

**A STUDY OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE CASTE-BASED ECONOMIC IN
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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Abstract

There was a strong, self-sufficient social and economic pattern based on the system of caste in the traditional society. However, since later changes in the social system caused by foreign invasions, the caste-based social and economic system collapsed. Therefore, the skillful craft of knowledge had collapsed, and the social system based on it had broken up. Anyhow, craftsmen engaged in traditional jobs can also be seen in modern society. The problem of the research was, why does the caste-based economy fail to use modern technology? The main purpose of this research was to understand the reasons behind the caste economy for not using modern technology. Palpola village in Millaniya secretariat division of Kaluthara district of Western Province has selected as the research field. This is a comparative study about the former study which has done over six decades and the prevailing condition (Professor Bryce Ryan's research "Sinhalese Village" - 1958). In this research comparative method and historical method were used as the research methods. Observation, Interviews and survey methods were used as the techniques of collecting data. Primary data were obtained through field study and secondary data were obtained by referring the relevant books and articles including Professor Bryce Ryan's book (Sinhalese Village). The results of the research that modern technology has not been used because of the caste traditions. Therefore, craftsmen products did not enough to fulfill modern requirements.

Keywords: self-sufficient, caste, foreign invasions, skillful craft, modern society

Introduction

The man born in this world is similar to the biological features, but the late social phenomena have been caused to various inequalities. Created a system in the society which was on the base of these changes, the sociologist called that situation is social stratification. Accordingly, factors such as gender, age, caste, ethnicity and class have been introduced into social stratification factors. (Silva, 2005, Page 11) According to these factors, gender, age, caste, ethnicity layers were ascribed status and class was an achieved status. All these factors are common in any society except in the caste system in this classification, while the caste system is a unique system of South Asia.

The caste system created in Indian society is unique to South Asia. The Indian caste system has been classified as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Untouchable, that has religious background. (Basham, 1995, Page 157) From the beginning, a clear hierarchy of caste was observed in Indian society and established formal social structure depends on that. That caste system was established in Sri Lankan society as a result of various invasions and migrations. The Indian caste system was a religious aspect and the Sinhalese caste system was re-created by craft aspect of the Sri Lankan society. According to that, the Sinhalese caste system created a simple, self-sufficient social and economic

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system. Through this, a systematic social order was established and gradually a culture related to the country's native caste was established.

According to the geographical location of Sri Lanka and the country's resources, they had to face Oriental and Western invasions. The result was the combination of the social and cultural features of the Empires with the local society. Sri Lankan society did not have much influence change by Oriental invasions. However, the western imperialist culture contributed to change the social, economical and political sectors of this country. They tried approach to break the strong foundation of the caste system. As a result of that, the overall social structure of the caste gradually changed and there were major changes in the socio-economic pattern. The collapse of the simple and self-sufficient subsistence economic system because of that emerged Social crises. While the collapse of the caste system, so the labor involved was free and created a money base system in the society. The social layer was decided on money and that created a society by representing capitalists of upper society and proletariats of lower society. Further, the caste was not regarded as a strong social determinant, and the social structure was formed through the class system.

Foreign market created in Sri Lanka and expanded merchandise that was increased attractiveness through in Sri Lankans. The caste-based system failed as a result of failure to compete produced indigenous handcrafts with foreign merchandise. Indigenous craft did not use new technology, and the economic system that was associated with the caste weakened so that being moved to other alternative jobs.

Introduction to Social Stratification and Theories

The society consists of layers in a specific order. These layers affect all processes in society and different according to society. Accordingly, social stratification is a combination of social layers that are in the society and which help its process. (Silva, 2005, Page 02) There are two main perspectives in this social stratification. One of them is the Objective factors, which is based on physical inequality based on income, housing conditions, property. The other category is Subjective factors, which is based on the upper and lower in the society. Because of the same and unequal in these perspectives, it is important to investigation at theories.

