

Review

Estate Tamils of Sri Lanka – a socio economic review

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Indo-Aryan migrated from India in the 5th century B.C. to form the largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka today, called the Sinhalese. Tamils, the second-largest ethnic group on the island, were originally from the Tamil region of Southern India. Until the British occupied Ceylon, Sinhalese and Tamil rulers fought for dominance over the island. Today, two sections of Tamils exist in Sri Lankan society: the Sri Lankan Tamils, and the Indian Tamils or Hill Country Tamils. The hill country Tamils are highly involved in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka. The main objectives of this work are to gain insight into the socio-economic status of Indian Tamils and their history. The author did a literature review on the history of Indian Tamils, their political-legal, geo- demographical and socio-economic status and their participation in Sri Lankan economic development. The data used for this work were secondary in nature and obtained from verifiable sources viz. electronic databases, libraries, scholarly articles, books etc. From the analysis, it is observed that their standard of living is below that of the national average: they suffer from demographic stress, are subjected to political and economic discrimination and historical exclusion. Greater political representation and equal civil rights for the stateless Tamils are among their basic concerns. In the economic arena, there should be improved working conditions and greater educational and occupational opportunities. The privatization of the country's tea plantations in the mid-1990s resulted in some short-term costs, affecting the Tamils. Social and cultural concerns include depriving the Tamils of the freedom of religious belief and protection from the attacks of the dominant community

Key terms: Indo-Aryan emigration, Jaffna kingdom, Sinhalese, Hill country Tamils, Civil rights, Coffee/tea plantations, Stateless.

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka formerly known as Ceylon is a pear shaped tiny island located in the Indian Ocean about twenty eight kilometres off the South-eastern coast of India. Sri Lanka has a population of about twenty one million in which Sinhalese makes up seventy four percent of the population and are concentrated in the densely populated Southwest. Sri Lankan Tamils, whose South Indian ancestors have lived

on the island for several centuries, are about twelve percent of the total population live who throughout the country and predominantly present in the Northern Province of the island. Indian Tamils, a distinct ethnic group, also known as plantation Tamils represent about five percent of the population. The British brought them to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century as estate labourers to work initially in a coffee plantation and then later in tea,

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rubber plantations. They remain concentrated in the "tea country" of South-central Sri Lanka. Other minorities include Muslims (both Moors and Malays), at about seven percent of the population; Burghers, where descendants of European colonists, mainly from Netherlands, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and aboriginal Veddahs forms the island's population. Most Sinhalese practices Buddhism and most Tamils practice Hinduism. The majority of Sri Lanka's Muslims practice Sunni Islam. Sizable minorities of both Sinhalese and Tamils are Christians, most of whom are Roman Catholic. Thus, Sri Lanka is ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse. English is commonly used in government and spoken competently by about ten percent of people.

Evolution of Tamil migration to Sri Lanka

The manual labourers problem was a strange characteristic of the Sri Lankan society which the plantation was helping to solve in nineteenth century Ceylon. The Kandyans provided manual labour initially when there were only a few handfuls of plantations in 1830s. But within a few years they recoiled from the influx of planters and due to incidents of friction they withdrew into a state of some hostility to these intrusions of the coffee estates (The Examiner, 1853). In spite of that, some of them continued to perform the essential task of clearing the forest areas for payment. Although some low-country Sinhalese moved to the plantations seasonally and worked as regular hands until the early 1840s when they too withdrew from this role into those of domestics, traders, carters and fellers of forest (The Examiner, 1853). By the 1860s both group of Sinhalese were undertaking contracts for weeding and holding besides those for felling forest as a "piece work". They objected and avoided the routine work on estates because they had not the need and most of them had land of one sort or another (CO 54/235; 1847). They felt it is unessential to work for a strange person, the white planter, as none were not so poverty stricken as to tie themselves to the wage strings of.

Kandyans averted the estate-work as they regarded it as degrading and that caste contributed to their antipathy to such work (Vandendriesen, 1954). Besides, the treatment meted out to the labourers by the planters of the 1840s served to further aversion the regular estate work. However repugnant the restraints of plantation labour may be to the Sinhalese, it is not supposed to be a race knowing that they are incapable of exertion or insensible to the stimulus of gain. On the contrary, it is a curious fact that all the hardest works such as clearing the forest, "bandy" transport etc. connected with the estates were done by them. But in all of this they are to a certain extent obey their own masters as they work by contract or by the job. They are not amenable to the orders of an overseer, the white planter (CO, 1857).

