CHAPTER II

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Chapter II

THE VEDDA COMMUNITY

The Vedda Community

2.1. Origin

When searching for data about these traditional inhabitants, it is important to go back to the beginnings of Sri Lanka's recorded history and even to its pre-historic period. The term 'Vedda' is a derivative of the traditional connotation 'hunter'. The word 'Vedda' is similar to the sanskrit word Vyaadha and its meaning too is 'hunter' (Wijesekara 1964: 41). Etymologically it means "one who shoots with bow and arrow". They, however, refer to themselves as "Vanniyalaetto" meaning "people of the forest" (Dharmadasa 1993: 7).

There are many folk tales worn around the Vedda community. The most popular one is supposed to be the Vijaya legend. The Mahavamsa reports that at the time Vijaya landed in ancient Sri Lanka, the inhabitants in the island were a tribe known as Yakkhas (Geiger 1950: 54-57). Vijaya subsequently married a Yakkhini called Kuveni and she begot a son named Jeewahatta and a daughter, named Disala. Vijaya got married to a princess from Madurai and finally dispelled Kuveni and the two children. Since Kuveni had betrayed her tribe into the hands of Vijaya, she was killed by her kith and kin in revenge while her children fled to the region of the Samanala hills. As time passed, it is said that the two lived as husband and wife, and that they had many children. Descendants of this offspring, it is told, are the Veddas.

If so, how did they become the first inhabitants of the island? The two assumptions that the Veddas are the earliest settlers of the island before the advent of Vijaya and they are the descendants of the offspring of Vijaya and Kuveni are contradictory. If we were to accept this record, are we to recognize the Veddas as the earliest inhabitants of Sri Lanka only through the process of maternal heritage? (cf. Ratnapala 1990: 58). Therefore, some
scholars say that the Mahavamsa does not report any factors about the origin of the Veddas and it only reveals us how Kuveni's children became the savage (Meegaskumbura 1991:6).

However, these legendary figures are hard to place in a certain point of time in the chronology of the island, or in their relation to each other. Of speculations on their affiliations and origins, there is no end (Raghavan, 1957:01). Seligmann (1911) (1969 ed: 28) says that the legend of Vijaya and Kuveni, which is absolutely unknown to the Veddas, is firmly established among the Sinhalese. Accordingly, the Veddas who believe in this legend might have taken it from the Sinhalese.

Nevertheless, the Mahiyangana Vedda perahara or procession of Veddas, in which the Vedda folk still participates, speaks of the event where Lord Buddha on his first visit to the island restrained the Yakkhas and overwhelmed them, and how the Yakkhas in turn displayed their protest against Buddha. What we can naturally gather from this is that the Veddas believe themselves to be the descendants of the Yakkhas who were the 'primitive' settlers of the land, and that they believe it fit to commemorate this historical event since ancient times. This further confirms the belief that the Veddas lived there even prior to the arrival of the Aryans.

When and why the Vedda community arrived on the island is unsure and has given birth to diverse and conflicting theories among historians and anthropologists. Most scholars wish to consider the Veddas as belonging to the Paleolithic period and as a mixture of the Negro, Australoid and Mediterranean types. The stone age of Ceylon has been dealt with by various writers since 1905 but there is still uncertainty regarding its actual age.4 Paleontology reveals that Ceylon passed through the following phases, i.e. (a) torrential rivers (b) followed by a lake phase with a wet tropical climate, (c) the lakes disappeared more or less completely and (d) today there are only swamps. The Balangoda culture appears to have flourished towards the close of the lake phase and persisted into recent times and its races are some of the original components of the so-called Veddas" (Deraniyagala 1953-1954:116).

According to the excavations conducted at Bandarawela and Balangoda, the Veddas can be considered a 'primitive human' type descending from the Homo Sapiens

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4 Sarasins (1907) regarded it as upper Paleolithic, Seligman (1911) considered it to be Neolithic, and others regard it as Recent (Deraniyagala 1953-54:113).
Balangodensis ('Balangoda man') living in the new stone age similar to those found in the aborigines of Australia and the Dani of New Guinea (Deraniyagala 1939: 351-372). In the descriptions of Deraniyagala (senior), there is clear evidence that the people who lived in the caves of Balangoda and Kuruvita were the ancestors of the present Veddas (Alchin 1958: 184-185). Sarasins (1988), who conducted research about a hundred years ago is of the opinion that the Vedda is a man belonging to the Caucasoid type (Sarasins, quoted in Meegaskumbura 1991: 14).

Van Eickstedt divides the people of India into three groups (i.e. Weddid, Melanid and Indid), thus giving them a racial classification of their own. The Weddid group, named after the very 'primitive' Veddas of Ceylon, comprises the bulk of the aborigines 'the real and genuine Ancient Indians', and stands in striking contrast to the light-coloured, more graceful Indid group (Van Eickstedt, quoted in Elwin 1943:3).

But the book, The Pre-history of Sri Lanka authored recently by Deraniyagala (Junior) (Part II 1992: xxi) has brought forth an entirely different opinion in relation to this classification.

Human remains dated to Ca 28,000 BP constitutes the earliest evidence of anatomically modern man in South Asia. Finally, three assemblages of human skeletal material dated radiometrically to Ca. 16,000, 12,500 and 6,500 BP, display a degree of morphological similarity that suggests a strong genetic continuum over these ten millennia with survivals in living Vedda ethnic group in Sri Lanka.

The above findings strengthen our belief that the Veddas of Sri Lanka are a unique tribe and not originated from the Australoid, Negroid or the Mediterranean types. But, the impediment to confirm the data of the aforementioned is not possible because sufficient artifacts and skeletons have not been found during the excavations done so far. However, some valuable information about the Veddas have been revealed through the excavations conducted by scholars and authorities engaged in anthropological and archaeological research.

Excavations and research conducted by Hartshorne (1876), Nevill (1885), Le Mesurier (1886), Virchow (1885-1886), Parsons (1907), Sarasins (1908), Seligmann (1911), Paul (1913), Hartley (1913), Wayland (1919), Deraniyagala (1939-1957) and finally Wijesekara (1964) have proved to be more productive. Among these, the excavations
conducted in areas such as Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, Balangoda, Kataragama and Bintenna were extensive surveys.

While some scholars have considered the Veddas as migrants from India: some others have attempted to find the connections between the Veddas and the tribes of other countries.

Dr. B.S. Guha, who worked on the 1931 census of India, says, "If we compare many of the Central and South Indian tribesmen with the Veddas of Ceylon and the aborigines of Australia we find that in the shape of the head and the face, the form of hair and skin colour, the three are essentially alike" (Guha, quoted in Elwin 1943: 4-5)

In order to prove this point Paul (1930: 265), quoting Ptolemy, says "the Island Sri Lanka was once known by the name of Palasi-Munda". Various conjectures have been offered regarding the etymology of this word. Paul ventures to think that this land was known as Palasi-Munda or the Old-Munda at a period when it was occupied chiefly by the Mundas, a Pre-Dravidian race, who are found even now in scattered and isolated units in various parts of India and who are ethnologically related to the Veddas of Ceylon.

The same view is expressed by Wijesekara (1964: 27):

Compare the modern Veddas with the jungle tribes of the Southern part of India, viz., Malavedans, Irulas and Sholagas. A remarkable similarity still prevails. What can be the answer? Migrations of such tribes from India must be the most likely answer (1964: 27).

V. Elwin (1943: 184) who had done extensive research on tribes of India, defines the Veddas as follows:

Basically, of course, the Veddas are akin to many of tribesmen of South and Central India and to the aborigines of Australia. We call the three groups by the common name of proto-Australoid. Temperamentally, the Veddas reminded me vividly of such tribes as the Bondos and Mangs of Orissa.

Irawati Karve (1968: 61) also speaks of a tribe in India called Savara (Sanskrit Shabara) inhabiting the Northern Andhra districts of Vishakhapatnam and Srikakulam in Northern Orissa (North of Cuttack). Since the present Vedda is also called by the same name of 'Sabara', it is therefore interesting to the anthropologists to identify the affinity between the Veddas and the aforementioned ethnic group called 'Savara'. If one were to identify any resemblance between the two tribes, another interpretation of the origin of the Veddas may emerge.

Fernao de Queyroz (1930:16), writing in the seventeenth century on the origins of the Veddas, reported that the people of Rajarata after the abandonment of the capital city, "........ betook themselves to the forests in those mountains and being deprived for a long time of the urbanity of the court and communication with men in those mountain ranges, they became altogether barbarians......". Percival (1805) cautiously suggests the possibility that "..... the Bedans are merely a part of the native Kandyans (up-country Sinhalese) who chose to retain their ancient savage freedom, when their brethren of the plains and valleys submitted to the cultivation of earth and the restraint of society" (Percival, quoted in Brow 1978: 10). Brow further says that Selkirk (1844) was still asserting a similar argument forty years later.

But Kennedy (1974: 97) has observed that by the eighteenth century European geographers and historians accepted that Ceylon possessed a population of 'wildmen' who were physically and culturally distinct from their more civilized neighbours and who were identified by the term 'Veddha'. Similarly, Virchow (1885-1886: 456), who had done research on Vedda in the nineteenth century, says "a people who do not even possess clay vessels, who have no knowledge of domestic animals beyond the dog, who are unacquainted with the simplest forms of social institution, who are not even counted among the outcasts by the civilized neighbours, cannot possibly ever have had the means which make a higher culture of any kind possible. Hence the hypothesis of a return to barbarism must be definitely given up".

Over the years many scholars and other writers had stated that Sinhalese who had gone to the Veddas had been entertained by them. Robert Knox, (1958 ed: 101) who wrote in 1681 after a captivity in Ceylon lasting for twenty years, reports that "Some of the Cingulays [i.e., Sinhalese] in discontent will leave their houses and friends, and go and live among them where they are civilly entertained." Not only that, in ancient times Veddas
enjoyed a high status and played a significant role in the cost of many Sinhalese Kings (Virchow 1886: 372; Dharmadasa 1975: 55-56).

Quoting Knox as well as Indrapala, Brow (1978: 34) presents the view that in the course of time whole communities that were once Sinhalese may have become Veddas. This is most likely to have occurred during periods of chronic economic decline, especially when accompanied by political dislocation. For instance, he takes the collapse of the Polonnaruwa civilization. On the other hand, it is clear that, with the fall of the Rajarata civilization (Polonnaruwa too belonged to Rajarata), much of the present North-Central Province reverted to jungle and that those Sinhalese who remained were forced to supplement agriculture with hunting. They could have mingled with Vedda groups coming in from the Central region. Since the Veddas had a high status vis-à-vis the caste hierarchy, there was considerable incentive for any Sinhalese to identify themselves with the Veddas (De Silva 1990: 26).

This point of view leads us to conclude that the origin of the Veddas did not lie in Sinhalese becoming forest dwellers. But there were Sinhalese who had gone to the forests and submerged with the Veddas. This may be how Kuveni's children became savage according to the Mahavamsa.

There are thus only a host of debatable opinions that exist in relation to the origin of the Veddas, and no specific conclusion as such. Their origin remains an unsolved mystery.

### 2.2 Physical Anthropology

Until now, very few studies relating to the physical anthropology of the Veddas have been conducted. Amongst them Sarasins, Deraniyagala, Wijesekara and Kennedy's contributions are considered the more significant.

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6 See Busk (1862), Virchow(1886), Sarasins (1986), Hill (1932), Deraniyagala(1963), Wijesekara(1964) and Kennedy (1965).
Examining nineteen skulls of Veddas, fifteen of Sinhalese and fifteen of Tamils, Sarasins (1886: 295), sum up the results as follows:

We learn by the measurements that the Sinhalese, Tamils and Veddas are three well-distinguishable races, and further, the measurements give much reason to suggest that the Tamils are more closely allied to the Veddas than the Sinhalese, which latter no doubt represent the highest race, whilst the Tamils in many respects range between the two other.

Sarasins' aforementioned opinion leads us again to believe that the Veddas are a separate and unique ethnic group. But Sarasins (1886: 292), who compared the skulls of Veddas, Sinhalese and Tamils, say that an obstacle was the frequent intermarriages of these three groups which often left them in doubt whether the man they examined was of 'pure' blood or not. Based on a physical anthropological study, Virchow too asserts that the Veddas and Sinhalese are two distinct races. Virchow (1886: 465) also made a comparative study of the Veddas with other tribes in the world.

"However, Van Eickstedt, who classified the Veddas into the Weddid group, says that the Weddids are characterized by the infantile nature of their racial features, by a smooth, round, child-like snub nose with wide nostrils, a soft full and bent child mouth, a small retreating chin and a delicate child-like somewhat stocky (thick-set) body with small hands and feet" (Van Eickstedt, quoted in Elwin, 1943: 4).

Deraniyagala, who excavated at Bellan Bendi Palassa, saya that the humans of this culture reveal two types of suggesting admixture of Australoids and Negroids. These are Homo Sapiens Balangodensis. These races are some of the original components of the so-called Veddas (Deraniyagala 1953-54: 116).

And also Deraniyagala (1963: 113-114) provides us with the data collected by J.R. de la Haule Marett principally from Veddas of the Anuradhapura district in the North Central Province and from those in the Badulla district in the Uva Province.

In 1937 - 1939, Wijesekara (1964: 50) did the same kind of ethnographic survey with Marett and reported that the Vedda is shy mannered and reticent. He is a thin small built man having a dark complexion with lustrous open eyes. He has a small long narrow head, broad face slightly prognathous, and with prominent cheek bones, narrow and long thin lips, good teeth, dark wavy hair, scanty body hair except in those who are said to belong to the Australoid type. The eyes almost dark brown and dark in colour. The nose is broad
with alae except in the Mediterranean type which has a fine straight nose. The skin colour is dark and tends to be oily. Thin legs with weak-looking calves and thighs. The normal skin colour is matt but in Veddas it appears always exaggerated and this matt surface is a racial characteristic.