Karl Marx as a social thinker has presented a theory on the social inequality. According to that theory, a class system is created on the basis of the production process and the human contribution to that process. (Silva, 2005, Page 03) Analysis of this, the product pattern and the class system are closely related and for these reasons divided as the capitalists and proletariats. German sociologist Max Weber introduced three dimensions of the social stratification to the social system. Those are Social class, social dignity and social power. (Silva, 2005, Page 08) Weber has pointed out that there is a clear link between these three characteristics, and the reasons of the indicating that social inequality is a subjective. Vilfredo Pareto has been introducing as a social pyramid. The society is stratified according to how the majority of the population is handling by the minority elite. (Silva, 2005, Page 09) He presented a justification view of social inequality. Determination of elites or non-elites has been base on personal talents. These sociologists such as Marx, Weber and Pareto presented their theories of social stratification based on Western European society.

Social stratification factors

In addition of the theories of social stratification, there are a number of social factors that have been identified by various determinants. These can be categorized ascribed status as inherited from birth and achieved status of human activity after the results of birth. Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Caste and Class are considered in social stratification to be the main determinants. Of these, the class is an achieved status, and all other factors are ascribed status. (Silva, 2005, Page 11) All these factors can be seen in any society, with the exception of caste. Accordingly, the caste is unique to South Asia and is a social determinant factor that directly influenced the social, cultural structure of that society.

The origin and development of the Sinhala caste system

The caste system was origin in Indian society is processing with religious context. The caste was not only a belief, but a symbol of purity. The caste was associated with everyday life and that had not been challenged. (Dias, 2003, Page 159) Accordingly, the Brahman was highest caste and regarded as deserving of offering the sacrifices. (Basham, 1995, Page 160) The governance and the defense were in-charge of the Kshatriya and the Vaishya was engaged in trade. Shudra was considered a low caste and Untouchable caste was too.

The caste system conducted in India was diffusion in Sri Lanka due to various invasions and migration, and the caste was reestablished inherently in the Sinhalese society. Accordingly, the Sinhala caste system was implemented based on the crafts without a religious foundation. Within that created a simple, self-sufficient social and economic pattern and the social layers were formally framed. The hierarchy of the Sinhala caste system was depends on the craftsmen performance and amount of caste population. (Jayasiri, Edirisinghe, 2010, Page 92) Accordingly, there was a caste classification as upcountry, low country and Jaffna, and spread sub-categories.

New trends of the caste system

From the past, Sri Lanka was often experienced to invasions and migrations in the Oriental, but did not caused to social changes. Western colonialism was the main factor in changing the traditional Sinhalese caste system. In 1505, the Portuguese and in 1658 the Dutch seized the coastal provinces. They needed to raw materials for production and make a foreign market. In comparison to the period of Portuguese and Dutch, British rule was a major influence on the Sinhala caste system. In 1796, the British occupied the coastal Provinces and conquest of the whole island in 1815. Identified as the caste system spread throughout the country have been the main obstacles to the needs of the British. Therefore, the imperialists has been adopted various actions to destroy the caste system in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, action was taken to abolish the system of work, merger administration, expand education, expanding Western culture and Catholicism, directing the public towards commercial cultivation and giving money for labour. For this reason, create a contradictory view against for the caste system and freed man labour from the caste. Result of that was the created of a money-based social and economic system. So that the craftsmen get away from their caste and gradually turned to their alternative jobs. The local Trade market was filled with foreign goods and there was no demand for caste made.

The traditional society began to change so the whole society based on the currency. The result was a change in the systematic caste hierarchy, class system created as a new stratification factor. The background for the class system was established by the colonialists.

Problem Statement

The empirical problem is basic element in research. This means of that a problem must be developed in order to carry out research according to scientific theories. In particular, the validity of the conclusion given in sociological research depends on the empirical problem. According to this theory, the problem of casting was a significant phenomenon for the South Asian society and the problem was developed on the scientific principle in this study. The research problem is why does the caste-based economy fail to use modern technology?