Despite views from such a quarter, the hallowed practice of using the Sinhalese refusal to work on estates, as proof of their indolence continued to hold sway. Be that as it may, there was a need for immigrant labour. Famine on several occasions at many places and extreme poverty all around provided very few convenient propelling factors to the planters to import estate workers from South India. Higher wages in India sufficed to attract Tamil immigrants spontaneously and with little urging provided the 'pull' to bring immigrant labours from South India. At the outset, wages rose with competition and by the mid-1840s the estate labour received 6d to 9d^{5a} per day and, it is said that some could earn from 15s to 18s a month (The Examiner, 1853). In the Madras Presidency some labourers received 3d a day even in 1858. The fact that coffee culture necessitated a maximum supply of labour only seasonally combined with the proximity of the two countries, permitted the immigrants to return to their homes. At the outset, it was mainly a seasonal migration.

In 1823, the first batch of Tamil labourers came from Tamil Nadu then called the Madras Presidency. They came from the districts of Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Madurai, Thanjavur, Thiruchirapalli and other parts of India to work in the Sri Lankan coffee plantations. In the 1830s this migration was a mere trickle. The first great influx was in 1840s. According to a history of the Planters' Association, the first planter that attempted to recruit labourers in India was Lt. Col. Henry C. Bird in 1844. It was in fact illegal; it was not till 1847 that this stream of immigration was legalised by the Indian Government with the proviso that Ceylon was not used as a springboard to transport immigrants elsewhere. Labour problems were intensified at first by government reluctance to support the immigration of labourers from India. In 1840 there was an increase in the demand for labourers for repairing irrigation tanks in the dry zone. The Jaffna people who were employed to do this repair work as people of Indian origin accepted to work for lower wages than local labourers. The prospect of employment in Ceylon attracted enough workers, this is to increase the number of workers for expanding plantations and to keep labour costs extremely low.

Given the nature of the "push" factors in South India and the spontaneous form of the immigration, it is not surprising that the supply fluctuated. Several factors heightened this fluctuation. It includes:

- (1) The travails of the journey were considerable and not uncommonly, fatal. Then the sea journey to Mannar or Colombo in unregulated, crowded and unstable sailing vessels was far from pleasing. Only a small stream used the Tuticorin-Colombo route. But, most travelled via Mannar. Mannar to the hill-country was a long walk of over hundred and fifty mile largely through tropical, malarial jungle beset with elephants and leopards.
- (2) The labourers usually travelled in gangs and were not always protected from exploitation by those who ran the

sailing vessels; or against some of the local populace (CO 54/235; 1847). Also, they were certainly no protection from cholera and small pox which occasionally scourged immigrant and resident alike in the hill country.

(3) The planter treated their labourers with "disgraceful injustice and cruelty" (William, 1888) sick labourers were turned out of the estates; discipline was exceedingly arbitrary and cruel.

(4) The housing and the medical aid provided were far from adequate.

(5) Many planters did not pay the wages regularly or withheld them altogether especially when the coffee enterprise had slipped into a serious depression (De Silva, 1840-1955).

Socio-economic status of estate Tamils

The bulk of the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka were drawn from the most depressed and lowest caste groups in South India. While this may be an artefact of great poverty among such groups at the time when the colonial masters were recruiting such labourers from 1840s, onwards, it appears that the colonial masters and the employers of such labourers were deliberately looking for those from the relevant caste groups in their search for a pliant work force due to their firm stereotypical views about race and caste of workers. Over seventy five per cent of the Indian Tamil workers represent the lowest levels in the South Indian caste hierarchy, but interestingly those in supervisory grades were selected from among the higher status. Even though opting the plantation work force would have produced a levelling influence on people from different caste backgrounds, this has not happened for over hundred and fifty years. The colonial system and the plantations imposed many restrictions on the Indian Tamil plantation workers in order to keep them under harsh living conditions and minimum worker benefits within the plantation workforce. The Sinhala and, to some extent, Tamil nationalists movements in Sri Lanka treated them as an immigrant group with no local roots and mere interlopers brought in by the colonial masters. As an ethnic minority in post-independence Sri Lanka, the Indian Tamils lost their citizenship rights and a programme for repatriation to send a significant number of them back to India was initiated in the 1960s. One could argue that the "Untouchables" became "Touchable" within the plantation economy as members of lower castes worked and lived side by side with higher caste people within the plantations. There was however some degree replication of caste or even "an invention of caste" within the plantation economy as workers hierarchy broadly conformed to the caste system and some services such

as sanitary work, washing of cloths etc. were extracted on the caste basis.