Samanthi Kulatilake (1996: 62) in a recent study on cranial variation and the dispersal of modern humans in South Asia states the follow:

"The Vedda crania being similar to the North Indians and their language being an acquired Indo-European one, shows in this instance that there is a link between cranial morphology and language, but the genetic component is not in accord. This suggests that the Veddas have retained some of their anthropometric, anthroposcopic and genetic characteristics, while losing their original linguistic and craniometric uniqueness through admixture."

Blood and genetic analysis on Veddas has been conducted by Hill (1937), Wijesekara with Marett (1937-1939), Roychoudhury and Ellepola in 1984 and 1990.

"Four main human blood groups, viz., O,A,B and AB are recognized. The races having the 'O' group are considered very old. Although the number of cases examined by Wijesekara and Marett were not large enough, the indications were that the majority of the Veddas belonged to the 'O' group and the rest to the 'A' group. There were hardly any persons who belonged to the other groups. This fact may also establish, in some measure, the primitiveness and purity of the Veddas as a race" (Wijesekara 1964: 54).

Ellepola (1990: 48-62) compared the genetical relationship among the Veddas, Sinhalese and the other tribes in Asia. He concludes that the Veddas and the Sinhalese are not identical but that the Veddas of today have inherited genetic characteristics from the Sinhalese as well as from another people. He also concludes that the Veddas are closest to the Malay tribes. The aborigines (Australian) and the Dani (West Irian) are close to each other but the Negritos of the Philippines are not closely related to the other four tribes, viz., Vedda, Malay tribes (Senoi), Australian aborigines, Dani of West Irian. Therefore, any theory postulating a Negrito element in the Veddas is not substantiated by scientific evidence. It is, however, likely that the physical similarities may be due to adaptations to similar environmental conditions.
Roychoudhury (1984 : 285), who did a gene frequency data analysis for gamma globulin on Indian populations and their neighbours, says that the genetic distances among the Toda, Irula, Kurumba and Vedda are small, but their distances from the Senoi in Malaya, Australian aboriginals, and the New Guineas are large. The distance between the Senoi in Malaya and the Vedda in Sri Lanka is small in comparison with that between the Senoi and the Australian aboriginals, but this is not clear from the dendogram.

In spite of the fact that various scholars express diverse views on the origin of Veddas, there is enough evidence from the same sources to suggest that the Veddas are connected to various tribes of neighbouring countries.

Summing up the facts hitherto considered we can conclude the following: I) The Veddas who are the Negrito, Australoid and Mediterranean types; belong to the Paleolithic period. II) They are descendants of the new stone age man identified as 'Homo Sapiens Balangodensis'. III) They are a unique tribe and did not originated from Negrito, Australoid or Mediterranean types; and IV) Ancestors of the Veddas might have migrated from India and other neighbouring countries.

There is another point put forward by Indian geographers and other scholars. The Island of Ceylon extended on the West as far as Africa and on the East as far as China. These ideas were also reflected in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The unknown author of 'Periples' makes Ceylon almost stretched to the shores of Africa. Hipparchus conjectured that it was not even an island but the commencement of a South-Eastern subcontinent (Paul 1930 : 272) As this was a part of a huge continent, it is highly possible that there were unique inhabitants belonging to that region. And also, people from neighbouring regions may have easily migrated and mixed with these inhabitants. After the geological separation of this land (presently Sri Lanka) from the main continent, it is not surprising that descendants from that inhabitants sharing similar characteristics with the various tribes of neighbouring lands.
2.3 Geographical Background

a. The Past

There is evidence to the effect that the Veddas were living in most parts of the Island before the influx of the Aryans and Dravidians. The reason why the Veddas receded further into the dense jungles of the dry zones could be attributed to the fact that they were deprived of their homeland because of this influx. This is further established by evidence revealed by the excavations done at Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, Balangoda, Katara-gama and Bintenna.

Robert Knox, who gave the first precise information regarding the Veddas in the year 1681, contend that their place of origin was the woods of "Bintan" (Bintenna) (Virchow, 1886: 350). It has been revealed through studies so far that these people had their first settlements in the areas known presently as Central, North-Central, South, South-East, East and North-West too. Bintenna in the Uva area known as the 'Maha Vedi Rata' (the Great Vedda Land) is a more popular homeland of the Veddas. John Davy also speaks about this Vedda territory, in the early part of the nineteenth century (Davy 1821:115-116). This area, which comprises of the Central hill region, is located on the boundaries of the North Central region. These two regions are physically separate from each other by Sri Lanka's longest river, the Mahaweli.

Apart from this, 'Sabaragamuwa' is regarded as one of the first places of settlement of the Vedda people. Even today the Ratnapura district is more popularly known by the name of 'Sabaragamuwa', which means the village of the hunter. This legend is further confirmed by the term: 'Vedda Pangu', 'Vedda kumbura', 'Vedda watta', 'Vedda ela', 'Vedda gala' and 'Veddagage' still in use in the district of Ratnapura (Wijesekara 1964 : 56). Bailey (1863: 313) cannot to the same conclusion in 1863. He and many other scholars find in a Sinhalese poem written about five hundred years ago (fourteenth century), Paravi Sandese ('the Pigeon message') that the district Ratnapura or the Sabaragamuwa province including the Samanala mountain was distinctly inhabited by the Veddas.

This point of view was highlighted again after the excavations carried out during the mid-twentieth century by archaeologists in Ratnapura district at Balangoda. They revealed that the man who lived in Ratnapura belonged to the new stone age and the present Veddas are the descendants of that man (Deraniyagala 1939 : 351-375; 1953-54: 113-124).
It is mentioned that the Veddas inhabited three hundred villages scattered all over the country just before the medieval period of Sri Lanka (Meegaskumbura 1991 : 18). In the seventeenth century (1681), Knox (1958 ed : 98) designated these natives by, 'Wild and Tame'. By the name of 'Tame', Knox meant the village Veddas. If so, it proves that in ancient times, the above mentioned Vedda villages were scattered over the whole island. According to Nevill, the Vedda was reported to have been seen in the vicinity of Puttalam in the days of king Bhuvaneka Bahu VI of Kotte (1473 - 1480) (Ragavan, 1953 : 51).

In 1911 Seligmann (1969 ed : Chapter II) visited the following Vedda communities: Henebedda, Danigala, Kovil Vanami, Sitala Wanniya, Galmeda, Omunai, Unuwatura Bubula, Dambani, Nilgala, Malgode and Elakataliya, Kalukalaeba, Yakkure, Rotawewa in Thamankaduwa. In the years 1961-64 de Silva visited and checked all the places visited by the Seligmanns except Nilgala (Dharmadasa 1990 : 150-151). He observed that, out of the above mentioned areas, the Veddas were found at the time only in three areas; Bulugahadena (adjacent to Dambana), Dambana and Thamankaduwa. By the time of the author’s visit (1994) out of the above three areas only the Dambana Veddas were still remaining. Of the other two groups of Veddas the Thamankaduwa Veddas were assimilated into the mainstream and the Bulugahadena Veddas were resettled in Henanigala due to the fact of that Bulugahadena had been made part of the Madura Oya National Sanctuary.

In 1978 James Brow claimed in his book Vedda Villages of Anuradhapura: The Historical Anthropology of a Community in Sri Lanka that he found scattered in some 44 villages a Vedda population of about 6000. But some scholars claim that Brow might have categorized Wanniyas of the Northern jungles as Veddas in Anuradhapura.7 Even so, the number of villages surveyed is also questionable.

The Kohomba Kankariya8 performed between the 15th and 18th centuries contain numerous references to the Veddas. Veddas from eighty four localities in the Island, each mentioned by name are invited to be present at the ritual (Godakumbure 1963 : 13-16). Accordingly, one could further agree with the opinion expressed by archaeologists and anthropologists that the Veddas were inhabited in many parts of the Island.

7 See (Dharmadasa 1990 : 151-153).
8 Kohomba Kankariya was a healing ritual performed by King Malaya and his retinue from India when the curse of Kuveni fell upon Vijaya's successor, Panduvasdev.
2.1 The Past and the present Vedda settlements
But, since the Veddas live as a migratory group, it has been difficult to extract clear information about their early settlements or homelands. For instance, Spittle, who studied the Veddas around the middle of the twentieth century, has mentioned that on many occasions he was unable to trace the whereabouts of their usual haunts.

b. The Present

However, at present, Vedda settlements are restricted to certain areas in the Mahaweli valley. As such, they have continued to maintain their colonies in Dambana, Watuyaya, Gurukumbura, Kotabakiniya and Henanigala attached to the Mahaweli C division in the Mahiyangana Dambana region; in Ratugala and Nilgala which are situated beyond Inginiyagala in the Amapara district; in Pollebedda situated beyond Maha Oya; and in areas in close proximity to the sea such as those in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts.

During the last six decades drastic changes have occurred in the Vedda settlements and population. The inauguration of Minneriya, Minipe and other irrigation and colonization schemes in the Polonnaruwa and Mahiyangana regions during the 1930s and 1940s led to a shrinkage of the forest land and steady influx of Sinhalese and Tamil colonists into the region (Dharamdasa 1990 : 148). Due to the damming of the Gal Oya river in 1950 (which culminated in the creation of the Senanayake Samudraya), the Veddas, living in the well known hunting and food gathering area of Henebadda and several other favourite areas, were displaced. They were resettled in Pollebedda and other areas in the vicinity.

The latest inroads of modern civilization into the domain of the Veddas occurred with the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme inaugurated in 1977 (Dharmadasa 1990 : 140). In 1983 hundred and thirty three Vedda families who were living in Kadegamvilla, Keragoda, Kadupaharella, Yakkurai, Timbirana, Indiatta and sections of Gurukumbura and Kotabakiniya were shifted to Henanigala9. Tissahamy, the Chieftain of Dambana and a handful of his followers refused to renounce their Vedda trappings (Punchihewa 1993 : 46). They are living in the area earmarked for the present Madura Oya

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9 with the proclamation of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, the Maduru Oya National Park was created under the scheme

in 1983 by acquiring number of Vedda territories.
national park. The Veddas who were scattered in Mahiyangana and the other areas in the vicinity were resettled in a Vedda colony created in 1955 in Kandegamvilla. Those Veddas of Kandegamvilla were again resettled in Henanigala due to the creation of Madura Oya national park in 1983. While some Vedda colonies are established in settlements created as a result of development projects, some Vedda communities continue to live in their traditional homelands.

2.4 The Vedda Population

An accurate and perfect census of the Vedda folk has not been made up to the present time. Census officers have often neglected these people considering them as an insignificant, separate group of inhabitants. Since the Veddas have mixed much with Sinhalese and Tamils, it is now somewhat difficult to get a proper idea of the identity of these people. Some of them have even acquired Sinhala Ge-names (Surnames) such as Herath Mudiyanselage, Atthanayake Mudiyanselage, but this has not been due to marriage and happens at the time of birth without any special reason.

Before the population census, some scholars who studied the Veddas, gave estimates of their numbers. According to the census taken in October 1849 by Rev. J. Gillings, the total amount of the Bintenne population (covering four districts; Rugampalartty, Udappalarthy, Rattuvapalarthy and Pallappalarthy) was 1538. Cordiner says, "not many thousands in number"; whilst Sir Emerson Tennant in 1859 considered the estimate at that time of 8,000 an exaggerated one. Bailey in 1863 declared the number of Veddas as 686 in the district of Batticaloa, in Nilgala and Bintenna (Virchow 1886 : 356).

THE VEDDA POPULATION ENUMERATED AT THE CENSUSES 1871--1953

<table>
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<th>YEARS</th>
<th>VEDDA POPULATION</th>
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<td>1953</td>
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<td>-1646</td>
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TABLE 2.1
(Wijesekara 1964:192).
Table 2.1 figures show a rapid decrease of 47.06 per cent of the population in 1946. The major reasons for such a decline in the Vedda population were the severe calamity due to malaria and parangi\textsuperscript{10} drought and floods that swept those colonies which were situated in the dry zone. The last separate census of the Veddas was in 1953 at which time it was discovered that the population numbered only 803 persons. Since then their numbers appear to have been further depleted and from the census in 1963 onwards they have been grouped with other small communities in the category called "other" (Dharmadasa 1990 : 84).

The fluctuating Vedda figures in the various census since 1871 may also be ascribed to possible errors in judgment on the part of the enumerators as to who is and who is not a Vedda (Ragavan, 1953 : 50). According to the Seligmanns (1969 ed : vii) "the Veddas were a numerically small people verging on extinction and confined to a roughly triangular tract lying between the Eastern slopes of the Central mountain massif and the sea".

Over seventy years later sociolinguist K.N.O. Dharmadasa wrote, "The Veddas of Sri Lanka are a near extinct aboriginal community confined at the moment to a narrow strip of forest in the areas East of Central hill country" (De Silva 1990 : 24).

This concept of the Vedda as an aboriginal hunter has influenced those who designed the census of 1911. According to that census, a person was defined as a Vedda if he had, "Knowledge of his Waruge, knowledge of Vedda religion combined with hunting as an occupation" (De Silva 1990 : 24). On the other hand, to Brow (1978), as to many modern anthropologists, a Vedda is simply one who identifies himself as a Vedda and is accepted by others as such (De Silva 1990 : 25).

Thus, if the definitions of the Veddas differ, on which basis were enumerators able to design their census? For instance, when the writer was collecting data from Dambana 1994 to 1996, she met a Vedda called "Sugathe", who identified himself as a Vedda and he pursued a typical form of the Vedda way of life over the past years. He wears a short sarong. He also has a special type of pouch known as the 'Pita-podiya' or back pouch which the Vedda man carries behind the sarong. He ties his hair from behind, carries a hand-axe, bow and few arrows to display his identity. Furthermore, he carries a small bag containing betel and arecanut. Though Sugathe leads a conventional Vedda life, through
very few reliable respondents I learned that Sugathe is not a real Vedda; he is a Sinhalese, married to a Vedda woman called Dingiri Menika and has become a Vedda for the sake of subsistence.

