary support for the anti-poverty programme. Although under President Nixon's first term of administration the measures continued, in the second phase he dismantled a number of such programmes. President Nixon was compelled to do this because fighting poverty involved time and enormous expenditure. There were other programmes with important national objectives among which poverty received a relatively low priority. Thus the war on poverty which began with lot of enthusiasm now became a historical phenomenon "with a secure little chapter of its own in the history text books."

If we look at poverty alleviation in the U.S. we see how in the 1940 s Americans paid little attention to such programmes. In 1960 s more than 20 per cent of Americans were poor. As such poverty was then a critical problem. President Johnson's Equal Opportunities Act mentioned earlier is thus a landmark in American history. It showed the extent of the political commitment of the President himself to this programme. Without such commitment and the political will from the most powerful executive in the land no anti-poverty programme is destined to succeed. It is very timely and that our programme in Sri Lanka possesses such deep commitment and the necessary political will.

Legislative action followed anti-poverty programmes in U.S. and thus helped to establish the necessary legal structure to give effect to strategies planned. The Office of the Economic Opportunity (OEO) was created, located in the executive office of the President.



Although the OEO was the leading agency in the anti-poverty programme in order to make the programme more successful, it was thought that the responsibility involved should be shared rather than being concentrated in the hands of one body. For this purpose five very important Departments with a direct relevance to anti-poverty measures were selected. They are the Departments of:—

1. Health, Education and Welfare
2. Housing and Urban Development
3. Labour
4. Commerce
5. Agriculture

In the initial phase following strategies were identified:—

1. Job training
2. Compensatory education
3. Community economic development
4. Community action.

Other measures such as

- (a) direct cash assistance
  - (b) in-kind benefits (food, housing, health care etc.)
  - (c) Government financed services (case work services, community health services, childcare and neighbourhood legal services)
- were added to those above mentioned strategies.

The anti-poverty measures needed more and more money as the programmes developed. In 1977 the social welfare programme expenditure totalled U.S. 35 billion - an increase of nearly 300 per cent from 1968. Any developing country involved in anti-poverty programmes would soon discover these enormous costs. How could that country then finance these programmes, seek a balance between other national goals as well as to keep the monster inflation under strict control? The success of anti-poverty programme in this context depends on establishing and maintaining such a careful control and a precise balance of all these elements.

In U. S anti-poverty programmes attracted much research. A particular strategy adopted was followed by meticulous research carried out on them. Such research enabled the programmers to understand the practical implications of the objectives, their success or failure as well as the appropriate methods to monitor them.



Research investments by the Federal Government in 1979 was U. S 90 million. The majority of research was on strategies and programmes tied to the war on poverty. Research helped to develop particularly quantitative measures to identify and define poverty. Today the vast knowledge accumulated by successive U.S. research on poverty is available for any country involved in the exercise. What is necessary is not to adopt such research and accept their conclusions uncritically but to carry out our own research, inspired and guided by that vast knowledge and discover research methods appropriate to our country and our peculiar problems.

There is no doubt poverty in every country differs from that of other countries. Even within the same country conditions of poverty may totally differ from locality to locality. It is here that careful research becomes relevant. How could we identify such poverty? What are the strategies that could be adopted to understand such poverty? What ways and means would alleviate poverty best? How could we keep track of such diverse programmes? The feedback of anti-poverty measures from the people's point of view would be useful. How could we discover such methods useful for such feedbacks? There are thorny problems at the people's level (say the rural village). Ways and means have to be sought out to make the poor reach the benefits of anti-poverty measures in spite of existing political and social problems.

In research there are many examples that we could follow. For us the knowledge of how people experience poverty at first hand is of vital importance. It has been mentioned that most people who did research on poverty came from the middle class. They do have only a nodding acquaintance with or a hearsay knowledge of poverty. We could overcome this difficulty by direct experience of the people living today.