The system of indentured labour that evolved in the plantations shared many features with the caste system as mobility of labour was restricted. The kanganis and other higher ranks came from more respected castes and chances of moving up or moving out were extremely limited. While ethnic barriers such as language, citizenship rights and poor education served to keep them within the plantation system, caste, class and to some extent, gender barriers reinforced their position as manual workers with limited rights and low dignity. The much of the tea pickers were women who had limited agency at home as well as in their work place. As a cumulative outcome of these circumstances, Indian Tamil plantation workers recorded the lowest educational levels and life expectancy, the poorest quality of life and the highest mortality levels in independent Sri Lanka, in spite of the widely acclaimed beneficial outcomes of the Sri Lankan welfare state. In addition, there are serious social problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, poor housing, lack of support in old age and widespread poverty in many of these communities, adding to their social marginality.

The political mobilisation of the Indian Tamil community took a distinctly ethnic form particularly since 1940s, with a higher caste leadership in control of the Ceylon Indian Congress that later changed its name to Ceylon Workers Congress, representing Indian Tamil interests in Sri Lanka. In spite of its seemingly working class orientation, it is an upper caste-led organisation that has been part of the ruling governments in Sri Lanka without interruption since the 1970s. While looking onto the economic status of Indian Tamils, the evidence suggests that planters were treating their labourers much better in the 1850s and 1860s than in the 1940s. The most salient factor was that the labour supply was invariably short of the demand. This meant that plantations could not afford a bad name. By the 1850s planters saw that it was in their own self interest to treat their workers with some benevolence. With a ready demand for labour, the ill-treated immigrant had some chance to move to another planting district. Unlike the indentured labourers in the sugar colonies who was also favoured by the short period of notice he was entitled to give (CO, 1872).

The immigrant started estate life in debt to the kangany or the planter. This was inherent in the 'coastal advance' system which was used in conjunction with kangany system to recruit labour. As planter's agent, the kangany was provided with an advance to secure labourers but this advance was debited depending on the estate workers that he brought over. If the labourers need 'course cap' it will be provided but will be debited against him. This was his initial debt even though many kanganies

tended to spend only a fraction of the cost advance on the immigrant labourers, keeping the bulk of it for them (De Silva, 1940-1955). The main point was that the Kangany was the leader and representative of the labourers com-posing his gang and artfully bound them to him in every conceivable way. He was their banker and spokesman. This was a position of unwholesome power, though accepted by the immigrants themselves. It would appear that it was his natural rank as leader and middleman rather than that of creditor which resulted in such power. The planters themselves railed at the system and felt that it placed them in power of the kanganyes and argued that as creditors they were placed in awkward position (Ferguson, 1866).

Much has been made of the fact that immigrants commenced their estate life in debt. The question hinges on the amount of their advance, their wages and how much they were able to save per month. According to a planter majority of his labourers came over, deeply indebted to the estate and they often found difficulty in repaying the advances though planters rarely charged interest (Ceylon, 1876). Even more significant is a kangany's admission, quite incidentally, that most of the hands on his estate were in his debt. But these views bear examination. Obviously these travelling advances differ since much depended on the size of the gang procured and how much money the immigrant desired to leave behind for his relatives in India. 4 to 6s should be sufficient for his journey. It would seem that the advance was seldom under 10s and 10 to 15s can be taken as the normal sum (Ceylon, 1870).

In the 1860s, the rate of estate wages vary where the adult males earned 7 to 9d a day, the amount varies in different districts, while women and boys received 4.5 to 7d. Off season the labourers were liable to get only four days work but in crop time five days or more probably a six days week was common. This would have brought the men roughly to 13 to 14s a month or 16 to 17 shillings a month. They could also earn 6d for bushel extra picked in crop time (Ceylon Observer, 1870). A feature of the plantations in Ceylon was that planters issued rice or rice money at standard rates, every week or every month. In 1840s this was at 5 to 6 shillings a bushel, in the late 1850s it varied from 6 to 8 shillings. A bushel was usually issued each month but some estates issued three fourth of a bushel with 2s for curry stuffs. Thus, 8 shillings can be regarded as the subsistence expenditure of each immigrant per month but one should note that they invariably sold a portion of the rice (Ceylon Times, 1863). This was possible because immigrants maintained vegetable plots near their line and because some even had a few cows which provided to be useful by-income.