According to Brow's definition, a person like Sugathe can be accepted as a Vedda. As a participatory observer, I spent a long time with them and I was able to identify people who could be categorized as Veddas. But those who do field work for only a short period will never be able to identify such characters. If that is so, is it logical to collect the numbers of Veddas through the definitions and criteria given by scholars? This error might have occurred over the past years. That might be one of the reasons of the incompatibility of the figures since 1871. There are other obstacles such as resettlement and assimilation which affected the carrying out of a proper census of the Vedda population.

Due to negligence of the relevant authorities a proper census had not been done of the Veddas who were resettled in the colonies. For instance, since the initial resettlements in Henanigala, those families have been disintegrated due to marriages and the departure of some from the colony. In the meantime the new Vedda generation began to consider that it is a shame to call themselves 'Veddas' as there is a social stigma associated with the term. This motivated them to ignore their age-old traditions and imbibe new ways of life in the manner of the neighbouring Sinhalese. The Vedda men and women married Sinhalese and these mixed marriages hastened the process of their fast disappearance as a separate community with its own identity. These are the factors that complicated the task of estimating their numbers.

I described the problems which were encountered by me during the population survey conducted in Dambana in 1995-96 (see chapter 111). According to that census there are 456 Veddas living in Dambana. (See diagrams 2.1 and 2.2). According to diagram 2.2 the number of people belonging to the above 55 age group is unusually high. This is due to the fact that most of the Vedda elders were unable to give an accurate account of their age.

10 It was a disease which spread all over Sri Lanka in the 1940s.
Diagram 1.1

Diagram 1.2
Various scholars have expressed different opinions on the Vedda language. It may be that the Veddas used a language which could be learned as 'original Vedda language' in the earliest times. From a distant past they have their own words, very different from Sinhalese. In the nineteenth century writers reported; "They speak Sinhalese, but it is so corrupted that it is very difficult to understand. They make use of some words that are not Sinhalese" (Le Mesurier 1887 : 340). Yet, the modern Vedda language is akin to the Sinhala language in all respects. It would take only a few days for a Sinhalese to master the Vedda language.

Geiger (1935 : 504-516) has commented on the aforementioned fact. He goes onto record that the Vedda language is similar to the Sinhala language in all aspects while giving an extensive exposition of its etymology. He says that this occurred due to the lasting interaction with the Sinhalese, the loan words became more and more numerous, and the aboriginal language was gradually displaced by colloquial Sinhalese. It is also his opinion that all the Vedda words which are dissimilar to the Sinhala terms are words that are original.

There certainly would have existed a Vedda language surviving from ancient times. They would have adopted a Sinhalese dialect long ago in place of their own. Some of the words found even today cannot be derived from Aryan origins (Wijesekara 1964 : 102-103). Based on this point of view the Seligmanns (1969: 87) detect three stages in the evolution of the present Vedda dialect. In the first stage their original language is effaced by an archaic form of Sinhalese : the formation of a large number of secret words based on the archaic Sinhalese constitutes the second stage, while the third stage is represented by the process of substituting a majority of archaic words by more or less modern and colloquial Sinhalese words, and forms, process during which many modern words underwent phonetic changes.

According to some scholars certain none-Aryan language features were present in the languages of Sri Lanka's indigenous people, and they attribute some of those particular characteristics to the language of Munda or Austric language types (Rayer 1964 : 29; Wijesekara 1964 : 102-104).
Most scholars argue that the Vedda language is a native language which is a mixture of ancient Sinhala, modern Sinhala, Tamil and languages of the South Indian Giri tribes (Parker 1982: 89).

But, taking into account the analysis of the term written under the name of 'Wanniyaleththo' by linguist Sugathapala de Silva, the language analysis done by Merrit Ruhlen and Barbara Grimes; Stegeborn remarks that the Vedda language neither belongs to any languages of the two Munda families, which are, the small Munda family of North-East India or South-East Asia, nor to the Mon-Khmer family or Nicobar Islands of the Bay of Bengal (Stegeborn 1993: 14-16).

Sugathapala de Silva’s (1964: 4) opinion is that the Vedda language has assumed the present shape as a result of some ancient language which was mixed with the Sinhala language. He goes on to say that, though the Vedda language has been a mixture of Sinhala, it still possesses a number of characteristics which are not found in the Sinhala language. Holding the same view, linguist K.N.O. Dahramadasa (1990:86) states: "Phonologically, the inventory of Vedda speech sounds is the same as in colloquial Sinhalese. However, the occurrence of those sounds in Vedda speech is different from those in Sinhalese, thus marking it off from any variety of colloquial Sinhalese".

De Silva (1964: 9) further mentions that, while the Vedda language currently in use in Sri Lanka could be identified as a creole language, it was not a provincial type of Sinhala. If a mass of population associates with another mass of population, the farmer group assimilates certain terms and models from the latter, and then modifies its own language in a manner the other group understands. It is then called a creole language. Dharmadasa (1975: 47) holds the same view.

Considering all these points, we observe one common factor: the Vedda language had functioned as an independent original language, and subsequent to the migration of the Aryans and the Dravidians, there had been a mixture of the Sinhala and Tamil languages with the Vedda language; and thus, while the characteristics of the original language were gradually destroyed, their place had been substituted by the characteristics of alien languages.
The number of original Vedda words remaining today is indeed small. In fact, just a few terms are only constantly in use today: Eththo\textsuperscript{11}, Pojja\textsuperscript{12}, Manda Karanava\textsuperscript{13}, Ena Ukalanav\textsuperscript{14} are some examples of such words.

The Veddas do not have separate words for arithmetical numbers for this purpose they add the letter 'm' (the sound 'ma') as a suffix of the Sinhala word used. Thus, for 'one' they use 'ekama' (Sinhalese: eka), for 'two' 'dekama' (Sinhalese: deka), for 'three' 'thunama' (Sinhalese: thuna) and so on. For 'hundred and fifty' they use 'siyayai bhagayamai' (Sinhalese: Ekasiya Panaha). As such, they have adopted a simple number system derived from the Sinhala language.

Apart from this, Vedda songs have been almost entirely nourished by the Sinhala language. A simple verse created by a Vedda youngster for a Vedda girl could be quoted as an example:

\begin{align*}
\text{Thande thande thanai thande thane} \\
\text{Thanai thandena thande thane} \\
\text{Nena thannama thani ouwe} \\
\text{Matath yannata hith pojjata mando vane} \\
\text{Thong cubing mangachchane} \\
\text{Meibang mong-gachchana kiri nene}
\end{align*}

Translation: “Lonely damsel, when I see you coming my way on that boat my heart aches to be with you. Please tell me where you are heading.”

In the above verse, except for the few words ‘Pojja’, ‘Mong-gachchana’, ‘manda vane’, it is observed that almost all the rest of the words are Sinhala words. It is stated that even the word ‘Mangachcha’ (English: going) is a derivative of the Pali language word ‘Gachcha’.

\textsuperscript{11} Sir, Mr., Master, Madam.  
\textsuperscript{12} It is a suffix end with a noun.  
\textsuperscript{13} Happen, To come.  
\textsuperscript{14} Give or take, Sitdown.
There is no doubt that the present-day Vedda language has been subjected to modern changes. When studying the modern Vedda language used in Dambana, it is quite clear that the Sinhala language is being directly made use of even more than before.

But at the beginning of the century when Seligmann (1969 ed : 49) was doing his study on the Veddas he reports, "a positive advantage which has, however, arisen from the condition is that the Dambana folk have kept up the remains of the so-called Vedda language". About seventy years later de Silva also states that the best informants on the Vedda language can be found in Dambana (Dharmadasa 1990 : 85).

However, it is, only a handful of the Veddas of Dambana that still uses the Vedda language. Currently the Vedda children who go to school do not use their Vedda language at all. Though they are conversant with the Vedda language, they are now ashamed to use it. Apart from very few who try to preserve their Vedda identity the majority who uses the Vedda language seems to use this as a strategy to flaunt their identity. In this way the Vedda language is one of the languages fast disappearing from the face of the earth.

2.6 The Vedda Way of Life

Davy (1821 : 116-118) had divided the Veddas' into village and forest Veddas. It is indeed a long time since this forest or wild Veddas have disappeared. Though Mesurier (1886 : 337) writer that, the 'pure' village Veddas had very little social interaction with others. The settlements of the village Veddas are not very far from the villages of the Sinhalese and Tamil people. Since Sinhalese and Tamils too live in areas known as Vedda villages situated, they are intermixed. Certain typical traits of Vedda folk life remain. I study the transition in the Vedda way of life, we can see how far they are still able to retain their traditions and how much changes has occurred.

a. Housing

Like tribal communities elsewhere in the world, the early Vedda settlers too were dependent on the natural environment. This is quite apparent when one studies the transition of the Vedda settlements. They used caves as their homes in the ancient age because hunting was their means of living. When cultivation of chenas (plots of land for cultivating crops) became an alternative to hunting, the construction of small huts started into being.
House architecture, which is dependent upon the form of the family and the planning of domestic life, offers illustration of progress from savagery to civilization (Morgan and Bugghi 1982: 5). The Vedda hut was a very simple structure. The Veddas moved from one land to another and remained in one place only for a year or two. Under these circumstances the need arose the need for a new hut each time they shifted.

Many writers, such as Bailey (1863) and Mesuries (1886), mentioned the ancient Vedda houses. Mesurier (1886: 339) describes them as follows:

Their huts are constructed in a very crude manner, some of them being a mere roof composed of three or four sloping poles, one end of which is placed in the ground, and the other end is supported by a cross stick placed on two perpendicular ones. Others have a perfect roof coming down to the ground on both sides, like the old military tents. Their huts are generally covered with the bark of trees, but sometimes with dried grass or straw.

About four or five decades ago they constructed huts by laying a long, strong stick on the ground and then on top of it an arc formation, the roof was thatched with Illuk. One is reminded of the igloos of the Eskimos who crawl into their houses.

Later on, while a quadrangular frame was formed with Welang twigs and sticks and it was covered with skins of animals. Illuk was thatched over the sticks, and twigs laid across in a triangular formation. Subsequently, the entire hut was extended construction evolved the bark of trees were used as walls. The bark of trees such as Kolon and Damunu was dried and kept on top of the frame made of Welang twigs and sticks, and was tied with Lihiniya creepers. While the rafters were tied with Welang the roof was thatched with Illuk.

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15 Cymbopogon Nardus.
16 Steriospermum canascence
17 Adina Cordifolia
18 Grewia Tiliaefolia
19 Steriospermum Canascence
20 Helicteres Isora
2.1 - A typical Vedda house made of barks

Today these huts have been changed into wattle and daub huts. The wattle and daub walls are constructed with frame made of sticks and twigs, and by depositing clay on it. The thatching of Illuk is seen even to this day. Clay is applied on the floor too. A narrow entrance the open room of the hut. Since most houses comprise only one room, practically all activities take place within it.

In almost every house there is a special seat at the entrance constructed of clay. This seat which is 3' in height, 5 1/2' in length, and 2 1/2' to 3' in width is leveled with an application of soil, and is used for sitting and other purposes too. The rack and the hearth is seen underneath it.

b. Fire Making

Fire making was known to all ancient men except those of the Andaman Islands. Like most early men the Veddas had a simple method to light fire. They followed one of the oldest techniques, the bow-drill method, to obtained fire. The use of fire was known to be common and it is proved by the fact that charcoal turned up during cave excavations (Wijesekara 1949: 29).
There were two very common methods to made fire. One was the friction of two sticks dashing the blade of an axe on a very hard surface. For purposes of friction the Welang is used. The dashing of a flint and a piece of iron to obtain sparks of fire was extremely popular in the past. Parker (1909) (1982 ed : 52) describes how the Veddas obtained fire by the above method in the 19th Century. In 1911 Seligmann (1969 ed : 32) says that in the past the Veddas were making fire in the above manner. Accordingly we can infer, that the Veddas might have obtained fire by the bow-drill method after the end of the 19th century. But all these methods have now gone into oblivion because they now have the modern match sticks to their aid.

**c. Hunting and Gathering**

The foremost way of life to the stone ages (Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Microlithic - B.C. 50,000 to 5,000) from the Pleistocene age (Eolithic - B.C. 100,000) was hunting and gathering. After the Upper Paleolithic period, nomadic way of life gradually diminished and by the Mesolithic period man started settling down. But the hunting and gathering continued till the period of the iron (Wijesekara 1964 : 34).

The primary means of living among the Veddas too was hunting and the gathering of honey. For these purposes they used the bow and arrow and hunting dogs. All the writers describe the way of making a bow and arrows. The bow and arrow were made of wood. The length of the bow is determined by the height and strength of the users. To make it an appropriate sapling should be selected. Maha Kakula, Kobbawela and Getawela are the trees most commonly used. A groove is cut at the end of the stick and the string is permanently fastened to one end and tied around the other end when about to be used (Wijesekara 1964 :85). Tennant (1860 : 499) describes the bending of this bow as very difficult. The Veddas, in a half lying position, using their left foot to draw the bow. Tennant gives a picture of one according to a model carved in ebony by one of the native wood carvers. The arrow shaft is made of the Welang tree which, when dried, attains a remarkable lightness and strength. The arrowhead is made of iron rounded at the point but not barbed. It is flat, narrow and elongated (Wijesekara 1964 : 85).

The Veddas were adept at pursuing an animal and shooting it with an arrow dipped in poison. But smaller animals such as the iguana and the pangolin were hunted with the aid

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21 See (Virchow 1885-1886 : 365 ; Parker 1909 : 60 ; Wijesekara 1964 : 85).
22 There are no botanical names available for certain trees.
23 *Allophylus Cobb*
of a handedaxe. Though the bow and arrow is no longer used, the present day Vedda children remind one of the skilled Vedda hunters of a bygone era when seeing their dexterity in aiming at birds and shooting them down with a catapilar (a strong forked stick with a rubber band attached to it). Though the bow and arrow has now become an obsolete tool where hunting is concerned, it is still the most popular plaything of the Vedda children. A Vedda boy not carrying a bow and arrow is something very rare in a Vedda village.