In this context Paul Weibe's "Social Life in an Indian Slum (1975)" comes to my mind. This book helps us to gain insights on such a research method we could utilise to understand poverty. Another researcher from whose experience we could gather such useful insights is Lloyd Fallers', "Inequality, Social Stratification Reconsidered, (Chicago 1973)". Fallers is interesting because he



attempts to put economic facts obtained from different countries into a cultural context. He believed that direct observation enabled one to "mature" economic facts. Economic inequality on which economists concentrate is a sub-set within the culture domain of inequality. As Fallers correctly observes all of us are invariably culturally bound in our views of inequality.

We have referred to India at the beginning. India is our closest neighbour and we in this region share many a common cultural link with India. The anti-poverty measures adopted in India are of more relevance to us than to that of many a western country.

In India poverty has been studied as early as 1888. Dadabhai Naroji wrote his "Poverty in India" in this year. Mahatma Gandhi adopted various strategies to fight poverty. As the editor of "Young India" he circulated a number of questions to economists and other scholars. The questions are :—

1. What are the tests of poverty ;
2. Whether India is richer or poor today than it was 75 years or longer period ;
3. Is poverty in India general or confined to particular groups ;
4. Causes and remedies.

It is interesting to observe Gandhi's conclusion that poverty in India is mainly due to colonial exploitation. How far do we in Sri Lanka look at colonial rule as one of the many complex causes that aggravated our poverty ? The emphasis on plantations and the desire to extract as much wealth as possible from the country by the colonial administrations contributed its share to the growth of an unbalanced economy.

Gandhi thought much of using what is produced in India itself to solve this problems. He adopted a simple lifestyle when he advocated such simplicity to others. His simplicity was not confined to the outward manifestations in public only. He followed simplicity in all aspects of his lifestyle and gave the much needed example to others.

One would notice here an important principle that has estranged the younger generations in most developing countries. The national leaders preach simplicity, limit such simplicity only to their public appearances. The way they live, eat, the pattern of



their children's education, how they go about, how they spend their leisure, in all these luxury and ostentation is the keyword. Although they pay lip homage to what is produced in the country in practice it is otherwise. The younger generation is now disgusted of this bogus life style. They are indeed very angry and rebellious about this great gap in the preaching and practise of our national and even local leaders.

Gandhi not only emphasised the use of indigenous material but in order to achieve self-sufficiency in clothing he introduced the handloom. Development of cottage rural industry was one way of alleviating poverty. Pockets of socially and economically depressed have to be sought and helped directly. He called this programme the "Anthodaya" strategy. May be in Sri Lanka the selection of depressed people and incorporation of them in the Village Rewakening Programme received its impetus from Gandhi's Anthodaya which was later developed by Vinobha Bhave.

In 1963 C. N. Wakil published his "Poverty and Planning." The six main points listed by him as causes of poverty in India are also useful to us. They are :—

1. Lack of adequate work for a vast majority of agricultural population during off seasons ;
2. The social system which lays burden upon one person of supporting a large family ;
3. The presence of a large number of able bodied beggars miscalled Sadhus ;
4. Entervating climate ;
5. Resignation to fate and consequent want of determination to fight against poverty ;
6. Faulty education system.

In India attempts were made to fix a poverty line by determining a definite income per person per month. This differed from time to time and also from one area to another area, (example:- rural and urban). During Mr. Moraji Desai's Government the poverty line was fixed at Rs. 61.80 and Rs. 71.30 (for rural and urban areas respectively), per month per person. In adopting this criteria, the nutritional norm of 2400 calories per person per day in rural areas and 2100 calories in urban areas was accepted.



In our country there are difficulties in adopting income as the only norm. Some people do receive invisible income. There are those who earn enough to make them easily liable to pay income tax but who tactfully avoid such social responsibility. Some with means do claim even rice rations or food stamps given only to those below the poverty line. Some do engage themselves in even anti-social activities that bring them unseen income. It is here that research can help to devise ways and means to establish a flexible but effective poverty line and also to find measures to answer the above problems,

It is very easy to say "get at the real poor and help them"; but no one precisely define this real poor or establishes the criteria to reach them. Levels of income and other assets including land ownership, the lifestyle pursued etc. as well as what the western countries adopt as such quantitative criteria would be of immense help here. These, however need re-interpretation in the context and terms of our culture and society in order to make the best use out of them.

