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Research Centre for Social Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Kelaniya
Sri Lanka

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Editors' Note

Journal of Social Sciences, published by the Research Centre for Social Sciences (RCSS), Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya, is relaunched this year as ***Journal of Social Sciences (New Series)***. The journal, as was its predecessor, dedicates itself to publish articles in the subject areas of Social Sciences and Humanities. It is a peer-reviewed journal for original research. From this year onwards the journal would be available both in print and online. The online version will be available in the RCSS website.

We take this opportunity to thank the researchers who contributed their articles and to all the referees for their hard work. We are deeply grateful to Senior Professor Nilanthi de Silva, the Vice-Chancellor of University of Kelaniya for encouraging the current project and Professor M.M. Gunatilake, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences for his endless support. We thank Emeritus Professor K.M.P. Kulasekera, Retired Professor Herath Madana Bandara and Professor Gamini Hapuarachchi for their advice and guidance. We also thank Senior Lecturer Wijayananda Rupasinghe who coordinated the publishing process and Senior Lecturer Mangala Keerthi de Pasqual for designing the cover. We are also thankful to the Vidylankara Press for undertaking the printing of the journal.

Editorial Board

June 2022

Contents

The Terrors of "Tomfoolery"[1]: An Analysis of Ragging Based on the 1975 V. W. Kularatne Report

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Abstract

This paper examines the report of the V.W. Kularatne Commission that was appointed to look into an incident of ragging that took place at the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka in 1975. It explores how what can be described as soft ragging—the jokes, fun, and "harmless" ragging—can be interpreted and theorized. Many discourses on ragging make the distinction between "fun" and "harmless" ragging and sexualized or brutal and life-threatening ragging. In this paper, I draw on Sayidiya V. Hartman's work on slavery to argue that ragging can be understood within the same structure: just as slavery drew on "scenes of subjection" (Hartman, 1997, p.4) where slaves were forced to sing, dance, and perform for their masters establishing the masters' power over the slaves, ragging too employs a set of normalized and mundane practices that are often seen to be harmless and fun. Such scenes, far from being harmless, are spectacles of the raggers' power and the powerlessness of the ragged. I draw on Judith Butler's theory of injurious speech to argue that both the perpetrators and victims of ragging are in fact subjectivized as agent and victim as an effect of performative speech acts. I argue that the raggers and the ragged too are enacting historically constructed power structures and ideologies in such scenes. I end by examining the rag as a form of objective violence, rather than subjective violence, by

[1]I borrow this term from the V.W. Kularatne report, where the attorney representing a few student raggers describes their participation in the act of ragging as "tomfoolery" (Kularatne, 1975, p.63)

isolating the way the rag has become normalized and accepted, not only among the student community, but also with the administration of the university. The research question driving this research is how soft ragging can be understood and theorized as an important aspect of ragging that sustains the practice and normalizes it, turning ragging into scenes in which enjoyment and terror are entangled (Hartman 1997, p.4). The methodology used in this study is interpretivism. I interpret the scenes presented in the historical record, particularly drawing on Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia. I treat the report as a dialogical text in which multiple voices and forms of social speech appear, presenting the experiences of the victims, the perpetrators, the administrators. Drawing on the larger picture that is reconstructed by the record, I conclude that the terror of ragging is not limited to extreme forms of violent ragging, but also to so-called soft ragging which normalizes and sustains this destructive practice.

Key Words:

Kularatne Report, ragging, Vidyalankara campus, heteroglossia

Introduction

The practice of ragging has remained a controversial, and in the eyes of some, an unsolvable problem[2] within the state university system in Sri Lanka. While incidents of ragging that lead to death, impairment, or extreme violence receive attention in the press and are often sensationalized, there seems to be an unsaid consensus that the "harmless" forms of ragging such as cracking jokes, repeating obscenities, getting freshers to act various scenes or sing songs, and mild physical ragging is acceptable. In this paper, I turn to the report of the V.W. Kularatne Commission that was appointed to look into an incident of ragging that took place at the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka in 1975 to theorize this practice of soft ragging. The objectives of this paper are to analyze the V W Kularatne Commission report to tease out the way ragging can be analyzed by referencing the dimension of violence that appears as an everyday form of fun and enjoyment, which Saidiya Hartman calls "scenes of subjection" (1997, p. 4) and outline how ragging functions as a form of hate speech as defined by Judith Butler. The research question framing this paper is, how soft ragging can be understood and theorized as an important aspect of ragging that sustains the practice and normalizes it, turning ragging into scenes in which the power of the seniors and the powerful are enacted through the victim's subjugation. This study identifies the soft ragging carried out through a combination of enjoyment and terror and the performance of power through the repetition of obscene language. The main conclusion of this paper is that soft ragging normalizes and sustains ragging as an institutionalized practice in which both the victim and perpetrator are subjectivized as such through enacting various scenes, through obscenity and hate speech, and by becoming a form of objective violence.

[2] See the reports of the University Grants Commission (2020); Parliament (1998)

Ragging is not one practice but ranges from joking, teasing, asking the ragged to sing songs, act various scenes etc., to severe sexual abuse and physical abuse. Although the distinction between hard physical and brutal ragging and what I call soft ragging in this paper is a tenuous one, I would nevertheless like to make this distinction. Thus, I call joking, teasing, asking freshers to enact various scenes, worship, by heart and/or repeat obscenities, carry out various sexualized scenes and physically demanding actions which may seem like fun or enjoyment to perpetrators, but could potentially be traumatizing for the person undergoing the ragging. I focus on this aspect of ragging because analyses on ragging seem to make the distinction between such soft ragging and the more violent forms of ragging, often condoning such "harmless" practices. But I use it with the caveat that the distinction between soft and hard ragging is not always clear, and that aspects of soft ragging are present even in the cases of brutal or sexualized ragging, as examples discussed in this paper will show. Such soft ragging plays a vital role in the subjectivization of the perpetrator and the victim and sustain the practice as a normal, acceptable, and invisible form of abuse.

Literature Review

Several documents, reports, Hanzard Reports, and newspaper reports have discussed ragging extensively. For the purposes of this paper, I focus only on one aspect of ragging that appears in these reports, as I am focusing largely on the way soft ragging exists within the university system and the way it is represented in the report under discussion. In this study, I would particularly like to focus in detail on two documents that hardly ever receive attention in discussions of ragging: the 1962 Report on the Universities of Sri Lanka and the 1998 Hanzard Report of the parliamentary debate to introduce the Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Bill.

The 1962 Universities Commission Report published in 1963 (Sessional Paper XVI - 1963) provides an interesting point of departure for the current discussion on ragging. According to this report, not only did ragging exist in universities by 1962, but they were severe and not simple frolicking fun as is often claimed when comparing the rag in the past with the rag in the present:

> The "Fresher's Rag", which is officially forbidden, was originally confined to the Medical Faculty but has spread to the Science and Engineering Faculties in the universities as well. The prohibitions are ignored and the rags are repeated year after year under the eyes of those in authority without action being taken against them except a few of the most extreme cases (Report of the Universities Commission, 1964, p. 498)

The report identifies the situation as a disciplinary problem stemming from "a small proportion of undesirable elements who should never have been admitted" (Report of the Universities Commission, 1964, p. 498) to the university. The report goes onto note that "This attitude is even condoned by public men, who justify ragging as a practice copied from Oxford and Cambridge" (Report of the Universities Commission, 1964, p. 498). Unlike today, when ragging is seen as a practice predominantly present in the Arts Faculties and orchestrated by leftist student groups, the report sees the practice as being perceived as imitative of Ox-bridge student life, but hastens to clarify that the practice is not as vulgar at the British universities. What can be ascertained is that the practice predates the emergence of leftist domination of the student movement, particularly the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, and that what possibly occurred was that the left groups mixed a violent structure that already existed within the system with a rhetoric of equality. Such parties have appropriated hierarchical power structures within the university system and infused it with a pseudo rhetoric of equality. Instructively, the 1962 report defines ragging as "organized molestation of freshmen in halls of residence"

(Report of the Universities Commission, 1964, p. 498), a broad definition that captures both the soft ragging as well as the extreme forms of ragging that are discussed in other documents.

The Hanzard Report of the Parliamentary debate on introducing the Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Bill also clearly illustrates the distinction between soft ragging and extreme ragging. Introduced in the aftermath of the deaths of students of Peradeniya University and the Hardy Technical Institute as a result of ragging, the Bill can be understood as a response to the public outcry against ragging. Several eminent parliamentarians, including a few former university professors[3], speak during the debate emphasizing the cruelty and barbarity of the rag. Yet, as in most other discussions on ragging, they too make the distinction between ragging that is "fun" and acceptable and harder forms of ragging. It is particularly instructive that the term "verbal abuse" was completely deleted from the Bill on the ground that it is too vague to be enforced in the context of ragging. Some MPs argue that it can curb the academic freedom and freedom of expression within universities and the Education Minister, Richard Pathirana agrees to delete the relevant clause[4]. From the perspective of the present study, this omission is indicative of the way "verbal ragging" is somehow considered less damaging and less worthy of attention than hard ragging. Several Parliamentarians also point to the way ragging could be, or has been, "fun" and harmless in the past. For example, the Minister of Education himself states,

> Honourable Speaker, this ragging existed in universities before as well. Questions were asked from freshers. They were asked

[3] Prof. G. L. Peiris, Prof. Karunasena Kodithuwakku, Prof. A. V. Suraweera

[4]The deletion is proposed by A.C.S. Hameed, to which the Minister of Education Richard Pathirana agrees (Parliament, 1998, p. 1313).

> to sing songs. But what are they doing in the name of ragging now? Is this ragging? Or killing? (Parliament, 1998, p. 1311)

In a similar vein, MP A.C.S. Hameed, in his submission, also makes a similar distinction between the "good" rag in the past and the brutality of current practices: "In the olden days they said, 'Come, go down Thurstan Road; carry some broom-sticks on your shoulders, march up and down' or something like that. That is all right. That was fun. But what happens now?" (Parliament, 1998, p. 1316). The same point is made by Kabir Hashim, much more clearly:

> At one time it was something that was essential, it was a fun thing where seniors got together with freshers. There was innocent fooling around, and there was bondage that was built out of this ragging that used to be practised once upon a time. But ragging as it is practised now is no more a traditional act of strengthening that bondage between the fresher, the senior, and the institution. Today it is a brutal, barbaric act. (Parliament, 1998, p. 1359)

I quote this report at length to show that even high-level discussions on policy and legislature are framed by the distinction between harmless and soft ragging versus extreme, brutal, and sexual ragging. As I will show in my analysis, such scenes of "fun" are not innocent or harmless: several testimonies in the 1975 case belie this claim. Moreover, the 1975 report challenges the idea that a "good rag" existed in the past and it is only the 1990s that this "bad rag" has developed. Instead, what this study shows is that the brutal incidents of ragging reported during the 1990s and thereafter are a logical development of the so-called harmless rag that supposedly existed in the past.

Another common idea that is challenged by surveying the literature on ragging is that the brutal, excessive, and vulgar forms of ragging that exist in Sri Lankan state universities are unique to Sri Lanka

or even the South Asian region. Several studies have shown that the rag has a long history extending to Greek culture and that variations of the rag can be found in Medieval Universities (Finkel, 2002, pp. 228-229; Garg, 2009, p. 264; Gunatilaka, 2019, p. 92; Syratt, 2009, pp. 18-24). Early American Universities also experienced incidents of brutal ragging and the kind of ragging (even specific practices) described in the 1975 report are similar to the ragging that existed in Greek fraternities in American universities. Rajesh Garg points out that ragging has existed in other parts of the world and specifically mentions several Western fictional texts where ragging is described (Garg, 2009, p. 264). There seems to be a set of common practices, language, and attitudes that link the practice of ragging in various other parts of the world to what Sri Lankan universities have witnessed.

Garg notes seven reasons behind ragging, and for the purposes of this paper the seventh is most relevant: he argues that ragging is not considered a social evil by some: "People consider ragging as simple teasing; dancing etc., and they don't know the real extent of ragging in the hostels" (Garg, 2009, p. 267). Not taking ragging seriously or thinking of ragging as a form of teasing or dancing is central to the way the so-called "harmless" aspect of ragging functions. As I will argue below, these scenes where the victim is made to enact "fun" is in fact quite terrifying when one considers the way it humiliates and reorganizes the victim's subjectivity. I will examine such scenes of "fun" in detail where the victim is made to enact their subjugation and thereby sustain the normalization and trivialization of ragging that Garg points to in this essay.

Finkel identifies several types of ragging (called hazing in the article): the majority of the categories fall under the rubric of hard, violent, extreme, or sexual ragging. He also mentions psychological ragging as a form of ragging that is akin to the kind of soft ragging discussed in this paper:

> Although usually not clinically pressing, no list of hazing activities would be complete without the mention of psychologic abuse. According to the 1999 Alfred University study, two thirds of those surveyed reported being subjected to this kind of humiliating hazing, including being yelled or sworn at, forced to wear embarrassing clothing, or forced to deprive themselves of sleep, food, or personal hygiene. Other incidents have included upperclassmen's coercing victims into performing personal services for them. Demeaning episodes have included making rookies carry veterans' equipment and food trays and coercing them to push pennies down the halls with their noses. (Finkel, 2002, p. 230)

The demeaning, humiliating, and psychological intimidation that "fun" ragging involves can go so far as to reproduce oppressive social structures that already exist in society. For example, turning freshers into the vassals of senior students is quite common during the rag. Such relations act as a powerful means of sustaining institutionally sanctioned hierarchies and ideas of privilege and exclusivity that form an important part of the ethos of ragging.

Hemamali Gunatilaka has argued that psychological ragging is common within Sri Lankan universities where freshers are subjected to ridicule, intimidation, and embarrassment. She identifies several types of ragging that exists within universities. Several of these can be categorized as soft ragging: verbal torture involves asking freshmen to "sing the lyrics of any vulgar song or use abusive language while talking to the seniors"; dress code ragging refers to the way freshers are ordered to "dress in a specific dress code for a particular period to[sic] time. Formal introduction refers to asking freshers to "introduce themselves in different styles". Playing the fool involves asking freshers "to enact scenes from a particular movie or mimic a particular film state". In many cases, the seniors may also ask the fresher men to do

silly things" (Gunatilaka, 2019, p. 96). This variety of forms of ragging also captures the aspect of "soft ragging" that I discuss in this paper.

Methodology

This study is a non-positivist study that, ontologically speaking, treats the historical archive that is under examination as a necessarily partial document in its representation of the reality of the rag. V. W. Kularatne, who produced this report was an attorney-at-law as well as a prominent member of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (Mudliyar, 1998). Subsequently he was also a founding member of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (Fernando, 2010). The Communist Party broke away from the United Front government following tensions between the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Communist Party. Some of the student leaders involved in the incident (Kularatne, 1975, p. 66) as well as the attorney who represented them, Sarath Muttettuwegama were members of the Communist Party. Thus, when considering the historical context in which this document was produced and the various persons involved in the commission as well as those implicated in the ragging incident, this archival document cannot be considered as being politically neutral. Yet, the multiplicity of voices that we hear through the evidence recorded in the archive builds an experiential relationship between the historical practice of ragging and its various contemporary manifestations. Thus, I treat this historical document as a partial but meticulously detailed report that allows many voices to appear in its pages, rather than limiting itself to a single authorial narrative of the incident. In addition, it is important to situate my own subjectivity within this study: I have been actively involved in anti-ragging and anti-violence campaigns within the university. Thus, this study, far from being an abstract and politically neutral engagement with the violence described in the report, emerges from my own subjective engagement with such violence. The methodological specificity of this study lies in my attempt to pay adequate attention to the way the report both

validates, denies, and interrogates my own ideological bias towards anti-violence.

The study employs the methodology of interpretivism in order to trace the multiple voices and their suggestive content that appear within the archive. I draw on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia that he develops in relation to reading the novel. In his discussion of the language of the novel, he argues that, "a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized)" (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 114) enter into the text of the novel through speech. As Bakhtin argues with regard to the novel, the quotation of speech and dialogue within a text, constitutes it as a set of dialogical relations between many social voices. My interpretation of the report is based on the heteroglossia that manifests through the various statements made by witnesses, letters, proclamations, announcements etc. that appear in the report that turn the text into one of multiple voices representing various "speech types" (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 114). Interestingly, and unusual for contemporary official discourses on ragging, the voices of those who engage in ragging are also included in the report. Such utterances by raggers, particularly in the statements they and their victims give, allow a reader to trace how their subjectivity as seniors or raggers is constructed. As most reports on ragging tend to do, this document too highlights the cruel forms of sexual ragging reported throughout the investigation. My study attempts to identify the objective nature of the violence—that is, the way violence that has no immediately apparent perpetrator—that appears in the text of the report by examining the speech, statements, etc., that produces the heteroglossia of the text. The historical reconstruction of the various voices within the report allows this study to go beyond commonsensical understandings of the rag and to understand the web of power structures, particularly institutionalized power structures, that ensures the persistence of this practice despite

decades of being condemned and abhorred by the many parties involved.

The Background to the Incident and the Complexities of Sri Lankan Higher Education

In February 1975 a group of mathematics teachers arrived at the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka to follow a diploma course conducted by the university. By the time they arrived, the inaugural ceremony scheduled for the 3rd of February had been cancelled in the last minute and a lecture by the Dean of the Science Faculty was scheduled for the day (Kularatne, 1975, p. 3). The students who had arrived to participate in the programme were subjected to severe ragging and the press, who had been invited to cover the inaugural ceremony and were present at the campus when the ragging occurred, covered the incidents and gave them broad publicity in several newspapers (Kularatne, 1975, p. 3). The then president of Sri Lanka, William Gopallawa, appointed a one-man commission to inquire into the incident. Its report, titled "The Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into 'Ragging' at Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka" was printed that year as the XI Sessional Paper. This report, later simply known as the V. W. Kularatne Report, states that its mandate was to inquire into the causes of the events that led to the ragging, whether any employees of the university had neglected their duties in failing to prevent the ragging, whether any person engaged in ragging, whether any person "intimidated, threatened, or abused" any person in the related set of incidents, whether the ragging was "motivated" or "organized" by a particular group or organization (Kularatne, 1975, p. i). As the mandate of the commission indicates, the purpose of the inquiry was not only to identify perpetrators of ragging and specific acts of ragging, but also the institutional responsibility towards the incident and what internal or external political elements played any role in the incident. As an archive, this report stands out, because it captures the larger set of power structures at work in ragging

rather than simply reporting specific incidents. It details the various ways in which institutionalized forms of ragging and abuse are sustained, pointing, particularly, to the responsibility of administrators and the institution itself towards preventing such violence.

The background to the particular incident of ragging as well as the broader history of education is inseparable from the country's political history. From its very inception, discourses surrounding the aims and purposes of education, principles of access and equity, and even the broader horizon of thinking about education has not been framed by experts on education, but by the various individuals and parties who are driven by various political and class interests. The controversial report of the 1943 Special Commission on Education that proposed Free Education not only provided access to higher education to a large number of students from underprivileged backgrounds, but also led to a system of meritocracy where the best students, irrespective of their class background and economic capacity, would have access to higher education. This system, while vastly popular, was also met with criticism. N. M. Perera, for example, criticized it for turning education into a form of upward social mobility for a few, advantageous to those who receive it, but not for society as a whole (Perera, 1944, p. 4). C R. de Silva also points to the way a meritocracy has emerged as a result of the Sri Lankan higher education system: "it works as a selective process whereby a relatively small elite is chosen to man the top administrative and technical posts in the land" (de Silva, 1998, p.104) Such politically framed understandings about education cue us into one key conceptual root of ragging: the feeling of exclusivity based on academic merit. As literature on the history of ragging has shown, ragging has existed from ancient Greece to European and American universities of the 19th and 20th Century. There is a general consensus that ragging (or hazing as it is sometimes known) is an initiation ritual that is carried out when a person enters into an exclusive group—in this case through education (Finkel, 2002, p. 228;

Syratt, 2009, pp. 18-24). A similar ethos of exclusivity can be seen in ragging in Sri Lanka as well, where it functions as a typical initiation rite into the specific community. It is not uncommon to hear the rhetoric of exclusivity when discussing access to higher education, particularly, in the context of ragging and student politics. Throughout the report, there are several instances where the mathematics teachers are derided as those who had arrived at the university by "holding pandam to Members of Parliament" (Kularatne, 1975, p.12). At least part of the derision directed at the teachers involved the sense that those who were unentitled to enter university had done so through improper means and patronage of politicians. This points to the way a sense of exclusivity functions as a rationale for ragging—both as a form of initiation, but also as a form of exclusion in this case[5].

The 1970s was a decade of several critical incidents that affected the field of education in Sri Lanka. The 1971 civil insurrection was key among these, and in 1972 the administrative structure of the entire university system was restructured, turning the entire system into one university with several campuses (de Silva, 1977, p. 210). In addition, that same year, the language standardization process led to frustration among Tamil students that fueled the youth rebellion in the North (de Silva, 1998, pp. 114-119). As stated above too, since some of the student leaders were involved in the Communist party, tensions between the government and the Communist Party may also have led to the extensive reporting of the incident. Although it is hard to say how much this political backdrop affected the actual process of producing the report, it is unavoidable that this report would be read within this broader context.

[5] For example, the report shows how one teacher convinced the raggers that he had already passed his A/L examination with adequate results to enter university. When the raggers are satisfied with this information they let him go: "at this point I understood that they believed me to possess adequate qualifications for admission to the University" (Kularatne, 1975, p. 13)

Theoretical Framework

I employ three inter-related theories in the analysis and interpretation of the 1975 V. W. Kularatne report. The first is Saidiya Hartman's theorization of the spectacle of the "entanglement of terror and enjoyment" (1997, p.23) that she examines in relation to slavery. Hartman's theorization is useful to see how the mundane and normalized form of what is seen as fun and enjoyment would short-circuit with terror within ragging. Similar to the scenes of "simulated jollity and coerced festivity in slavery" (Ibid) that Hartman notes, ragging too relies upon normalized and naturalized scenes of so-called frivolous fun in order to sustain the true terror and subjectivization taking place within the practice. I will draw on Hartman extensively to theorize the way Kularatne report captures this aspect of ragging through the various testimonies given by witnesses as well as the generalized opinion that there is a rag that is fun and one that is cruel. By linking the enjoyment encapsulated within the rag to terror, and by defamiliarizing and interrogating the distinction between fun ragging and cruel ragging, I will argue that it is actually this mundane form of enjoyable ragging that sustains it and normalizes it.