The hunting dog has been replaced in hunting expeditions by the shotgun with chiseled gunpowder. The Maru-wela, Habaka and Ugul Thuwakku which are various forms of traps have now to a large extent become extinct.

The Vedda demonstrates a fine prowess in gathering honey. There are a number of varieties of honey. Mee (Bee), Bambara (Wasp), Danduwel Kaname and Kotha are such varieties. They are known in the Vedda language Kanda Rukuli or Kanda Arani, Kanda Palli, Kuda Kanda Palli, Poththi and Gal Mala.

The Vedda tracks down the honeycombs by listening to the sounds on the route taken by the bees and wasps and by carefully following that path. It is easier to track the honeycombs on days when there is a lot of sunlight. It is difficult to break a wasp-comb. They lace branches of the Pana tree\textsuperscript{24} underneath and prepare a torch by putting firewood over it. A rope or creeper is tied to the tree and the torch, which has been lit, is pulled-up to the top of the tree. A hollowed gourd is drawn up by means of a creeper. When the comb is smoked by the torch, the insects become intoxicated and as a result move out the comb. Immediately the honeycomb is dropped into the hollowed gourd and lowered along the rope. The honey is then gradually collected in the gourd and divided equally among those who joined in this exercise known as Bambara Kepilla.

Indeed, the gathering of honey from the steep slopes of cliffs is a real test of skill, feat of strength and a deed of courage. Many writers\textsuperscript{25} describe this hazardous and dangerous task. Though females traditionally not participate in the Bambara Kepilla, there are very rare instances now where both sexes join in the act.

\textsuperscript{24} Cassipourea Ceylanica
\textsuperscript{25} Nevill (1886), Seligmann (1911), Spittle (1957), Wijesekara (1964)
d. Slash and Burn Cultivation

Although chena cultivation is physically strenuous, it has been a popular practice among the Veddas. These people who suffer from drought half of the year and to torrential rains during the other half have got accustomed to sensing changes of the weather by instinct. They are capable of predicting the time of rainfall by determining the extent of heat emanating from the sunshine.

In July they clear the jungles and set fire to it in August. As this is done dry weather period, the fire spreads beyond a large area of land than anticipated. This causes the destruction of hundreds of acres of jungle land without purpose. They leave just one tree standing in the chena to make a sort of watch-hut on top of it. This serves to keep vigil over the chena. In September, when there is some rain, they erect a fence around the chena with the burnt-out stumps that are left behind at the time of planting the crops. The crops are planted by the end of September and in October. Maize\textsuperscript{26} happens to be the most popular crop today. The cultivation of kurakkam millet\textsuperscript{27} receded to a great extent.
Apart from these crops, pumpkin, peas and manioc are being cultivated. Even today the Veddas do not use any form of chemical fertilizer. In earlier times, when the soil was found to be barren, they would go in search of fresh land. But from the time the use of jungle land was prohibited and their land acquired, they could no longer look for new land areas. As the soil was barren and because of the harm done by elephants and wild boar the harvest volume began to flag. Once the harvest is reaped from the chena in January, they plant a form of paddy known as Goda el.

e. Fishing

The Veddas also catch fish in natural lakes and streams. Several methods are employed, the commonest one being to drain the water. A section of the stream is banked and the fish are stupefied by muddying or poisoning the water (Wijesekara 1964 : 81). By crushing kukuru fruit or with the milk of daluk and thimbiri leaves, they poison the streams. Once the fish begin to float after being poisoned, they are collected. Apart from this, they use fishhooks. The coast Veddas are expert fishermen. Seligmann (1969 : 333-334) describes how they catch fish with bow and arrow.

f. Food and Habits

A prolonged period of dependence on meat resulted in the development of a taste for meat. For a long period of time the food of the Veddas had been hunted meat and bees' honey. Among hunted meat, the flesh of the stag, deer, wildboar and that of the monkey was relished by them. They also consumed flesh of the iguana and the pangolin.

However, flesh of cattle, goats and elephants was not eaten by them. While they ate the crops cultivated in the chena, they also cherished Indian corn and porridge made of kurakkan millet with hunted meat. But this porridge is not consumed as much as in the past. On the contrary, rice, bread and curries which are typical Sinhalese food items have become their common food now. They do not have a regular routine of eating. They would consume immediately any food obtained and would remain hungry for long periods when no food is available. Whether young or old, they are capable of starving.

They chew betel as much as they consume rice. This too has been a habit practiced by them from the distant past to this day. In 1886, Le Mesurier (1886 : 339) says that they were passionately fond of tobacco and would use betel if they could procure it. Chewing of betel is seen among both sexes irrespective of age. When the Vedda children reach the ages

28 *Manichot Esculenta*
29 *Kalawel Derris Scandens*
30 *Randia Dumetrium Lam*
31 *Euphorbia Antiquorum*
of 7 to 9 years, they get accustomed to the habit of chewing betel. There are some Veddas who need fifty to sixty leaves of betel a day. As a result they have to expend about forty to fifty rupees per day for betel. They say that they have made it a habit to chew betel whether it be for sorrow, happiness, hunger or even to get over their loneliness. In the earliest times, they used Demata instead of betel, and Dawuta instead of arecanut. And instead of dried tobacco they used raw tobacco. They produced chunam by burning the live shells found along lakes, tanks, banks or river by placing them on coals. However, now they have to seek the assistance of the trader in their village to obtain the betel and arecanut. With this addiction to betel chewing it is indeed strange they do not make an attempt to cultivate this crop themselves.

Commercial vending of liquor in the tribal areas has caused serious damage to the tribal economy through an impoverishment of the tribal families. Brewing of indigenous drinks for own consumption is a traditionally permissible activity among the Indian tribes (Verma 1995: 106). But, as far as the Veddas are concerned, they had no such habit in the past. The authors say that the Veddas do not practice smoking, they have no knowledge of intoxicating liquor and drink nothing but water. However, Veddas are at present addicted to alcoholic beverages and cannabis to an extent which forces them to cultivate cannabis themselves. The village traders supply them with the alcohol available in the market.

g. The Mana Concept

It is mentioned by writers that the Veddas were accustomed to biting human liver. Among the main writers who dealt with this subject were Seligmann (1911) and Spittle (1951).

This is also a common concept among ancient tribes. Referring to the 1931 census of India, Wijesekara (1964: 70) says that this custom prevails among the Vedda tribe and the Nagas of North East India.

They believed that human energy (Mana) existed within the liver and that in order to gain the supreme power of someone, his or her liver had to be eaten. Since in the modern times it is not possible to obtain a human liver, according to Wijesekara (1964: 69-70), the

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33 Diospyros Malabarica
34 Gemalina Aasiatica
35 Carallia Brachiata
36 Mesurier (1886: 339), Wijesekara (1964: 72) etc.
35 It was Codrington (1891) who initially presented this religious idea known as ‘Mana’ in relation to the society of Melanesia.
Veddas are purported to be carrying the liver of a monkey in their pouches and thus displaying it to others. However, this custom has now completely disappeared from their community.

h. **Barter System**

In the past the economy of the Veddas depended only on two activities: the bartering of hunted meat and honey. They would go to the Sinhalese trader and offer hunted meat and honey in exchange for such items as spices and salt. It is in the same manner that they obtained tools and axes, the heads of arrow and fire lighting tools from the blacksmith. Robert Knox (1681) (1958 ed : 99) describes it thus,

> It had been reported to me by many people, that the wilder sort of them, when they want arrows, will carry their load of flesh in the night, and hang it up in a Smith's shop, and a leaf cut in the form they will have their arrows made, which hang by it. Which if the Smith do make according to their pattern they will requisite, and bring him more flesh ; but if he makes them not, they will do him a mischief one time or another by shooting him in the night. If the smith make the arrows, he leaves them in the same place, where the Vaddahs hung the flesh.

But this system of bartering changed two or three generations back into one that depended on cash. As a result of this, the Veddas were subjected to many changes during the past half century or so. Today they hunt not for purposes of consumption but to earn money. In the past, hunted meat and palatable powdered portions from the trunk of certain trees taken with bee honey was of delicious item of food for them. But today they gather bee honey in order to sell and earn money.

i. **Reciprocity and Subsistence**

A few decades ago, the Veddas engaged in the *Aththankramaya* for their chena cultivation which was an exchange system of labour assuring village solidarity. Such type of reciprocity systems were popular among the tribals. For instance, Elwin (1943 : 8-9) says those in Hill Maria villages, there were still share corporate granaries. In some Jung villages everyone pays the same taxes, whether they be 'rich' or 'poor' in order to preserve village solidarity.

But the Vedda folk were rapidly affected by the market economy. *Aththankramaya* has now been substituted with labour work for which money is being paid. The Arabic traveler Alberuni (1100 AD) describes the silent trade with the savage Ginn (Veddas) (Alberuni, quoted in Wijesekara 1964 : 18). And the next reference is by Robert Knox (1958 : 98) who states, "They kill deer, and dry the flesh over the fire, and the people of the
country come and buy it from them". Today, apart from agriculture and hunting, livestock and the tourist trade has become as part of their livelihood. A very small number of families in the Vedda community own cattle and the milk obtained is sold to others.

They also earn by displaying their traditional dances and by reciting their own poems to both local and foreign visitors. Among the items offered are figures carved out of wood, hairs from the tail of an elephant, rings and talismans supposedly made out of elephant tusks. Gam malu\textsuperscript{37} are sold as herbal preparations for diabetic patients. Thus the cash economy has become a part of their humble pattern of living. The diagrams 2.3 and 2.4 give details of the occupation of the Veddas in Dambana.

\textbf{2.3 - A typical Vedda—engaged in carving a Gammalu cup out of wood for sale.}
2.4 - Vedda handicrafts for sale
**OCCUPATION - THE VEDDAS IN DAMBANA - 1995**

- AGRICULTURE 42.7%
- TOURIST GUIDE 1.9%
- TRADE 7.8%
- TOURIST ENTERTAINER 8.7%
- HUNTING 38.9%

**Diagram 1.3**

**OCCUPATION OF THE VEDDAS - 1995**

**GENDER COMPARISION 1995**

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**Diagram 2.4**
Clothing

Dresses made of leaves were very popular among tribals. Elwin states (1943 : 6) that some of the Juangs who live in the mountains to the South of the Bengal Nagpur railway still dressed themselves in leaves. It is said that during the period when the Veddas were confined to the jungles, their mode of dress was supposed to have been kola (leaves of trees and plants). Perhaps, for this reason they were known as 'kola Veddas'. Beyond the said period, the Veddas are supposed to have been living as tribal a community without any form of dress. This is confirmed by the term 'Niri (naked) Vedda' used for them Virchow (1885 - 1886 : 369) says that Bailey also mentioned this.

There is evidence available to prove that about two generations ago the Veddas were living with the top part of their bodies exposed. The males were dressed in a short loincloth while the females were adorned with a cloth long enough to cover them from their waist down to the soles of the feet. Deraniyagala (1963 : Ill) says that the Veddas who lived at Kos Gaha Ulpotha, near Dimbulagala rock, in Dalukana, Gini Damana, Kolakana Vela and in the vicinity of the Vahava hot springs were dressed in the same manner. Later on the men changed their dress to a short sarong and the women covered their breasts.

At present they do not show any difference from the Sinhalese folk as far as the dress is concerned at present. The Vedda woman would dress in cloth and jacket or wear frock. Though some males, who pursue a traditional pattern of living, dress themselves in a short sarong with their hair grown long, the others keep their hair short and wear a skirt, either with the short sarong or a pair of short pants. Further, there are some 'inheritances' analogous to a Vedda who still pursues a traditional form of life. As mentioned earlier, the loincloth and the short sarong happens to be the main feature in this respect. There is a special type of pouch which the Vedda man carries behind the sarong known as the 'pita podiya' or back pouch. The present day Vedda man prefers to be dressed in the short sarong rather than in the loincloth. Even those who wear the loincloth are seen to wear the short sarong over it while the portion above the waist is left bare. Their hair is tied from behind. One could also see a hand axe being carried over their shoulders and for purposes of symbolical display of their identity when travelling about. They are used to carrying a few arrows in their hand. Further, the men do not forget to carry with them a small bag wherein is contained betel and arecanut.
But now only a handful are left who live this form of conventional life. The majority follows the dress which is similar to the Sinhalese. The female folk do not wear ornaments and because they do not possess the cash necessary to purchase them. A few women who can afford these do adorn themselves with such ornaments or gold jewellery. When confronted with cash problems, they sell some of these items. But all the women have a liking for fancy necklaces and bangles.

**Utensils and Household Items**

The tools used by the Veddas have undergone various changes. In the past they produced clay pots of the clay in their territory. They would mix water with clay and cover it with banana leaves for a day. They then place the clay on a deer skin and pound it with a pestle on the following day. Subsequently, clay pots were made out of the clay. They used a tool called *Thati Perava* (a tool made by a coconut shell and piece of cloth for polishing the pots). The other household items which they used were also very simple.

Now, some items have become sophisticated to a certain extent. For instance, they have started using items made out of aluminum, enamel or plastic. The dried skins or barks of trees used in years gone by, have been substituted by mats bought from the vendors.

After the Veddas came into contact with outsiders, especially with local and foreign tourists, they have started receiving a wide assortment of gifts. Now many of them possess articles like torches, radios and cameras. This is very common among many tribal folks in the world. Chakroarty (1990:27) cites the same situation of the tribals of the Andaman islands.

**I. Health and Diseases**

The poor state of health of the Vedda folk may be due to diminishing forest resources and the difficulty of not being able to fully practicing their traditional life. Now they are strictly prohibited to collect fruits and yam from the deep forest. They cannot afford to buy food from outside. Very often, their meals consist of *Viskirinjna*\(^{38}\) and black tea. Sometimes, they starve for days.