Indian research had sometimes gone into areas below the poverty line. Here they have identified :—

1. A ring of severe destitution
2. Ring of destitution and a
3. Ring of poverty

It would be worthwhile to look at such rings and understand their appalling conditions. How best could these unfortunate people be identified, reached and helped ?

Research has convinced me that such people cannot be "helped to help themselves." The idea of inculcating self-help only in such destitute and very poor and socially depressed communities ended in failure in the past. This is evident from numerous examples in the history of our country where such a strategy has failed miserably both in the NGO and the Government sector.

The categorisation of different sections of poor people according to their needs and capabilities, the choice of strategies appropriate to each group have to be done in a logical, convincing and demonstrable method. Careful thought, meticulous preparation and deep commitment are absolutely necessary in this context in order to make the programmes successful.



In India, under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a war on poverty was openly declared. That was called "Garibi Hataao" or "Quit Poverty." This was a very well laid out plan. In spite of the fact that even emergency powers too were invoked, the plan was not carried out effectively in all its stages. The machinery necessary to implement the plan was not carefully identified and prepared. The personnel in charge of implementation lacked an understanding of its philosophy and necessary motivation. Although much propaganda was carried out very little of it was translated into real action.

The 20 point plan of Mrs. Gandhi had much in it capable of developing our own insights on the anti-poverty war undertaken now in Sri Lanka. We need law and order if we are to carry out the anti-poverty war. Peace and stability are the corner stones on which the success of such a plan depends. Peace and security should prevail before the programme unfolds itself or these have to be established gradually as the activities role on.

Certain salient points of the Indian plan attract our attention :

**Maintenance of downward trend of prices of essential commodities, streamlined production, procurement and distribution of essential commodities, reducing of non-essential expenditure in Government departments.**

The importance of keeping the prices of essential commodities down is underscored here. It is very essential both for the people who are poor and those on the borderline. With the anti-poverty programmes and fluctuations in world trade, the prices of essential goods would inevitably soar. The unscrupulous traders and anti-social elements would do everything in their power and ability to earn as much as they can often laying the blame on increased prices at the doorstep of others.

Unless and until prices of essential commodities are kept under strict control all efforts to help the poor would end in negative



results. Rising prices would burden more the already suffering groups and the problem would inevitably escalate.

Our Governments in the past always had a bag full of social welfare remedies which in a definite measure helped the poor majority in society. Subsidies on essential items of food (eg. rice, sugar, free education, free medical care, subsidised transportation) helped our society to achieve a measure of social development which certain development researches (eg. P.Q.L.I. index) appreciate much.

The western model of economic thinking rarely appreciates the social care model which an economy of a so called developing country such as ours had to follow. More than half of our people are poor, some even living in the level of severe destitution. In 1978, 64 per cent of Sri Lankans received food stamps and were earning less than Rs. 300 a month. In a poor society of a developing country an attempt made to reduce welfare measures and divert that money to so called development tends to reverse the impact of development itself. This is a hard unpleasant fact that economists who give such advice to third world countries should try and understand. If they examine the past economic history of the third world they would come across countries which followed their "benevolent" advice and landed in political turmoil; or countries which out of instant wisdom did not completely implement such recommendations and thus escaped dire political uprisings at least for the time being.

In our country attempts were made by successive Governments in 1960 — 75 and again in 1970 — 77 towards making the country self sufficient in rice. Together with this praiseworthy attempt if far reaching structural changes were made to enhance such production, the situation would have been different. The Paddy Land Act, Land Reform Law (1976), Ceiling on House and Property lacked necessary teeth to assure tangible results, or later action of those in power robbed whatever potential power the acts possessed and made them almost impotent.



The total result of all this was the inevitable concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. It increased the distance between the poor and the rich. That contributed to the further deterioration of the standards of the poor.