The second theoretical strand of this paper is drawn from Judith Butler's concept of injurious speech. I link Hartman's notion of the scenes of subjection with Butler's concept of injurious speech (Butler 1997, 49) in order to examine how the subject of ragging is constructed. The mundane and "fun" element of ragging is often sustained through hate speech. In her study of hate speech, Butler asks, how is it that words can cause injury? When words do cause injury, does the injury come from the actual speech (or words employed) or the agent of that speech, the person who speaks them? (Butler, 1997, pp.49-50) These questions are important, not only for their politico-legal implications, but also because they raise the question of the subject of ragging. By interpreting the evidence that appears in the Kularatne report, I will argue that the subject of ragging is not an empirical subject but a

historical one. By paying close attention to the way ragging can be seen as injurious speech, we see that both the agent and the victim of the act of ragging is subjectivized as such retroactively, through the injurious speech act. The broader theoretical claim that will be forwarded here is that ragging must not be seen as a single, immediate, empirical act, but the manifestation of a set of historical power relations that sustains ragging at a deeper, institutional level.

Building on the above two theorizations, finally I turn to how the archival document situates ragging as a form of objective violence. In our more empirical everyday understanding of ragging, the agent as well as the victim of ragging are not considered as embodying a set of power relations, but simply as the agent and the victim of the particular instance of ragging. Yet, as Slavoj Žižek has pointed out, focusing on subjective violence is inadequate to understand the larger systematic nature of that violence and the coordinates that sustain it (Žižek, 2008, pp. 1-2). It is only when we look beyond each individual act of violence, the here and the now, to how that violence is historically constructed and sustained that one can recognize its objective nature, that subject-less violence that is unleashed in systemic, institutionalized forms. Although the scope of this paper does not allow a full engagement with the way ragging can be theorized as objective violence, I will examine the specific ways in which the report brings out the dimension of objective violence of ragging.

The Terror and Enjoyment of Ragging

As discussed above, Saidiya V. Hartman has examined the way subjectivization occurs in various scenes of slavery in which “terror of the mundane and the quotidian” (Hartman, 1997, p. 4) can be traced. The following testimonies, for example, depict the way terror and enjoyment are entangled in the practice of ragging:

Witness XXX:

> I came with my mother and elder brother. A person asked us to fight in the manner teachers fight. There was another lady teacher there. They asked us to act like a male star and a female star. Thereafter we were given some twigs and asked to dance like mad people. Then they took me to another place and asked me to state five sentences about "stone". They asked me "what a stone is and where it is found". I showed them a stone. Then they said "Here this wench does not know what a stone is. Don't you know what a stone is, even after teaching for three years". I started crying. They said that "stone" means "legs". Earlier a student asked me to recite a filthy poem. Most of the words in the poem were filthy. After that I was given a cigarette butt and asked to smoke it once and pass it on to the next one. I mentioned a few things to my mother, but I didn't mention everything, thinking that it would hurt my mother's feelings (Kularatne, 1975, p. 25)

Witness XXX:

> Thereafter I was asked to sing. I sang the song "Sihinen Oba Mata". When I was singing a little while, they said that it is not correct and instructed me to sing again inserting other words. . . . After that I was shown a boy and asked what I liked in him. I replied "Nothing". Then they showed me a lady teacher and asked me to enact a scene imagining us to be Gamini Fonseka and Anula Karunathilleke. As we came out through the door blue was applied on our faces. At Peliyagoda they asked me whether I know how to "hit hoppers" (meaning Lesbianism). After the lecture they came inside and ordered us to get on top of the chairs. One was taken to a platform and he was asked to take an oath starting "We, the Juwan Guras who came on Pandan" etc. (Kularatne, 1975, p. 24)

Although the comparison between ragging and slavery may seem slightly extreme at a glance, I make this comparison because, structurally, they perform the same function. That is, the victim is made to act out various frolicking and fun scenes as a representation of the perpetrator's power and a performance of one's victimhood. To put it in the words of Hartman,

> Therefore, rather than try to convey the routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath through invocations of the shocking and the terrible, I have chosen to look elsewhere and consider those scenes in which terror can hardly be discerned—slaves dancing in the quarters, the outrageous darky antics and the minstrel stage, the constitution of humanity in slave law, and the fashioning of the self-possessed individual. By defamiliarizing the familiar, I hope to illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the shocking spectacle. What concerns me here is the diffusion of terror and the violence perpetrated under the rubric of pleasure, paternalism and property. (1997, p. 4)

In my own argument, it is the same kind of antics, enforced singing and dancing, and other "fun" that constitutes the way ragging is both mundane and terrifying at the same time. As shown in the two testimonies quoted above, the victims are made to imitate actors, dance like madmen etc., which to many would seem like "harmless" fun are in fact terrifying to the victim. Wimala de Silva states, in her autobiography, that ragging was fun and enjoyable as far back as 1937, comparing it with the lethal ragging event of 2004, where a student died as a result of ragging (de Silva, 2004, 190). I read the above testimonies more theoretically, to argue that just as the slave must perform his/her victimhood before a master in order to express their subjugation, the victim of ragging too is forced to express their subjection to raggers by performing their victimhood through such acts that seem trivial and fun to the raggers and bystanders. In forcing women to utter obscenities,

getting them to worship various buildings in the university etc., raggers are subjecting them to the institutionalized hierarchy of seniority within the university, subjectivizing them as victims. Simultaneously, such performances of victimhood by the ragged also reiterate the power of senior students within that hierarchy, establishing at once their place in that hierarchy as well as the exclusive reverence that the institution itself demands from students. Resistance to the process is rare, but when they do occur, they are minor and individual without any real power to challenge the power that is forced on them by this terrifying and cruel practice. For example, in the testimony where a woman is asked if she knows how to "hit hoppers", she replies that she knows how to cook hoppers. This part of the testimony that appears in the Sinhala translation of testimonies in the report is deleted from the English translation. Despite its evocative power to challenge the ragger, such statements remain isolated and ineffective.

The "terror of the mundane and the everyday" (Hartman, 1997, p.4) that Hartman outlines in the context of slavery manifests itself in the multiple instances where women are forced to utter obscenities, give flowers to men etc., showing us how terrifying practices of subjugating women are "normalized" as fun. A letter sent by student counsellor, summarized in the report is instructive of the way such mundane violence was normalized within the campus:

> They stated that the incidents of ragging were not of a special nature referred to in the newspapers in comparison with what has taken place in the previous years at the Campus. These two Student Counsellors ended their letter by a sweeping statement to the effect that the report in the 'Daily Mirror' as well as the news appearing thereafter in the said paper was a calculated and deliberate attempt to bring the Campus into disrepute. (Kularatne, 1975, p.4)

It is clear from this letter as well as the other testimonies given by these Student Counsellors presented in the report that they did not consider the ragging that occurred to be unusual or special (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 50-52). Such claims illustrate how far a practice that is so terrifying to the victim has become normalized as well as the terror of what is considered mundane forms of ragging, where such traumatic events are considered "normal" even by administrators and lecturers.

The report describes how an effort was made to mitigate the negative impact of the broad publicity that the ragging received in media, through a letter signed by teachers, claiming that they were not subjected to harsh ragging. Its wording, appearing in English translation in the report direct us, once again, to the way terror is reframed as fun:

> We who were admitted to the Vidyalankara Campus (for a Diploma Certificate Course for Mathematics) on the Februaty 3, 1975, declare and state on oath that there was no ragging of an inhuman nature and that there was little fun and jokes and that the Press and the various people exaggerated this in order to take advantage of the situation. We further state that the senior comrades have cordially received us. Finally, we state that we have no objection to this and that we are engaged in our academic matters in a spirit of co-operation. (Kularatne, 1975, p.31)

What remains interesting about this letter is both its claim as well as its validity. In order to establish that they were not ragged, the teachers claim that there was a "little fun and jokes" that was exaggerated by the press. Later, several of the teachers testified that they had signed the letter because they were afraid that the course would be cancelled if the incident was investigated and that they wanted to complete the course. The victims themselves try to cover up the incident indicating how they themselves were now fully subjugated to the power of the seniors as well as the institution, worried only about

their own fate if the course is cancelled. It shows how the upward mobility tied to education in a meritocratic system will lead a victim to tolerate and even justify the violence perpetrated against them. The administrators worry about the good name of the campus and the victims worry about the opportunity that would be lost to them. In such a context, where the different agents and actors responsible for ragging as well as its victims make calculated decisions that are determined by institutional and social power that is coded within the education system, we can clearly see why violent systems such as ragging cannot be eliminated from the field of education in Sri Lanka.

During the investigation, the accused named P. Hettiarachchi claims that he had only participated in common rags where victims were made to do physical exercises etc., and not in any serious ragging. Even his attorney, Sarath Muththetuwegama describes his participation as "tomfoolery" (Kularatne, 1975, p. 63). The commission rejects this submission by producing evidence that he had forced women to utter obscenities, made male students masturbate and denude them, which cannot be considered "ordinary" forms of ragging (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 62-64). The distinction made by those from within the university regarding "fun" and "acceptable" forms of ragging and the brutal reality of such practices are brought into sharp relief at such moments in the report. The visceral descriptions of ragging brought out through the dialogical nature of the various speech acts quoted in the report cue us to the way the range of practices that fall under the rubric of ragging cannot be simply bifurcated as "fun" and "simple" ragging and hardcore ragging. Instead, it repeatedly shows that the ordinary and mundane forms of "fun" violence is, in fact, a most terrifying element of the rag that sustains and justifies it.

The performative nature of ragging described throughout the report indicates the way fun and jokes are imbricated with brutal forms of physical ragging. The two are inseparable in the way they occur in more outrageous instances as well:

> I was taken to a room and was asked to remove my clothes. I removed my shirt and banian. They asked me to remove my trousers too. They said "We did not know whether you have a social disease. Remove your trousers." Accordingly, I removed my trousers. Then they asked me to creep under the beds. They asked me who our Member of Parliament was. I said he is Dr. Dahanayake. Then they asked me to make a speech as if I were Dr. Dahanayake. I did so. While I was making the speech they asked me what the nick names of Dahanayake were. They asked me whether he is nick-named "Beli Mutta" and inquired why it is. I told them that there are two beli trees near his house and possibly it was the reason. Near the gate I was caught by a group. They asked me to raise my hands and proceed hooting. They asked me to kneel down and worship the Mathematics Section and then to proceed to the lecture hall hooting. I did so. After the lecture we were taken out of the hall in a line, and blue was applied on everybody's face. (at the stage the witness writes down on a paper some indecent words he was asked to utter. It reads as follows: -
>
> Saadu saadu harohara
> Umbe ammage redda asse
> Chikey chikey kathai kathai
> Eta deka wata kota
> . . . . .wate lon") (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 21-22)

The quality of the Bakhtinian carnivelasque[6] that we can trace in such

[6] Carnival is the place for working out in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, *a new mode of interrelationship between individuals*, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life. The behaviour, gesture, and discourse of a person are freed from the authority of all hierarchical positions (social estate, rank, age, property) defining them totally in noncarnival life, and thus from the vantage point of noncarnival life become eccentric and inappropriate. Eccentricity is a special category of the carnival sense of the world, organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it permits –in concretely

spectacular performances are undercut by the oppressive structure embedded in it. The raggers draw on not only the names of political rivals, actors, etc., but also places such as the Suez Canal that must have been part of the political imaginary and vocabulary at the time to intensify the performative nature of the rag. The testimonies and the letters capture the speech of the raggers in visceral detail as we hear them asking questions, repeating obscene words and songs, and even citing popular cultural references in the testimonies cited in this section. The dialogical nature of these exchanges show us the way ragging is not a simply site of fun and enjoyment, as many claim, but a place where different social interests, moods, tones, and experiences interact and intersect. The new students are introduced to the various places in the university as well as initiated into its student culture[7]; yet this is entangled with the perverse pleasure that the senior students derive from the process. The fun, the initiation, and the terror become inseparable turning the practice itself into a performance of the power of the seniors and the broader hierarchy within the university.

Hate speech and the Subject of Ragging

Judith Butler uses the concept of "injurious speech" in her discussion of hate speech. She points out that the person who utters speech that is injurious is engaging in a citational act:

> . . . the operation of that metalepsis by which the subject who "cites" the performative is temporarily produced as the belated and fictive origin of the performative itself? The subject who utters the socially injurious words is mobilized by that long string of injurious interpellations: the subject achieves a temporary status in the citing of the utterance, in performing itself as the origin of that utterance. That subject-effect,

sensuous form –the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves. (Bakhtin, 1998, 251).

[7] In contemporary parlance this is called an "orientation" for new students. Sometimes it is also referred to as upasanksruthiya pavaraa deema (initiating into the subculture).

> however, is the consequence of that very citation; it is derivative, the effect of a belated metalepsis by which that invoked legacy of interpellations is dissimulated as the subject and the "origin" of that utterance. (Butler, 1997, pp. 49-50)

In other words, what hurts in hate speech is the speech itself: that is, language carries the capacity to injure, to hurt. Language derives its power to hurt through its performative nature. Yet, such a speech act cannot be its own subject. Instead, the person who utters such injurious speech becomes the belated subject of that utterance, making the subject the "subject-effect" of that speech act through its citational act. It relies upon a set of interpellations that necessarily situate the immediate subject uttering the injurious speech as the agent of that utterance; these interpellations are necessarily historical and the subject of the utterance is both temporary and an effect of the injurious speech.

Butler's theorization of the subject of injurious speech is useful for a discussion of ragging as it helps to identify the symbolic dimension of violence that is embedded in ragging (Žižek, 2008, p. 1). Ragging relies upon language that is meant to hurt, humiliate, and instigate fear. There are many instances described in the report where threatening and humiliating speech is used against the victims. One key example that short circuits between the humiliation of the victim and the sense of entitlement of the perpetrator is the term "Juvan Gurala" that is used against the teachers to suggest that they had arrived at the university through the patronage of politicians. In addressing the freshers as "Tho" and using various other nicknames or second-person pronouns signal the social power the seniors have gained, as seniors, to use such language against the freshers, by mobilizing the conservative hierarchies that are courted by university communities across the world. Ragging often preserves such hierarchies and punishes those who violate them cruelly. This is common in the practice of ragging in global and historical instances (Syrett, 2009, 18-19), but particularly

prominent at the Vidyalankara Campus, that is a newly converted Pirivena Campus with a strong history of teacher-disciple relationships, so-called Buddhist values of respecting elders, respecting educational institutions etc., appear in various guises throughout the rag. For example, seniors get freshers to worship buildings, parents, and even lecturers. In the context of the Pirivena tradition, such conservative gestures are hardly innocent. As the 1962 University Commission Report points out clearly, allegations of "nepotism and favouritism" (Report of the Universities of Sri Lanka, 1964, p. 495) were quite common in the two universities. Thus, proclamations of seniority, respect for elders etc., that are perpetuated through the rag as an enforced set of hierarchies moulded through the trauma of ragging is neither innocent nor radical in any sense. Instead, the citation of this larger and conservative power structure at once humiliates, hurts, and subjugates the victim and posits the senior student as the agent of that history of institutional power hierarchy.

Yet, it is not only the ragger who is constructed as an effect of the injurious speech within ragging. The victim too is subjectivized as a victim, the moment s/he is subjected to injurious speech. Within the context of ragging, the performative power of an injurious address posits the victim as victim interpellating him/her into a subject position that s/he has not hitherto identified with. The humiliation and pain experienced by the female teachers who were subjected to ragging makes this process of subjectivizing of the victim as victim explicit:

Witness XXX:

> Then we were asked to recite the five precepts. As we started to recite the precept "Kamesumichcha Chara", they said, "Those things are not here" . . . After that they asked me to explain everything in my anatomy from head down-wards to the feet. I explained to some extent. Then they said, "How can you teach children if you don't know these things?" (Kularatne, 1975, p. 26).

The humiliation that the teacher is subjected to is the outcome, not only of the power that the seniors cite when they force her to describe her body, but also because in forcing her to speak of her body in this way, they are also violating the historically constructed sense of "respectability" that she has. As Malathi de Alwis has pointed out, the construction of women's sense of respectability intersects between colonial and patriarchal axes of power (de Alwis, 1997, pp. 105-106), turning the woman's body into the location in which such respectability can be invoked to mask the domination and hetero-patriarchal and colonial control that it entails. Her subjectivity as victim is then constructed through these seemingly contradictory calls to be respectable and to utter obscenities at the same time. But in the end, both mobilize the violence that is coded into language. Forcing women to violate their respectability becomes a way of giving body to that very respectability through the experience of embarrassment because the obscenities ultimately function as humour and fun for the raggers and bystanders. What is funny, presumably, is the embarrassment of the woman forced to talk about her body for the enjoyment of others. The paternalism in the question, "how can you teach children . . .?" merely adds insult to this injury, where the ragger at once takes the form of the oppressor and the liberator of the woman from her own sense of modesty. Thus, the injury is not only caused by the language used by the perpetrator against the victim, but also in the way the victim herself is forced to repeat abusive or embarrassing language. Thus, ragging situates both the victim and the perpetrator, in a historical scene in which colonial power, patriarchy, and hierarchical and conservative institutional power structures intersect through language. The male students who were subjected to ragging were turned into unwilling actors in such scenes: male mathematics teachers were asked to repeat obscenities, sing songs with obscene language, draw pictures of women's bodies against their will, perform certain gestures etc., that subjected them to the rag and made them victims of injurious speech by getting them to utter the language that hurts them through

humiliation. I will quote but one testimony that produces a particularly terrifying combination of spectacle, hate speech, and enjoyment.

> After that I was given a pink chalk and asked to draw the picture of a woman on the floor. I drew one in a sketchy way and I was told to draw all the details. Then I was asked to describe the picture in an aesthetic way. Then I was asked to kiss it. Then I was asked to make noises with my mouth and pretend like I am having sex with a woman with that picture. Then I was asked to get up. At the end there was a group of girls. I was asked to show my organ to them. They watched me. They did not leave. They watched me and laughed. I was told to scold them asking them if they are itching. But those girls didn't leave . . . I was then asked to measure the floor with a pin (Kularatne 1975 128, my translation)

This testimony shows how far ragging can take on the characteristics of a spectacle that mixes brutal sexual ragging with the spectacle of fun and enjoyment: a man forced into performing the sexual act, a group of women enjoying the spectacle, and seniors who are directing every detail of the scene. In testimonies such as these, we hear the voice of the raggers in reported form, the laughter of bystanders, and the narration of the ragged who are made to utter humiliating words and perform humiliating acts. In some cases, the witnesses refuse to repeat the words, and write them down instead. In a typically Bakhtinian dialogical moment, the multiple voices, the different speech forms, and the narration of the witness are all captured in a single testimony. The narrativization of that moment captures the way humiliating subjugation, enjoyment and hate speech overlap in one terrifying scene.

Ragging as Objective Violence

Although the scope of this short paper does not allow space to discuss how ragging can be theorized as a form of objective violence in the way that Slavoj Žižek has defined the concept, a few pointers on how the V.W. Kularatne report allows this theorization would be helpful. As Zizek puts it,

> At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible "subjective" violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. (Žižek, 2008, p. 1)

Thus, acts of violence where there is a clearly identifiable agent or perpetrator is only one dimension of violence:

> Subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence. First, there is a "symbolic" violence embodied in language and its forms . . . Second, there is what I call "systemic" violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems. (Žižek, 2008, pp. 1-2).

The Commission has examined, not only the immediate evidence related to the incident, but also its spatial organization, buildings, disciplinary mechanism, and the way the administrative structure of the university had allowed ragging to exist freely and openly (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 82-83). The report also outlines the way student leaders who facilitated the ragging maintained formal and informal relations with administrators that would have made it easier for them to perpetuate the rag. This is particularly evident in the way the students, administrators, and the victims all seem complicitous in

the way they produced a false document denying that ragging was occurring at the university. The report details the way the student leaders also traveled in the same vehicle as the teachers who were on their way to meet the education minister to submit this falsified document (Kularatne, 1975, p. 37). The student leaders were traveling in the official university vehicle, given to the mathematics teachers by the university to make a false statement to the minister, and the seniors' presence in the vehicle seems to have served no other purpose than intimidating the teachers and instilling fear. Not only were they traveling in an official vehicle of the university; some of the student leaders were also occupying rooms in the administrative building (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 43-46). When read between the lines, it is not hard to discern that it is not only the students' violence that perpetuates the rag, but the unwritten complicity of the administration in the practice and the many suggestions of weak and corrupt administration. To illustrate this point, I will quote a testimony of a sub-warden. His testimony allows us to see the violence from the perspective of the administration that seems to have turned a blind eye to the violence. As most other witnesses linked to the administration claim throughout the investigation, this sub-warden too claims that he had not been informed about the inaugural ceremony and he did not know that the mathematics teachers were coming to the university. However, he claims that on the morning of the 3rd, he heard the sound of hooting at around 9.00 a.m.-9.30 a.m. while at his quarters in the Dharmarama hostel. I quote the report directly:

> He says on hearing the hooting, he went up and saw some new students and some seniors surrounding them. He says he did not anticipate any ragging and he did not wait there sufficiently long enough to inquire what it was all about because he had just lit the hearth for the preparation of his mid-day meal. He stated that he was completely unaware of any ragging that took place on that morning at the Peliyagoda Campus premises.

> Although in [sic] the normal course his duties would have taken him on that day to each and every hostel situated within the Campus premises, he says he did not see any acts of ragging going on in any of the hostels. It is difficult to believe that Jayasekera Aratchchi was unaware of what happened in some of the hostels and especially the Ray Hostel on the morning of the 3rd February. (Kularatne, 1975, pp. 53-54)

The commission concludes that it is hard to believe that the sub-warden could not have not noticed the various acts of ragging that took place within the hostels throughout that day, because several graphic descriptions of the ragging that took place on the premises have been recorded in the report. But taken from his perspective, it is not hard to understand why he had not noticed any ragging: ragging of the sort described in the report had become so normalized and imperceptible, because they were nothing out of the ordinary for the sub-warden. In his rather comic testimony, we can imagine him hurrying back to make sure that his lunch is not burnt while the mathematics teachers were being subjected to cruel physical and emotional torture in the hostel premises. When read together with the statements of the victims who were being ragged in the hostel, we realize that this another dialogical moment in the text where we hear the voice if the indifferent administrator in realistic detail. The ordinariness of ragging, the mundane and comic response of the sub-warden, and the way ragging had become so normalized cues us into the way ragging had become very powerful form of objective violence where, the systemic and symbolic violence that is perpetrated through the rag is not even recognized as violence.