Although the caste was origin in Indian society, the recreate in Ceylon was based on the crafts. This process has a long history and gradually changes have taken place. For this reason, western influence was more powerful than the oriental. As the result of that, structural and qualitative changes have taken place of caste system in modern society. In this research among the use of technical strategy and changes in the caste system were studied.

Table 1. Classification of Caste role

Level of the society	Name of caste	Occupation(s) of Caste
1 st Level	Goyigama caste	
	Radala	Proprietor of land
	Govi	Cultivation
	Patti	Livestock
2 nd Level	Coastal area caste	
	Karawa	Fishing
	Salagama	Cinnamon peeler
	Durawa	Toddy tappers
	Hunu	Gray lime industry
3 rd Level	Service caste	
	Navandanna (Achari)	Blacksmith/ Artisans
	Rajaka (Hena)	Washerman
	Wahumpura (Hakuru/Dewa)	Made Jaggery/ Farmed
	Badahala (Kumbal)	Potters
	Welladura / Bodhi	Sacrificer
	Pannadura	Elephant keeper / Grass cutters
	Berava / Nekathi	Traditional drummers / Agricultural wage laborers
Bathgama / Padu	Servant / Soldiers	
4 th Level	Untouchable	
	Gahala	Garbage refinement
	Kinnara	Made Mats/ Menial servant / Grass cutter
	Rodi/ Huwali	Made Besoms and Brooms/ Suppliant

(Silva, 2005, Page 29), https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste_system_in_Sri_Lanka

Objectives of the Research

The success of research depends on its objectives, if it is successfully represented in the data. According to that, the objectives are guiding to the researcher. Therefore, research objectives should be developed according to scientific methods. Caste system is a social phenomenon, and developing objectives are complex for the objectivity. Therefore the purpose of the study is understood the reasons behind the caste economy not use modern technology.

The caste-related economic system in the past was the main factor in making self-sufficient in the society. Everything in the life of human was related with caste. It was inherited, and the sure name, occupation, and marriages are depending on the caste. Because the Western colonialism influenced every field, gradually society has been change. The result was the collapse of the caste-based economic system.

A special feature of colonialism was the establishment of Western culture in the country. Foreign technology with foreign goods gradually used the people of the country. The craftsmen used traditional

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techniques from long time and they have not been so enthusiastic about the new technology. According to that, it was difficult for compete traditional products with western products. As a result, the caste based economic system was accelerating of failure. If the purpose of this research was to influence the use of new techniques to break down the caste based economy, finding out why not use such techniques.

Importance of the Research

Since past times the Sinhalese society has functioned in traditional methods. Within that, religion, occupation, education and beliefs are the result of traditional methods. The caste is a common phenomenon to the social, cultural, political and economical methods. The Sinhala caste system was based on craft. The changing of the caste was adversely affected to the whole social system. The result was a gradual weakening of the subsistence economy and self-sufficiency. Although commercial cultivation has been high economic returns, within the economic collapse has created social issues. Social problems were increasing in society so value increased of the caste system. Westernization and new technologies were introduced to society. According to this situation, it is timely to study the impact of the new technology and collapse of the caste-based economy.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is the key element in the objectivity of research. For that, it is suitable to use a scientific method. In studying social phenomena following this principle can be develop the objectivity and reliability of the research. Accordingly, the study on the challenges facing the caste-based economic in contemporary society, was used of a formal scientific method.

Caste is not only a social phenomenon, but also a major factor in all of society actions. In this research, the study of the social and economic phenomena of past and modern society was use comparative method and historical method as research methodology. In this research, the observation, interviews and survey methods were used as data collection techniques. The caste related books, previous research and Millaniya secretariat divisional office report were used as fulfilled the secondary data requirements. In addition, the Sinhalese Village book written by American sociologist Professor Bryce Ryan in the 1950 decades also had used as a secondary data. The primary data requirements of the research were fulfilled through field data and information. Before six decades ago, American sociologist Professor Bryce Ryan who had done a formal social research on the caste system. The same research field was used for present research. Palpola village in Millaniya secretariat division of Kaluthara district of Western Province has selected as the research field. Because of the capable of studying the changes taking place of the contemporary society and traditional caste, it has been selected for study.