The proposal to eliminate waste in Government in Mrs. Gandhi's battle against poverty was indeed a step in the correct direction. In our country now steps are being taken to minimise such waste. This enormous waste includes waste of time, material and money. How such waste precisely affects the population has not yet been understood by most of our decision makers. The inordinate delay caused in getting official work done, lethargy, bribery and corruption involved, the high-handed bureaucracy, the manner in which officials utilise public facilities which thus enable them to practice a pattern of life very different from that of the poor are facets of official waste that we have to reduce and control in order to win our war against poverty.

#### **Implementation of the land ceiling and speeding the distribution of surplus and compilation of land exceeds.**

As far as possible a just distribution of assets such as land and attempts made to increase income by providing employment and better employment opportunities are also important for our Sri Lankan programme.

#### **Conferring ownership of right of house site for landless and weaker sections.**

In our country the village reawakening programme and the grant of land by way of "Swarnabhoomi" deeds may be included under this heading.

In the 21 point programme bonded labour was made illegal. Sri Lanka does not possess such forms of bonded labour as in India. But research indicate that there are women intrigued into "to a sort of bonded" labour in industrial concerns and as house-aids. The unfortunate children who work in well-to-do houses are another group of "bonded" labourers. So called



low castes such as the Rodyas, the Harijans in the north, the unfortunate refugees who are the "children" of communal war need identification and help together with the old, destitute and the disabled.

**Plan for the liquidation of rural indebtednes.**

**Moratorium on recovery of debts from landless  
laboures small farmers and artisans.**

Indedtedness is found in all villages and rural areas. Until and unless the extent and nature of this indebtedness is identified and appropriate steps devised to put and end to this, no steps taken to minimise poverty could succeed. Declaration of a moratorium as proposed in the Indian plan cannot be done in the similar manner in this country. It would create unnecessary rivalry and antagonism among people.

The other points in Mrs. Gandhi's 21 point programme may not directly be of relevance to our immediate anti-poor war. But certain isolated aspects in the programme attract our attention further.

The programme has in it provision for legal machinery to be established to try economic offenders. This provides us with a clue as to how necessary such machinery is to deal with corruption and waste in Government offices. Resources now wasted could then be set right by the immediate availability of justice.

It is stated that most of our national economic programmes could have been less costly and more useful if waste had been carefully eliminated. (see Dr. H. N. S. Karunatillake, *The Economy of Sri Lanka*, p. 410) Dr. Karunatillake gives examples of such waste from our major economic programmes such as the Mahavali scheme.

Smuggling and the creation of black money is another area in which Mrs. Gandhi's programme could provide us with insights. Today smuggling of gold, gems, narcotics and drugs create black money and simultaneously increase social problems in the country.



“The total volume of black money annually generated from the gem industry, both in rupees and in foreign exchanges, would be in the region of Rs. 6 billion. The total stock of black money—that has built up abroad between 1977 and 1985 could be conservatively estimated at about Rs. 40 billion which is slightly less than the cost of the entire Mahaveli project” (Karunatilake, op. cit. 458.)

This black money comes in the form of commissions, bribes, brokerage and fees, and under the table transactions such as the sale of arrack and liquor including illegal liquor, casinos and betting centres, narcotics and drugs, pornographic literature and blue films.

Black money earned by the rich class need identification by society. and that class need bringing back to earth, before they by their foolish acts complete the destruction of the entire society. It is useful if those who attempt to trace present day problems directly to poverty, examine how with money and political power and also with their conspicuous consumption oriented style of life, this new rich class had alienated and angered the educated poor youth of the country.

The socialization process that existed in the past helped in the socialization of all youth, whether they be rich or poor in almost the same manner. This process had broken down due to various reasons. In the past context at least by way of socialization the rich and the poor shared a common heritage. The disappearance of this heritage has separated them from each other. The young rich or their parents do not know whether the poor exist. The educated young who are poor hate the rich, with reason and the majority of the non-educated young people too hate them because they are rich and they do possess what they do not have or which they wish to possess. This has led them to commit acts of destruction and even arson.

Mrs. Gandhi's programme allowed for the liberalization of investment but import licenses were severely curbed. A distinction between luxury items and necessities had to be carefully made in our country. Import licenses are often utilised by certain people to increase their wealth by devious means. In the case of infant food and medicine such practices adopted by the rich to earn quick money at the expense of the poor affect the poor very badly.