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\(^{38}\) A bun type sweet made of white flour and sugar.
In 1994 the midwife of Dambana reported that hundred per cent of the Vedda children are suffering from malnutrition, with one case being severe. During the period of her service several nutritional programmes were living conducted, but due to poverty, the Vaddas cannot follow the instructions properly. She further state that the Veddas were also acutely infected with skin and hookworm related diseases. Malaria epidemics too are offering the Vedda colonies. They frequently are prone to water-borne diseases such as as diarrhea, hepatitis and typhoid.

In fact, malnutrition, malaria and diarrhoea are common health problems not only among the Veddas but also among other tribes of the world. For example, studies have shown that malnutrition was common among Indian tribal children under five years of age. Forty five to eighty three per cent were found to be malnourished. Severe malnutrition stages like Marasmus were also observed in twelve to twenty five per cent of the children (Bagade and et al. 1995 : 52-53).

Among the Veddas maternal care during pregnancy is neglected. Right from conception to birth no specific diet is consumed by a woman. Most of the deliveries are undertaken at home by elderly women of the household or by the mother herself. The service of a mid-wife is only being accepted by Vedda mothers very recently. Nandawathi, who was the mid-wife in Dambana in 1983 was the first to offer her services to them. Since then, services of health workers are called upon only in difficult cases. The umbilical cord is cut by a knife or a blade. No specific care of the new born is taken. (This will be elaborated upon in forthcoming chapter V11: The Status and Role of the Vedda Women).

The Sri Lankan Government has done very little to uplift the health condition of the Vedda community. It is indeed necessary for the Government to implement a sound health care programme for them. For instance, under the national health policy, the Government of India has given high priority to the promotion of a twenty point health programme especially in the tribal, hill and backward areas of the country. ILO Conventions Nos. 107 and 169 both stress that it is the responsibility of the Government to provide adequate health care facilities to these communities, taking into account their socio-cultural specificities. Article 25 of ILO convention No. 169 goes even further in requiring that these services

39 See Statement on National Health Policy, Government stress that it see statement is the responsibility of India 1982 : 4 Section 5:1.
should be community-based and should also take into account traditional health practices and medicines (Roy 1996 : 6).

The services provided by the Assistant Medical Practitioner, the Public Health Inspector and a mid-wife are not sufficient at all. The health problems need special attention in the context of the tribal community of Sri Lanka. On the other hand, they have their own traditional healing methods. They attribute all sicknesses to the wrath of malignant spirits, whom they believe to be in abundance. They trust entirely in incantations to propitiate the demons who have affected them.

Some of the cases which the doctors had failed to cure, were supposedly cured by the traditional healing methods. For example, one of my respondents, Hudi (50), who had got severely sick was admitted to the Mahiyangana hospital. She was discharged by the doctors without diagnosing the ailment. She had returned home and thowit⁴⁰ was performed on her by the Vedda Shaman Kiribanda. She had been supposedly recovered as a result. There are however, many instance where the traditional healing is ineffective and the patients dies. They also have their own herbal remedies. Two decades ago they rarely went to hospitals. They used only coriander⁴¹ and batu⁴² Kenda⁴³ for any sort of illness.

Batu Kanda is a very popular drink. They take the leaves and roots of the batu tree and grind them to get the juice. Batu kenda is prepared by boiling rice with this juice. This herbal preparation is effective for ailments such as cough, cold, fever and asthma.

**m. Death Rites**

Like every one else, tribal people have no definite knowledge about the nature of death, but they take it as a mystic terror. They have a conviction that death is an accidental event and the anger of the so called Gods and deities the ancestral souls, sorcer, witch craft, etc., are responsible for it. In the case of a suspicious death, the sorcerer or witches are punished by death or by beating them with the help of special witch diviners (Vidyarthi and Rai 1985 : 297).

⁴⁰ Kind of ritual.
⁴¹ Coriandrum.
⁴² Solanum melongena.
⁴³ a liquid herbal.
There are numerous forms of special customs related to the phenomena of 'death' that have originated among the world's tribes. When death occurs, a series of customs are observed at different stages like before the funeral, after the funeral, etc. All the activities and rituals performed after the death of a person in a particular community to which the dead belonged are called death rites (Vidyarthi and Rai 1985: 297).

According to the Hill Kharia of Bihar, death is not a natural event but due to malignant supernatural beings. Death means the departure of the spirit from the body. They believe that the spirits of the dead go to the underworld where they lead the same kind of life which people lead on this earth without its inconveniences. Every person has two souls Jiom and longoe. At the time of death the former joins the ancestors while the latter goes back to the household and is worshipped and propitiated by the descendants. Most Hill Kharia bury their dead. The death pollution lasts for two days (Sachchidananda 1968: 36).

The Munda tribals burn or bury their dead according to the season of the year and the causes of death. Only in summer and winter can the body be cremated if money can be spare; in other cases it is buried. Death also places the family in a state of ritual pollution. On the third, fifth, seventh or ninth day, depending on the area in which the death takes place, the consanguineous relatives of the deceased gather for the umbu ade ceremony. This is the purificatory rite after which the spirit of the dead is housed in the Ading. Once a year the Jangotopa ceremony is held in which the bones or relics of the dead are deposited in the clan Sasan of his Bhuinhar village (Sachchidananda 1968: 36).

In South India the Todas have a concept of one soul which leaves the body as soon as the person dies. In their funeral, generally, one or two buffaloes are sacrificed by beating them with a stick, in the belief that they would serve the soul in the other world where the sun shines while it is night on this earth. The soul hovers on the earth till a dry funeral, i.e. sacrifice of buffaloes and feasts to relatives, is performed again (Vidyarthi and Rai 1985: 248).

As far as the Vedda beliefs are concerned, when someone dies, because he becomes a relative demon (Ne Yakku). They therefore dig a pit within the hut itself, deposit his or her corpse there, and then abandon the house. Prior to this they were used to depositing the dead body within the hollow of a cave and subsequently would leave the place for some years or even forever.
Death rites of the Veddas were described by many writers. Seligmann says (1969: 147) in an article of Hugh Nevill's that Veddas were never buried until the English Government endeavoured to enforce a burial. The Veddas have not the least objection to the corpse being buried, but object greatly to being forced to dig the grave. Since E. Tennant reported that the Vedda dead were not buried, but simply covered over with shrubs and leaves in the jungle the above mentioned Hugh Nevill statement could be accepted (see Virchow 1888: 361). Tennant's opinion is that the burial in graves was probably conducted in much the same manner as that practiced by the surrounding Sinhalese (Tennant, quoted in Seligmann 1969: 124). On the other hand Hartshorne knows of no other practice than burying. When a person is dead, they envelop him in the skin of an animal, and dig a grave for him with their axes or pointed sticks (Virchow 1888: 361). Nevertheless, an even more advanced stage of care for the dead has been described by the Sarasins in the case of a "Culture Vedda" whose grave they opened. The description is as follows:

1. A small structure (gerust) was built over one such grave upon which a coconut leaf was laid, and at each corner of the erection was tied the inflorescence of a coconut palm. At the head of the grave lay three open coconuts and a small pile of wood, at the foot of the grave, one at the head, one in the middle and one at the foot. The grave was three or four feet deep. The body which was that of a woman was wrapped in much cloth and had on it a necklace of glass beads (Sarasins, quoted in Seligmann 1969: 124).

2. According to their description it is also clear that Veddas who kept more contacts with Sinhalese, conducted the same death rituals which were practiced by the neighbouring Sinhalese. Hartshorne further says that women were not allowed to be present and no weapons or utensils of any kind are buried with corpse (Virchow 1888: 361). But Seligmann (1969: 123 - 125) states that the Veddas, who were influenced by the Sinhalese, had to leave their stuff such as bows, arrows, axes, betel bags, etc., with the corpse. In addition to that he describes the death and mourning ceremonies among the coast Veddas and says that the corpse is washed by a barber, dhobi (professional washerman) or the relatives of the dead man. According to Hartshorne an offering is brought to the spirit of the departed one, who has become a Yakka, in the following way: while invoking the spirit they roast the flesh of a monkey or an iguana with honey and edible roots, and distribute it among those present, who eat it on the spot (Virchow 1888: 361). It seems that though the
Veddas have come to accept death as a natural phenomenon, their rituals display a fear about the world beyond death. This also shows that even in the past, they were influenced by the surrounding neighbours.

2.5 - *A Vedda burial – the present style.*

3. At present the customs related to death among the Vedda folk have been more similar to Sinhalese customs. The Veddas have now started using of coffins too. Both the Veddas of Dambana and Henanigala have gone to the extent of establishing a funeral aid society. This society collects a sum of Rs. 10/- from each family every months or Rs. 100/- from each family every six month. On the occasion of a death, a simple coffin is donated together with a sum of Rs. 1,500/- or Rs. 2000/- by the society. The dead body is deposited in the coffin and is buried in the village cemetery. Like Sinhalese the Vedda do not isolated the corpse and the body is kept in the house for two or three days for the community to pay their last respects. But it should be mentioned that unlike the Sinhalese the Veddas do not cremate their dead. They also request the services of a Buddhist monk from a neighbouring temple, and the monk would make a sermon on behalf of the dead person in the presence of all those attending the ceremony. But poverty has interfered with all activities
pertaining to the Vedda community. If one of their members would pass away in a Government hospital, they do not even possess the bare finances to bring the body home, and therefore they would often refrain from attending to this task. This would then result in the funeral activities being undertaken of the state itself.

2.7 Social Structure among the Veddas

'Social structure' is a general term for any collective social circumstance that is unalterable and given for the individual. Social structure thus provides a context or environment for action. The size of organizations, the distribution of activities in space, the shared language and the distribution of wealth might all be regarded as social structural circumstances that set limits on feasible activities for individuals (Rijitina 1992 : 1970).

In studying society, Radcliffe Brown has emphasized the importance of the study of social structure. According to him, a society has a life of its own; it is not an object so much as a creation, so the study of the structure - that is, the interdependence of the component parts of the system - is indissoluble linked with the study of the function, or how the component parts of the system "work" in relation to each other and to the whole (Leach 1968 : 484). Man is born in an organized society. Therefore, the study of the social structure is possible only through the study of human actions in an organized society. The study of the social structure is one way of selectively looking at any and all such human events (Gearing 1968 : 163).

When looking at the Vedda social structure, one sees that it has undergone a number of changes during the period when the Veddas were subjected to socialization. For instance, during the prehistoric and historic eras, the concept of 'garden' in relation to the hut of the Veddas was something alien. Since they have to build their huts in relation to colonies or bordering a main road, a 'garden culture' has woven around them. The distance among each house is not much. Therefore, the cluster concept of building houses within complex societies had been created. Seven to eight members, at least, occupy one hut. This may well increase to eleven or twelve. Each individual is related to the other. The kinship is decided by cross or parallel relationships or by marriage.
a. Kinship

"Kinship, the system of human relationships derived from marriage and descent plays an important part in all societies. It is a major factor regulating behaviour between individuals and affecting the formation of social, political and territorial groups. In modern industrial society, the domestic family is the most obvious example of structure based on kinship. In tribal societies kinship is of even more significance, having far-reaching effects on the social and economic life of the community" (The New Encyclopedia Britannica Vol. 10 1974 : 477).

"Kinship systems depend on the social recognition and cultural implementation of relationships derived from descent and marriage and normally involve a set of kinship terms and an associated set of behavioural patterns and attitudes which, together, make up a systematic whole. All societies distinguish various categories of relationship by descent or consanguinity, and most societies distinguish relationships by marriage of affinity" (Eggan 1968 : 290, 390).

According to Murdock the Eskimo, the Yankees of New England, the peasant Ruthenians of Eastern Europe, the agricultural Taos Pueblo and the Andamanese Pygmies, among others, all share one type of kinship structure, while the Fijians, the Tallensi, the Manchs and the Chinese all share another type. However, kinship originates with the individual. A human being's actions and destiny are tied to his parents, ancestors, clan members and descendants. For maintaining the kinship structure all cultures have sets of names for various relations between kin (Hsu 1971 : 4-7).

As far as the Vedda kinship is concerned, Edmund Leach states that the kinship terminology listed in Seligmann's book on the Veddas appears to be identical to that of the Sinhalese (Pieris 1964 ; 118). Brow (1978 : 36) also says that some groups of Veddas may have adopted the forms of kinship organization employed by their Sinhalese neighbours.

But Ralph Pieris says that, since Seligmann and other scholars were mistaken about some terms of kinship, the conclusion given by them was not complete (See Pieris 1964 : 118,119; 1965 : 25). However, the present Vedda kinship terminology in Dambana and Henanigala almost similar to the kinship terminology of the Sinhalese. The word Eththo is
attached as a suffix to denote the Vedda kinship; by meaning and addressing it is a reflective creation of the Sinhalese family tree.

If considered in order, relations from four generations live in Dambana. The most outstanding characteristic in the Vedda kinship of Dambana is that the family tree spread in a parallel manner. The reason for this is that the same relative becomes a relative repeatedly by way of marriage.

How Vedda marriages take place and how the kinship system is decided upon on this basis could be portrayed in the following manner:

![Diagram of Vedda Kinship System]

**Diagram 2.5 Basic Kin Categories by Marriage in the Vedda Kinship System**

With the marriage between Gomari and Burunda, Ranee and Hudee, two daughters, and Demata, a son, were born. They then entered into matrimony with Gunaya, Wanni and Meddee respectively who were their cross or parallel relatives.
With the marriage between Ranee and Gunaya, two sons Ukku Banda and Sudu Banda and a daughter Dingiri Menike were born. Subsequently, two daughters named Sudu Kuma and Heeni were begotten in the marriage between Hudee and Wanni. Demata and Meddee had three children. They are the two sons, Davuta and Guna Banda, plus Punchi Menika, the daughter.

Sudu Banda wedded his mother's sister's daughter named Sudu Kuma, disregarding the parallel relationship that existed. They begot a daughter named Niluka and a son named Seneviratne. According to the cross kinship, Heeni married her Evessa uncle (being a blood relative) who was the mother's brother's son Davuta and begot a daughter named Dayawathi and a son named Gunatilake.