Taking another shilling off for extras, this would have left an immigrant bachelor of the 1860s with 4 to 8 shilling

a month to pay off his initial debt, spend on clothing, on luxuries like arrack and toddy or to squirrel away as he pleased. The head of the family might have needed most of the savings for his dependents in India but one should note that the advance or initial debt could well have fulfilled this task, even if partially. If the family was in Ceylon the women and elder children could generally earn their keep as well. On these calculations an immigrant could work off his initial debt in three to four months. Matters were further complicated by the fact that apart from their initial debt, immigrants contracted other debts with their employees or kanganyes in the form of advances for which they charged interest on these advances (Ceylon Observer, 1870). To sum up, the wages in the 1860s were adequate for subsistence and for savings as well though, obviously, on the basis of a very low standard of living and the assistance of vegetable plots, cows and poultry maintained by the immigrants themselves.

Education and Health Conditions

Education is the main factor that determines the social status of a development process of an individual's as well as a community. It transforms people psychologically, socially and culturally. Plantation community is one of the marginalized groups that are more vulnerable in educational achievements. The comparison of literacy rates with national level showed that the plantation community was only 76.9% while the national average was 91.8%. Similarly, only 20.2% of the plantation population has a secondary education and only 2.1% of them had a post secondary education. The comparable figures for the all island are 52.2 and 20.7% respectively. More than half (55.9%) of the plantation population had only primary education. A few of them had entered into the university system (Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka, 2005).

The indicators of health and nutrition are another source which reflects the backward and neglected nature of the plantation community. The percentage of undernourished children below the age group of five years in the plantation sector was 38.9% where as the percentage of the rural and the urban sector were lower and they were 21.8 and 12.8% respectively. Infant mortality in the sector was 60.6% while the national rate was only 25.3% and still birth rate is 20% in the plantation sector. The plantation health sector is still not integrated with the national health stream and it is treated as a separate entity. As a result, national health policies and health programmes are not fully covering the plantation community.

Plantation human development trust (PHDT) is the institution handling the entire health services of the plantation sector. Estate hospitals are not equipped with

the necessary facilities. Lack of qualified doctors, qualified health staffs and lack of medicine, indoor treatment facilities are the major problems faced by the estate health service (Gwatkin et al., 2004).

Housing, water supply and sanitation

The plantation sector has its own identical housing patterns known as line rooms, introduced by the colonial planters. The line rooms are barrack type structured with two hundred sq. feet for an entire family, with hardly any ventilation, no privacy for grown-up children and overcrowding due to larger families with their dependent parents. In the plantation sector, 185,533 families consists the population of 777,730 who lives in 163,580 housing units/line rooms. Most of these line rooms are more than 100 years old and seventy percent of them lives in dilapidated conditions. The percentage of self owned houses among the plantation community is estimated to be low as 10.2 and others who live in the line rooms owned by the plantation companies. Nearly, 13,000 families do not have even line rooms they live in temporary huts.

However, as a result of various housing programmes implemented by the different organization 45,000 new housing units were constructed and some of the old line rooms were upgraded. However, given the large number of unsuitable housing units in the plantation sector the challenges behind the provision of decent houses for the plantation community is enormous. With regard to the provision of drinking water and sanitation 90 and 62% of the needs of the estate sector are met respectively due to Donors, NGOs and Government interventions. But still 74% of the estate households use common taps and 15.5% use common well for drinking water. While nearly 25% of the households use latrines, another 25% do not have access to latrine facilities. After the re-privatization in 1992.

Government Agencies and NGOs had interest to improve the water supply and sanitation conditions, but the problem still prevails in higher level compare to the other sectors (Status of Workers Housing in Plantations, 2004).

Employment and Child labour

Labour force participation rate in the estate sector is around 45%. The sector also characterized by high labour force participation rate (43.4 percent) among females compare to the other sectors. However, in the recent years the labour force participation rate of the sector is

decreasing due to the emerging trend of greater emphasis on education over employment at a relatively younger generation. However there is a decline in the participation of female in labour force from 47.6% in 1986/87 to 45% in 1996/97 in the plantation sector. Out of the total active persons in the plantation community 80.6% are employed while the unemployment rate is 19% overall. But the unemployment rate among the younger generation is 70.5%. While 7.5% of the working people have permanent employment the others which are 28.7 percent are temporarily employed and 3.1% are self employed. On the other hand, only 9.1% of the plantation people have subsidiary occupations. Unemployment is an acute socio-economic as well as development problem because of its relationship to the poverty and human development. Unemployment has been identified as an emerging problem among the plantation youth especially after privatization of the plantations in 1992. Among all the plantation youth, the unemployment rate is 38.63% but it is 50.6% among the educated youth. Of the working youth only 43.67% have permanent employment and the balance engaged in temporary or casual works (Labour Force Survey in the North and East Colombo, 2002).