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This short article has examined the 1975 V.W. Kularatne Report on the incidents of ragging reported from the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka. I read this report as an archive of violence

within state universities. I have claimed that the way ragging functions as a spectacle of power and the forms of soft ragging that are often overlooked obscures the way ragging enacts the institutionalized structures of hierarchy and the meritocratic ethos found among graduates from state universities. I have read the rag as a form of performance of power and a scene of subjection, akin to the relations between slaves and slave-masters that Saidiya V. Hartman outlines. The entanglement of terror and enjoyment is the key characteristic of this spectacle. I have also argued that the agent and the victim of ragging are both constructed retroactively and fictionally by turning the immediate perpetrator into an agent of historical forms of power, oppression, and ideology. Rather than examine the rag from an "agent-oriented approach" (Lee 2019, p. 123), I have tried to bring out the symbolic, performative, and objective nature of its violence. The trans-historical and sexualized spectacle of ragging that is meticulously reconstructed in the report enables a reader to see ragging as a practice that is not simply sustained by a few "sick" individuals to satiate their sexual desires or by one or other political party that uses it to maintain its hold among the student community. Instead, this study proposes that the sexualized, obscene, and spectacular scenes of ragging show how sexualized and other forms of violence overlap with the institutionalized powers linked to seniority, exclusivity and meritocracy. The student unions, the political parties, the administration or even its victims are participating in a constructed set of discursive structures. The agency of the raggers in this context lies in their self-proclaimed place of privilege based on seniority in which they impotently repeat institutionalized power and take it upon themselves to sustain conservative and hierarchical forms of power. As raggers often claim, if they carry the weight of history upon their shoulders, ironically, it is the weight of oppression they carry—preventing creativity, critical thinking, solidarity, and humanization within the student body politic. As an archive of that violence, the 1975 V. W. Kularatne report enables us to see why the rag persists: because it is a spectacle of power, hierarchy,

meritocracy, and ultimately as an objective form of violence that is mundane and silent, entangled with what is seen as fun and enjoyment sanctioned by those who wield power.

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Traveling Monks and the Troublesome Prince: On the Aftermath of the Dutch VOC's Mediation of Buddhist Connection between Kandy and Ayutthaya

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Abstract:

Kandyan historical chronicles and biographies of its influential monks and monarchs have tended to characterize the mid-eighteenth-century arrival of Ayutthayan monks, and the rescue of Laṅkā's defunct Buddhist monastic lineage, as a singular instance of meritorious religious patronage carried out by wholly virtuous agents. This article aspires to interject a more complex apprehension of these activities and the experiences of king, *bhikkhu*, and Dutch trader, especially in the decade following three importations of Siamese monks and royals on Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC) ships between 1753-1759. This article considers the failed assassination attempt against Kandy's King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha (r. 1747-1782) in 1760, plotted by disaffected courters together with Kandyan and Siamese monks, and especially its aftermath. I focus on the VOC's extensive efforts to track down one of the Siamese plotters, a troublesome Ayutthayan monk-prince named Krommuang Thep Phiphit. Between 1760 and 1764, in the context of the Kandyan-Dutch war, the Company attempted twice to bring him back to the island and install him themselves as a puppet king. By engaging VOC colonial surveillance in both Kandy and Ayutthaya alongside Siamese historical chronicles, this article suggests that the tendentious and short-lived moment of religious diplomacy between two independent and predominantly Buddhist kingdoms and the VOC had the effect of magnifying destabilizing political intrigue and perilous personal animosity in addition to reviving a defunct monastic lineage for Kandyan Buddhist monks.

Keywords:

kīrti srī rājasiṃha, kandyan kingdom, ayutthayan kingdom,, krommuang thep phiphit, dutch east india company (VOC)

Introduction

Perhaps one of the most important events in the history of Buddhism in the Kandyan Kingdom during the eighteenth-century was the importation of Siamese *upasampadā* (Pāli: full Buddhist monastic ordination)-granting monks from the Ayutthayan Kingdom by the agents and traders of the Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC, the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*). By 1729, with the death of Hulangamuve Jinadāsa Thero during the reign of Śrī Vīra Parākrama Narēndrasiṃha (r. 1707-1739), there was a third complete decline in the number of *bhikkhu*s (Pāli: fully-ordained male monks) on the island by which new ordinations could be conducted (Vimaladharma, 2003, p. 4; Wagenaar, 2003, p. 91). Thus, ambitious novice monks, especially Väliviṭa Saraṇaṃkara (1698-1778), and anxious kings, especially the foreign-born Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha (r. 1747-1782)—each hoping to restore the monastic lineage by contacting Buddhist *saṅgha*s in mainland Southeast Asia—had no choice but to work through the agents and traders of the VOC, who exercised control over most of the island's littoral ring and its ports (Schrikker, 2007, p. 38).

Beginning with their overthrow of Portuguese forces during the middle of the seventeenth century and lasting until the conclusion to the Kandyan-Dutch wars in 1766, the VOC frequently capitulated to Kandy's demands as much as possible in order to retain access to the island's economically valuable cinnamon cultivation lands. The company represented itself to the independent, landlocked kingdom as emissaries of its interests abroad. In what follows, I wish to draw attention to some surprising ways that the Buddhist monastic restoration, together with events occurring in Ayutthaya, factored into this changing balance of power between kingdom and company.

The order of *bhikkhu*s had gone into decline three times since the introduction of Buddhism to the island sometime between 300 and 200 BCE. During the previous two incidences of monastic decline

leading to an importation of ordaining *bhikkhus* from afar*,* first during the reign of Polonnaruwa's Vijayabāhu I (r. 1055-1110), and second during the reign of Kandy's Wimaladharmasuriya I (r. 1590-1604), Laṅkān kings had turned to Burmese Buddhist courts and their *saṅgha*s for aid. However, in the 1740s, it was the Dutch who made the determination that Siamese *bhikkhu*s would be suitable (Wagenaar, 2003, p. 105-107). This was almost certainly because while certain powerful parties in Kandy were eager to restore the *upasampadā* lineage, the VOC was eager to make use of Kandy's own desire for monks in order to restore its interrupted trading relationship with Ayutthaya (Ruangsilp, 2007, p.195). While much has been written concerning contestations between *bhikkhu* and non-*bhikkhu* monastic and ritual specialists, such as the *gaṇinnānse* (Blackburn, 2001; Holt, 1996; Malalgoda, 1976), significantly less attention has been given to the tendentious relationships that obtained between these two predominantly Buddhist courts and the VOC in the decade after the three successful importations of Siamese *bhikkhu*s on Dutch ships in 1753, 1756, and specifically after the final shipment of monks in 1759-60.

This article brings Dutch VOC colonial surveillance from both Kandy and Ayutthaya, as well as Siamese historical chronicles, to bear on the aftermath of what K. W. Goonewardena (1980, p. 1-2) has described as "triangular relations" between two predominantly-Buddhist kingdoms separated by the Bay of Bengal and the Dutch colonial merchants who brought them together in a temporary and tendentious moment of religious diplomacy. Specifically, I pick up the story in the immediate aftermath of a failed assassination attempt against King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha in 1760, plotted by many of the Kandyan and Siamese monks who were brought together by the king's patronage of maritime Buddhist monastic connection as it was made possible by the economic and maritime supremacy of the VOC. The assassination attempt, too, has been the subject of considerable historiographic

attention and debate which has largely centered the micro and macropolitics of the Kandyan kingdom (Dewaraja, 2008; Holt, 1996; Roberts, 2004), at the expense of some of the broader political and social contexts concerning the Ayutthayan Court and the economic motivations of Dutch traders. Specifically, in the aftermath of the failed assassination attempt, the VOC grew excited about the possibility that they might be able to locate and install as a puppet-king the Siamese monk-prince that Kandyan courtiers themselves had tapped to replace Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha on Kandy's throne.

An Assassination Attempt and the Troublesome Prince

The VOC kept close tabs on daily life in the reclusive Kandyan Kingdom. The Company often employed local elites as spies—some of them were even Buddhist monks—to gather intelligence about what was happening both within the kingdom's lands and in the border zones between Kandy and the low-lying VOC-controlled littoral (Obeyesekere, 2020, p. 79). While Goonewardena (1984, p. 3) has suggested that prior VOC knowledge about the assassination plot may have been likely, no primary documentation has yet surfaced to definitively establish that the Company was aware of, or involved in, the failed 1760 rebellion against the king prior to its occurrence. In the weeks following the plot, they did, however, seek to reconstruct what had transpired and who was to blame. Gathered Dutch intelligence from August of that year, now housed in the Sri Lanka National Archives in Colombo, contains a remarkable narrative account of the violent means by which Sammanakoḍi, the Udagampaha *Adigār* (Sinhala: one of two, the highest ranking Kandyan courtier and administrator under the king), along with several other elite Kandyan courtiers, and even Väliviṭa Saraṇaṃkara, the future *Saṅgharāja* and his chief student, Tibboṭuvāvē involved themselves in a violent plot to dispense with the king:

> Wijayawardene Senewiratne [the] First, and Wickremeratne Samerakoon [the] Second *Mahāmudaliyars* of the Noble Great

Respectable Governor's Gate have dispatched us, Donpeganne *Ārachchilege* Lokoe *Appu*[*-hami*] and Nawagammage Baddehelle *Kangān*, to the gate of the Noble Great Respectable Lord Governor, in order to investigate the incident at Kandy regarding the perpetrators there, and so we report on what we have seen and heard.

One day, the following five people, [1] the head of the priests, Väliviṭa Saraṇaṃkara, [2] the priest Tibboṭuvāvē, [3] the Udagampaha *Adigār*, Sammanakoḍi, [4] the Yaṭinuwara *Ratērala*, Molandanda, and [5] the Gajanāyaka *Rala*, together with the prince who came from Siam and was staying in Kandy, have all gone to a *Vihāra* in Anuradhapura. From there, they have returned with plans to go to Kehelella.

On their way to that place, they made plans with one another to treacherously kill the king on an appointed Thursday at seven in the evening, and to establish the Siamese prince on the throne in his place. With letter bearers they sent an *ola* in the Siamese language to the prince in Kehelella, whereby they let him know of their intentions and that it would be very good if he, without fail, made his way to the Court that coming Wednesday…

While this was taking place, the *Adigār* of Udagampaha arrived at the Court and, kneeling before his Royal Majesty the King, requested that he appear the following Thursday at the Pōyamalu *Vihāra*, as there would certainly be a Siamese priest there conducting a sermon in his mother tongue. When the *ola* had been intercepted and transferred to the court, and the King had read it, his Royal Majesty asked the heads and chiefs of the seven *Disāva*s to appear publicly. He asked if they judged it reasonable that people would murder their King and install a strange prince in his place.

> The folks inquired about the evildoers, but the king sent them to the chief Priest Väliviṭa, with instructions to ask him if the story was true or not. Whereupon the Chiefs proceeded to the Pōyamalu *Vihāra*, being the residence of the Head of the Priests, and there found a grave five—and a coffin fit inside with protruding steel spikes four—*cobidoe*s long [one *cobido* is approximately 45 centimeters]. Over the grave lay a plank brushed with earth and manure. They asked the Head of the Priests whether the treacherous affair had been brutally undertaken or not.
>
> The Head of the Priests [Väliviṭa Saraṇaṃkara Thero] said in reply that something had been heard about it on that day, but [feigned that he] did not know if it was true. The folks went to the King and relayed what the Head of the Priests had said, and what they had seen. [With the assassination plot uncovered,] [T]he King sent the Head of the Priests to the Hurikaduwa *Vihāra,* along with [his student] Tibboṭuvāvē. He had the Udagampaha *Adigār*, the Yaṭinuwara *Ratērala*, and the Gajanāyaka *Rala* killed… He sent the Siamese higher and lower priests to the palace at Welassa Māligāwa, where they were fenced in and guarded by *Weddha*s. The carpenter who had made the coffin was put into the great prison. The man who had rings made to serve the investiture of the new king, the writer of the treacherous *ola*, and three other participants had their hands cut off. Two others accused of treason had their tongues removed. The possessions and ministries of the executed great Chiefs were recalled and given away… (Appoe & Fernando, 1760, f. 169 *recto*-170 *verso*).

The motivations for attempting to assassinate the king have been much debated (see Blackburn, 2001; Dewaraja, 2008; Dharmadasa, 1989; Holt, 1996; Gunawardana, 1990; Obeyesekere, 2020; & Roberts, 2004). The dominant justification for the plot, which

had perhaps only crystallized decades later, was that the South Indian-born "Nayakkar" king was an illegitimate foreigner who continued to privately perform *śaivā* pujas, despite his substantive and public patronage of Buddhist ordination and monastic institutions, and that he was unfit for the throne because of this (Dewaraja, 2008, p. 122). What seems more likely is that Sammanakoḍi and several other high-ranking courtiers grew resentful of the political and religious success of the foreign-born dynasty of powerful monarchs on Kandy's throne. They distorted this resentment into a discourse about his foreignness and religious commitments which, they hoped, might have gained at least some traction (Holt, 1996, p. 29).

Who was this Siamese prince that the conspirators had hoped to install on Kandy's throne by violently pushing Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha into a pit of spikes? When Ayutthaya's King Borommakot (r. 1733-1758, who had sent Siamese *bhikkhu*s to Kandy on VOC ships to restore the Kandyan monastic lineage) died in 1758, the kingdom, which had no policy of primogeniture at this point, was plunged into turmoil by a succession dispute amongst his elder sons, Kings Uthumphon (r. April-May, 1758) and Ekkathat (r. 1758-1767). While Ekkathat was more senior than Uthumphon, prior to his death, King Borommakot had tapped the younger brother for the throne, forcing Ekkathat to join the *bhikkhu saṅgha* (Cushman tr. & Wyatt ed., 2000, p. 458-459). During his short reign, Uthumphon faced significant opposition by members of the court and, when confronted by his elder brother, agreed to abdicate. Thus, Ekkathat disrobed and became Ayutthaya's final king, reigning until the kingdom was conquered by Burmese Konbaung forces in 1767 (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2017, p. 253).

One of the deceased King Borommakot's younger sons, Krommuang Thep Phiphit, held a prominent position in the Ayutthaya Court, and had backed Uthumphon during the succession dispute. When Ekkathat's bid for the crown finally prevailed and he was coronated as the new king, fearing reprisal, Thep Phiphit himself

entered the monkhood, whereupon he was banished to Laṅkā by his elder half-brother, the new king. Thep Phiphit's monastic name, given in VOC surveillance from 1761, was Tammebaan (Kotelawele 1972, p. 119; Sweepe 1761, f. 135 *recto*-138 *recto*). The banished Thep Phiphit, arriving in Kandy with the third shipment of Ayutthayan *bhikkhu*s in 1759, is the "Siamese Prince" referred to in the above VOC surveillance about the failed assassination. Paulusz (1931, p. 92) has characterized this troublesome monk-prince as having a "talent for intrigue," and for attracting treason and conspiracy wherever he went. When the assassination plot failed—it was revealed to the king in time by a loyal courtier—Kīrti Śrī had the Udagampaha *Adigār*, Sammanakoḍi executed, along with the other non-monastic conspirators. The Ayutthayan and Kandyan monks involved in the plot were temporarily detained, and the Siamese *bhikkhu*s were eventually put into VOC custody to be deported from the island, including Thep Phiphit.

Correspondence between a Kandyan *Disāve* (Sinhala: both an administrative district and the title of its administrator) named Dumbara Ralahamy and the *Opperkoopman* (Dutch: Chief Merchant) at the Colombo fort during the months following the failed assassination reveal that the Company was extremely reluctant to take possession of the monks, as any perception of their mistreatment at the hands of VOC agents would risk the newly-restored trading relationship the VOC had forged with the Ayutthayan Kingdom (Cramer, 1760, f. 1721 *recto*-1722 *recto*; Ruangsilp, 2007, p. 198). It is important to remember that Dutch trade with Ayutthaya had once again been restored by virtue of the Company's self-interested patronage of Kandy's desire for Buddhist connection with mainland Southeast Asia. Before arriving back in Ayutthaya in late 1761 or early 1762, Thep Phiphit lingered at the Dutch fort in Tuticorin for several months where, in an attestation he dictated to Company interpreters, he provided substantive replies to the Colombo's VOC governor Jan Schreuder's (g. 1757-1762) questions concerning possible political and economic fault lines in the Kandyan

Kingdom, which the company had hoped to magnify and exploit (Sweepe 1761, f. 135 *recto*-138 *recto*).

The Failed Wartime Search for Thep Phiphit

By late 1761, relations between Kandy and the Company had deteriorated to the point that the two parties were heading into an outright war. Schreuder had instituted aggressive new cultivation polices for coconut and cinnamon, and the assassination plot, too, had weakened King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha influence (Schrikker, 2017, p. 38). Furthermore, over the previous decade, the VOC had expended significant labor, provided costly gifts, and tapped numerous diplomatic and political resources in order to bring Siamese monks in from Ayutthaya, hoping this would placate Kandy into bending to its demands for increased access to the kingdom's fertile cultivation lands. In Ayutthaya, the Company had used its position as emissary of Kandy's interests to insert itself once again into the cosmopolitan Siamese kingdom's robust economic center of trade and commerce.

Between 1760 and 1766, the Kandyan crown and the VOC were in a state of violent resistance toward one another. Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha at first succeeded in overtaking several VOC forts, but with the arrival of backup forces from Batavia and a new, yet more aggressive Governor, Lubbert Jan van Eck (g. 1762-1765), the tide turned in the VOC's favor. Despite the Company's exclusive access to the island's ports, relatively superior weaponry, and a larger military force, the VOC's campaign against the kingdom reached a stalemate when dwindling food supplies and Kandy's guerilla attacks against encroaching Dutch forces finally exhausted van Eck's troops. In 1766, the two sides signed a treaty in which much of the island's littoral was officially ceded to the Company, ending the illusion that the VOC was merely a protector or emissary of Kandy's interests on the coast and abroad (Dewaraja, 2008, p. 154; Wickramasinghe, 2014, p. 12-13).

What does this have to do with the Siamese monk-prince? Amidst rising wartime tensions, and with the introduction of a new Governor, the VOC had hoped to use any means at its disposal to weaken Kandy's position. An anonymous/unsigned letter sent to the Mahabadde *Mudaliyar* (VOC-employed headman and civil/military officer) penned in May 1762 relays that:

> [T]he present king will not, in relation to these troubles, reconcile; even more so because His Majesty has, in the presence of many great and lesser chiefs of the Mātara *Disāva*, and of the Four *Korale*s, openly said that as long as the sun and moon remain in the firmament of heaven, the *Disāva* and *Korale*s would not be relinquished to the Dutch or come under its subordination….
>
> The high priest from whom we had inquired several times has also relayed the following story, that in the case of the Siamese prince in Kandy, the first *Adigār* was executed [by the king], and this person's kinsman, along with a high priest at court who has supervision over three offering houses, yet another priest named Väliviṭa *Terunansē*, had been exiled to another place, but that now these two people have risen again somewhat in His Majesty's favor. However, the kinsman is still very dejected and in his heart is very bitter towards His Majesty….
>
> [T]he priest had been misled in believing that his religion was being greatly suppressed, and that the subjects were being thereby oppressed, and [he believed] that these affairs could not be redressed in any other manner. Namely, if the gentlemen and lords of the Honorable Company were to look for the banished prince (or his son), who was sincerely committed to the Buddhist teachings which all sincere Sinhalese hold in the highest affection, and if the Honorable

> Company were so inclined, that kinsman should come, along with those two other distinguished persons, into its [Siamese] lands in the manner of envoys….
>
> That this kinsman must have been a good and intimate friend of the [Siamese] prince can be easily understood, since the prince gave him, shortly before his own departure, five instruments that are employed in their religion for safekeeping. The aforementioned kinsman is also a wise and noble man, and is an opponent of the King (Anonymous, 1762; Previously translated in Paulusz, 1954, f. 159-162).

The letter reveals that before he had been exiled from the island for his part in the plot and his aspiration to replace King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha, the troublesome Krommuang Thep Phiphit had befriended a younger kinsman (*neef* in Dutch could refer either to a cousin or a nephew) of Sammanakoḍi, the Udagampaha *Adigār* the king had executed after the rebellion. Furthermore, this kinsman harbored a deep resentment toward the king for having the *Adigār* executed. For the next three years—sparked by fears that the English would soon engage in talks with Kandy that might lead to a further weakening of the Dutch position (Goonewardena, 1984, p. 5)—the possibility of unseating King Kīrti Śrī and installing Thep Phiphit on the throne would capture van Eck's imagination and lead to two protracted, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to locate the monk-prince in Siam and bring him back (Broekhuizen, 2013, p. 59-71). van Eck was so enthusiastic about the idea of installing Thep Phiphit as a "puppet king" on Kandy's throne that even on his deathbed in 1765, after two missions to locate the monk-prince had failed, he dictated an impassioned letter trying to convince his superiors in Batavia to launch a third attempt. Let us turn our attention to these failed attempts to locate and install the prince as a puppet king in Kandy.

In August and September 1762, van Eck arranged for the collection of expensive gifts destined for the Ayutthayan nobility and sought the support of the VOC's Governor-General in Batavia, Petrus Albertus van der Parra (g. 1761-1775), to raise support for a mission to gain an audience with King Ekkathat in hopes that he might approve of the Company's plan to extract Thep Phiphit from Siam and secretly bring him back to Kandy. A letter from the VOC's General Council on September 14, 1762 suggests that Company officials believed that Kandyans would rally around Thep Phiphit and accept him as a new ruler, not only because of his royal bloodline (he would have been legible as belonging to a suitably royal caste), but also because, unlike King Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha, the Prince's Buddhist credentials—first arriving on the island in 1759 as a monk named Tammebaan—could not be the subject of doubt in the hands of jealous and power-hungry courtiers (Broekhuizen, 2013, p. 43). In addition, VOC governors believed that the prince was free from the "train of covetous relatives" that had beset the Kandyan kings' attempts to gain and retain power amidst factional politics at court (Obeyesekere, 2020, p. 93). In fact, much of the Secret Council's debate that autumn had to do with the question of whether the Company might once again raise, and then magnify, claims that Kīrti Śrī was an illegitimate heir to the throne because of his South Indian "Nayakkar" origins (Broekhuizen, 2013, p. 61; Goonewardena, 1984, p. 5-6).

The first secret mission to Siam in 1752 was unsuccessful because of a series of missteps and diplomatic blunders. The VOC envoy tapped to make the journey, Marten Huysvoorn, initially sought an audience with King Ekkathat, and despite his costly gifts and extensive entourage, he was rebuffed by the Siamese *Phraklang* (Thai: Foreign Minister). In his eventual meetings with the reluctant Minister, it became clear that the Siamese court feared that the Dutch were in fact attempting to overthrow *their* king and replace him with the ambitious monk-prince, whom they had banished several years earlier, and who,

because of the VOC's mediation, once again (and to their dismay), found himself back in Ayutthayan lands. The Company's belief that the monk-prince was free of tendentious familial and courtly entanglements was patently false.

It is likely that Ayutthayan fear of the VOC's secret mission had been planted in the mind of the *Phraklang* and other members of the court by a Portuguese Catholic priest living there, Fre Manuel de St. Joachim, who claimed that the VOC ambassadors were in fact spies who had come to destabilize their kingdom, and not Kandy (Broekhuizen, 2013, p. 64; Goonewardena, 1984, p. 7). What the priest's motivations might have been in spreading this allegation remain unclear. Brockhuizen (2013, p. 59) also suggests that the failure of the mission could be attributed to King Ekkathat's tenuous grasp on power after a protracted Burmese siege against the Siamese royal capital, leaving the king weak and unwilling to entertain even the slightest possibility that his kingdom might be further destabilized by any additional foreign interpolation.