In this way, with such cross and parallel marriages among kin of the same family root, it is clearly seen how the kinship occurring through matrimony is once more reflected back to the original root. If we were to inquire into the fourth generation kinship connections of Niluka, Seneviratne, Dayawati and Gunatilake, the parents of Niluka and Seneviratne (Sudu Banda and Sudu Kuma) are parallel relatives. Sudu Banda's mother is his wife Sudu Kuma's Loku Ammila Eththan (mother's elder sister). Heeni, who is the mother of Dayawati and Gunatilake is Sudu Kuma's sister. Davuta, who is Heeni's husband, is the son of the latter mother's (Hudee) brother Demata. Finally, the great grandmother and great grandfather of Niluka, Seneviratne, Dayawathie and Gunatilake are Gomari and Burunda who are the parents of Ranee, Hudee and Demata.

With such cross and parallel matrimonial transactions among the same kin there is no possibility for a growth within relationships. Since Vedda marriage are decide upon with focus on root there could be various forms of direct and indirect influence on the society as a result of lack of new social attachments and lack of expansion. The above state of affairs cannot be dismissed as far as the Vedda population is considered. On the other hand, disputes that have sprung up among relatives have hurt the strong emotional attachments which are based on kinship.

b. Marriage.

Marriage is a socially recognized and approved union between two individuals of the opposite sex made with the expectation of permanence and usually with the aim of producing offspring (Bacon 1983 : 436). From a social level of analysis the institution of
Marriage represents all the behaviours, norms, roles, expectations, and values that are associated with the legal union of a man and woman. It is the institution society in which a man and woman are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence to found and maintain a family. For most people getting married and having children are the principal life events that transfers an individual into mature adulthood (Ihinger - Tallman 1992: 1181). In fact, marriage is part of the overt structure of the community (Pitt - Rivers 1954: 98).

Marriage is a bond between two individuals; but through customs it is also a bond between two parties. While kinship is fostered through marriage, kinship also furthers social attachment. As a consequence, a host of customs have grown around marriage, from the tribal societies down to the modern complex societies.

'Taravad marriages' among the Nayar tribes of Central Kerala (India) were obviously of great strength economic and legal co-operation. According to anthropologists, Nayar marriages entailed the slenderest of ties. Giving young girl hand in marriages at the suitable age seems to be a collective responsibility among the Nayars. Accordingly, they arrange a custom marriage for all girls between ten and twelve years on one and the same day (Gough 1962: 357).

In some societies a couple may be expected to setup a house together. If the trial goes well, the marriage is recognized or ratified. In other systems, as in much of India, the bride and groom may not have seen one another before the day they are irrevocably married; their kin has made all arrangements for them. In many societies, girls are promised in marriage while they are still at the stage of infancy and sometimes a woman may promise a young man that if a daughter is born to her, she will be given in marriage to him (The New Encyclopedia Britannica vol. 10, 1974: 479).

It is mentioned that such forms of customs existed among the early Veddas. They then approved highly of cross-cousin marriages. When a female child was born in a hut through Evessa, cross-cousin blood relationship, the child was regarded for the son of the aunt and uncle by their tying a string of beads around the child's waist. When the suitable age dawns, the two young people enter into marriage. This was how marriage was decided upon. Apart from this, if a Vedda youngster had romantic feelings towards a Vedda girl, it was customary to forward the proposal via his parents. In days gone by the mode of
confrontation was for the youth to visit the wooed girl’s parents with hunted meat and bee-honey. Later this custom changed into taking betel and arecanut on such a visit. These items were accepted only if the girl’s parents approved of the kinship, and if the girl too had no objections towards the boy. If the reaction was positive, marriage was confirmed with the girl giving a *Diya Lanuwa* to the boy. Bailey and Seligmann described the same custom (Bailey 1863 : 293-294; Seligmann 1969 : 33). There are no other rites of marriage and no special ceremonies. However, marriage is accepted as a collective decision and the parents mediate in the process.

Unlike some Indian tribes such as Ao Naga, Gonds, Savara and some Himalayan tribes there is no custom of dowry or bride price among the Veddas. Like Hindus, the problem of dowry is becoming complex in Indian tribal societies. On the other hand, in the Singbhum district, the amount of the bride price among the Ho tribe is so high that very few persons can pay it (Sharma & Sharma 1994 : 218). It is said that bows, arrows and hunting dogs were given as dowry to Vedda brides (Seligmann, 1969 : 97, 98). But they never made it a point to make it a burden for their social organization. Due to external interference, hunting being badly affected, giving the above mentioned items as dowry is almost irrelevant today. At present they have nothing to offer as dowries.

A new pattern beyond all such customs has emerged today among the Vedda society. Though the Vedda origin took place as result of the consorting between Jeewahaththa and Disala, the Veddas no longer leave room for a marriage between parallel relatives. The degree to which they looked down upon marriages between parallel relatives is noted by the legend of 'Naga meru ala' as recorded by Spittle (1957 : 98-108). Seligmann (1969 : 75) also says that the rules for a Vedda marriage were stringent. On the contrary, it is observed that once more they have begun to disregard these norms. What is seen today is that the majority of marriages takes place on the sly, and solely on the whims and fancies. Some Nepal tribes too practice such type of elopement marriages (See Gautam 1994 : 4). The custom that is prevalent at present is that a couple erects a hut in a chena and separates from the parents. In most cases the latter are not aware of what has taken place between the former.

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45 waist string.

There is no registration of marriages among the Vedda folk. Though a few years ago the registration of marriages did take place in the Vedda villages with the mediation of Government officials, marriages that occurred later, neglected this procedure. Even today the majority of the Veddas do not register their marriages. The foundation of marriage has become 'presumption and co-habitation'. The lack of stable assets among the Vedda people have contributed towards the importance attached to registration. As there are no legal marriages, there are no legal divorces among them either.

In 'primitive' societies, and in many 'simple' agricultural communities, the age of marriage is related to the competence of young people to support and manage a household. A boy who has begun to hunt or help in the fields at the age of six or seven has acquired sufficient skill to support a wife by the time he reaches his mid-teens; similarly a girl who has been helping with household tasks from an early age can manage her own household by the time she reaches fifteen (Bacon 1983: 437).

As far as the Vedda youths are concerned, they also enter into wedlock at a very young age itself. Josef (1933 : 393) stated it thus, "three moons must pass after puberty before the Vedda girl is considered fit for marriage". Therefore, they beget children at a very tender age. The age gap between a married couple is from five to ten years. There are occasions when old and elderly male Veddas have married young Vedda girls to the bereavement of the former's spouses. It has been recorded that in the past certain Vedda girls had attained puberty in the hut with their husbands (Seligmann 1969 : 95). There are some rare instances of Vedda marriages occurring prior to the attainment of puberty. Muthumenika of Kotabakiniya and Muthumenika of Dambana attained puberty in the hamlets of their husbands. But Wijesekera (1964 : 97) says child marriages among Veddas are not like the practice of child marriage that occurs in India.

Plural marriages, such as polygamy and polyandry are approved of in many tribal societies. Elizabeth Colson (1962 : 61) states that polygamy functions among the Tongas of North Rhodesia, and that she had been able to trace 24 per cent of the persons concerned being involved in polygamy. These males had either two or more wives. The greatest number of wives for any man recorded in census was six. In Africa generally the number of wives was an index of a man's social status and prestige (Spier 1983 : 365). Among tribes such as the Ojibway in Michigan and Ontario, a man marrying a girl had a presumptive right

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and obligation to marry her younger sisters as they came of age, on the theory that sisters would live together more harmoniously than unrelated women.

Polyandry has been relatively rare and has occurred in widely separated parts of the globe. Fewer than a dozen cases of legalized polyandry are on record (Spier 1983: 365). Polyandry is prevalent among the Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar and the Todas of Nilgiri (Mathur 1995 : 130). Among the people of Tibet, the Chukchi of Eastern Siberia, Eastern Eskimo, the Batima of East Africa, the Canary Islanders, and the Marguesans of Eastern Polynesia, polyandry was practiced (Spier 1983: 365). This custom functioned within the ancient Sinhalese community too. There was a period when Eka Gei Kema or polyandry was popularly exercised within the hill country regions of Sri Lanka.

It was believed that begetting a large number of offspring was good for the social organization of the agricultural community. They approved of the practice of polygamy, in communities where females were not equal in numbers to males.

Though the number of women in the Vedda society was less in comparison to men, there is no indication to say that they appreciated this custom. Writers have mentioned that strict monogamy was practiced among the Veddas. Seligmann (1969 ed: 87-88) described it as follows:

Their constancy to their wives is a very remarkable trait in their character in a country where conjugal fidelity is certainly not classed as the highest of domestic virtues. Infidelity, whether of the husband or of the wife, appears to be unknown and I was very careful in my inquiries on this subject. Had it existed, the neighbouring Sinhalese would have had no hesitation in accusing them of it, but I could not obtain a trace of it.

In fact, monogamy has been the commonest type of marriage the world over among many ancient tribes. For instance, among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona all regularized marriages were monogamous, like those of the Veddas of Sri Lanka (Spier 1983 : 364).

Presently, though, just one Vedda family in Dambana is found to be engaged in polygamy. The rest follows the practice of monogamy. Even then, though it has not been approved of socially, there are cases of adultery which are common to highly developed societies and in the Vedda community too. This is explained by the human desire for
variety in the practice of sexuality even though limits have been imposed by morality for purposes of social control.

c. **Family Life**

"The family has been described as a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction (Murdock 1963: 46). According to Mead, (1953: 40) the family is, as far as we know, the toughest institution, we have, it is the institution to which we owe our humanity. We know no other way of making human beings except by bringing them up in a family. Hence, the family is the very cradle of human nature" (Leslie 1973: 3).

Among many other definitions, perhaps the most common and one of the broadest is the family as two or more people living together and connected by blood, marriage or adoption (Hartman 1995: 184).

However, though the family is a universal phenomenon found in all human societies, Malinowski (1960: 3) says that family is not the same in all human societies. Its constitution varies greatly with the level of development and with the character of the civilization of the people and it is not the same in the different strata of the same society.

Family structure varies from society to society. As far as the Vedda family structure is concerned the nuclear family structure is popular among them. There is no evidence to say that they had an extended family structure. The following description given by Seligmann (1969: 86) suggests that even in the distant past, they strictly followed the nuclear type family structure:

Whether staying in a 'private' or 'communal' cave, the family life continues in much the same manner. If in a communal cave, each family keeps strictly within its own limits, the women may always be seen at exactly the same spot, and when the men come in they sit or lie beside their wives, keeping to that part of the cave floor that belongs to them as carefully as though there was a partition dividing it from that of their neighbours.
Writers have frequently commented that the Vedda husband was a loving man who was devoted to his wife and who looked after the wants and needs of his wife. Harry Williams (1956: 174-175) remarked it thus, “Veddas are probably the best husbands in the world for they revere their women in the most practical way known to man, by living in absolute and complete equality with them.”

During my field work I found in verses interesting pieces of information about the family life of the Vedda folk in the past. The means of income as well as the forms of entertainment among the Veddas were found in their roaming the jungles. A Vedda man, when roaming the jungles with his wife, addresses her with the following verses.

Edei edei yamudei yamudei
Kela Pojjen yamudei
Gal pojjen yamudei
Oththma randa randa
Meththma randa randa
Us humbas bala bala
Mitit humbas bala bala
Ulu mulu bala bala
Yamu neni yamu yamu
E deiyo bala dei
Re pojjath mando venwa
Era pojjath mando venawa
Sanda pojjath mando venawa
Hani hnikka yamu dei
Oththama yamu deiye

(U. W. Sudubandi at Watuyaya on 21. 09. 94)

Translation: “Let us roam about through the forest on the rocks and short stopping here there, every where watching the tall and short ant hills. The sun is setting. The moon is shining. The night is falling. Let us hurry up.”

48 (Mesuries 1885: 340; Williams 1956: 174-175; Spittle 1957: 97; Ragavan, 1953: 57).
The Veddas loved their offspring most affectionately. Seligmann (1969: 90) says: "Veddas are affectionate and indulgent parents. never refusing a small child anything it wants and giving it always of the best". Even today they do not consider their offsprings a burden. Father accepts that it is his duty to nourish his children. The following verse speaks of a father who lulls his baby, singing how he nourishes his family.

Goya Goyam mala male meeya andala
Uya Uyang gahaka meeya kotala
Uya uyang uyang kole peni pudala
Kanna dunni mang amme kanna dunni mang
Kanne dunni mang kekuli kanna dunni mang
Kanna dunni mang kekula kanna dunni mang

(U. W. Sudubandi at Watuyaya on 21. 09. 94)
Translation: "I gathered honey from a hive full of bees, never think of my life to feed you, my dearest mother, my lovable daughter and son."

Vedda folk songs reveal some important information about their lives. These songs portray how they lived a peaceful family life with a fine understanding of duty bound and responsible life. However, the nature of the present day Vedda families, and the state of the Vedda woman and her role have been subjected to a number of changes and conflicts. Some Vedda women face harassment at the hands of their husbands. As a result the modern position of the woman and that of the family institution within the Vedda social organization has undergone considerable changes. This topic is going to be discussed further in chapter XI.

d. Clan Organization and Matrilineal Descent among the Veddas

The clan may be segmented into sub-clans and or lineages. Within it exact genealogical relationships need not be traced although it is always believed to have a single founding ancestor or ancestors (Middleton 1964: 94-95).

Radcliffe Brown (1950: 40) says that the term 'clan' has often been used without any clear definition. There are many different kinds of clan systems but the term should be
used only for a group having unilineal descent in which all the members regard one another in some specific sense as kinsfolk. Clans may be localized or dispersed and they may or may not form co-operate groups.

The term 'matrilineal' denotes a method of tracing descent by the recognition of relationships based upon descent from a common ancestor or ancestors through women only. Men may be matrilineal kin of each other but matrilineal kin may not be linked through a male (Middleton 1964: 417).