The selection of certain needy groups as students for special attention is another salient aspect of Mrs. Gandhi's programme. In Sri Lanka the grant of free text books to school children is now followed by the provision of a free nutritious mid-day meal. If these programmes were carefully planned before hand they could have achieved better and useful results. School children except for a few are in the majority poor and they need all this material support to continue their studies unhampered by the tentacles of poverty.

In Sri Lanka the majority of students at universities and such other higher seats of learning come from poor families. There are very few rich (not even 5%) among them. Investing in their education needs careful planning in order fight poverty successfully. Poverty together with other causes is either directly or indirectly responsible for most of student problems which create enormous social costs to present system of education. The wastage rate of education given in UNESCO report (1967) is 26 — 38 per cent in Sri Lanka. Today this ought to be much higher. It is therefore essential for us to transform our present system of education at all levels to achieve reduction of poverty through the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and a fresh vision of life.

With the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi's Government the Janatha Party Government that came into power in 1977 was also interested in fighting poverty. In order to achieve this end they launched what was called a "Rolling Plan" which was also recommended as the ideal approach for developing countries by Gunnar Myrdal in his "Asian Drama."

It is very unfortunate that programmes for economic development or education carried out by one Government are totally eradicated or contradicted by the Government that follows. What ever little good that is achieved is thereby completely erased or dropped by the next group that comes to power.

The Janatha plan although it did not succeed deserve out attention It had a minimum need programme to fight poverty. Rs. 1180 crores was earmarked for the provision of drinking water, sites for the homeless, village access roads, elementary education, rural health service and rural electirfication etc.



Measures to create conditions for distributive justice is another aspect of this Rolling Plan. In our villages the people waste money and time in endless litigation. The entire legal process is urban upper and upper middle class oriented. The poor man is an alien to law administrators (police) and lawyers, judges as well as other officials, in fact to the entire legal system. Justice is from his point of view not within his reach.

It is very unfortunate that deficit financing of budgets became a feature of Indian Government too. The miserable failure of the Janatha Rolling Plan is often traced to this deficit financing. In Sri Lanka this sorry state of deficit financing developed after late 1950 s. In 1976 the overall budget deficit was well above Rs. 3500 million. In 1977 the overall budget deficit almost doubled itself. In 1985 it has reached a peak of Rs. 21 billion.

Deficit financing is like a mill round the neck of Sri Lanka. Added to this there are debt services to be paid. The public debts rose to Rs. 24.9 billion in 1977 and Rs. 151.8 billion in 1980. (Karunatilake, op. cit. 459) Domestic debt service payment consisting of amortization of long term and medium term loan and interest payments on all foreign loans increased from Rs. 8026 million in 1984 to Rs. 8996 million in 1985. (op. cit. 461)

Anti-poverty programme, if it is to succeed need a vibrant and gradually recovering healthy economy. If the economy ails, suffering forever with foreign debts and deficit budgeting, inflation is the inevitable result.

As most of our food items are imported, the only way for us to strengthen the anti-poverty production drive is firstly by the production of food thus reducing food imports; secondly by the production of other essential items so that we are not severely caught in the unhealthy trade fluctuations that certain donor countries and firms manoeuvre at international level.

“So orienting the pattern of production in favour of essential goods and against luxury goods occupy a crucial place in any anti-poverty programme in India.” (G. Rakshit— *Poverty and Planning in India*, 1977) Mr. Achuta Menon, Kerala chief Minister suggested that Indian policy need re-orientation because



the programmes followed so far has only favoured high income groups. In our case although a few of our programmes have favoured the poor or not so rich groups, the emphasis has not shifted to the giving of more and more advantages to the poor than to the affluent.

In our research the main thrust was to identify the abject poor i.e. those groups without a permanent income that enables them to live an average life, those without proper shelter, clothing and medicament. Most of our villagers fall into this group. They need direct help to get out of this abject poverty and live as decent human beings. Abject poverty is a sub-human condition of life that is a blot on any society or culture.