Two years later, in 1764, Fre Manuel de St. Joachim came to assume a central role in a second and final attempt by van Eck (who died the following year) and his forces to locate the monk-prince. After spending several years in Ayutthaya, the priest relocated to Cochin, where he declared his intention to convert to Dutch Calvinism and to serve in the Company's excursions in Ayutthaya because of his extensive prior experience there. He was brought to Colombo in May, where had a lengthy meeting with Governor van Eck, after which he produced a sworn testimony about his intention to convert, and disclosed his knowledge about not only the affairs of the Ayutthayan Court in general, but of the whereabouts of Thep Phiphit in particular. He gave assurances that the monk-prince would gladly come back to the island to take the Kandyan throne at the invitation of the Company (de St. Joachim, 1764, f. 253 *recto*-258 *verso*). Thus, van Eck prepared another secret mission, this time its intent and details were kept even

from the other members of the Secret Council until it was well underway in case it might once again falter due to diplomatic or communicative missteps.

van Eck appointed Willem van Damast Limberger, an *Onderkoopman* (Dutch: Junior Merchant) to lead the expedition alongside the supposedly newly converted Dutch Reform priest. They departed even prior to receiving official approval from Batavia, and van Damast Limberger was instructed to misrepresent both his identity and the secret nature of the journey in order to prevent word from spreading (Goonewardena, 1984, p. 10-11). By September, when the VOC ship at last approached the Mergui Archipelago where Thep Phiphit was rumored to be residing, Fre Manuel de St. Joachim went ashore and purported to make inquiries about his whereabouts and reported back that the monk-prince was now in Tenasserim. The priest's claims would turn out to be a lie, as were his assurances that he had been in contact with Thep Phiphit, his sons, and the Viceory at Tenasserim in order to secure their willingness to bring Thep Phiphit (or one of his sons) back to Kandy (Broekhuizen, 2013, p. 69).

Several events led van Damast Limberger to conclude that the supposedly loyal ex-Catholic priest was misrepresenting his own commitments and leading the mission toward failure. Most notably, the Governor at Tenasserim assured him that his own encounters with the priest—who had been spotted recently wearing his old Roman habit—led him to conclude that he was a scoundrel, and relayed that he was certain that Thep Phiphit and his sons would never be permitted to leave for Kandy unless King Ekkathat personally gave his permission, something the priest had not made the slightest attempt to obtain. Although van Damast Limberger himself wrote a letter to the Siamese king, they would have to abort the mission before it could receive any reply. In January 1765, war between Burma and Siam once again started up, and soon the fighting came to Mergui. van Damast Limberger suddenly had to flee. Although van Eck had attempted to broach the

possibility of arranging a third secret mission in that year, warfare between Ayutthaya and the Burmese Konbuang dynasty, as well as van Eck's own death, meant that no further attempts were made. It is also possible that the treaty in 1766 left the Dutch with a satisfactory arrangement and obviated the desire to replace Kandy's king with a Siamese royal.

Conclusion

In biographies of Väliviṭa Saraṇaṃkara, such as the *Saṅgharāja Sadhucariyāva*, and historical chronicles of the deeds of Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha, such as the *Cūḷavaṃsa* (attributed to Tibboṭuvāvē, Saraṇaṃkara's chief pupil and successor as *Saṅgharāja*), we are presented with a rather laudatory account of the remarkable but tenuously carried out, short-lived, and tendentious moment of Buddhist connection mediated across monsoon waters by the economic and political motivations of the Dutch VOC (Wachissara, 1961, p. 10). This article, in bringing Dutch colonial surveillance and the Ayutthayan context to bear on the aftermath of these events, has attempted to show that the "triangular relations" that briefly obtained between two predominantly Buddhist kingdoms and a colonial European company-state suggest a dangerous world of political intrigue and personal animosity where even the meritorious patronage of Buddhist monastic connection could become a vehicle for destabilizing and fractious events, such as failed assassination plots and aspirational puppet kings.

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Socio-Demographic Trends of Suicide in Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

This paper reveals the trends of suicides in Sri Lanka. Only about 18% of the population is urbanized in Sri Lanka at present. The life aspiration of the rural people in Sri Lanka was changed as a result of open economy after 1977. The issue of suicide, which has been grown rapidly since the 1990s is one of the serious socio-economic problems. The rate of suicide reach its peak in 1995, when the number of suicides reported as 8519. Now it shows a gradual decline due to socio-economic changes and suicide prevention programs aimed at reducing suicides. The study looked at the main social factors influencing suicides based on Sri Lanka Police reports. The Index of moral poverty which was introduced by Emil Durkheim, was examined in this research work. The deterioration of moral values, including the reduction of integration between the individual and society, was identified as a major social factor for suicide.

Keywords:
collective conscience, suicide, moral system

Introduction

Majority of the population of Sri Lanka is still living in rural areas (77.4%). The urban population of the country is 18.2% of the entire population while the estate population consists of 4.4% (Censes and Statistical Report, 2012). Sri Lankan society with traditional rural cultural features is characterized by an agricultural life. In the past, the society was simple, with limited needs and limited population. A family in a traditional Sinhala village had about 8-10 children and it was an extended family. As a result, close relatives of the nuclear family also lived in the same house. The farming system can be defined as a collective system. It was a patriarchal family system. The *variga sabhava* or the 'tribal council' was instrumental in mediating day to day socio-cultural issues among the villagers. There was a social class system based on caste. Society functioned on the basis of collective agreement and judgment (Ubesekara, 2010; Vitharana, 2014). On the other hand, the estate community had a different culture when compared to the traditional Sinhalese society (Weerasooriya *et al*, 2010).

However, during the British colonial rule the traditional social system with the aristocracy as the highest social group in the hierarchy underwent changes. Moreover, changes were evident in every aspect of the traditional society. Temple-based education was replaced by missionary education; plantation sector which included cinnamon, pepper, sugarcane, tea and coffee took a leading role in the economy; the legal system also underwent changes; a system of payment of wages was implemented. English language became the language of administration. A capitalist economy emerged as a result of the plantation sector. Capitalist enterprise introduced changes in agricultural practices and horticultural techniques especially in urban areas. The rest of the country continued with subsistence farming, using traditional methods.

In 1977, Sri Lanka withdrew from the closed economic policy and began to implement the open economic policy. Import and export restrictions were lifted. Instead of uplifting local industries, the government encouraged the import of goods that could increase profits. Garment industry, tourism industry and the foreign labor industry became the top income agencies in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan society faced a wide range of complex experiences due to economic, social and political globalization. Further, Sri Lanka faced a horrific thirty years' war and two youth struggles since independence. On the other hand, state mismanagement led to widespread social inequality. In a broader service economy, a wider division of labor, personalization and disintegration are also evident. Moreover, contemporary socio-cultural background has changed as a result of the post-independence political intervention and formation of the political culture (Vitharana & Abeysinghe, 2021).

This paper discusses suicide as one of the major social problems in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka recorded the highest annual suicide rate in its history in 1995, becoming the country with the highest number of suicides in the world. Currently about 800 000 people die due to suicide every year, which means a person commits suicide in every 40 seconds in the world. Suicide is a global phenomenon and there are people from all ages among the reported cases of suicide. Globally, the majority of deaths by suicide occurred in low and middle income countries (79%), where most of the world's population lives (84%). Regarding age, more than half (52.1%) of global suicides occurred before the age of 45 years. Most adolescents who died by suicide (90%) were from low and middle income countries where nearly 90% of the world's adolescents live (WHO, 2019). Analysis of recent reports of suicide in Sri Lanka shows that in 1880 the suicide rate was three per 100 000, but by the 1960s it had grown up to fifteen per 100 000. Apart from that, Sri Lanka's suicide rate has risen gradually from 6.3 per 100 000 in 1940 to 9.9 per 100 000 in 1960. Thereafter, the rate of suicide increased more sharply,

doubling between 1961 and 1971 and doubling again between 1971 and 1983 (Gunnel *et al*, 2007). Around 1980, the suicide rate in Sri Lanka began to skyrocket. It increased to 35 people per 100 000. Its peak was recorded in 1995 at 47 per 100 000. It was the highest number of suicides in the world that year. When considering data of the past three years i.e. in 2016, 2017 and 2018, it can be seen that suicides in 2016 were 3025 and there is a gradual increase of 8% in 2017 which was recorded as 3263, and of 0.5% in 2018 which was recorded as 3281 (Crime Statistics, 2018). The article titled 'Suicide Trends in Sri Lanka, 1880- 2006: Social, Demographic and Geographical Variations' reveals that 'Analysis of number of suicides per 100 000 persons indicates a gradual and consistent increase over a period of more than 10 decades, starting from 1880. During this period the national overall suicide rate has increased from 2.3 suicides per 100 000 persons in 1880 to 21.2 suicides per 100 000 persons in 1974. Thereafter, a dramatic increase is seen in the overall suicide rate of the country. This rapid rising trend persisted until the year 1995, in which the country reported a highest ever overall suicide rate of 47 suicides per 100 000 persons' (Thalagala, 2009).

An important aspect of a study on suicide is the search for causal factors. Suicides can be prevented or minimized by looking for the causes. Investigation of suicide studies has shown that mental illness could be a major factor. According to the *Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police, 2018*, 'When considering committed suicides because of mental disorders, 244 persons have committed suicide in 2016 and 73% out of them were males. Compared to 2016, 330 persons have committed suicide in 2017 which is an increase of 35%. Out of these deceased persons, 74% were males. In 2018, 337 persons have committed suicide due to mental disorders which depict an increase of 2% compared to 2017 and 76% out of them were males. According to the table, persons who committed suicide for this reason accounts for 23% out of overall suicides in 2018' (Crime Statistics, 2018).

The rate of female suicides in Sri Lanka is second only to China. Suicides and acts of self-harm are concentrated to rural areas and among economically disadvantaged groups. Many such cases occur in the context of family disputes and other conflicts with family members. They are largely unpremeditated and driven by feelings of anger, humiliation, frustration, and desire to strike back against wrongful treatment (Marecek, 2006). Scientific data management such as new technology and e-science are vitally essential for the betterment of socio-economic development to prevent people from committing suicide (Si & Wanigasooriya, 2016).

Problem Statement:

Suicide is becoming a serious social problem from the end of 19th century. Both quantitative and qualitative data are important to understand the issue. It helps to select preventive programs. Eight hundred thousand suicides were reported in the world during the year 2019 and the rate is nearly three thousand per year in Sri Lanka. The unexpected loss of a family member affects directly or indirectly not only the family but also the society. According to many research reports, there are social, economic, political, psychological and environmental causes behind suicides. But there is a knowledge gap about the factors behind those reasons. This research attempts to overcome this knowledge gap by identifying the levels, features, shortcomings in the social-moral system which triggers suicide. Therefore, tested research problem was how does low levels of social morals affect suicides in Sri Lanka?

Research Aim and Objectives

The main objective of this research was to identify causes of suicide and the root social factors.

Literature Review

A significant number of researches have been done in multi-dimensional approaches related to suicides. The knowledge gap was identified through these research works. The article, 'Attempted Suicide in Sri Lanka–An Epidemiological Study of Household and Community Factors' (Knipe *et al*, 2018) has revealed that nearly a quarter of the variation in Sri Lankan data set is attributed to the households and community level. Higher rates of attempted suicide were seen in more deprived households and community environments. However, individuals in multigenerational households had a reduced risk of attempted suicide. There is also evidence that communities with higher levels of alcohol use problems increased the associated risk of attempted suicide. This study highlights possible areas for community intervention, but has not been able to conclude what these intervention strategies should be. A further qualitative investigation of the meaning of observed contextual associations with attempted suicide risk will be needed. In the research, 'Interventions to Prevent Suicides in Sri Lanka: A Randomized Control Trial' (Silva *et al*, 2010), 668 persons were initially interviewed and 300 recruited. The intervention arm had allocated 151 out of whom 96 (64%) received telephone follow-up and 55 (36%) received FHW visits, while in the non-intervention group this was 115 (77.1%) and 34 (22.9%), respectively. At 18 months there were 32 (10.6%) drop outs, with 135 in the intervention group while 132 in the non-intervention group. In the non-intervention group 39 (29.5%) requested support, 35 (26.5%) sought support and there were three (2.3%) suicides, five (3.8%) re-attempted suicides while in the intervention group these were 81 (59.3%), 76 (56.3%), one (0.7%) and three (2.2%), respectively. Conclusion of this study is that the intervention group has requested more support and had a lower trend towards repeat attempts of suicide. Telephone and FHW follow-ups are a feasible method to provide information and support.

Theoretical Perspective

The classic study of suicide was carried out by Emil Durkheim. Durkheim showed that social factors played a significant role in determining a person's social behavior. He also showed that the whole is more important than the sum of its parts. Collective representations and collective conscience help to maintain the social structure and the social order. Durkheim identified this as moral conscience. Social integration and social solidarity are the ultimate results of moral conscience. The division of labor in society makes impersonalized and organic solidarity. Suicide is one of the crucial social results of the modern society. According to Durkheim 'Suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result' (Spaulding & Simpson, 1951). Durkheim has left out the consideration of the universal factors influencing suicide such as environmental factors and psychiatric conditions. Instead, he had looked at the social factors that influence a person to commit suicide. He explored the interrelationships between society and the individual and the bond that society has towards the individual. He also looks at the extent to which the individual has adapted himself to society. Durkheim made a classification of suicides based on his findings. There are three forms of social causes and social types:

1. Egoistic suicide: individual is insufficiently integrated into social groups; why society is necessary to the individual (Inadequate).
2. Altruistic suicide: individual is well integrated into society; individual's life is rigorously governed by custom and habit (over-adequate).
3. Anomic suicide: individual is not sufficiently regulated (lack of regulation) (Spaulding & Simpson, 1951).

Methodology:

The ontological approach of this research is objectivism and epistemological approach is positivistic. The research type is descriptive and quantitative. Statistical method was used with secondary data which were collected by Sri Lanka Police and Department of Census and Statistics. The study is specifically based on data which are collected and compiled by the Statistical Division of the Department of Police on suicide. Data pertaining only to four years, i.e., 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 were used for data analysis. *The Census and Statistics Report* data for 2012 was used to compare the co-relationship when needed. The study used statistics on race, religion, and mode of suicides, civil status and standard of education level of suicide victims, reason for suicides, age and gender, nature of occupation of the persons who had committed suicide. In this research, the Collective Consciences and Moral Poverty Index introduced by Durkheim were used to interpret the data as the theoretical background.

The research has two steps:

1. Explaining socio-demographic characteristics - quantitative
2. Understanding social life of suicide victims - qualitative

The research has focused on especially quantitative features.

Findings and Discussion

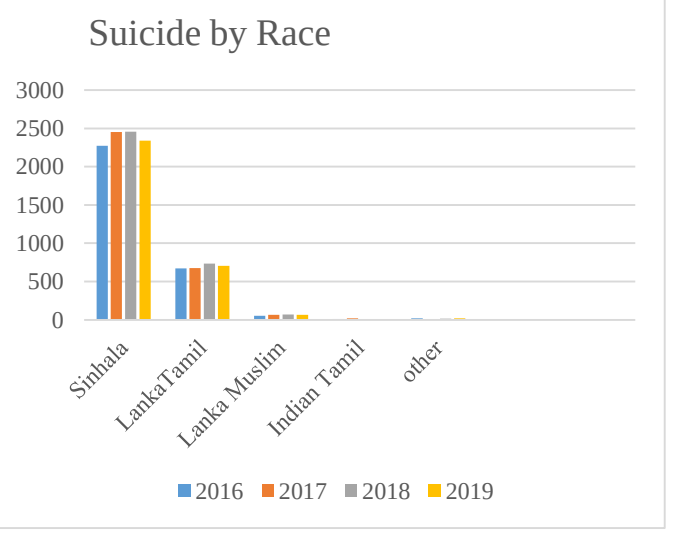
Suicide Based on Nationality:

There are three main ethnic groups living in Sri Lanka. They are Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim. The Tamil people are divided into Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils. Muslims are also divided into Ceylon Muslims and Indian Muslims. Burgher, Malay, Sri Lanka *Chetty* and *Bharatha* are also minority communities living in Sri Lanka. Also, the *Vedda* people are known as the aboriginal people in the island. Majority of the population in Sri Lanka are Sinhalese which is 74.9% of the total

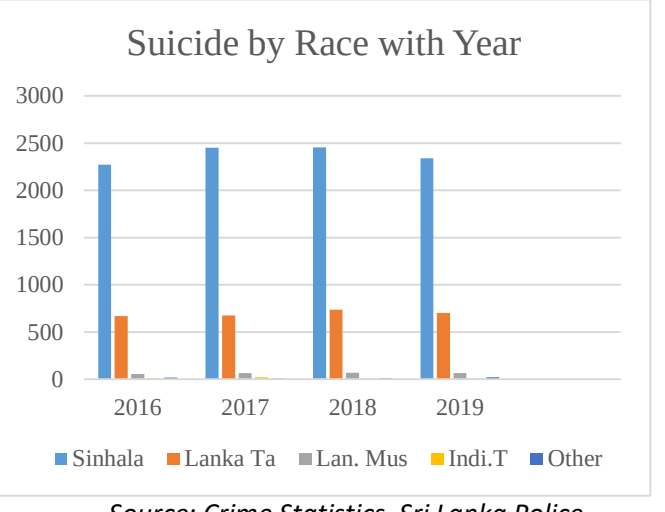
population; Tamils are 15.3%, while Sri Lanka Moors are 9.3% and others 0.5% (Census of Population and Housing Sri Lanka, 2012).

Let us find out whether there are any special factors related to the nationality of the suicides in Sri Lanka. The total number of suicides in 2017 was 3263. Of these, 2451 were Sinhalese, 705 were Tamils and 71 were Muslims. The percentages are 75%, 21.6% and 2.25% respectively. Compared to the 2018 population statistics, 74% of suicides reported were Sinhalese, 22.5% were Tamils and 2.5% were Muslims. In 2019, it was 74% Sinhalese, 22.7% Tamils and 2.6% Muslims. When considering in terms of average, it shows a high suicide rate among the Tamils and a low suicide rate among the Muslims.

Figure 01: Suicide Based on Nationality: by Race and Year



Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.



Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

The majority of the people in Sri Lanka is Sinhalese. Due to the limited size of their communities the Tamils, Muslims and other small groups of minorities seem to prefer coexistence at all times. When it comes to the lives of Muslim people, they have built up a collective consciousness by fostering a common sense of an ethnic group. Tamil community has been divided into various groups in the face of the 30 years' armed conflict in the north. Unfortunately, the Tamil people lost their unity and kinship-based co-habitation because of the war. Sinhala people have reached organic integration from mechanical integration. They are divided because of the division of labor. On the other hand, the Muslim people have been practicing collaborative activities, we-ness, interdependency and cohesion among their community.

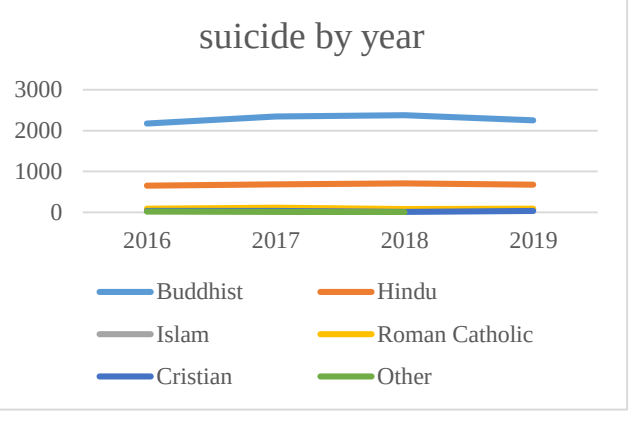
Suicide Based on Religion:

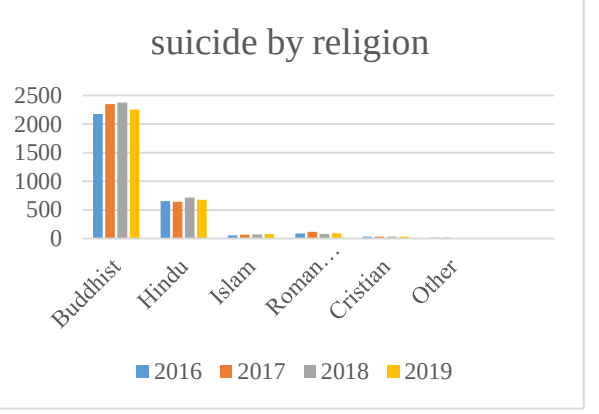
There are four major religions in Sri Lanka: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Catholicism. In addition, there are Christians. According to the 2012 census almost 70% of Sri Lankan population are Buddhists followed by Hindus who are 12.6%, Islamics 9.7%, Roman Catholics

6.2% and other religions 1.4% (Census of Population and Housing Sri Lanka, 2012).

Let us discuss the average number of the above four years in terms of suicides reported. Of these, 71% are Buddhists, 21% are Hindus, 2% are Islamics and 3% are Catholics. Christian representation is about 1%. The unique feature here is that the representation of the Buddhist population indicates the representation of the large majority of the population. However, higher percentage of suicides among Hindus are also evident. But very few suicides are reported among Muslims.

Figure 02: Suicide Based on Religion and Year





Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

Now let us look into the social commentary behind these numbers. There was an inseparable link between the village and the temple in the traditional Sri Lankan Sinhala society. That relationship started even before the birth of a person and lasted until his death. The temple intervened and helped whenever a person was ill. When a person had a family problem, he met the monks at temple and discussed it. The temple helped a person when he faced economic problems. There was ample time for both the monks and the villagers to work together. However, due to the change in religious and social factors in recent history, the monks became busy as they were engaged in other professions and other obligations. As the employment opportunities of the villagers also remained outside the village, the relationship between the village and the temple and the people gradually became distant. Today, that relationship is limited only to the performance of religious rites. Even the Tamil people had to experience this situation, but the nature of the Muslim people's connection with their places of worship is different. There is a strong bond between the Muslim people and the mosque. They meet at their mosque and make common decisions during the normal course of their lives. They form the collective feeling as explained by Durkheim. The person is drawn into religion automatically. It has led to a decrease in their suicide rate.

Civil Status of the Suicides:

There are different views with regard to the traditional and modern modes of marriage in Sri Lankan society. Traditional Sri Lanka had polygamy, polyandry as well as polygyny (Tambiah, 2011., Pieris, 1964) as modes of marriage. But now there are single partner marriages. There are also different customs related to marriages of Muslims and Tamils. Moreover, there are various opinions among the youth regarding divorce and being single. However, according to sociologists, marriage does more than just stimulating sexual desire, which is a basic human need; it activates social progress and social organization through the family corporation that emerges as a result of marriage.