It is also noteworthy to explain that among the working youth only twenty five are satisfied with their present jobs while 67.75% are not satisfied. The reasons for dissatisfaction are low wage, lack of incentives, low states of job, lack of promotional aspects, lack of social security benefits etc. The higher poverty line defined by the Department of Census and Statistics revealed that nearly 80% of the plantation households lie below the poverty line. The income of plantation workers household is determined mainly by five sectors such as daily wage rate which is determine by the collective agreement, the number of days of work offered to them by the estate management, the number of days they actually worked, non-plantation work income that they are able to earn and number of income receives in the household. From the inception of the plantations, the managements have maintained a low wage mechanism in order to ensure chief labour and higher profit. Because of this mechanism, they receive very low level of wage in the country compare to the workers in the other sectors.

According to the collective agreement of 2004, they receive Rs 135/- as a basic wage per day plus Rs. 25 as price share supplement and 20 as the attendance incentive bonus for work attendance of over 75%. While the money wage increases from 1992, the real wages of the plantation workers does not show significant increases but showed a static trend in changes. A recent study showed that 67% of the estate workers earned less than Rs 5000 per month while 26% earns between Rs 5000 and Rs 7500, only 7% earns more than Rs. 7500 per

month. The average monthly income of tea estate workers was found to be Rs 2362 (Labour Force Survey in the North and East Colombo, 2002).

It is also noteworthy to indicate that the average income of a plantation worker is around 50% income of rural workers and 25% of an urban worker. In the plantation households, the average number of income receivers had decreased to 1.7 % in 2004. Thus, 23.8% of the estate households have only one working member, about 57% of the household have at least two working members, 13.6% households have three working members and only 5.6% of them have four or more than four working members. The increasing cost of living in the country has an adverse effect on poverty level of the plantation household (Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2003).

Although there is a slight improvement in schooling among the plantation children, child labour bound to be one of the serious issues. A study conducted by Vijesandiran for centre on plantation study showed that among the plantation children below eighteen years old, 28.82% had engaged in child labour. The child labour rate is high among the female (33.55%) compare to the male children (22.58%). Poverty and poor education facilities are found to be the major causes of child labour problem. It is observed that parents are compelled to send their children to work as avenue to cope with poverty incidence. In addition to this, it is also observed that there is an increasing trend in alcohol habit among the members of the plantation community. There is nearly 60% of the plantation workers consume alcohol and they spend 6.6% of their total income on alcohol and 6.7% of their income on Tobacco and Beetle. Alcoholism is seen as two aspects in relation to poverty in the plantation community (Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2003). One is that the alcoholism is one of the major causes for higher poverty incidence and the other one is that it is the result of the higher level of human poverty which prevails in the community.

Status of Women

Sri Lanka has attracted much attention as a country in which women are unusually favourable in society and in political field when compared to other countries of the SAARC region but the plantation women have been neglected and marginalized by development programmes. Plantation women's work has been undervalued and underestimated. The economic contribution to women has not been fully recognized. The plantation women tends to have multiple roles. Women have double burden as income earners and as care-takers. As a result, they

do not have leisure time on a normal working day. Estate women are vulnerable to the oppressive economic and social structures which exist in the system that has continued to be their subordinate for over a century. Women's subordination is rooted in patriarchy, in the plantation families, decision making on major issues like education of children, their employment and marriage, handling of the household authority structure of the family is been decided by the husband. Women form the majority among trade union subscribers but not even 1% of the position in the decision making level is shared by them. The isolated life led by them in the estate is another issues, most of them do not know any world beyond their estate. Female literacy rate remain lower in plantation sector than in the other sector and the school dropout rate of females remains high. It has been recorded that only 53% of female children actually complete primary schooling, 24% attends secondary school and only 4% remain until GCE 'O' level.