Once the Government reduces this sort of extremes in society it is not difficult to identify and grant help to satisfy the other basic needs of the poor, non-poor and not so rich. They could be gradually done both by adopting structural and other strategies as suggested.

Whatever it is, the improvement of education of all these people and the provision of formal or informal facilities for them to organize, express their ideas, protest peacefully without fear and participate in all decision making, decision implementation and evaluation of programmes are vital. A vibrant democracy should function with the improvement of their education which would lead to the development of skills, more purchasing power and intensive participation in the democratic process.

In this connection it is relevant to note how the Buddha looked at man's basic needs and their satisfaction. According to the Buddha hunger is the greatest affliction that man faces. Hunger has to be satisfied before any other problems are tackled. The Vinaya Pitaka, the basket of the disciplinary code for monks, speaks of the four basic needs which have to be satisfied in all in order to lead a decent life. Food, clothing, housing and medicament are these four basic needs.

An individual if he is grown up and able-bodied has to live by his sweat. When he thus lives earning what he needs by his toil, in him a sort of happiness is born. Then he helps his family by means of what he has thus earned. The happiness in his mind is thus increased. When he lives by what he earns, supporting



himself and his family, incurring no debt to others he reaches another state of happiness "I am supporting my family and myself. I help others. I owe no debts." Thus thinking he enjoys this happiness.

In order to achieve this happiness the society in which we live should also be structured in a fruitful way. According to Buddhism a person should divide his income into four equal parts. One such part he should spend on his daily necessities including food. Two parts he should wisely invest. The fourth part he should save to be utilised on a rainy day.

Most people have not really understood the real implication of this teaching. The verse first of all stipulates the existence of a society in which a person could live meeting his basic necessities with one fourth of his income. Today in our society for those who receive low incomes (say even Rs. 2000 a month) the entire monthly salary is not sufficient even for food. The Buddhist teaching visualises and even advocates a society in which the above way of life could be conveniently practised.

The Buddha has recognised the existence of poverty. The following dialogue illustrates this :—

"Monks, is poverty a woeful thing for a worldly wonderer?"

"Surely Lord"

"And when a man is poor, in straits, gets into debt, and is that woeful too?"

"Surely Lord"

"And when he gets into debt, he borrows; and is that woeful too?"

"Surely Lord"

"And when the bills fall due, he pays not and they press him, is that woeful too?"

"Surely Lord" (Gradual Sayings, III, 249)

The Buddha identified depressed groups such as those of low castes, persecuted women, elderly and children. The poor were safeguarded from exploitation by him on several occasions. The



monks are enjoined not to add to the trouble of poor potters by asking for begging bowls again and again. Even going on their daily sojourn for food they have to be careful of the poor people. In order to save poor people from contributing their food for monks sometimes sacrificing their own basic needs, a special device is to be adopted by them. Such poor should be adopted as special beneficiaries of the Bhikkhu community. These special beneficiaries are not expected to offer alms (food) to Bhikkhus in their daily rounds. Here we see how the Buddha attempted to solve certain aspects of the problem of poverty.

There are also others who have devised fantastic ways and means of eliminating poverty. A panel of experts sponsored by the powerful Ford Foundation recently suggested that India should dispose of all her useless cattle and thereby try to meet the basic need of hunger. The Indian economy would gain much from this elimination of cattle. Another individual suggested (Romulus Whitkar) since India possesses a large variety of rats the protein deficiency of the people could be solved by killing and eating rats. He even stated ways of marketing rat meat as rat chips, rat sausages etc. (*Indian Express* 27-8-78 ; quoted by A E Punt in his *Profiles of Poverty in India*, p. 189). There is no doubt that we in Sri Lanka may also have such suggestions before us in the near future.!



## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bagdiken Ben  
*In the Midst of Plenty the Poor in America*, Boston 1964
- Balogh T  
*The Economics of Poverty*, London 1976
- Baster Nancy (ed)  
*Measuring Development*, London 1972
- Batchlder Alan  
*The Economics of Poverty*, New York 1971
- Bopegamage A  
"Caste and Poverty" in *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol, 57. No. 1
- Coppedge, Robert O and Davies, Cartlin G (eds.)  
*Rural Poverty and this Policy Crisis*, Ames 1977
- Coser L  
*Sociology of Poverty in Social Problems*, 13, 140-148
- Covello Vincent T  
*Poverty and Public Policy*, Boston 1980
- Dantawala M L  
*Poverty in India then and now*, Macmillan 1913
- Fallers Lloyd A  
*Inequality: Social Stratification Reconsidered*, Chicago 1973
- Fonseca A J  
*Challenge of Poverty in India*, Delhi 1971.
- Galbraith John K  
*The Affluent Society*, Boston 1958
- Gans Herbert J  
*The Positive Functions of Poverty*, in *American Journal of Sociology*,  
78; 275-89
- George Harry  
*Progress and Poverty*, Garden City, New York 1911
- Gooneratne W R and Gunawardene P J  
*Power and Inequality in Rural Sri Lanka in Rural Poverty in Asia*, ILO,  
Bangkok 1983
- Gooneratne G  
*Land Tenure, Government Policies and Income Distribution in  
Sri Lanka*, ILO/WEP Working Paper, 1983
- Grondjerg Kristen, Street David and Suttles. Gerald D  
*Poverty and Social Change*, Chicago, 1978
- Hayter Terese  
*The Creation of World Poverty*, New Delhi 1982
- Hettiarachchi Tilak  
*The Sinhala Peasant*, Colombo, 1982
- Karunatillake H N S  
*The Economy of Sri Lanka*, Colombo 1988



- Lewis Oscar  
*"The Culture of Poverty"*, *Scientific American*, 215 No. 4, 17-25
- Lipton Michel  
*Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reformation Studies of Peru, Chile, China and India*  
*The Legal Needs of the Poor*, A Law and Society Trust Publication  
 Colombo 1981
- Mcdonald Dwight  
*Our Miserable Poor*, New York 1913
- Mcnamara Robert S  
*One Hundred Countries, Two Billion People: The Dimensions of Development*, New York 1973
- Meade J E  
*Poverty in the Welfare State*, *Oxford Economic Papers*, November 1972
- Ministry of Health  
*Survey of the Nutritional State of the Preschool Children in Sri Lanka 1975-76*, Colombo 1977
- Ministry of Plan Implementation  
*Nutritional Status, Its Dimensions and International programs (1970-82)*, Colombo 1983
- Moorthy M V  
*Beggar Problem in Greater Bomay*, Bombay 1959
- Moyinihan D  
*On Understanding Poverty*, New York 1968
- Munsterberg F  
*Poor Relief in the U. S.*, in *American Journal of Sociology* 7: 501-3 5 659-86
- Myrdal Gunnar  
*Asian Drama*, 3 Vols, Penguin Press, 1968
- Myrdal Gunnar  
*The Challenge of World Poverty*, New York 1970
- Ponnambalama Satchi  
*Dependent Capitalism in Crisis*, London 1980
- Punt A E  
*Profiles of Poverty in India*, Delhi 1982
- Raksit Gangadhard  
*Poverty and Planning in India*, Calcutta 1977
- Richards P J and Gooneratne W  
*Basic Needs, Poverty and Government Policies in Sri Lanka*, ILO 1980
- Ratnapala Nandasena  
*The Beggar is Sri Lanka*, Colombo 1985 (Reprint)
- Roy Ajit  
*Economics and Politics of Garibi Hatao*, Calcutta 1970
- Schacter Gustav and Dale Edwin (ed)  
*The Economist Looks at Society*, Lexington, Mass. 1970
- Sinha Radha  
*Food and Poverty*, London 1970



- Snodgrass Donald  
*Ceylon, An Export Economy in Transition*, Illinois 1960
- Sundquist, James (ed)  
*On Fighting Poverty*, New York 1969
- Townshend P (ed)  
*The Concept of Poverty*, London 1970
- Vakil C. N.  
*Poverty Planning and Inflation*, 1978
- Valentine, Charles A  
*Culture and Poverty*, Chicago 1968
- Will Robert E and Vatter, Harold G V (ed)  
*Poverty and Affluence*, New York 1970
- Weibe Paul  
*Social Life in an Indian Slum*, Delhi 1978
- World Bank, *Assault on World Poverty*, Baltimore 1975
- Wijeweera B S  
*A Colonial Administrative System in Transition*, Colombo 1986