Caring for and nurturing of children are the main responsibilities of parents. When parents live together, their children's personality grows. A person learns to love his family members; recognizes his/her duties and responsibilities as a family member. In fulfilling them, the individual helps the family and contributes to the existence of the society too. The suicide of a family member has a serious impact on the family. However, the family members may also be a reason for the suicide of a person. This can happen due to the loss of the affection of the family members towards each other.

Table 01: Civil Status from 2016- 2019

Type	2016			2017			2018			2019		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Unmarried	530	229	759	601	201	802	662	226	888	536	211	747
Married	1800	448	2248	1974	468	2242	1939	436	2375	1943	431	2374
Illegal marriages	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Divorce	2	2	4	8	1	9	3	0	3	3	0	3
Widows	2	4	6	3	7	10	13	0	13	4	4	8
Legally Separate	5	3	8	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	2
Total	2339	686	3025	2586	677	3263	2619	662	3281	2489	646	3135

Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

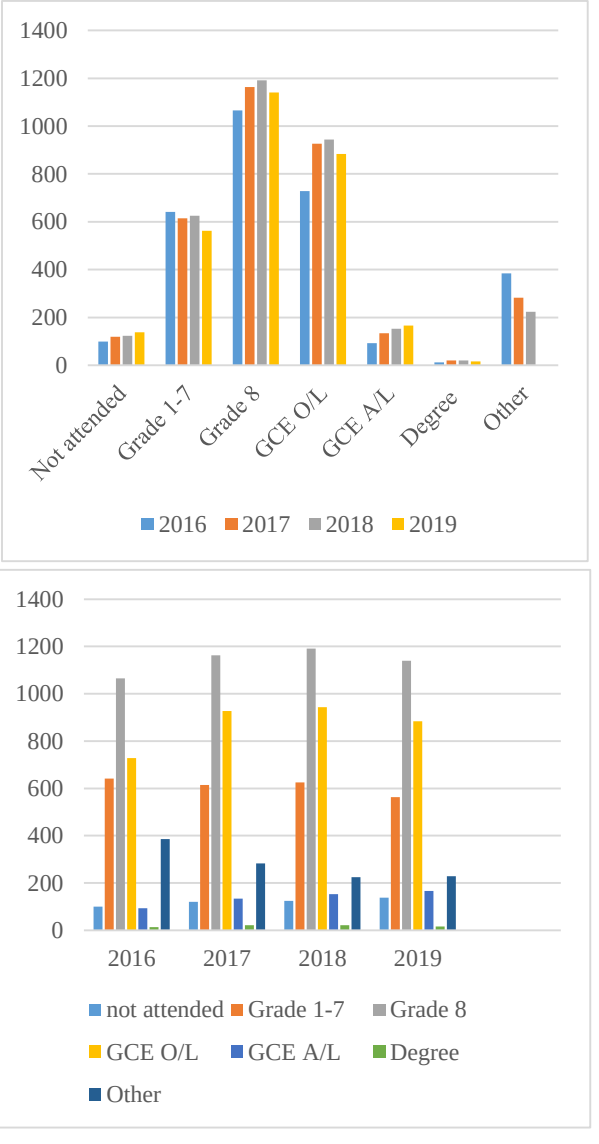
In 2016, 74% out of the total number of suicide victims were married people; 77% of them were men and 23% were women. Suicides of married men are significantly higher than the suicides of married women. In 2016, 25% of the suicide victims were unmarried people. These results are similar to Durkheim's research outcome (Spaulding & Simpson, 1951). Thus, 70% of them were men and 30% were women. The total number of suicides in 2016 was 3025 and only six of them were widows. In 2019, 79% of all suicides were men and only 21% were women; 76% of the total were married and 24% were unmarried. Males constitute 82% of the population and females 18%. 72% of unmarried people who committed suicide were men while 28% were women. The interesting point is that suicide is more common among married people than unmarried people. Also, men are more likely to commit suicide than women and male suicide rates are higher than those of women both married and unmarried.

Women play a major role in the institution of family in Sri Lankan society. Although men can be generally identified as working for economic gain, today women workers are employed in all fields of employment. The woman, on the other hand, works for the welfare of her family members. Due to social and biological gifts, a woman has an unconditional love for her children. It can be said that the bond between the mother and the children is stronger than that between the father and the children.

Education Level of People who Committed Suicide:

Sri Lanka is implementing a free education system based on the policy adopted by Mr. C.W.W. Kannangara since 1943. Now, primary education is compulsory for all children and education is available free of charge from primary to university education.

Figure 03: Educational Level: by Grades and year



Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

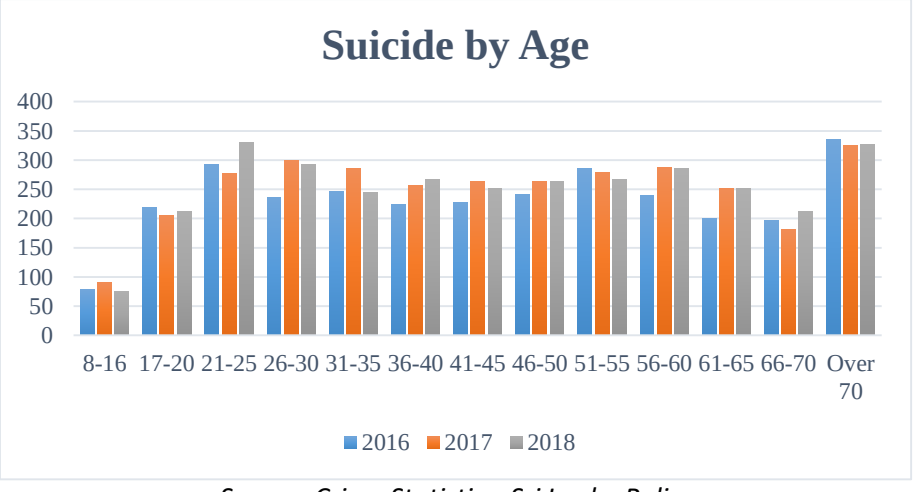
The highest number of suicides each year is represented by people who have studied only up to grades 8-10. After that the highest percentage is taken up by the people who have studied up to ordinary level. The

third place is taken by those who have studied only up to grade seven. In general, it can be stated that the majority of suicide victims were the people who were educated up to grade ten. The percentage of suicide victims who never went to school is 4%. Only 18% of suicide victims had gone to school up to grade 7. Also, 36% of the suicide victims were those who have studied up to grade 8 in the school. About 28% of all suicide victims were the people who have studied up to the GCE Ordinary Level. In general, about 82% of those who committed suicide were educated up to the Ordinary Level. This indicates that there seems to be a connection between the high dropout rates in education sector and suicides (Abeysinghe, 2020).

Suicides Based on Age and Gender 2016-2018:

Age is a major variable in a study on suicide. Let us examine how age has affected the tendency to commit suicide in Sri Lanka. In 2018 the total number of suicides was 3281; this means 16 people per 100 000; in 1995 it was 47 per 100 000; when comparing these numbers it can be seen that there is a gradual decrease in the suicide by 2018. In 2018, 16% of suicide victims were people over the age of 66. The suicide rate among those aged 8-20 years is 9%. In Sri Lanka generally this age group can be identified as 'school children'. The next special group is the 21-25 age group; 10% of the total number of suicides comes from this age group. All other age groups account for about 8% of suicides. In 2018, about 60% of suicide victims belonging to the 8-16 age group were women. Males accounted for the largest percentage of suicides in all age groups except in the 8-16 age group. In 2018, 80% of the total number suicides were men. The 66% of the suicide victims from the 21-25 age group were men. Also, 86% of the suicide victims who were from the highest age group (over 66) were men.

Figure 04: Suicides Based on Age and Gender 2016-2018



Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

Durkheim's study shows that the adult population in a country has a higher suicide rate than other age groups. This is one of the key features of suicide. During the period 1995-2011, among males, the highest suicide rates were recorded among the 50-59 year and > 60-year age groups (Silva, Hanwella & Senanayake, 2012). They can be Egoistic or Altruistic suicides. Elderly citizens in tribal societies such as *Visigoths*, *Thracians* and *Herulis* committed suicide for the benefit of their community. Limited food resources were spared for the use of the young. In India, married women committed suicide after the death of their husbands. Those can be considered as Altruistic which means they were highly concerned about their society and as a result they sacrificed their life for its benefit.

Methods of Committing Suicide:

According to police statistics, highest number of suicides reported were committed by self-strangulation. The number of cases reported was 1573 in 2016 and in 2017 it has increased to 1814; an increase of 15%. It was 1904 in 2018, an increase of 5% when compared to 2017. In 2018, out of the deceased, 81% were male; the number of females who had committed suicide by self-strangulation has increased by 17%

compared to 2017 (*Crime Statistics*, 2018). The next most common form of suicide is drinking pesticides (Gunnel *et al*, 2007; Abeysinghe & Gunnell, 2008), and jumping in front of running trains. In Sri Lanka, a major livelihood is agricultural and the farmers use pesticides without a proper knowledge of using them for cultivation. There is no effective restriction on the purchase of pesticides therefore anyone can buy in any amount of pesticide in the open market increasing the risk of people using it to commit suicide.

Table 01: Method of Committing Suicide from 2016 to 2019

Method	2016			2017			2018			2019		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Drinking insecticides & Pesticides	698	175	873	698	154	852	696	104	800	587	119	706
Self-strangulation	1284	289	1573	1508	306	1814	1546	358	1904	1569	348	1917
Getting drowned by leaping into rivers, lakes, sea, etc	51	42	93	72	37	109	69	342	111	64	41	105
By using firearms	14	2	16	6	8	14	14	6	20	21	06	27
By using hand grenades and other explosives	1	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
By using sharp weapons	4	0	4	9	2	11	4	3	7	3	0	3
Self-immolation	42	75	117	42	72	114	40	60	100	33	64	97
Jumping under train or vehicles	106	30	136	137	26	163	122	27	149	103	20	123
Drinking acids	23	7	30	30	11	41	30	8	38	23	07	30
Drinking fuel (Petrol, Kerosene	2	1	3	2	1	3	4	0	4	08	0	08
Drug overdose (Sleeping tablets etc.)	10	13	23	11	10	21	10	10	20	9	17	26

Ingestion of components of poisonous plants	43	35	78	36	32	68	34	30	64	40	12	52
Jumping from steep	7	2	9	6	2	8	6	0	6	7	3	10
Consuming drugs (Orally or by injecting)	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
By using other methods	52	15	67	27	16	43	43	14	57	21	09	30
Total	2339	686	3025	2586	677	3263	2619	662	3281	2489	646	3135

Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

'Sri Lanka can be basically considered as a rural community where more than 70% of the population depends on agriculture sector. Although there are similarities of basic elements, there are diversities among different regional subsistence of rural sector.' (Sakalasooriya, 2021). After the Green Revolution, the world was forced to use chemical fertilizers instead of organic fertilizers. Significant use of high analysis chemical fertilizers for food crops in Sri Lanka began in early 1950s, but widespread use of chemical fertilizer for food crops commenced in the year 1960. After 1980, the use of chemical fertilizers for agriculture in Sri Lanka spread rapidly. It became a common practice among the rural peasantry.

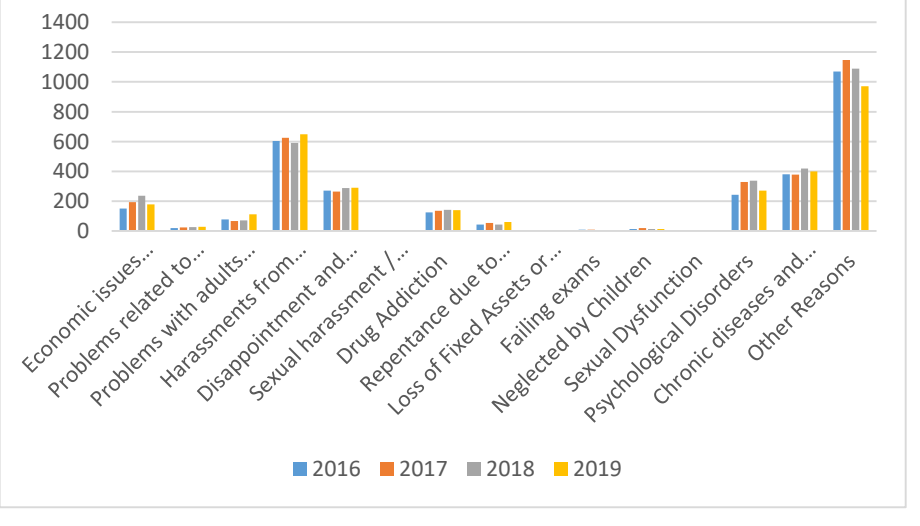
Another aspect is that families that were more interdependent in nature as extended families have gradually become nuclear families as a result of modernization and urbanization. Earlier, there were more than ten members in a family. But today more than 50% of the families have become families with not more than five members. Today, even in traditional rural areas, extended families are nowhere to be seen. The nuclear family can be seen as a small family, living apart, isolated, instead of living together and supporting each other. But Muslims still live a collective life and their families have a large number of members.

The methods used to commit suicide are related to the results of this social modernization.

Reasons for Committing Suicide:

One of the most important factors to be considered in a sociological analysis of suicide is to find out the immediate cause of one's suicide. However, the reason given by the suicide (for example in a letter written by him/her) or by others may not be the real reason. There can be a number of underlying causes. According to Durkheim, religious disintegration, domestic disintegration, and political disintegration are among the major social factors influencing suicide. If a person suffers from any of these types of disintegration, he or she becomes socially isolated. Based on these factors, Durkheim's study identifies three main causes of suicide. They are lack of integration, over integration and lack of regulation. One can identify the nature of suicides in Sri Lankan social context based on the above analysis.

Figure 05: Reasons for Committing Suicide 2016 – 2019



Source: Crime Statistics, Sri Lanka Police.

Majority of suicides in 2018 were due to family disputes. In 2018, 591 such cases were reported, which shows that although family disputes can be considered as ordinary phenomena within a family, a minor family dispute can lead to a calamitous end unless a proper solution is given in its initial stage. In all three years under consideration, reason for majority of suicides is family disputes. In 2016, 603 persons committed suicide due to family disputes, and it has increased by 4% in 2017 recording 625 incidents. However, in 2018 it has decreased by 5% which records as 591 deaths (Crime Statistics, 2018). Many studies have revealed this situation (Samaraweera, 2008). According to Durkheim, an individual is deeply attached to his/her family. Also, good integration between the individual and the society is achieved through family members, friends and religious institutions. When a distance in a society occurs, the care for the individual is lost resulting in the person trying to leave the group. When the person loses the love, affection, intimacy and the respect he deserves from his group, he decides to leave the group. That loss brings him more grief than the loss of his own life. Hence the person is tempted to commit suicide. These suicides can be classified as Egoistic suicides. Analysis of statistics from 2016 to 2019 shows that 29% of suicides occurred were Egoistic. Among those, 20% of cases were results of domestic violence of the husbands towards their wives and also of wives towards their husbands or problems with the elders (such as parents, teachers) in the family. Thus, suicides are caused by deficiencies in the functioning of the moral evaluation system. Family members enjoy collective recognition, and when such family ties break it isolates a person from his family. As a result, collective consciousness is lost. The other 9% have committed suicide as a result of a breakup in their love affairs. It also belongs to the same category of Egoistic suicide. Some researches reveal that persons who attempted to suicide refused to go back to their homes (Silva *et al*, 2000).

The factors that are mentioned in the police report including economic issues (poverty, loans etc.), problems related to professions, sexual harassment / rape, drug addiction, repentance due to deaths of relations including parents, loss of fixed assets or movable assets, failing exams, negligence by children and sexual dysfunction can be considered as social factors affecting suicides. Suicides based on these causes are considered Anomic suicides. All of these are based on the distance between the individual and the society. It is the result of 'poverty of morals'.

Suicide Tendency Based on Occupation/Livelihood

The highest number of suicides were unemployed persons and agriculture related workers. The tendency to commit suicide among the professionals including teachers, engineers, doctors etc., is higher than that of the members of the armed forces. When it comes to politicians, out of the total of 12704 suicides there were only 4 persons; three males and one female. When we consider the suicide rate among the students female suicides are higher than the male.

Conclusion

Durkheim explains that maniacal suicides, melancholy suicides, obsessive suicides and impulsive suicides are due to mental diseases. Mental and personality disorders are common among parasuicides in Sri Lanka (Silva *et al*, 2000). If one applies Durkheim's point of view to the Sri Lankan context, 90% of the suicides committed are sociological. Moreover, Sri Lankan statistics on suicide is sociological. Therefore, studies on psychological causes should be conducted from a separate psychological perspective.

According to quantitative data on socio-demographic information, main findings can be listed as follows:

- Highest number of suicides are Sinhalese Buddhists; lowest number of suicides reported are from Muslim and Islamic communities.
- Highest number of suicides are from the age groups 21-25 and over 70.
- Suicide rate among married persons is higher than the unmarried; the female student suicides are higher than males; however, when it comes to occupations, male suicides are higher than female.
- Most of the suicide victims had received only secondary education.
- Most common reasons of suicide were harassments in family, disappointments and harassment, economic issues, psychological disorders and chronic diseases.
- Suicide among unemployed persons are higher than the employed; however, the second highest number of suicides are reported from the agricultural sector while the lowest number reported are among the politicians.

The main finding of this research is that 90% of the factors that affect suicide are social factors. The integration between the individual and society has diminished and society has become indifferent to the needs of the individual. Group collectivism has been broken. The result is that individuals become isolated more and more and therefore frustrated. This is a state of scarcity of moral obligations in society. Anomic and Egoistic suicides can be minimized only by strengthening social integration and collective conscience.

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Significance of Introducing Climate Smart Agriculture for Cascades under Minor Irrigations in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka: A Case study of the Giribawa Hotspot in Kurunegala

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Abstract

This paper investigates the possibilities and challenges in introducing the climate smart agricultural (CSA) practices to minor irrigations, especially for the command areas and highlands of the cascades or terraced tank clusters in the Dry Zone (DZ) of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka being an Upper Middle-income country, the DZ farmers suffer climate change related extreme weather conditions. In Sri Lanka, 25.5% of the work force are engaged in agricultural sector under many challenges. By the Global Climate Vulnerability Index (GCVI) in 2018, Sri Lanka has been identified as the second most vulnerable country to climate change related disasters. Consequently, one of the major challenges of the central, provincial, and local governments of Sri Lanka is to identify the most productive interventions to be made for the identified hotspot areas to improve the agricultural livelihood of the farming community residing in highly vulnerable areas. Tambuththa and Rajanganaya Agrarian Service Areas (TASA) of Giribawa Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) in Kurunegala District have been identified as the hotspots by the Department of Agriculture, Sri Lanka. This case study used the common PRA tools and surveying methods to collect the primary data of the 03 cascades. The study reveals that there is a very high probability to introduce CSA. It also identifies that developing the marketing, and value chain for agricultural products are major challenges.

Keywords:

climate smart agriculture, climate change, global climate vulnerability index, cascades

Introduction

The settlers of the Dry Climatic Zone[8] (DCZ) of Sri Lanka have been facing frequent floods and droughts for hundreds of years due to the temporal and spatial climate pattern. The successive ancient kings since 500 BC applied many strategies to tackle this issue. Due to the negative impact of the climate change the vulnerability of agriculture has significantly been increased during the last 50 years in Sri Lanka. One of the major solutions for this issue is the 'terraced tank clusters' or cascade tanks,[9] locally called *helmalu wew pokuru* or *ellanga* in micro catchments in the DCZ. The cascade system or terraced tank clusters (TTC) had originally been designed for climate smart agricultural practices. Anyhow, all the successive governments of Sri Lanka which came to power after independence in 1948, paid their attention to introduce major irrigation projects and ignored the traditional minor irrigation works which have been built with indigenous knowledge and experience. Consequently, the income gap between the farmers who live in the minor and major irrigations is very significant. The farmers live under minor irrigation areas are vulnerable not only economically but also environmentally, culturally and socially. Hence, it is essential to uplift the agricultural livelihood of the small-scale tank-based farming community living in the climatically most vulnerable farming areas in the DCZ of the country. The main objective of the study is to identify the major challenges and strengths of the farmers who live in the DCZ. The

[8] The DCZ covers 63.6% (41, 717 km^2) of the total land area of Sri Lanka. the major natural hazards of the DCZ is frequent floods and droughts. Each year, the DCZ faces two monsoons and two inter-monsoonal periods. Four months of period from November to February are the normal rainy season of the DCZ and from March to November, evaporation exceeds the monthly annual rainfall (Report of the Land Commission of Sri Lanka 1990).

[9] Cascades or locally called Helmalu wew pokuru or Ellanga depend on a topography determined by geology and subsequent geomorphic changes in that topography (Sakalasooriya, N. 2020). The Cascaded Tank-Village System also contributes to efficient water management with water from one tank flowing to another, through a network of tanks and streams (Thennakoon, 2005; Maddumabandara, 1985; Sakalasooriya, 2020).

sub-objective is to make recommendations to improve the productivity and climate resilience of the smallholder agricultural sector in minor irrigation areas with climate smart agriculture (CSA)[10].

The Giribawa Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) is one of the 30 DSDs in Kurunegala district with a land area of 200.8 km^2 (see fig. 01). The Giribawa DSD lies on an undulating plain in Dry Zone (DZ) of Sri Lanka. Compared to the other DSDs of the Kurunegala district, a thin soil layer can be found all over the Giribawa DSD due to the high rate of erosion and the natural slope of the area. The average temperature of the DSD is about 32 ^{0}C and the mean annual rainfall of the DSD varies from 900 mm to 2000 mm. The average temperature is 4 ^{0}C higher than the country's average. Due to the thin soil layer and the geological structure of the DSDs, groundwater is lacking and it is difficult to build agrarian wells and drinking water wells there. The majority of the settlers suffer from high heat, seasonal droughts and floods.

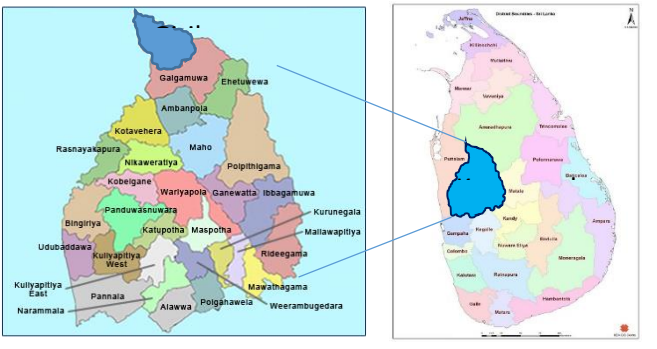
The elevation of these isolated hills and ranges varies from 65m to 850 m. Buddhist temples have been built on the monadnocks ranges. Due to the high temperature, some sources have pointed out that the Giribawa DSD is located in Semi-Arid Climatic Zone. But according to the Department of Meteorology it belongs to the Dry Climatic Zone of Sri Lanka and it is located in the DL1 agro-ecological zone[11]. There are wet and dry periods with the Northeastern and Southwestern monsoons. In each year, there is a 04-month rainy season from November to February, and the dry period is from March to November. During this

[10] Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is an integrated approach to managing landscapes—cropland, livestock, forests and fisheries—that address the interlinked challenges of food security and accelerating climate change. CSA aims to simultaneously achieve three outcomes: Increased productivity, Enhanced resilience, Reduced emissions (*The World Bank*, 2020).