Finding of the Research

The Sinhalese caste system strongly functioned in the traditional society. All caste was respected because they fulfilled all the needs of society in caste. Therefore, any caste wasn't separated from the society. This situation gradually changed after the Western colonization. Because of the transformation of the society changed everything related to the caste was changed. Social elite on the land tenure has been changed to the money. Therefore gradually a money-based social class system was created in the country. The study of impact of the technology that was the result of westernization has been done in this research. American sociologist Professor Bryce Ryan's research field which was studied also used in this research. In that purpose it was to compare past and present conditions.

The traditional Pelpolagama studied by Professor Bryce Ryan has been now divided into three Gramaseva Divisions. In 1980, for the convenience of the administration, Pelpolagama (643), Punsiripura (643-A) and Imbulahena (643-B) have been allocated. In this research, the traditional Pelpolagama is point out of the Professor Ryan's research field. A special attention was paid to the caste structure of the field to achieve the objectives of the research.

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Table 2. Caste population in the research field

Village	Gender	Govigama	Badahela	Rada	Karawa	Durawa	Salagama	Total
Pelpolagama	Female	676	42	5	0	0	0	723
	Male	586	37	4	0	0	0	627
	Total	1262	79	9	0	0	0	1350
Punsiripura	Female	873	0	3	68	12	17	973
	Male	809	0	3	57	12	16	897
	Total	1682	0	6	125	24	33	1870
Imbulahena	Female	181	0	0	14	7	6	208
	Male	151	0	0	11	5	5	172
	Total	332	0	0	25	12	11	380
Traditional Pelpolagama		3276	79	15	150	36	44	3600

Source: author's field observations.

In the traditional Pelpolagama which had been studied by Ryan, there are three castes only lived in area which were Govigama, Badahela and Rada. According to the research findings, at the present the six castes are living in the villages of Pelpolagama, Punsiripura and Imbulahena. Karawa, Durawa and Salagama caste have been added to the traditional Pelpolagama. There are some of the factors that contributed to the increase of the caste and the population. One of the reason is new residents have joined the housing schemes that were implemented in this area. The Thisaranagama and Gangasiripura schemes were created for the displaced by Tsunami and Floods. The Isuru Uyana housing scheme was built in this area for the displaced by construction of the Southern Expressway. As the result of that, people from different caste groups in other areas joined the village population. All the traditional villagers worked for their caste and thereby directly contributed to a self-sufficient economy. Therefore, they did not face the economic problems. Due to changes in the caste system, villagers gradually left out from their caste duties.

Table 3. Occupations in the research field

Village	Gender	State Job	Temporary Job	Private Sector	Self Employee	Foreign Job	Un - employed	Total
Pelpolagama	Female	18	53	184	134	3	157	549
	Male	16	49	195	111	5	120	496
	Total	34	102	379	245	8	277	1045
Punsiripura	Female	11	109	195	187	11	210	723
	Male	42	110	178	167	5	187	689
	Total	53	219	373	354	16	397	1412
Imbulahena	Female	7	18	48	31	2	45	151
	Male	10	45	29	5	1	32	122
	Total	17	63	77	36	3	77	273
Total		104	384	829	635	27	751	2730

Source: author's field observations.

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Six decades ago, the traditional Pelpolagama villagers worked only their caste role so that their economic condition was good. Therefore, there were not unemployment issues. Also the social network functioned properly. But, at the present, did not work of the caste role, and most represent to be moving to other jobs and self-employment. Also the number of unemployed has increased. As the result of that, social and economical problems seem to have been created. Similarly, the caste system has been weakened and the villagers had been referred to the new jobs.