## CORRECTIONS

The printing process of this book was repeatedly interrupted by the unstable political and social conditions of the country. Thus, while apologising for the printing errors, the author requests the readers to correct the following mistakes:

### Page

- 19 Para 2, line 3 read 'life pattern'
- 31 Para 4 end of first line, delete "6% of "
- 34 Last Para: read "Of these a, b and e are...."
- 40 Para 1, line 3: instead of "is" read "its"
- 40 Para 1, line 5: instead of "leach" read "each"
- 40 Para 5, line 3: instead of 'contamintaion' read 'contamina-tion'
- 44 Para 1, line 2: instead of 'statistes' read 'statistics'
- 46 Para 4, line 5: instead of 'indetification' read 'identification'
- 48 Para 2 line 6 read, sort'
- 48 Para 2, line 11, omit 't' in 'rittual' (ritual)
- 51 Last Para, line 7: instead of 'form' read 'from'
- 52 Para 2, line 4 read 'even more poor'
- 56 Para 2, lind 9: instead of 'increased' read 'increase'
- 57 Para 2, line 5 read 'portion'
- 70 Para 2, line 3: read "serves"
- 75 Para 2, line 6 read 'ficus relegiosa'
- 79 Para 3, line 12: instead 'wellage' read 'village'
- 89 Para 3, line 5: instead of 'adoroit' read 'adroit'
- 97 Para 2, line 7 read 'except a few idlers. whom one finds..'
- 98 Para 1, line 5, read "scholars but also in our own"



- 101 Para 3, line 7: instead of 'an' read 'and'
- 107 Para 2, line 2: instead of 'has to recognise' read 'has to be recognised..'
- 108 Para 1, line 14: instead of 'hypocrasy' read 'hypocrisy'
- 108 Para 1, line 11 read 'introduce an..'
- 126 Para 2, line 2: instead of 'xample' read 'example'
- 150 Para 1, line 1: instead of 'villges' read 'villages'
- 172 After page 172 read page 174 and then go back to page 173 for No. 5. 10. The remaining numbers of Basic Need No. 6 are found in pages 175.-177
- 205 Para 1, line 4: instead of 'there' read 'their'
- 206 Para 1, line 9: instead of 'no taken' read 'not taken'
- 206 Para 4, line 1: instead of 'settlemene' read 'settlement'
- 209 Para 6, line 6: instead of 'originthe' read 'origin the'
- 211 Para 1, line 4: instead of 'armony' read 'harmony'
- 218 Para 2, line 2: instead of 'cultuat' read 'cultural'
- 220 Para 3, line 7 read 'identified'
- 223 Para 2, line 1: instead of 'eleminate' read 'eliminate'

“ It is not the man who has little who is poor, but the one who craves more ” Seneca.



ET 08

**NANDASENA RATNAPALA**

**B.A. (Hon.) M.A. (Sri Lanka)**

**Dr. Phil (Goettingen)**

**Ph. D. (Sri Lanka)**

**Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology**

**Nugegoda, Sri Lanka**

**Sri Jayawardanepura University**

**Printed at the**

**Deepee**

**464, High Level Road, Gangodawila, Nugegoda**

**Sri Lanka**



80173

MAHARAJA RAJAWANGSA  
S.A. (1911-1912)  
D.K. (1913-1914)  
D.K. (1915-1916)  
D.K. (1917-1918)  
D.K. (1919-1920)  
D.K. (1921-1922)  
D.K. (1923-1924)

MAHARAJA RAJAWANGSA  
S.A. (1911-1912)  
D.K. (1913-1914)  
D.K. (1915-1916)  
D.K. (1917-1918)  
D.K. (1919-1920)  
D.K. (1921-1922)  
D.K. (1923-1924)









എൻ  
വെൽ  
സ്റ്റാൻഡ്