[11] Sri Lanka has a heterogeneous agro-ecological environment and many workers have made efforts to classify this situation. A particular agro-ecological region represents fairly even agro-climate, soils and terrain conditions and would support a particular farming system with a certain range of crops and farming practices, including forage cultivation and livestock farming. DL = Dry Climatic Zone, Low land

dry period, there are short rainy periods due to convectional currents which are formed in the inter-monsoonal periods in April and September. Major soil groups are Reddish Brown Earth (RBE) and Low Humic Glay (LHG) soils and undulating land.

Figure 1; Relative location of Giribawa DSD in Kurunegala District



Compiled by Nishan Sakalasooriya, 2020

Data source: *Survey Department of Sri Lanka, 2010*

Due to the relative and absolute location of the DSD, it faces four climatic periods during a year. It has a 04-month rainy season from November to February and receives two thirds of the total rainfall from the Northeastern Monsoon (*Department of Meteorology*, 2020). The months of March and April are the first inter-monsoon, and a very low amount of rainfall is received from the convectional currents. The Southwestern Monsoon gets activated from May to August and provides a small amount of rainfall from convectional currents with heavy thunderbolts. According to the temporal and spatial patterns of the climate of the Giribawa cascade, it has a 08-month dry period from March to October. The effective evaporation is higher than the rainfall during this period and consequently the area faces a seasonal and annual drought. Due to very specific weather conditions, a high amount of rainfall exceeding 250 mm has been received in the month of May and it causes flash floods in the lower valley of the DSD. However, this general climatic pattern has significantly been changed and in most of

the years, unexpected extreme weather events such as floods and droughts have occurred.

There are 103 farmer villages in 35 *Grama Niladari* Divisions of Giribawa DSD. Tambuththa and Rajanganaya Agrarian Centers provide the agricultural services to the DSD. The total population is 38,522 by 2018 with 19,708 males and 18,814 females and 92.42% of them are Buddhists and 7.42% are Islam (*Department of Census and Statistics*, 2019). Agricultural Zones are divided taking into considerations the annual rainfall, annual temperature, soil condition, and geological features of the district, and Giribawa DSD has 09 Agricultural Zones. Accordingly, the Northern part of the DSD has dry climatic characteristics while Southern and the Eastern parts have wet climatic characteristics. The wet climatic region is spread out within a small area.

This is an agriculture-based division and agriculture is the main livelihood of the people living in the area. Consequently, 85% of the total population of the DSD directly depends on agriculture, especially on paddy cultivation. The total agricultural land area is 96,360 acres in this division (*Statistical Handbook of Kurunegala* District 2019). Many of the land of this division are under the control of the Forest Conservation Department and Wildlife Department because of the legal boundaries of the country. Later due to the colonization, forest areas decreased and some parts of the area were developed. For example, areas such as Irudeniyaya Agricultural Colony. But still, these areas remain less developed compared to the other DSDs of the District.

Giribawa Division is nourished from water resources of the tributaries of Kala Oya,[12] and the Rajanganaya reservoir[13] supplies the

[12] The Kala Oya is the third longest river in Sri Lanka. It is approximately 145 km in length (Maria S. R., 2007). The river has a basin size of 2,873 km2, and more than 400,000 rural population live by the river basin (Emerton, L., 2005).

[13] The Rajanganaya Dam (also sometimes called Rajangana) is an irrigation dam built across the Kala Oya river, at Rajanganaya, bordering the North Western and North Central provinces of Sri Lanka. The main concrete dam measures approximately 350

irrigation water under the major irrigation category. The rest of the area is covered by the minor irrigations with cascades or rainwater in the rainy season. Major barriers for ensuring the human wellbeing is the lack and the deficiency of water in the dry period and floods in the rainy season. Lower accessibility, low income, divisional isolation, threats from wild animals including human-elephant conflict, sand mining and destroying of forests are the other main threats that affect the development of the living conditions of the people and the division.

Approach and Methodology

A mixed method under the inductive approach has been applied for primary data collection and both qualitative and quantitative data and information have been collected. Depending on the schedule, some of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods have been applied. The data from DSD offices, resource profiles, data from Agricultural Service Centers (ASCs), District and statistical handbooks, relevant websites, and field notes of the field officers in the region were the main secondary data sources. Satellite images, Google Earth Maps, and images, 1: 50,000 and One-Inch maps have been interpreted for spatial data in the region.

The PRA assessments have been conducted by using carefully selected tools of PRA. Two types of methods have been utilized for the participatory assessment. The smaller group-based assessment has been conducted on an individual tank basis with a few well-informed farmers, leaders and officials of the local farmer organizations and gathered information pertaining to the status, challenges, opportunities, and interventions in the area. The larger group-based assessment has been conducted with 50% of farmers including women,

m (1,150 ft) and creates the Rajanganaya Reservoir, which has a catchment area of 76,863.60 hectares (189,934.1 acres) and a total storage capacity of 100.37 million cubic meters (3,545×106 cu ft) (Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources Management, 2015).

to adjust, order, and prioritize the list of interventions as well as details such as location, interested set of participants' beneficiaries. Afterwards, likely costs, benefits, and risks or special requirements have been identified.

The social resource and hazard mapping has been conducted at the cascade level with 03 to 05 farmers who are well experienced and knowledgeable. Both the women and men attended for the discussion from each tank-village. The discussion focused on identifying the physical setting of the cascade as a hydrological as well as a biological system. In the discussion, it was able to identify and collect information on the socio-economic profile of the cascade. The existing land use pattern, social, and cultural aspect of the cascade were also recognized and understood through mapping and discussions. The existing water storage system, morphology of the cascade, water availability status for irrigation in the cascade, and issues of the individual tanks at the cascade level were observed and identified.

The tool of seasonal calendar was also practiced on cascade basis. Two members including one expert and an assistant facilitated the discussion in order to identify the seasonal crop pattern, the cultivation practices and other seasonal practices in the cascade. The information on existing CSA practices, technologies on cascade as well as the agricultural profile of the cascade were observed. The scope for promoting CSA practices and technologies option for livelihood diversification in the cascade was also discussed. The identification of crop economics, as well as the status and issues, crop diversity in the cascade, irrigation management status, and issues in the cascade was also done through the discussion. Finally, daily routine of the women and youth was also discussed. The matrix ranking was a tool used to identify the existing general crops which have been cultivated in the cascade including the existing drought-resistant cultivation, and crop practices, and the options and willingness of the communities on cultivating drought-resistant crops in the cascade.

Finally, the gravity of the existing problem of water management, available service for farming, problems, and alternative options for value addition and post-harvest management in the cascade were discussed. Likewise, attention was also paid to identify the crop production, marketing, price fluctuation, existing conditions of the tank, micro-irrigation management, the power issues within and between the communities and other stakeholders. The existing issues related to climate change, hazard, adaptation practices, and capacities were discussed. The discussion was focused on understanding the vulnerable groups while identifying the daily routine of men, women, and youth in the villages.

The transact walk was done in each tank to establish a rapport with the local farmer communities and to obtain preliminary information and thereby an idea about the geographical setting as well as the socio-demographic features on individual tank specific and cascade basis was obtained. By the transact walk, the nature of vulnerability on livelihoods and resources was observed while verifying the existing conditions of tanks, micro-irrigation systems, paddy fields, highlands, home gardens, agricultural roads and other infrastructure facilities in the region. The observation of the wild elephant and other wild animal attacks was also done through the visits.

The study has selected 07 terraced tank clusters of Giribawa DSD, 04 cascades from Thambuththa ASC and another 03 from Rajanganaya ASC. The total number of the tanks and diversions of these 07 minor irrigations is 302 and the total direct beneficiary farmer families are 6038. The cascade level data are shown in Table 01. The spatial pattern and the geographic locations of the irrigation systems of the cascades have been illustrated in Figure 02. Figure 03 depicts the drainage pattern of the Pahala Giribawa cascade, terraced tank cluster which is the largest tank cluster of minor irrigation in Sri Lanka (Sakalasooriya 2020). Pahala Giribawa Cascade consists of 64 tanks and 26 anicuts. The direction of the drainage pattern of the cascade is

towards the north and flows to Kala Oya through Giribawa Ela.

Table 01: Number of tanks and anicuts (diversions) and their beneficiaries

ASCs	Name of the cascade (Terraced tank cluster)	Total tanks and anicuts	Total beneficiary families
Thambuththa	Halmillewa	28	664
	Pahala Giribawa	90	2,204
	Warawewa	63	1,068
	Gurulupitigama Wewa	21	290
Rajanganaya	Gampola Mahawewa	36	603
	Andarawewa	34	774
	Medawewa	30	435
Total	07	302	6,038

Data Source: PRA Results 2020

Figure 02: The locations of the selected cascades of the study

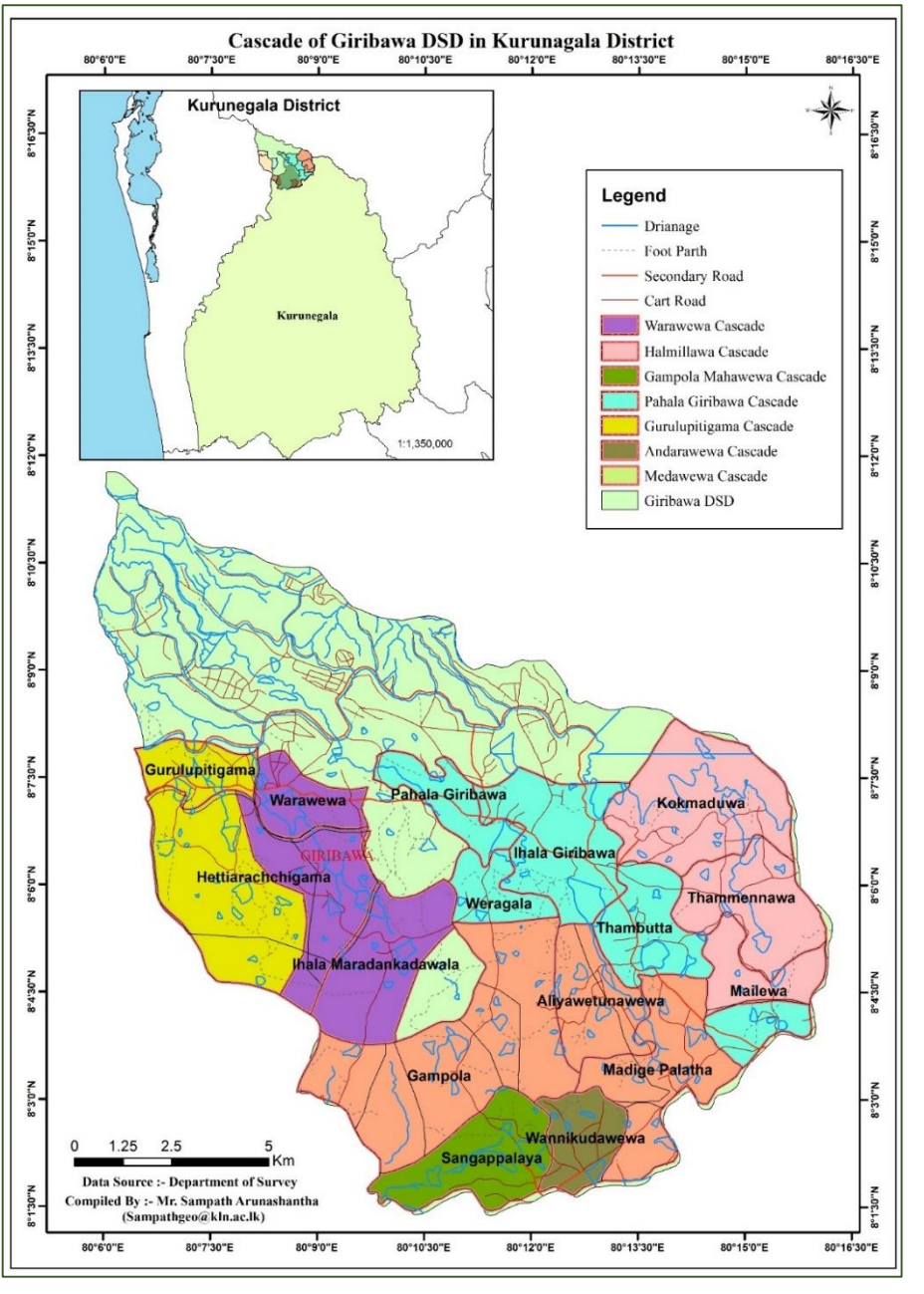
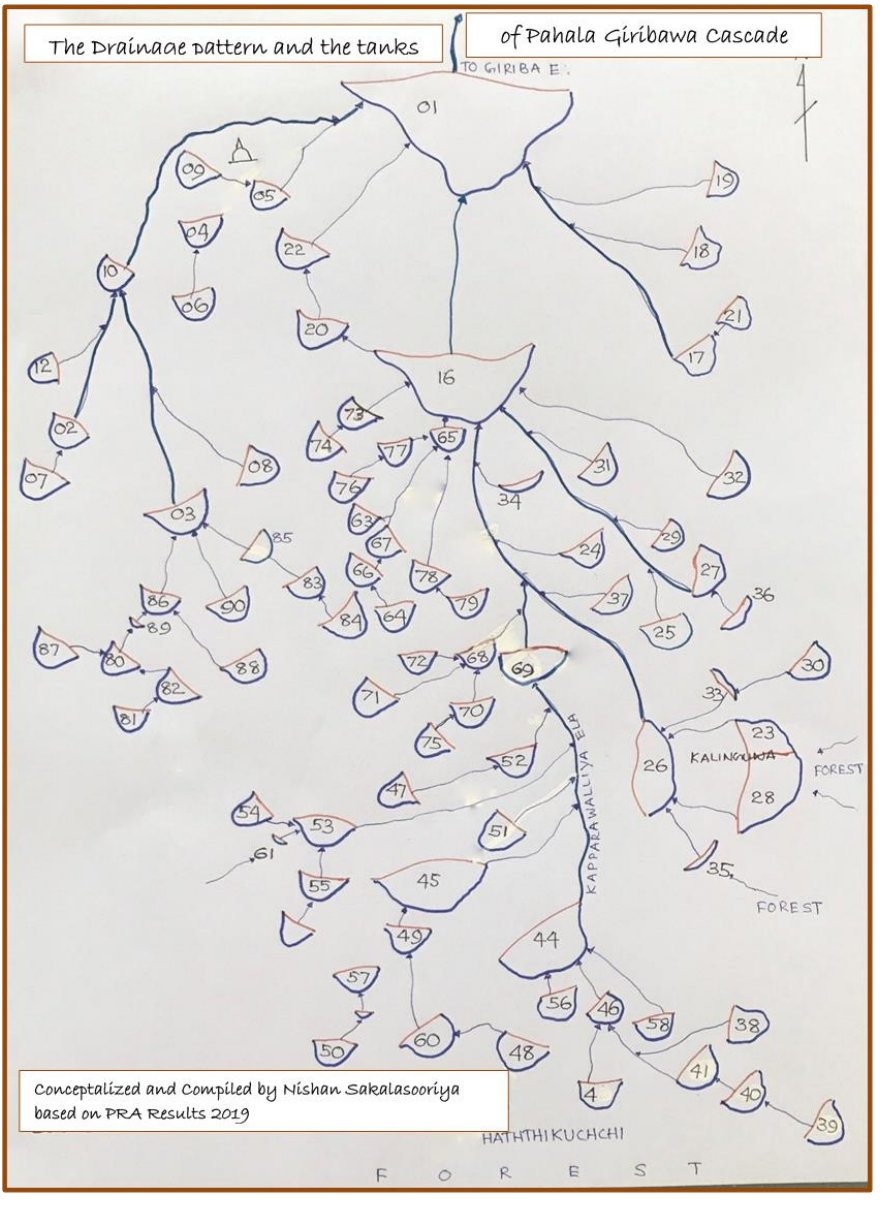


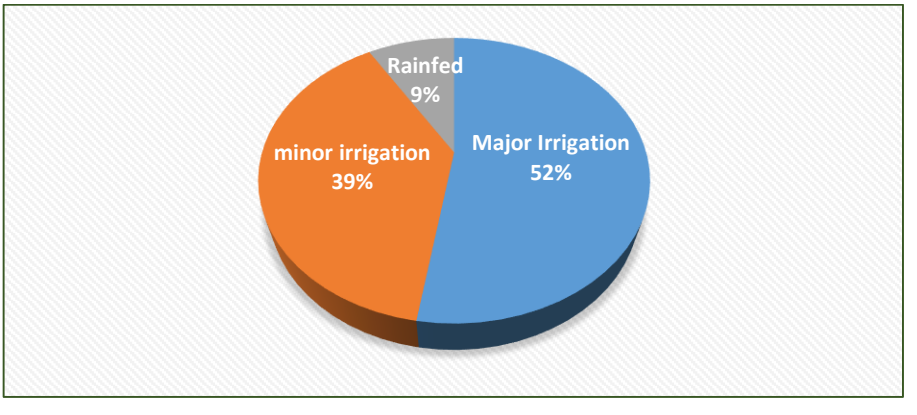
Figure 03: The Drainage and the water flow of the Pahala Giribawa Cascade



Results of the study

The aswaddumized extent of total paddy land was 4,693.2 ha in 2018 including 2,465.4 ha and 1,822.3 ha under major and minor irrigations respectively and 405.5 ha under the rain-fed condition (*Kurunegala District Statistical Handbook*, 2019). Sown and harvested extent of paddy lands in the Maha season of 2017/2018 and Yala 2018 was the same under the major irrigation. Due to the poor condition of the minor irrigation system in the hotspot area, lower extent of paddy lands was sown in the Yala. Figure 04 depicts that 52% of the total paddy lands have been cultivated under the major irrigation system. The minor irrigation like small tanks in the cascade system sustains for 39% of the total paddy cultivation. It has shown the significance of the rehabilitation of 79 anicuts and 223 small tanks in the cascade system of the Giribawa hotspot area.

Figure 04: Total paddy extents by irrigation systems in the Giribawa hotspot area



Data Source: *Kurunegala District Statistical Handbook*, 2019

Table 02: Sown and harvested extent of paddy - 2017/2018, by Maha and Yala in the Giribawa hotspot area

	Maha		Yala	
	Sown (Ha)	Harvested (Ha)	Sown (Ha)	Harvested (Ha)
Major irrigation	2,193.1	2,193.1	2,193.4	2,193.4
Minor irrigation	29.9	10.0	45.3	37.2
Rainfed	16.8	4.9	0	0
Total	2,239.8	2,208.0	2,238.7	2,230.6

Data Source: *Kurunegala District Statistical Handbook*, 2019

According to the secondary data, in both seasons, the contribution of the minor irrigation and rainfall is significantly less due to the lack of rainfall and malfunctioning of the cascade system in the area. As mentioned earlier, only 29.9 hectares out of 1,822.3 hectares, have been cultivated under minor irrigation during the Maha season in 2018 (*Kurunegala District Statistical Handbook*, 2019). Only 10 hectares have been harvested. There is a considerable number of highlands which have been used for settlements and perennial crops. Data confirm that coconut is the dominant crop in the highlands and the land extent is 1,634 hectares. Generally, all the highlands have banana cultivation under mixed crops and the total area is about 108.7 hectares. Coconut is the major perennial crop of the DSD and coconut cultivation is concentrated in the IL3 zone. The 2nd highest extent is banana and banana cultivation is concentrated in DL1b. Mango is another common

crop in the highlands in Giribawa and extends over 77.9 hectares. Various other crops are also cultivated in the highlands. According to the statistics of 2018, number of milk producing cattle and buffalos in the DSD was 948,247 (*Kurunegala District Statistical Handbook*, 2019).

Normal crops which are grown in the command area, highlands, and home gardens

Three crop cultivation areas of the cascades can be identified namely, command area, highlands, and home gardens. The crops and the cultivation area are varied by one cascade to another. The crop diversification by cascades has been described in the following section. The data proves that the paddy cultivation is the major crop in the command areas and maize, groundnuts, cowpea, watermelon, long bean, chili, and black gram are being cultivated in the Yala season. The normal crops of the highlands and home gardens are highly diversified by the climate, physical conditions, attitudes of farmers, market prices, water sources, wild animal threats, pest attacks, storage facilities, government policies, and technological advancements. Paddy, groundnuts, maize, cowpea, and watermelon are the major crops cultivated in the command areas. During the rainy seasons, the farmers have been used to cultivate in the highlands and home gardens. Cowpea, coconut, banana, beetle, orange, mango, pomegranate, cashew, and lime are the most common crops in the home gardens while groundnut, sesame, maize, watermelon, black gram, millet, cowpea are the major crops grown in highlands.

Paddy is the major crop in all the command areas of the tanks of the cascade in Giribawa DSD in the rainy season. According to water storage capacities of the tanks of the cascades, the tank command areas are varied, and basically, paddy cultivation has been limited to Maha season. There are limited tanks. Moreover, the main tank of the tank cluster (the *maha wewa*) possesses a limited water storage for the Yala season due to the malfunctioning of the tank and rainfall variations.

Therefore, farmers must limit the command area or change the crop according to the available amount of water. Some of the tanks of the cascades such as forest tanks for wild life (*kulu wew)*, tanks for bathing (*nana wew*) and tanks of the temple (*pin wew*) do not have command areas as the main purpose of these tanks is not to supply water for cultivation (Mendis, 2002; Thennakoon, 2012; Maddumabandara, 1985; Panabokke, 1999, 2002, 2009; Dharmasena, 2015). The cropping patterns of the command areas during the normal rainfall years and the drought years are totally different in the study area. Data in the table clearly shows the difference of cultivation area between normal rainfall years and drought years. Though the paddy and other seasonal crops are cultivated in the command areas in the Maha season with rainfall and minor irrigation like small tanks in cascades, in the dry season, Yala cultivation does not take place due to lack of rainwater and tank irrigation. Thus, all the cascades of the hotspot area have to be developed, and it will support to enhance the water availability and to reduce the number of drought years. The PRA confirms that 489 acres and 567 acres of the highlands are cultivated with seasonal crops during the Yala and Maha seasons respectively. There is no seasonal crop cultivation in homesteads in both seasons as they have perennial crops in 472 acres in the highlands of the cascade. Sesame and groundnuts are the most popular crops in the Yala while maize and groundnuts are the dominant crops in the Maha season. Mango and banana are the other common crops of the Giribawa DSD.