In his book, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, Malinowski (1960: 9) has recorded the characteristics prevalent among the matrilineal society in North Eastern New Guinea as follows:

These natives are matrilineal, that is they live in a social order in which kinship is reckoned through the mother only, and succession and inheritance descent in the female line. This means that the boy or girl belongs to the mother’s family, clan and community. The boy succeeds to the dignities and social position of the mother’s brother. And it is not from the father but from the maternal uncle or maternal aunt respectively that a child inherits its possessions.

As far as Veddas are concerned Seligmann (1969: 30) says that every Vedda belongs to a Waruge or clan and among a large number of Vedda communities, exogamy is the absolute rule. Further, exogamy is associated descent in the maternal line so that the fundamentals of the Veddas may perhaps be summed up as a clan organization with female descent. In fact, the clan organization of the Veddas was first pointed out by Nevill in 1886 (See Nevill 1886: 176).

A Sinhalese born into a society comprising caste hierarchy. Among the Veddas, it is the *Waruge* hierarchy. The *Waruge* organization too has assumed the characteristics of a caste hierarchy as recorded by Seligmann and Wijesekara (Seligmann 1969: 78-79 and Wijesekera 1964: 92). But Brow (1978: 25) says that Leach (1963) acknowledges that caste differences among the Veddas are very much less pronounced than among the Sinhalese.

A few *Waruge* names popular among the Veddas are:
Apart from the above mentioned Waruge, Nevill (1886 : 176) mentioned two additional clans such as the 'Ura-wadiya' and 'kovil Waname'. The Morana, Unapana, Uru and Thala the only names which remain today. Diagram 2.6 gives details of the clan distribution of the Veddas in Dambana 1995. “Primitive people frequently have totemic names for their clans and while emotional associations with plant or animal eponyms may be tenuous, they often assume deeper significance; in Australia some of the most serious rituals are linked with the clan” (Lowie 1934: 145). Folk stories about the birth of five Waruge (i.e. Morana, Unapana, Uru, Thala, and Aembala) and their relationship with plants and animals still live among both Veddas and the Sinhalese (see Seligmann 1969 : 74)

Studies on the Vedda clan, exogamy and matrilineality contain a great deal of contradictions when compared of each other. In fact, in the late nineteenth century, Nevill (1886 : 178) was the scholar who first mention the existence of exogamy and matrilineality among the Bintenna Veddas.

Later on, Seligmann (1969 : 71-78) too states that the clan, exogamy and matrilineal descent prevail among the Veddas of Bintenna and other territories. In the mean time the authors who concentrated on the Vedda social organization had not forgotten the matrilineal descent, exogamy and the system of caste.  

Brow made an attempt to analyze the same subject more critically. His views were based mainly upon Leach’s article which was questioning Seligmann’s writings on the Veddas’ matrilineal clans. Seligmann and Leach offer contrasting explanations of the practical variations but they agree that the Waruge is to be defined in terms of marriage and descent rules. According to Brow, Leach made an ingenious argument against Seligmann’s
view on the originality of the Vedda Waruge. According to him, Veddas have ceased to practice many of their customs including that the clan exogamy. Leach argues that the Veddas are aware of caste distinctions and that the Waruge is ideally an endogamous unit but the demographic factors often prevent caste principles from being translated into action. On examining the basic sociological features of the Kandyan Sinhalese (North Central Province) Waruga concept, he found out that the essential characteristic of Waruga is its endogamy (Brow 1978: 20-21).

Seligmann's description of the Vedda Waruge of Dambani, Bingoda and Rotawewa contains contradictions. Brow, questioning the data, pointed out that they were secondhand and not collected by Seligmann himself (Brow 1978: 21-22). For instance, once Seligmann states that the Dambani Veddas belonged to Uru Waruge. He also states that a Yedda from Horaborawewa village said that his mother came from Dambani and that she was a Namadewa woman (Seligmann 1969: 72, 79).

Quoting Leach's argument, Brow questions Seligmann's writings on exogamy among the Veddas. He says that Seligmann's description seems to be an exaggeration. Leach's argument is that Waruge exogamy is an accidental situation rather than a custom (Brow 1978: 22-23).

Brow says that Leach's second argument is more powerful. Quoting Leach's point of view, he says that these people live in small communities and that several Varugas are often represented in each since each Waruge will be represented by relatively few persons, and members of the same Waruge are likely to be classificatory siblings rather than eligible spouses (Brow 1978: 23). Accordingly, the Veddas could be considered to be an exogamous rather than endogamous group.

Further discussing the concept of endogamous and exogamous marriages by quoting Leach, Brow (1978: 23-34) points out that the contrasting views of Leach and Seligmann. He states that Vedda settlements were located far from each other. It was impossible to practice both types of marriages among them. Moreover, the concepts of caste hierarchy and exogamy would not have co-existed at all. However, the caste principle can be consistent with the rule of endogamy. Pul Eliya: a Village in Ceylon by Leach has a clear description of caste hierarchy and endogamy among the Kandyan Sinhalese. He
explains how Sinhalese social organization ensures both customs by instituting them in a local court called 'Variga Saba' (Leach 1961: 72-73). But the exogamous marriages themselves break the aforementioned caste difference. It is believed that Veddas do not practice any rigid exogamous caste hierarchy as Seligmann suggests.

In summing up his views, Brow (1978: 24) says that the Waruge organization of the Veddas differs significantly from the Sinhalese Variga organization at any rate. In particular, the Vedda Waruge is neither an exclusive residential group nor an endogamous. Yet the Veddas and the Sinhalese do use the same term to describe social divisions within their respective communities.

In this context it is necessary to review the current position of Vedda exogamy and matrilineality in Dambana. In modern times the Veddas in Dambana have started freely marrying within the clan and also with the neighbouring Sinhalese. Moreover, due to the extinction of certain Waruges, they may have been forced to do so without being able to maintain the Waruge hierarchy. Diagram 2.7 gives details of the types of the Vedda marriages in Dambana 1995.

As far as the concept of matrilineality is concerned, it is nowadays also being neglected. Since marriages of the Veddas are not legally registered, the mother's maternal surname has to be given to the newly born child. Though they take no interest in registering their marriages, they do show a certain desire to obtain the birth certificate of the newly born for reasons of getting relief from the Government and for providing an identity to the child when he or she is admitted to the school. As the parents are not legally married, the officers-in-charge of registration leaves the column meant for entering the father's name blank and only enter the informant of the child's birth as the name of the father. As a result the child is called upon to use the mother's maternal surname. Therefore it is illogical to identify the Vedda society as a matrilineal society without having definite proof. A matrilineal inheritance as explained by Malinowski in the case of the natives of North-Eastern New Guinea, is not seen among the Veddas in Sri Lanka. It is possible to conclude that matrilineality has not been practiced by Veddas in the recent past.
THE CLAN DISTRIBUTION - VEDDAS IN DAMBANA, 1995

Diagram 2.6

THE VEDDAS IN DAMBANA – CLASSIFIED BY THE TYPE OF MARRIAGES, 1995

Diagram 2.7
c. Leadership and Social Control

“Originally, the concept of social control was defined as any structure, process, relationship or act that contributes to the social order. In some ways the study of social order and social control are indistinguishable” (Liska 1992: 1818). As 'social control' keeps society in order, many sociologists have come up with definitions to emphasize the importance of the concept.

Amongst them G. C. Homans (1950: 301) defines social control as “the process by which, if a man departs from his existing degree of obedience to a norm, his behaviour is brought back toward that degree, or would be brought back if he did depart”.

The earliest known societies followed their own ruling methods to control and conduct the social order. It is a common feature in all societies, from ‘simple’ to ‘modern’ and complex society. In order to resolve social disputes and conflicts, tribes still make use of their leadership and local agencies.

For instance, among Uralies the 'Kani' or 'Kanikkaran' is the formal head of the social organization. All matters of any significance are brought to his notice and his advice and participation are sought in all important matters. He is the formal spokesman of the settlement. All disputes are brought to his notice and the villagers are expected to obey his commands. It is the duty of the Kani to see that justice is done according to the traditional rules and according to his good officer. The Kani has the right to punish anybody who does not obey his command (Padma Sri and Shashi 1994: 234).

As far as Vedda leadership is concerned, it is not something that was decided upon a clan (Waruge) or social contract. The present day Vedda leadership arose for a later requirement. Nominal leadership in the sense that it exist did not from emerge from a continuous unrolling of history. For instance the kachin society, studied by E.R. Leach, has a leader called the 'Duwa'. As the leader of the society 'Duwa' plays a significant role in the Kachin society. He is in charge of judicial, military, economic and religious affairs and also the executive leader of the community (Leach 1964: 182-195). Examples of this type of leadership are recorded for the Singpho of North East India in the 1830’s, the Gauri of the Sinlum area in the 1850-1870 period, and North Hsenwi and elsewhere in the 1870’s.
(Leach 1964: 182-195). Since present Vedda leadership is not by tradition and heritage, it is of less significance to the society, than the aforementioned *Kani* service among the Uralies. But in dealing with the mass society, Vedda chief Tissamby is the representative of his community. He does not play a significant role in the Vedda community in contrast to leadership in the above mentioned tribal communities.

2.6 - *Vedda chieftain – Tissahamy.*

50 See the sub topic: The Political Organization of the Veddas.
In order to resolve their disputes, Veddas do not follow any traditional institution like the Mundas, Todas and many other tribes in India. The Mundas in India and the Amerindian tribe of Cheyenne are ruled by a tribal council which plays a significant role in their social control and social order (Patel 1994: 165; Gisbert 1978: 92). The Todas of the Nilgiris have no tribal chief; they are ruled by the Naim or council of five members which is a replica of the ‘panch’ or ‘panchayat’ found in Indian tribes and villages (Gisbert 1978: 97).

Brow and Woost (1992: 203) say that everyday social life in Vedda villages is largely governed by norms of kinship although recourse is also made to state officials, and the police have a more frequent presence than in the past.
According to my observations, norms of kinship do not play such an important role among the Veddas in Dambana. In fact, the Veddas are also bound by the common law of the country. Nevertheless, a few decades ago, a rapport between the 'Gamarala' and the tribal individual was established. The word 'Gamarala' may have derived from Sinhalese.

The Gamarala was the judicial adjudicator over disputes in a village. Like many tribes (e.g. the Arunta and other tribes of Australia), Veddas also practiced gerontocracy in the past. The status of the Gamarala was bestowed on the eldest person in the village. There was one Gamarala for each village. His wife was known as 'Gama Mahage'. She too assisted the Gamarala in his judicial affairs.

Gamarala, Arachchi and Korala were wielding authority in ascending order. Arachchi and Korala were appointed by the high Government officials. It was the duty of the tribal folk to provide the Gamarala with hunted meat and honey. The whole administrative structure may have been borrowed from the Sinhalese. Today these activities take place under a new form of bureaucracy.

For sending these official messages to Veddas, they (officials) used their own method of communication with the help of a creeper. The number of knots made on the creeper indicates the type of message. A creeper with only one knot indicated that people should meet the Gamarala. Creepers with two and three knots indicate that they should meet Arachchi and Korala respectively. Due to their illiteracy the above simple method was employed to convey messages and thereby the law and order of the society was maintained.

Apart from the above mentioned method, sorcery accusations can also act as an informal means of social control. It is a common method among them today.

f. The Political Organization

The political organisation of the Vedda community has to be viewed in the context of the wider politics of the country. On becoming the first Prime Minister of independent Ceylon in 1948 the Hon. Mr. D.S. Senanayake took peasant issues into account in his politics. He began to strengthen his political party, viz the United National Party, by recruiting members from the village level.
Mr. D.S. Senanayake's attention them moved towards the Vedda village in Dambana. In order to obtain the votes of the Vedda community, he wanted to elect a leader from among them. Consequently, he decided that Oru Warige Tissahamy, who was of good physical stature, was suitable to hold this post, and Mr. D.S. Senanayake himself confirmed the appointment. From then onwards Tissahamy became the leader of the Vedda community.

Ever since it was the United National Party that gained the votes on an election status of the Vedda community. This was even easier to achieve since the election symbol of the party was none other than the illustration of an elephant. For a community that had made the jungle region their abode, the elephant was nothing unfamiliar. So it was not a difficult task at all to get these people to cast their vote for the symbol of the elephant on the ballot paper.

After the elections Ministers and Members of Parliament did not forget to visit Dambana and enquire about the well-being of the Vedda people and make various promises. They would remember however, this community only when the next elections drew near. Yet the Veddas are mainly members of the United National Party.

The Vedda community that belonged to the villages under the authority of the Madura Oya National Park was made to settle down in Henanigala. Their political ideas gradually changed. The most important reason for this was that they had to forgo their own jungles which became a part of the National Park.

The People's Alliance which is presently at power promised the Vedda chief Thapal Bandiya during the election campaign the justice would be brought to them for their lost territory. Hence, the chief rested his hopes on this promise and took his seat together with a few members of importance in his community on the election platform of the People's Alliance. However, it is unfortunate that even today the innocent dreams of these people yet another illusion.

As can been seen, the Vedda people have constantly and permanently been duped by many a politician. Promises made to a community lacking in literacy are many. If they were not fulfilled, who is there to question?

That fact that is no political organization which originated from within the Vedda community and that there is no represent them in the administration has resulted in immense injustice being done to this tribal community.
Brow made an attempt to analyze the same subject more critically based on his views mainly upon Leach’s article which was questioning Seligmann’s writings on Veddas matrilineal clans. Seligmann and Leach offer contrasting explanations of the practical variations but they agree that the waruge is to be defined in terms of marriage and descent rules. According to Brow, Leach made an ingenious argument against Seligmann’s view on the originality of Vedda waruge. According to him, Veddas have ceased to practice many of their customs including that the clan exogamy. Leach argues that the Veddas are aware of caste distinctions and that the waruge is ideally an endogamous unit but the demographic factors often prevent caste principles from being translated into action. On examining the basic sociological features of the Kandyan Sinhalese (North Central Province) Variga concept, he found out that the essential characteristics of variga is its endogamy (Brow 1978: 20-21).