The traditional method of education in Sri Lanka functioned in the round of the family. Its aim was to teach of the craft. But the colonialists used the education to weaken the caste system. As a result, people were able to select a job based on their ability. Therefore the traditional caste system collapsed.

Table 4. Education level in the research field

Village	Gender	No attended	Up to grade 5	Up to grade 8	Up to grade 10	Up to G.C.E. (O/L)	Up to G.C.E. (A/L)	Degree or above	Total
Pelpolagama	Female	17	28	97	255	188	78	13	676
	Male	19	24	57	209	228	49	8	594
	Total	36	52	154	464	416	127	21	1270
Punsiripura	Female	33	112	168	256	230	98	3	900
	Male	23	67	201	223	225	90	0	829
	Total	56	179	369	479	455	188	3	1729
Imbulahena	Female	6	7	23	71	48	31	2	188
	Male	10	12	24	66	33	12	1	158
	Total	16	19	47	137	81	43	3	346
Total		108	250	570	1080	952	358	27	3345

Source: author's field observations.

These data point out that most of the villagers are in higher educated and which was one of the reasons left out from traditional jobs. The land proprietors are elites in the traditional society. The power that the land possessed during the traditional period was gradually based on the money. As a result, people's attention to the land was weakened. This situation was also shown in the research field.

Table 5. Usage of land in the research field

Usage of land	Pelpolagama	Punsiripura	Imbulahena	Total
Cultivated land (Rubber)	78	34	7	119
Non cultivated land	27	13	11	51
Tea cultivation	15	14	7	36
Cultivated vegetable	9	6	2	17
Paddy field (cultivated)	31	13	5	49
Paddy field (fallow)	102	48	37	187
Home land	224	129	47	400
Total	486	257	116	859

Source: author's field observations.

While Ryan was studying period lands had highly important in the society. As the result of that, land use was effectively in traditional society. However, the present research was point out that situation has changed. According to the research, the fallow land has increased. For that, the main reasons are the implementation of development projects in this area and left out the caste activities. In analyzing the research data, it appears that only 25% of the total land area are using in the present society.

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It is clear from the research data that there was a formal caste system in that society. Because of this, it is always a tendency to conform to tradition is also can be seen today. Villagers had to use different techniques but were slowly moving. The craftsmen have always tried to use traditional equipment. Some of the craftsmen rarely used technical ways that had primary level technology.



Source: author’s field observations.

In present society used technical potter wheel instead traditional potter wheel. This was intended to expedite the production of goods needed for competitive markets. Because of the lack of money and the slow interest for it, they paid slow attention in advanced technology.



Source: author’s field observations.

Transport is essential for Govigama caste work. There were new methods for this, but it could be seen, mostly traditional methods are being used.

Conclusion

The traditional caste system was established in the Sri Lankan traditional society. Because of the later varies influences that society was gradually changing. The impact of modern technologies is one of those main influences. Several conclusions could be drawn from the research had been done on the caste based economic system. In the analysis of the data from the research, the craftsmen in this area proved to be using the most basic level technology. The reason is the lack of knowledge and capital for the use of modern technology. Usually, using technology means expecting benefits such as work convenience, efficiency and productivity. But, the lack of benefits will give craftsmen a negative attitude about technologies, as craftsmen do not use them. Another conclusion identified by research is shown below. The features of alternative goods use of technology include the high quality, attractiveness, low price and availability of products. The manufactured goods were failed by craftsmen, to compete with these alternative goods. Another conclusion that the cultivators do not use modern techniques is the

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left out of their caste work. Farmers are reluctant to use technologies such as planting, harvesting, using poison and fertilizer. Therefore, their yield of crops appeared to be low. Craftsmen's attitude is that if technology is used for caste work, it will cost a great. Therefore, craftsmen have a negative attitude towards the use of techniques for caste work.

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