The farmers show their willingness and prior commitment to the rehabilitation of the cascades and the majority of them are very much supportive for the renovation process. Anyway, the people have adapted themselves to various bad practices due to former renovations carried out by the government with the top-down approach. Therefore, farmers welcome the new participatory approaches for tank renovations, and they were very much happy to share their knowledge and experience for sustainable renovations of the tanks while

requesting to renovate all the tanks of the cascades as a whole. According to field experiences, some areas of the tank and tank ecosystems have been encroached by the settlers and some areas have been demarcated as forest reservations by the Forest Department. Therefore some kind of legal intervention is required. In our observation, the demarcation process of the forest areas has been done without farmers' participation. Due to this process, some of the functioning tanks have been categorized under the forest areas and sometimes some parts of the tanks have been demarcated as forest areas. This is one of the major issues of the Giribawa DSD.

Community Cooperation

The settlers of the cascades seem to be disappointed with some of the government services. For example, farmers believe that some agricultural services such as providing irrigation water and tank renovation process are politicized. According to the community, the same tank has been renovated several times during the last 20 years while some of the tanks have not been renovated even once for the last 50 years or so. In these cascades, the rate of caste-based conflicts is very high. Although such conflict remain hidden in those societies they surface particularly when it comes to sharing of water and renovations of tanks. The tanks which serve to lower-caste communities have not been given priority. This is evident in the process of selecting tank for renovation. However, majority of the farmers are happy to support the cascade renovation process under the participatory approach. On the other hand, encroachment of forest lands is very common in all the cascades in the hotspot area. The command areas of the cascades have extended by 30%-50% due to the encroachments. Some of the essential components of the tanks of the cascades have been fully encroached while some of them have been partly encroached. Especially, most of the tanks in the hotspot area have no interceptors, silt traps, tree belts, and filters. Consequently, the cascade system is threatened and

malfunctioning. In our experience, the small-scale farmers are trying to expand their command area or highland with the intention of increasing the harvest and income. This situation has increased the climate change related vulnerability. The farmers have no clear idea about the problems that they are facing in their villages.

Unequal Distribution of Land

The size of the lands in the area directly decides the final income of the farmers. In these cascades, a quarter of the total land belongs to persons of higher castes according to the traditional law which has been in existence for centuries. Although these farmers have lands and better income in the cascade settlements, the others have to provide supportive services to those high caste farmers. Consequently, there is a huge gap of human wellbeing between the persons of different castes. The average size of a farm in the command areas varied due to the historical process of the ownership, population growth, size of the tanks, and functional level of the tanks. The size of the smallest land in the command area is 0.25 acres and the largest is 20 acres. Similar differences can be seen in the Pahala Giribawa cascade too. These intra and inter inequalities of the size of land have created income inequalities and social exclusions among the families and the communities of the cascades.

One of the major issues faced by the farmers is difficulty of obtaining a reliable source of seeds. In the open market system, most of the seeds come from private markets. Sometimes the farmers go for government sources also. Still, there are small groups of farmers who produce seeds on their own. According to our observations, the farmers have no adequate scientific and modern technological training for production of seeds. The available sources of seeds are mentioned in Table 03 and it illustrates the seeding and planting methods of the cascades in Giribawa DSD.

Table 03: Source of Seeds of the Cascade Area

Pahala Giribawa, Andara Wewa, Gurulupitigama, Gampola Maha Wewa, Halmillewa, Warawewa cascades	
Source	Seeds
Own	Paddy, Groundnuts, Green beans, Cowpea, Finger millet, Vegetables, Black gram, Sesame
Private companies	Paddy, Maize, Groundnuts, Watermelons, Green beans, Cowpea, Vegetables, Gherkin,
From other farmers	Paddy, Groundnuts, Green beans, Cowpea, Finger millet, Sesame, Black gram
Government sources	Paddy, Groundnuts, Green beans, Cowpea,

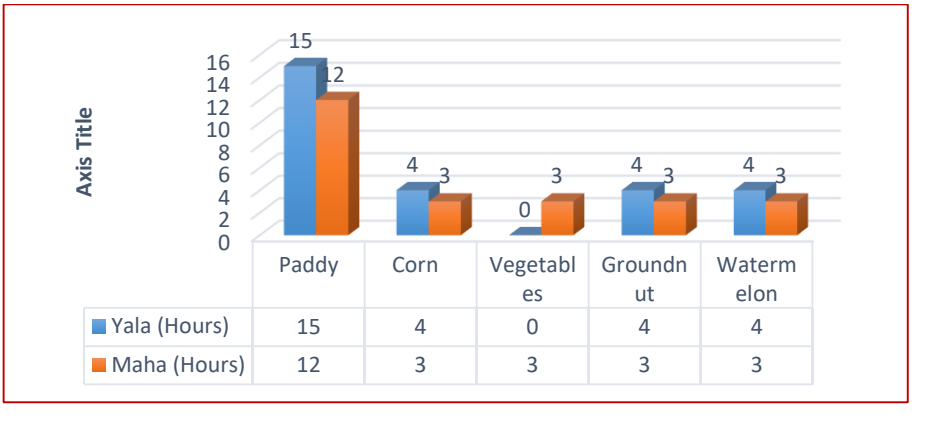
Source: *PRA Data*, 2020

The average number of hours of water flow required to irrigate one acre by crop and season in normal rainfall years has been calculated in the Figure 05. According to the data, paddy consumes more water than the other crops that have been cultivated in the tank command areas. Watermelons, maize, and groundnut are the best drought-resistant crops as they consume a very little amount of water compared to paddy.

Figure 06 shows the average use of labor for the crop by seasons. Paddy, maize, and watermelons are the most labor-intensive crops and consume more hours for the protection of crops from wild animals. The farmers say that some of them have given up the crop

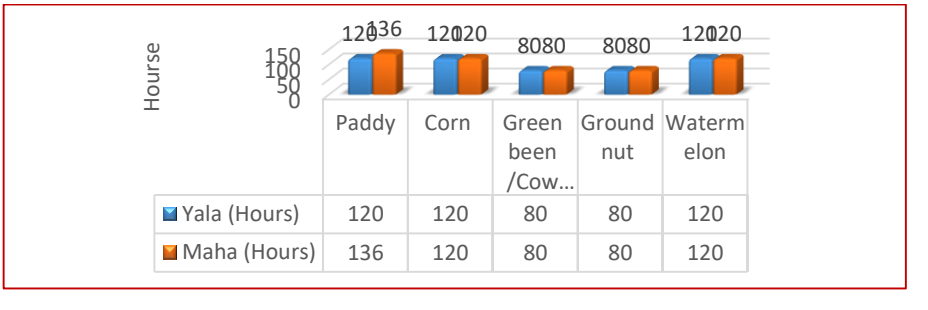
cultivation because of these wild animal attacks. Through our field research we understood that the group cultivation method has been applied in these areas to reduce the labor hours. Consequently, one group of farmers cultivate the crops in total command area and then another group cultivates there in the next season or the next year. Slow population growth and the high rate of outmigration are the major obstacles for supplying laborers. As a result, intensive subsistent agriculture has rapidly been mechanized. Cereals and legumes need more attention during the Maha season, and the number of laborers required is greater than that of the Yala season.

Figure 05: Average Number of Water Supply Hours by Crops



Source: *PRA Data*, 2020

Figure 06: Labor use per acre by Crop and Season



Source: PRA results, 2020

The average fertilizer-usage per acre by crop and the seasons is similar in all cascades. The average pesticide and weedicide use per acre by type, crop, and seasons are also the same. Some farmers are addicted to use agrochemicals extensively for a better harvest. According to our observations, majority of the farmers do not have a scientific understanding about the agrochemicals and agrochemical usage. This may ultimately cause kidney diseases and different types of illnesses among the farmers and the consumers of these productions. This is one of the major challenges which emerged when introducing the CSA to the villages.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the main objectives of the study, 07 conclusions have been reached**.** The study has disclosed that there is a high probability of introducing the Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) practices to minor irrigations especially for the command areas and highlands of the cascades or terraced tank clusters in the Dry Zone (DZ) of Sri Lanka. Farmers are also looking for new strategies and answers for climate change related issues. The major challenge in introducing the CSA practices to the area is the lack of scientific knowledge and the conflict between traditional practices and modern approaches among the farmers. The young generation of farmers are implementing the new practices only for maximizing profits. They do not pay attention to maintain the ecological sustainability. When introducing the CSA practices, it is necessary to pay attention to the environmental sustainability while increasing the environmental literacy of all the settlers of all generations.

Climate-Smart Practices and Technologies

Currently, the farmers in the minor irrigation areas of the DSD apply some of the CSA practices in different ways. There are 03 major soil conservation CSA practices in the hotspot area that have been

identified and they are mulching, land-levelling, and bunding. Mulching is a popular and traditional practice in chili, seasonal fruits, and vegetable cultivations. Land-levelling has been practiced in paddy, maize cereal, legume, fruit, vegetable and watermelon cultivation while bunding is implemented in paddy, cereal and legume, fruit, and vegetable cultivation.

Even though they use these traditional CSA practices, they do not follow a common practice to protect the soil layer due to several reasons. As explained in several places in this article, the soil layer in the hotspot area is very thin as the hotspot area is located on an eroded peneplain. Due to the shape and the slope of the cascade system, the tanks have been located according to the terraced pattern. Consequently, the water flows from one tank to another through the terraced tanks of the cluster. In this process, tree belts and the grass and bush filters play a major role in filtering the drainage water of the tanks. Due to the unauthorized encroachments, these natural filter systems have been malfunctioning or have totally collapsed. As a result, during the land preparation periods for paddy cultivation, the mud water with eroded debris directly flows into the tanks. Finally, all the tanks of the cluster have been silted and the water storage volume has been reduced. This is one of the major issues of the cascades.

As a result, all the tanks of the cascades in this hotspot area are full of silt and other debris. The second reason is chena cultivation. Currently, the chena farmers do not practice any of these soil conservation methods and as a result soil erosion has increased. On the other hand, the *Kayan* tanks which have been specially designed for reducing the soil erosion are now being converted to supply water for command areas. In our field observations, we identified that the farmers do not have scientific knowledge of these conservation practices. It is essential to conduct awareness programs and introduce appropriate conservation methods for the hotspot areas. Re-establishment of the tree belts and filters are also equally important.

Finally, in order to succeed the CSA practices in minor irrigations especially cascades, the fully renovation of terraced tank clusters under the system approach is essential.

Multi Cropping

Three major methods of cultivation have been identified in the hotspot area and they are intercropping, multi-cropping, and raw cropping. Under the intercropping method, coconut with banana, banana with ginger, pineapple with aloe-vera and ginger, coconut with pepper, pomegranate with soursop have been identified as the combinations. Vegetables, beetle with ginger and turmeric and mixed crops have been cultivated under the multi-cropping method. Generally, the raw method can be seen in coconut, mango, cashew, groundnut, maize, and legume cultivation. According to our field observations, the traditional and informal cultivation methods have been updated and upgraded in the hotspot area.

The PRA confirms that aloe-vera is the most suitable crop for organic agriculture. Farmers are willing to use organic fertilizer for paddy, but they say that it reduces the produce. Perennial fruits like guava, pomegranate, mango, banana and coconut have been selected for organic cultivation. On the other hand, the farmers are also thinking of reducing the use of chemical fertilizer and other agrochemicals because of the threat of kidney disease. Farmers need both attitudinal and technological transformation with practical activities. There is a reliable possibility of producing compost using livestock manure, crop residues and biomass, 75,000, 44,000, and 53100 kg in a year respectively. Anyway, they do not have the scientific knowledge or good enough program to promote the organic agriculture with CSA practices.

There are positive responses from young farmers for horticulture, but they need to obtain a training and other technological support from the government. On the other hand, this new CSA practice

will increase youth participation in agriculture as the young generation refuses to engage in traditional agriculture. Farmers of the minor irrigations generally think that the uneducated or lower educated people should work in the farms and engage in other traditional primary economic activities. The young generation has an intention to change these attitudes. Use of this kind of technology and CSA practices, would encourage youth to engaged in agriculture again.

Green House Farming and Drought-resistant Crops

There is a significant possibility of promoting greenhouse farming under CSA in the hotspot area. There are some trained young farmers in the village. Young farmers and educated farmers are happy to apply new knowledge and technology to change traditional farming in the villages. 20% of landless farmers are happy to engage in community farming in the common lands as they want to engage in agriculture but they are unable to do so due to the lack of land. On the other hand, the small landholders are also willing to engage in community farming due to the lack of private land.

There is a satisfactory possibility of introducing different crops for drought-resistant and expanding salinity. Paddy, cereals, green beans, cowpea, maize, various fruits and vegetables can be cultivated in the hotspot area. One of the burning issues of 90% of farmers is the lack of water for existing agriculture. Though they have surplus rain in the Maha season, they have no fully functional cascade system to store the surplus rainwater. Due to these failures, they suffer from both droughts in the dry period and floods in the rainy season. The farmers are coping with the situation by adopting different traditional ways. Therefore, it is very important to promote water-saving technologies into the Giribawa DSD.

Agricultural Marketing and Value Chains

The PRA and the baseline survey identified the inadequacy of marketing channels and transport networks for major crops, and the major marketing issues by crop and season. All farmers who cultivate all types of crops in the area pointed out a similar set of problems. These issues are common for all the tank areas in the hotspot. Price fluctuation, unfair practices of the traders, lack of regulations to control such malpractices, lack of sufficient storage facilities for off-season marketing to enjoy a high level of income and lack of transport facilities in and around the cascade due to unavailability or unsuitable conditions of the market roads are the common problems faced by the farmers in the hotspot area in the district.

The study recognizes the average farm-gate prices by crops and seasons, average prices during the harvest period, and off-season period by crops and seasons. The data proves that the prices of all the crops in off-season is higher than those of the harvesting periods. The price gap for 1kg of black gram, finger millet, sesame is 150 LKR. The price fluctuation of cashew is 200 LKR. There are several reasons for this condition. A lot of farmers tend to sell their grain produce in order to protect it from elephant attacks. It has been reported that elephants attack paddy stored rooms and houses in all the 07 cascades in the hotspot area. The scale of production is the second reason. As majority of the farmers in the cascades are smallholders, their produce is also comparatively small. The lack of storage facilities in their homes is another important reason and some of the productions like vegetables cannot be stored for a long period. There are no reliable market linkages in the areas. Consequently, farmers sell their productions during the harvesting period itself.

Some of the farmers have been practicing forward sales agreements with different private sector companies. The crops such as gherkin, aloe-vera, dragon fruit, groundnuts, and maize have been

cultivated under this agreement systems during the last 10 years. Aloe-vera is a newly introduced crop to the area by a private company and it is rapidly expanding over the hotspot area because of these agreements. According to the farmers, this agreement has reduced the risks faced by the farmers and it is said to be more profitable with a reliable market source.

In the cascades, one of the major problems is the storage facilities because there is a high risk to lose the harvest due to elephant attacks and the attacks of wild animals like rats. Therefore, they request proper storage facilities. Price fluctuation and unfair practices of the traders are taking place due to the lack of storage facilities in the season and the offseason. There is a lack of transport facilities in and around the cascade due to unavailability or unsuitable condition of market roads and they are the common problems faced by the farmers in the hotspot area in the district. Issues in the processing of agricultural products are not reported mainly due to non-involvement of the farmers in the processing activities except for rice milling in the hotspot area.

Adequacy of Input Supply and Extension Services by the Agrarian Service Centers

An evaluation has been conducted on services provided at the individual department level. In general, observation of the communities is that they are not provided with services at an acceptable level from all the service providers. This needs to be taken into consideration at the project implementation level. The study revealed that the agricultural services which are being provided by the government are not at a satisfactory level. Therefore, there is a need to consider taking actions to overcome such shortcomings by formalizing the agriculture services in both ACSs. The respective farmers in the cascades are at a satisfactory level at obtaining services such as updating farmland register, distribution of fertilizer, agriculture bank, and crop insurance, etc.

Service Quality of Different Departments in the HSA

An evaluation has been conducted on services provided at the individual department level. In general, observation of the communities is that they are not provided with services at an acceptable level by all the service providers. Accordingly, the findings of the evaluation of services provided by different departments revealed that communities in all the cascades seem to be unsatisfied with the services provided by the Department of Forest, Department of Wildlife, Department of Local Government, Department of Provincial Irrigation, etc. Therefore, priority should be given to rationalize their services in order to provide improved services from the departments mentioned above. Since Forest and Wildlife departments are directly linked with the project implementation, this relationship will become highly vital for the smooth implementation of the project.

Proposed Communication and Knowledge Enhancement Activities through the Mobilization Process

As we have observed, the general information and communication process between the communities and the officers is very low. The communities generally do not know where the required information and the responsible officers are available. Especially in Rajanganaya ASC does not possess a strong link with the cascade since all are interested in working in major irrigation systems and cascades of Madawewa, Gurupitagama, etc., which are located faraway from Rajanganaya.

Proposed Strategies to Enhance Existing CAS Practices in DSD

The modern CSA practices are not much popular among the farmers in the DSD. Hence, it needs a proper mobilization process and a solid technical assistance program from the experienced officers to promote CSA practices. As per the findings, in the three-cascade

training on Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) technologies and practices are given the second priority. Accordingly, it is recommended to design and implement a capacity building program for the farmers in the division with suitable training and assessments.

Since Giribawa is highly vulnerable for wild animal threats on agriculture it is important to be concerned with the selection of crops for CSA practices. It would be better to consider the introduction of wild animal resistant crops under the CSA program. The trust regarding crop insurance in the cascade is dissatisfactory and most of the farmers are not much aware of the benefits of crop insuarance. The only reason for insuring the paddylands is to get themselves qualified for the fertilizer subsidy given by the government. A scientific understanding is needed for them to insure their assets, life and properties. In order to create a better future for the farmers who live under minor irrigations, especially in the cascades of the DCZ of Sri Lanka, introduction of new CSA practices and the maintenance of good practices of traditional CSA of the Giribawa DSD are vital.

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The Mobile Phone as a "Swiss Army Knife": Empowerment Potentials of Mobile Phones for Female Heads of Households - Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Being the "fastest diffusing communication technology in human history", mobile phone is analogous to a "Swiss Army Knife". South Asia has become the region with the fastest growing market for mobile phone subscriptions and the mobile phone is ubiquitous in Sri Lanka. During the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in Female Heads of Households (FHHs), defined as women who are single, separated, widowed or divorced, never married or whose husbands have migrated for work, and are solely responsible for the day-to-day care and organisation of the household in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study explores how mobile phones function in empowering FHHs in the Trincomalee district, Sri Lanka, which is recovering from the civil war in the North and East of the country (1983 to 2009) and the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. Thus, this study is based on the interpretivist (Dilthey & Rickman, 1979; Weber, 1978; Weber, Gerth & Mills, 1991) paradigm, the theoretical underpinning of empowerment of Nalia Kabeer (2005) and methodological triangulation of using depth interviews, focus groups and an overt, non-participant observation in selected sites within the research setting. The findings indicate that the research participants used their mobile phones for diverse activities such as to communicate with others for their income-earning activities, to balance their family responsibilities and income activities and to maintain their social relationships. Further, it became apparent that the mobile industry in Sri Lanka offered opportunities for women of all three

ethnicities to be employed in related businesses. Hence, as the findings indicate, participants used their mobile phones to manage and coordinate their multiple roles in both public and private spheres. Thus, the mobile phone has become a “Swiss-army knife” in their lives.

Keywords:

empowerment, mobile phones, female heads of households, sri lanka

Introduction

Being the 'fastest diffusing communication technology in human history' (Castells, 2008, p. 447), and a highly convergent medium that incorporates communication, media, entertainment and information while being analogous to a 'Swiss Army Knife' (Boyd, 2005, p. 28) and referred to as a 'body part' (Oksman & Rautiainen, 2003, p. 293), the mobile phone has become an affordable and widely available Information and Communication Technology (ICT) around the world.

Since 2005, the rate of growth in subscriber numbers in developing countries has exceeded that in the developed world. South Asia has become the region with the fastest growing market for mobile phone subscriptions (International Telecommunication Union, 2011). Sri Lanka is the first country in South Asia to launch cellular mobile network and commercial 3G services (Gunawardana, 2007). The mobile phone is ubiquitous in Sri Lanka, with 29,048,708 subscriptions recorded in June 2021, exceeding the country's total population (Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Sri Lanka, 2021, p. 5). Smart phone adoption has increased dramatically in Sri Lanka between the fourth quarter of 2015 and the fourth quarter of 2016, from 29% to 41%, recording the second highest growth rate in smart phone adoption in Asia (Waring, 2017). However, the use of mobile phones as a tool for the empowerment of rural, disadvantaged women is hardly recognized at official policy or regulatory levels in the country and there have been few academic studies on them.

During the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in Female Heads of Households (FHHs), defined as women who are single, separated, widowed or divorced, never married or whose husbands have migrated for work, and are solely responsible for the day-to-day care and organization of the household in Sri Lanka. Recently, there were over one million FHHs recorded in the country, which amounts to

23% of all households, with most belonging to the age group between 40 and 59 years (Department of Census and Statistics, 2013, p. 9).

This increase has been particularly marked during the last few years, especially in the Eastern and Northern Provinces of the country. In August 2011, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs reported a total of 42,565 war widows in the Eastern Province and 16,936 in the Northern Province (ColomboPage, 2011), representing 18.6% of FHHs in the country (Eastern Provincial Council 2011, p. 144). Social isolation and exclusion are more marked among the Tamil and Muslim FHHs in the Eastern Province (Eastern Provincial Council, 2011, p. 144) due to the common cultural belief that widows are 'unlucky' or 'inauspicious', implying that they are the cause of their husbands' deaths or disappearances and the view that, due to being alone, they are 'sexually deprived' (Tambiah, 2004, p. 81). Widowhood, male migration for economic or political reasons and increased numbers of separations, desertions and divorces - often the result of early marriages hastily arranged by parents during the war years to protect young people from conscription by insurgents - had left many women as heads of their households once the war ended (ColomboPage, 2011; Eastern Provincial Council, 2011, p. 144).

Many widows in the Eastern Province are unable to claim the government welfare benefit available to FHHs, as their marriages or the deaths of their husbands were not officially recorded during periods of unrest and are therefore unable to prove their widow status. This also applies to women whose husbands had disappeared or went missing during the unrest and immediately thereafter (Eastern Provincial Council, 2011, p. 146). The low levels of education; younger age; trauma faced during the war; cultural stigma of widowhood, divorce and separation; and the lack of experience in being a head of the household have also made them poorer, isolated and socially excluded or ostracized from mainstream society while becoming vulnerable to male power within and outside their extended families. Even economically

stable women, such as those whose husbands have migrated for work, face challenges in maintaining their long-distance relationships while taking care of their families, financial matters and social obligations within their traditional societies. Therefore, their experiences are different from those of women who live in male-headed households or FHHs in less conservative societies, as they seek their own gender identity in a patriarchal society.