Women working as tea pluckers form the single largest segment of the plantation workforce in Sri Lanka. The smooth operation of factory-based tea processing is heavily dependent on the skillfulness and efficiency of the tea pluckers who brings in the green tea leaf. The female workers are economically far more important than male workers. Until 1978, however, female labourers were paid 20% less than male labourers. In 1978 the government passed legislation to increase and equalise plantation wages for all labour categories, thus removing the wage anomaly between male and female plantation labour that had existed in the sector since its beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The daily wage rate for all workers in 2002 was Rs.130.00 for an eight-hour workday. The tea pluckers are also entitled to an 'over kilo' payment of Rs.4 per kilogram during the periods of 'flush'. However, male labourers have the opportunity to earn extra cash by taking advantage of the plantation work schedule where men can do 'task work' that they usually complete within a few hours in the morning although they receive pay for an eight-hour day. They can either find additional employment as a casual wage labourer in a no plantation horticultural activities or engage in their own productive work (Kurien, 1982).

According to the office records of plantations, female workers earn relatively higher incomes than men, but evidence suggests that they neither handle nor manage their earnings. To start with, the female workers do not collect their own wages. Women's wages are routinely handed over to the males (husbands/ fathers) by the management and this practice was originated in the mid nineteenth century, when the Indian Tamil labour gangs, consisting entirely of families were brought to the newly opened plantations in the island from southern India. In

2002, 53 years after independence from the British and more than fifteen years after the large privately owned tea plantations were declared as state corporations and again after the 1995/96 privatisation of plantations, female wage earnings continued to be handed over to the males. This effectively carries on historically established norms of gender discrimination. Management personnel confirmed earlier observations that frequent family conflicts arise because men tends to waste the wages of their wives or other females on alcohol and gambling.

In the view of management, however, women do have the opportunity to collect their own wages, since there is a compulsory work stoppage when wage payments are made. Plantation workers are paid twice a month and although there is a work stoppage on the formal pay-day, the vast majority of the women tea pluckers simply stay at home and male members of the household collect their wages. It should be noted however, that there are instances when women collect the men's wages as well. But such cases are extremely rare. On the days when 'wage advance' is paid, only a few plantations stopped work anyway, usually in the afternoon, when the men were relatively free (Samarasinghe, 1993). It may be argued that as a consequence of a long history of male control of their earnings, the Indian Tamil female tea plantation workers would have internalised the belief that they cannot manage money and voluntarily leave the management of their earnings to the males. But this does not appear to be the reality. For instance, they have small amount of money that they had managed to hide away in an informal savings system called *Ceettu*. The participants would take turns in receiving the pooled sum of money each month. That money is not given to the males and the women spend it mainly on purchase of household goods and in some instances on jewellery. As for collecting their own wages, they had neither the resources nor the organisational capability to change the pattern in the face of a male-dominant workplace and a patriarchal domestic sphere. They viewed themselves as producers, working as many hours as possible to earn the maximum wages.

In addition to the above characteristics and social realities, tea plantation workers devote their lifetime which to an outsider may seem irrational. This situation of total institution remains almost the same as it was in the colonial period. It is the males in the family who collected the cash payment and spends it on themselves. Most of the families especially females in the household suffer and have to bear burdens mentally and physically with huge responsibility and worries in their lives. They have to earn, prepare meals, look-after the family, arrange marriages and dowries for their female children, look after grandchildren and the like. They tolerate all sorts of

harassment from their drunken males. As a family they have a peculiar lifestyle, which is totally different from that in the surrounding village culture. Culturally and socially females in Sri Lankan society still behaves in a traditional manner. This includes not drinking alcohol, smoking, or grumbling except for some elite classes and westernised females (Samarasinghe, 1993).

CONCLUSION

Beginning in the 1870s, the British owners of tea estates in Sri Lanka began bringing over Tamils from South India to provide cheap labour for their plantations. This process led to the uprooting of the Kandyan hill country Sinhalese peasantry from their traditional lands and deepened the majority Sinhalese view that the Indian Tamils were an alien population. The social status and backwardness of these communities have remained unchanged in spite of personal success of some individuals. The dominant ethos among many members of these communities is to seek individual rather than collective remedies for their problems through privately pursued exit strategies such as internal or overseas migration. In most instances, the plantation labours of Indian origin tend to deny, ignore and sweep under the carpet the problems they face rather than recognising them and dealing with them in an open manner.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Since decimalization the pound (symbol"£") has been divided into hundred pence. Prior to decimalization the pound was divided into 20 shillings, each of 12 (old) pence; thus there were 240 (old) pence to the pound. The new coins were marked initially with the wording New Penny (singular) or NEW PENCE (plural). The word "NEW" was dropped in 1982. The Symbol "p" was adopted to distinguish the new pennies from the old, which used the symbol "d" (from the Latin denarius, a coin used in the Roman.

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