The above discussion illustrates the importance of studying the day-to-day use of mobile phones and their impact on the lives of FHHs, who struggle for their survival in a patriarchal society and may use mobile phones differently from other female users. Therefore, this study explores how mobile phones function in empowering female heads of households (FHHs) in the Trincomalee district, Sri Lanka, which is recovering from the civil war in the North and East of the country (1983 to 2009) and the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. The study investigates the empowerment these FHHs have achieved through the day-to-day use of the mobile phone.

Theoretical Framework

Thus, this study is based on the interpretivist (Dilthey & Rickman 1979; Weber 1978; Weber, Gerth & Mills 1991) paradigm and methodological triangulation of using in-depth interviews, focus groups and an overt, non-participant observation in selected sites within the research setting.

The Empowerment of Women

The empowerment of women in developing countries has become a buzzword in development projects, with the literature providing differing definitions and evaluations. Kabeer (2005, p. 13) defines *empowerment* as 'the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability'. Through empowerment, women can make strategic life choices on matters relevant to their lives, including place of residence, marriage, children,

freedom of movement and association. To make a meaningful choice and to be considered truly empowered, individuals must have alternative choices available to them.

Individuals may be prevented from making strategic choices about their lives due to institutional bias, cultural and ideological norms, and the potential personal and social costs that result from certain decisions (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). For example, a woman may be prevented from owning and using a mobile phone by her husband, who may become suspicious of her mobile phone use and accuse her of having an illicit affair. This could lead to marital conflicts or even divorce, which carry social stigma within many societies. To make meaningful strategic life choices, therefore, women require not only economic support but psychological, social and cultural support from society. Thus, empowerment is based on 'how people see themselves, their sense of self-worth' and 'how they are seen by those around them and their society' (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15).

Agency, resources, and achievements are interrelated dimensions of empowerment (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). *Agency* refers to 'the processes by which choices are made and put into effect', where people can make and implement choices positively without hindrance or resistance from others. Agency may be exercised in the suppression of the agency of another who is using their authority in a negative way. *Resources* - the second dimension of empowerment - are the 'medium through which agency is exercised' (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Due to their relative positions within a particular context, some members of an institution hold more power than others and are able to interpret 'rules, norms, and conventions' (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). If the family is taken as an institution, in many contexts, the husband would hold the decision-making power due to his position as the head of the household. He would therefore decide on the distribution of resources and their availability to others. Consequently, when a woman accesses resources as a dependent member of her family, she is unable to make strategic

choices at will. This is different in the case of women who are heads of households, when they have the power to make decisions for themselves and their families, enjoying full access to the family's resources, which empowers them to make strategic choices.

The next dimension, *achievement* - is the extent to which the potential for living the lives people want - is achieved or not (Kabeer, 2005). For example, rather than considering waged work as a sign of improvement on women's empowerment, it should be explored whether it has brought them a sense of independence and self-reliance in addition to meeting their survival needs (Kabeer, 2005). Explaining the interrelationships between agency, resources, and achievement, Kabeer (2005, p.15) differentiates between *passive agency* or 'actions taken when there is little choice' and *active agency* which is 'purposeful behaviour'.

Use of Mobile Phones by Women for Empowerment

The studies conducted in developing countries have explored different types of empowerment potentials of the mobile phone for women. The maintenance of family and kinship relationships has been the most sought out benefit from mobile phones by female mobile users in many developing countries, often having leapfrogged to mobile technology without first going through landline telephones. They also use it for emergencies and for personal safety and security (Bayes, Braun & Akhter, 1999; Castells, 2006; de Silva, Pulasinghe & Panditha, 2012; GSMA Connected Women & Altai Consulting, 2015; Hafkin, Huyer & Press, 2006; Handapangoda & Kumara, 2013; LIRNEasia, 2012; Murphy & Priebe, 2011; Schuler, Islam & Rottach, 2010; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford, 2012; Wanasundera, 2012; Wei & Lo, 2006; Zainudeen & Galpaya, 2015). Expanding and strengthening social networks among natal family members, relatives and friends have also been some of the main contributions of mobile phones to women's empowerment in developing countries (Doron, 2012b; Handapangoda & Kumara, 2013; Hoan, Chib & Mahalingham, 2016; Jouhki, 2013; LIRNEasia, 2012;

Murphy & Priebe, 2011; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford, 2012; Tenhunen, 2014b).

The literature on mobile phones and women in developing countries has given special emphasis to women's economic empowerment. The mobile phone has been identified for its capability to allow women to directly earn an income for themselves with new business ventures or to increase the profits of their existing ones. The capacity of the mobile phone to lead to a direct income for women was primarily identified through the Village Pay Phone (VPP) program in Bangladesh, introduced by the Grameen Bank (GB) in 1994 via the establishment of Grameen Telecom (GT) - a non-profit rural telecom company and Grameen Phone - a for-profit MNO in operation since 1997. By 2007, VPP were established in over 50,000 villages in 61 of 64 districts in Bangladesh with the total number of VPPs involved being 297,079 (Hultberg, 2008, p. 3) with 95% being women. Due to its success, this program was replicated in Cambodia, Haiti, Indonesia, the Philippines, Rwanda and Uganda (Agar, 2013; Lee, 2009).

Women engaged in mobile payphone business in countries such as Bangladesh, Uganda and Nigeria were able to improve their economic and living standards by lending mobile phones (Aminuzzaman, 2002; Bayes, Braun & Akhter, 1999; Comfort & Dada, 2009; Macueve et al., 2009; Kyomuhendo, 2009). Due to the financial contribution these women make to their families, their husbands stopped abusing them, while others left their abusive husbands once they started earning an income (Kyomuhendo, 2009; Masika & Bailur, 2015; Ullah & Hultberg, 2009).

In addition to its capability to facilitate a direct income, the mobile phone has been beneficial for livelihood activities, particularly for small businesses and micro-entrepreneurs such as female fish mongers and fish processors, market women, rural farming women and women who ran errands. They were able to save and reduce their travel

time and costs in seeking information; developing their credibility and trust among customers and suppliers; obtaining prices and orders; checking availability of goods; locating and contacting clients and suppliers; comparing and negotiating prices; obtaining better prices and markets; and enhancing skills, because of their mobile phone use. (Abraham, 2006; Aker, 2008; De Silva, Pulasinghe & Panditha, 2012; Donner & Escobari, 2009; Jensen, 2007; LIRNEasia, 2012; Macueve et al., 2009; Masika & Bailur, 2015; Murphy & Priebe, 2011; Komunte, 2015; Sreekumar, 2011; Svensson & Larsson, 2015; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford, 2012; Traore & Sane, 2009; Wanasundera, 2012).

The mobile phone is considered a solution to information poverty, allowing housebound women in the Global South to obtain timely, up-to-date and accurate information on health, electricity, water and security services, and information from administrative and political authorities (Aminuzzaman, Baldersheim & Jamil, 2003; Goggin & Clark, 2009; Handapangoda & Kumara, 2013; Hoan, Chib & Mahalingham, 2016; Lee, 2009). Mobile phones assist women to organize doctors' visits (Sylvester, 2016), obtain assistance when facing illnesses or deaths in the family (Asongu & De Moor, 2015; Comfort & Dada, 2009). Social maintenance is considered a traditional responsibility of women in developing countries (Aminuzzaman, 2002; Momsen, 2004; Moser, 1993). In this respect, mobile phones have enhanced the effectiveness of women's agency, assisting them to cope with their responsibilities, more than enhancing the transformative forms of agency, such as challenging and changing their traditional roles and responsibilities (Kabeer, 2005).

Methodology

The data collection of this qualitative study involved methodological triangulation of using more than one data collection method in one study (Denzin, 1970; Neuman, 2011, pp. 164-5; Silverman, 2006, pp. 291-2). Hence, 30 in-depth interviews and six focus

group discussions (FGDs) with FHHs and an overt, non-participant observation of relevant settings were employed as data collection methods in this study.

The project obtained ethics clearance using the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) meant for high risk projects via the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC) (Reference Number 2014 -125).

The Research Site

The Trincomalee District - the research site of this study - is an ethnically and culturally diverse society that had been significantly transformed by several crises it had faced during last few decades such as the civil war (1983-2009) and the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. Thus, this site was suitable for gathering rich data required to answer the research questions and thereby achieve the specific research objectives (Neuman, 2011, p. 429).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted between September, 2014 to February, 2015, mainly in two Divisional Secretary's (DS) Divisions in the area - viz. Trincomalee Town and Gravets and Kinniya of the Trincomalee District. Of the 11 DS divisions in the district, these two were selected as they record the highest number of widows living in the region. Time constraints, issues of accessibility of locations and the required ethnic compositions of the sample of participants were among the other reasons that influenced the selection of these locations.

Volunteer, purposive and snowball sampling or referral methods (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2005) were used to identify and recruit ten participants per each ethnic group (Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim). FHH participants for the six FGDs of six to nine participants each (a total of 41 individuals) were recruited using purposive sampling to represent all

three ethnicities in the DS divisions of Trincomalee Town and Gravets and Kinniya.

The *Grounded Theory Method* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a systematic method of data analysis and constructing theories grounded in the data was used for the data analysis of the study. Initially, the researcher read through several interview transcripts and field notes to be familiarized and identify the possible common categories or themes that could be generated from data. Then, open coding or initial coding, axial coding and selective coding methods were carried out to identify categories and the relationship between these categories to come up with main themes of the findings. Nvivo - a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) - was used to facilitate the data analysis process of the study in constructing themes/codes by coding texts, retrieving them, writing memos and linking them with codes and data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; QSR international, 2015).

Findings

The findings indicate that the research participants used their mobile phones for diverse activities. Many participants reported using their mobile phones 'only to talk' or for 'basic conversations', similar to previous findings with women in India (Doron, 2012b, p. 422; Jouhki, 2013). Nonetheless, their responses throughout the data collection indicated that they used their mobile phones for a wide range of activities. Towards the end of their interviews and discussions, the participants acknowledged the mobile phone as highly valuable and integral to their everyday lives.

Use in Income-generating Activities

Participants often used their mobile phones to communicate with others for their income-earning activities. Vanathy - a divorcee who worked as a marketing and sales executive in Dubai - was on home leave during the data collection. However, she continued to attend to

the requirements of her foreign clients and superiors over the mobile phone. She also used her mobile phone to manage her properties and construction projects in Sri Lanka.

Nayana, Gayani and Dharsha - three government employees - used their mobile phones to inform their offices or supervisors when they needed to take leave or would be late for work, while their co-workers would contact them regarding work-related matters. Since Nayana's work involved night shifts, she kept her mobile phone with her all the time. Her supervisor would inform her each day of her work location, which changed often.

> Nayana: I must communicate often with our supervisors … when my work partner is sent to another 'point' [work location] [like this morning] … I had to call [my work partner] about three times [from my mobile] … she has gone to another point this morning ….

For instance, due to Kumudini's role as the *Graama Niladhari* (the government officer appointed to her village), she was obliged to share her contact information with all village residents, who often contacted her throughout the day, seeking solutions to their problems or check her availability in her office.

> Kumudini: They tell me things like when a shop is robbed … 'shop has been broken into … two people have taken all the stuff', like that, when someone has passed away … if a child did not return from the school ….

Many participants frequently used their mobile phones to contact suppliers, clients, customers, employees and employers. These included Karuna, a supervisor with a construction firm which built roads and lakes; Benazir, a sub-agent for a company in Colombo that sent women abroad for work, as well as a moneylender and a manager of rental properties; Anula, a hotel, restaurant and bar owner with

approximately 20 employees; Sivapriya, a small and medium entrepreneur (SME) who owned a grinding mill and ran a dairy farm; participants in the first Tamil FGD, who were suppliers of goods and services for weddings and other functions; and several participants in the second Sinhalese FGD, who worked as suppliers of food packs and snack items. Subuhani, a Muslim woman who had been abandoned by her husband, sold seasonal fruits to schoolchildren. In order to facilitate the smooth functioning of her business, she borrowed her younger brother's mobile phone to contact her fruit supplier - the only person she contacted over the mobile phone - about once a week to arrange his delivery. Mobile phones saved these participants money and time. Before owning or accessing a mobile phone, they had faced difficulties in finding and acquiring goods.

A participant in the first Tamil FGD, who hired water pumps and portable generators, began receiving more orders once she included her mobile numbers on the name board displayed in front of her home. Other participants in this FGD, as well as Vanathy, Anula and Kumudini, had business cards, name boards, notice boards, web sites and magazine advertisements carrying their mobile numbers. These forms of advertising helped them to increase their customer bases.

Further, they used more-than-voice functions of the mobile phone such as the camera, Bluetooth and voice recording facilities in income-generating activities. Kumudini and Karuna used their mobile phone cameras to take photos of their work-related activities, which they added to illustrate the reports that they submitted to their superiors. Kumudini would send these photos to her co-workers using Bluetooth, when required.

Nayana benefitted from one of the recorded incoming calls as evidence to prove she had followed the directions given by her supervisor and thus protect herself and her job in case it led to a disciplinary inquiry later.

The mobile phone facilitated the banking activities of several participants. Anula could receive SMS notifications when cheques were deposited to her bank account. Nayana and Amudha could contact the bank over their mobile phones to verify whether their salaries or remittances had been deposited in to their accounts. Various participants' husbands, children and other family members who worked abroad or in other regions of the country informed the participants once they transferred remittances, as found in Potnis (2011, p. 41), Aminuzzaman *et al*. (2002), and Richardson, Ramirez and Haq (2000). Amila used her mobile phone frequently to communicate with the bank when organizing a loan to build a restaurant.

These echo the findings of earlier studies on the use of mobile phones to support and enhance income-earning activities of women and SMEs in various sectors (Bayes, Braun & Akhter 1999; De Silva, Pulasinghe & Panditha 2012; Donner & Escobari 2010; GSMA mWomen 2012; LIRNEasia 2011; Roldan & Wong 2008; Sundari 2010; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford 2012; Traore & Sane 2009).

The Mobile Industry as an Income-earning Activity for Women

During the field observations, it became apparent that the mobile industry in Sri Lanka offered opportunities for women of all three ethnicities to be employed in related businesses. For instance, the female Sinhalese mobile payment provider interviewed was in the business of providing mobile payment services, and sold SIM cards and mobile related accessories for nearly seven years. At the time of data collection, she was a successful entrepreneur, invited to participate in many training programs at different locations conducted by MNOs on how to run a successful mobile payment business. A young Muslim mobile payment service provider interviewed in Kinniya had been in the business for about eight years, even refusing another employment opportunity in favor of maintaining the current position. She was instructed and trained by Dialog and Airtel representatives on their products and services, avoiding the need for her to attend training

programs elsewhere. Even though Muslim women are not allowed to do business with unknown males, her family had allowed her to be engaged in this business as she did not have to work in close physical proximity to men.

Coordinating Income-earning Activities and/or Family Responsibilities

Being heads of their households, participants also had to attend to the responsibilities of their homes as mothers, grandmothers, wives and, in some cases, daughters of elderly parents. Mobile phones were essential for them to balance their family affairs and income activities.

Gayani incorporated her mobile phone into her family and work chores, and said that that it was used more for family matters than for income earning.

> Gayani: I'm afraid when I'm [at work]. So, I'll ask whether the child has returned home [from school or tuition classes] ... so all those things could be done because of the phone, if not, I'd have to take time off work to go home to check ... I do it every day….

According to Gayani, she would have been forced to give up her job if she did not have a mobile phone when her husband went abroad three years earlier.

> Because of the phone, I can balance things, if not I wouldn't have [continued to work] [laughs], there was a time that I even decided to resign from work, [but] I'm not suggesting I didn't quit because of the phone, but I can do things [over the phone]…

Vanathy, Nayana and two other Sinhalese and Tamil FGD participants also used their mobile phones often to communicate with their elderly mothers who cared for their children while they were at work. Vanathy and Nayana contacted their daughters' teachers when their daughters

were late to arrive home or were unwell, and with regards to parent-teacher meetings. Amila had given her mobile number to her sons' teachers, because her younger son suffered from asthma. Nayana, Anula and Amudha often contacted through mobile phones their children who lived in other districts for their education. Because Dharsha's workplace was quite far from her home, she kept her mobile phone with her to monitor the well-being of her elderly mother, who was at home alone. She also maintained her mother's mobile phone, regularly checking its credit limit and battery life.

Although the newly resettled village in which the participants of the first Sinhalese FGD lived following the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004 was situated about 10 kilometers from their previous village in Trincomalee, their children continued attending the same schools as before. They had to take irregular and unreliable public transport for a journey of about 45 minutes and their parents often worried until their children returned home, especially during the civil conflict. Many parents started using a mobile phone because their children could use their teachers' phones to call their parents if they would be late in getting home. When there were disruptions in the public bus service due to strikes, participants could ask their relatives living in Trincomalee town to pick up their children from school for them.

Additionally, participants used their mobile phones to coordinate transportation needs such as arranging *tuk tuk* (taxi or auto) for themselves and their family members, to contact health and government officials such as the *Graama Niladhari,* the *Samurdhi* officer and Divisional Secretariat officers and other services such as, emergency services, water and electricity services, dressmakers, food providers, and to check the availability of gas used for cooking in shops.

Hence, mobile phones facilitated participants' access to timely and accurate information needed for effective decision-making or as a solution to information poverty and to obtain information on essential

services such as health and transportation (Bayes, Braun & Akhter 1999; Goggin & Clark 2009; Lee 2009; Potnis 2011a). Further, they allowed participants to work outside their homes and still be available to handle both work and family matters (Lee 2009; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford 2012; Traore & Sane 2009).

Participants' ability to coordinate different aspects of their everyday lives empowered them, many admitting that they felt proud and glad they could handle 'everything' and 'be a man and a woman at the same time' (Nayana). Hence, as Handapangoda and Kumara (2013) argue, the mobile phone expanded their range of choices and actions in their daily responsibilities and lives. However, as argued by feminists (Hjorth 2008; Rakow & Navarro 1993; Wajcman 1991), participants' duties as responsible mothers, grandmothers and daughters, and the expected gender roles for a Sri Lankan woman, were reinforced in their use of the mobile phone, in addition to their roles as breadwinners, contributors to the family economy and heads of their families.

Mobile Phones for Social Connectedness and a Sense of Security

Participants often used their mobile phones to communicate with family members, relatives and friends to coordinate family and work activities as found in several past studies (Castells 2006; Chew, Ilavarasan & Levy 2010; Doron 2012b; Handapangoda & Kumara 2013; Hoan, Chib & Mahalingham 2016; Jouhki 2013; Moyal 1992; Rakow 1992; Tenhunen 2014b), to alleviate loneliness or isolation, for a sense of connectedness and security.

Ganga lived alone with her three children who are under the age of six while her husband served in the military. Her husband and mother often contacted her, giving her a sense of security and reminding her to check the battery life of her mobile phone and to keep it close to her. The mobile phone helped when she was home alone, especially during the period of her pregnancies.

> ... I had the number of [one of my neighbors] ... and my mother said, 'give us a call immediately if you feel any pain'.

However, she described her present life as 'bored and lonely sometimes' since her husband was away. To relieve her from loneliness, she used her mobile phone to keep in touch with about 10 of her friends with whom she had worked while in the military. Apart from calling her children and grandchildren, Malini often talked to her friends living abroad with whom she had worked in the past.

Rashida, Mahira and Azhara, whose husbands worked abroad, said that they had the feeling of having their husbands near them due to their mobile phones. In the past, Azhara had to run to her next-door neighbour's home to receive calls from her husband. She was pleased to have her own mobile phone now because,

> He didn't talk at night [in the past], he rang me only during the daytime … now he talks 'anytime' [laughs] … I only hang up when I'm sleepy … if not we talk all the time.

These experiences show how relationships in transnational families depend on long distance communication, bringing a virtual co-presence or connected presence and feelings of togetherness to overcome family distance (Madianou & Miller, 2011).

As women's safety and security are based on social relationships such as marriages and family connections (Hyndman, 2008; Hyndman & De Alwis, 2003), participants' fears of being alone and their feelings of insecurity were understandable, and are considered the main challenges FHHs face in Sri Lanka.

As the wives of fishermen, Ramya and Chamila were unable to contact their husbands when they were at sea for approximately two months at a time. To ease their loneliness and isolation, Ramya talked to her mother every day and Chamila to her mother-in-law, who worked abroad, once a week using Viber.

The participants in the first FGD, who had resettled in a new village after being affected by the Boxing Day Tsunami, felt it was useful to have a mobile phone to immediately contact and inform their family members and relatives living in Trincomalee town in an emergency, as none lived close to their new homes. Similarly, previous studies in India and Nigeria found that learning news from their natal families, immediately informing their relatives of happenings and handling the arrangements for funerals (of the frequent HIV/AIDS-related deaths in Nigeria) in their families were principal uses of the mobile phone for women (Comfort & Dada 2009; Tenhunen 2014b).

The mobile phone has thus become vital in tightening family relationships (Wei & Lo 2006) and strengthening social capital (Bourdieu 2001; Handapangoda & Kumara 2013; Tenhunen 2014b). The participants' natal families were the main source of support, as found in previous research (Doron 2012b; Handapangoda & Kumara 2013; LIRNEasia 2011; Tenhunen 2014b). The mobile phone minimized geographical and social spaces for these participants (Ling 2004; Horst and Miller 2006; Donner 2009), enabling them to contact their loved ones without leaving their homes or neighborhoods (Handapangoda & Kumara 2013; Jouhki 2013; Tenhunen 2014a) even though physical mobility was not a barrier to them, except for the Muslim women in the sample.

Mobile Phones and Domestic Violence

The mobile phone has also become important for participants in tackling domestic violence. Sameera recalled how the mobile phone had saved her life when she and her husband had fought in their home in the past, as follows:

> At the time, when I had a problem at home, I could quickly contact my neighbors because I had my mobile phone with me; because of that only, I could escape from the danger that would have happened to me.

Kumudini - the *Graama Niladhari* - advised her villagers to report any violent incident to her, including domestic violence in their families or neighborhoods. Similarly, women in Morocco and India have benefitted from mobile phones in domestic violence situations because they could inform legal centres or natal families of abuse (Lee 2009; Tacchi, Kitner & Crawford 2012; Tafnout & Timjerdine 2009; Tenhunen 2008).

Conclusion

As the findings indicate, since the mobile phones are indispensable in their lives and because its advantages outweigh the disadvantages, it can be argued that the use of mobile phones had expanded their capability. Hence, as income earners, mothers, wives, daughters, grandmothers, friends and neighbors, they used their mobile phones to manage and coordinate their multiple roles in both public and private spheres. Thus, the mobile phone has become a 'swiss-army knife' in their lives. Further, the participants had expanded their capabilities, well-being and agency, using mobile phones to enhance their income-earning activities, family well-being, safety and security - aspects they strongly desired in their lives and were unachievable in the past.

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