Seligmann’s description on the Vedda waruge of Dambani, Bingoda and Rotawewa contains contradictions. Brow questioning the data pointed out that they were second-hand and not collected by Seligmann himself (Brow 1978: 21-22). For instance, once Seligmann states that the Dambani Veddas belonged to Uru Waruge. He also states that a Vedda from Horaborawewa village said that his mother came from Dambani and that she was a Namadewa woman (Seligmann 1969: 72, 79).

Quoting Leach’ argument, Brow questions the Seligmann’s writings on exogamy among the Veddas. He says that Seligmann’s description seems to be an exaggeration. Leach’s argument is that waruge exogamy is an accidental situation rather than a custom (Brow 1978 : 22-23).

Brow says that Leach’ second argument is more powerful. Quoting Leach’s point of view, he says that these people are small communities and that several varugas are often represented in each since each waruge will be represented by relatively few persons and members of the same waruge are likely to be classificatory siblings rather than eligible spouses(Brow 1978 : 23). Accordingly, the Veddas could be considered to be an exogamous rather than endogamous group.

Further discussing the concept of endogamy and exogamy marriages by quoting Leach, Brow (1978 : 23-34)points out that the contrasting views of the Leach and Seligmann. Accordingly, he states that Vedda settlements were located far from each other.
It was impossible to practice such types of marriages among them. Moreover, the concepts of caste hierarchy and exogamy would have existed together at all. However, the caste principle can be prevalent with the rule of endogamy. *Pul Eliya: A Village in Ceylon* by Leach has a clear description of caste hierarchy and endogamy among the Kandyan Sinhalese. He explains how Sinhalese social organization prevails such customs by instituting them in a local court called 'variga saba' (Leach 1961: 72-73). But the exogamy marriages itself breaks the aforementioned caste difference. It is believed that Veddas do not practice any rigid exogamous caste hierarchy as Seligmann suggests.

In summing his views, Brow (1978: 24) says that the waruge organization of the Veddas differs significantly from the Sinhalese variga organization at any rate. In particular, the Vedda waruge is neither an exclusive residential group nor is it endogamous. Yet the Veddas and the Sinhalese do use the same term to describe social divisions within their respective communities.

In this context, it is necessary to review the current position of Vedda exogamy and matrilineality at Dambana. In the modern times, the Veddas at Dambana have started freely marrying within the clan and also with the neighbouring Sinhalese. Moreover, due to extinction of certain waruges, they may have been forced to do so without being able to maintain the waruge hierarchy. Diagram 2.7 gives details of the types of marriages of Veddas at Dambana 1995.

As far as the concept of matrilineality is concerned, it is also being neglected. Since marriages of the Veddas are not legally registered, the mother's maternal surname has to be given to the child born. Though they take no interest in registering their marriages, they do show a certain wanting to obtain the birth certificate of the child born for reasons of getting relief from Government and for providing the child an identity when the latter is admitting to the school. As the parents are not legally married, the officers-in-charge of registration leaves the column meant for entering the father's name blank and only enters the name of the father as the informant of the child's birth. As a result, though the child is called upon to use the mother's maternal surname, it is without foundation to identify the present Vedda society also as a matrilineal society on a surface level. As explained by Malinowski in case of the natives of North-Eastern New Guinea, a matrilineal inheritance is not seen among the Veddas in Sri Lanka. It is possible to conclude that matrilineality is not being practiced by Veddas over the recent past.
e. Leadership and Social Control

Originally, the concept of social control was defined as any structure, process, relationship or act that contributes to the social order. In some ways, the study of social order and social control are indistinguishable (Liska 1992: 1818). As 'social control' keeps society in order, many sociologists have come up with definitions to emphasize the importance of the concept.

From amongst, G. C. Homens who(1950: 301) defines social control as 'the process by which, if a man departs from his existing degree of obedience to a norm, his behaviour is brought back toward that degree, or would be brought back if he did depart'.

The earliest known societies followed its own ruling methods to control and conduct the social order. It is a common feature, from 'simple' to 'modern complex' society. In order to control social disputes and conflicts, tribes still make use of their leadership and local agencies.

For instance, among Uralies, the 'Kani' or 'Kanikkaran' is the formal head of the social organization. All matters of any significance are brought to his notice and his advice and participation are sought in all important matters. He is formal spokesmen of the settlement. All disputes are brought to his notice and the villagers are expected to obey his commands. It is the duty of the Kani to see that justice is done according to the traditional rules and according to his good service. The Kani has the right to punish anybody who does not obey his command (Padma Sri & Shashi 1994: 234).

As far as Veddas leadership is concerned, it is not something that was decided upon a clan (waruge) or social contract. The present-day Vedda leadership is something that was born for a later requirement in a nominal leadership sense and not something that exists from emerging from a continuous unrolling of history. (See the sub topic : The political organisation of the Veddas). For instance the kachin society, studied by E.R. Leach, has a leader called 'Duwa'. As the leader of the society 'Duwa' plays a significant role in the Kachin society. He is the leader of judicial, military, economic and religious affairs and also the executive leader of the society (See Leach 1964 : 182-195). Examples of this type of leadership are recorded for the Singpho of Assam in 1830's, the Gauri of the Sinlum area in the 1850-1870 period, and North Hsenwi and elsewhere in 1870's (Leach 1964:182-195).
Since present leadership of Veddas is not succeeded by the tradition and heritage, it is of less significance to the society, like aforementioned Kani service among Uralies. But in dealing with the mass society, Vedda chief Tissamy is the representative of his community. And also he does not play a significant role in Vedda community in contrast to the above mentioned tribal communities.

In order to resolve their disputes, Veddas do not follow any traditional institution like Mundas, Todas and many other tribes in India. Like Mundas in India, an Amerindian tribe Cheyenne is ruled by the Tribal Council and it plays a significant role to conduct their social control and social order (Patel 1994: 165; Gisbest 1978: 92). And also the Todas of the Nilgiris have no tribal chief; they are ruled by the naim or council of five members which is a replica of the panch or panchyat found in Indian tribes and villages (Gisbert 1978: 97).

Brow and Woost (1992: 203) say that everyday social life in Vedda villages is largely governed by norms of kinship although recourse is also made to state officials and the police have more frequent presence than in the past.

According to the writer's observation, norms of kinship does not play such an important role among the Veddas at Dambana. In fact, the Veddas are also bound by a common law of the country. Nevertheless, a few decades prior to present times, a coordination between the 'Gamarala' and the tribal individual was established. The word 'Gamarala' may have used by the influence of Sinhalese.

The Gamarala was the judicial adjudicator over disputes in the village. Like many tribes (i.e. Arunta and other tribes of Australia) in the world, Veddas also practiced gerentocracy in the past. The status of the Gamarala was bestowed on the eldest person in the village. There was one Gamarala for each village. His wife was known as 'gama Mahage. She too assisted the Gamarala in his judicial affairs.

Gamarala, Arachchi and Korala were wielding the authority in ascending order. Arachchi and Korala were appointed by the high officials of the Government. It was the duty of the tribal folk to provide the Gamarala with hunted meat and honey. The whole administrative structure may have borrowed from the Sinhalese. Today, these activities take place under a new form of bureaucracy.
For sending these official messages to Veddas, they (officials) used their own method of communication with the help of a creeper. The number of knots made on the creeper indicates the type of message. A creeper with only one knot indicates that people should meet the Gamarala. Creepers with two and three knots indicate that they should meet Arachchi and Korala respectively. Due to their illiteracy the above simple method was employed to convey messages and thereby the law and order of their society was maintained.

Apart from above mentioned method, sorcery accusations can also act as an informal means of social control. It is a common method among them in the present day.

f. The Political Organization.

The political organisation of the Vedda community has to be viewed in the context of the wider politics of the country. On gaining in 1948, the first Prime minister of Independent Ceylon the Hon. Mr. D.S. Senanayake extended his political policy towards peasants. He began to strengthen his political party, viz., the United National Party by collection members from the village level.

Mr. D.S. Senanayake’s attention moved towards the Vedda village in Dambana. In order to obtain the votes of the Vedda community, he wanted to elect a leader from them. Consequently, he decided that Oru Warigie Tissahamy who was of good physical stature was suitable to hold this post, and Mr. D.S.Senanayake himself confirmed the appointment. From there onwards Tissahamy became the leader of the Vedda community.

From that day onwards, it was the United National Party that gained the votes on an election status of the Vedda community. This was even easier to achieve since the election symbol of the party was none other than the illustration of an ‘elephant’. For a community that had made the jungle region their abode, the elephant was nothing unfamiliar. Likewise, it was not a difficult task at all to get these people to cast their vote for the symbol of the ‘elephant’ on the ballot paper.

Subsequent to the election, Ministers and Members of Parliament did not forget to visit Dambana and inquire for the well - being of the Vedda people and make various promises. However, they would remember this community only when the next election drew near. Yet the Veddas are mainly members of the same United National Party.
The Vedda community who belonged to the villages that come under the authority of the Madura Oya National Park were made to settle down in Henanigala. Their political ideas gradually changed. The foremost reason for this was because they had to forgo their own jungles which became a part of the National Park.

The People’s Alliance Party which came into political power recently, made to Vedda chief Thapal Bandiya at the election campaign that they would do some justice to the Veddas over the jungles so acquired from them. Thapal Bandiya who rested his hopes on this promise took his seat together with a few other Veddas of importance on the election platform of the People’s Alliance. Though some years have passed by with People’s Alliance having come to power, there is no evidence that the needs and requirements of thapal Bandiya and the Vedda community of Henanigala have get been met.

As is seen, the Vedda people have constantly and permanently been duped by many a politician. Promises that could be made to a community lacking in literacy are many. Even if they were not fulfilled, who is there to question?

The fact that there is no political organization which originated from within the Vedda community and that there is no one to represent them in administration has resulted in immense injustice being cause to this tribal community.

**g. Property and Inheritance**

The growth of the property system in the several periods and the rules that sprung up with respect to its ownership, and inheritance and the influence which it exerted upon the ancient society have to be looked at. The customs upon which these rules of property are based and modified, and the progress of the social organization (Morgan 1958 : 535).

It has been mentioned that the bestowal of property among the Veddas takes place according to patriarchal society. (See Wijesekera 1964). But according to Seligmann’s (1968 : 111-112) observation, Vedda daughters were also entitled to receive some share of their father’s property. Fathers gave land as marriage gifts to their daughters. Like the Bhils of Western India, it seemed that the Vedda sons inherited a greater part of their fathers' property according to seniority (See Bhowmik 1971 ; Seligmann 1969).

However, Seligmann’s (1969 : 118) description proves that the Veddas did not follow rigid rules in sharing their property. Moreover, it is clear that a man’s personal property is
equally divided between his children the daughter's share being often nominally given to their husbands. It seems that though the Vedda woman inherits her share of her father's property, she is not capable of exercising authority over her property. For instance, the Pueblo of Orayaca and the Moqui Pueblos show that the husband acquires no rights at all over the property of his wife. The wife and the relatives of the deceased wife have the authority over her property (Morgan 1958 : 546). Compared with these societies, certainly the Vedda husband had the right to receive and enjoy his wife's property. The Vedda society has now substantially changed and its affairs are becoming more complex.

Properties are of two forms, namely, moveables and immovables. There was no interest among the Veddas in immovable property in the past. They were used to moving from one chena to the other. However, the permission of Government officials, which is needed to erect a hut within a limited land space has now made them realize the significance of land value. It is said that most of the property was vested in the males in the past. Now the situation is different. The parents help the children build their huts and provide them with utensils for cooking. In this regard, there is no distinction between the sexes. Since there is no property to be divided as in a complex modern society, there are no serious problems in relation to inheritance of property.

h. Education and Literacy

Education is the key catalyst to the development of human resources. Education disseminates knowledge. Knowledge gives inner strength which is very essential for the tribals to attain freedom from exploitation and poverty (Verma 1995 : 88).

The definition of a literate according to the 1961, 1971 and 1981 census of India is as follows:

A person who can both read and write with understanding in and any language is to be taken as literate. A person who can merely read but cannot write, is not a literate. It is not necessary that a person who is literate should have received any formal education or should have passed any minimum educational standard (Sharma 1991 : 3).

It cannot be said that the literacy among the Veddas is favourable. Diagram 2.8 gives details of the literacy level of the Dambana Vedda community in 1995. Most of the elders do not know how to write. For official purposes, they use thumb impression.
ILLITERATE 81.4 %

LITERATE 18.6 %

DIAGRAM 2.8

LITERACY LEVEL OF VADDA COMMUNITY IN DAMBANA 1995
In India the literacy rate among tribals is almost the same as in Sri Lanka. According to the 1981 census the percentage of literacy among the scheduled tribes is 16.35. The 1991 census showed that the overall literacy rate was 59.91 per cent. The rate among the scheduled tribes had risen to 29.6 per cent and scheduled tribes girls were more keen to study than boys (Dash 1989: 235; Verma 1995: 90).

As far as education facilities among the Veddas are concerned there are two junior schools in Dambana and one in Henanigala (South). They are the Badulla / Dambana junior school, the Gurukumbura junior school and the Ampara / Henanigala South junior school.

The Badulla / Dambana junior school which was founded by a touring school teacher on September 1, 1947 finally became an approved Government school. Since 1995 the school has a principal, eight graduate teachers and a student population of over 250. The Gurukumbura school which was established in recent times, is of a primary level. Since 1995 the school has only one teacher and about 25 students. He is also the principal of the school. The Ampara / Henanigala South junior school which was founded in 1980, in a temporary building and became an established school by 1983. When the school started there were eighty students. By 1994 the student population had increased to 350. The teaching staff consist of fourteen members including the principal. Apart from the staff quarters there are only three buildings for each school.

According to the information given by the teachers and principals of the school, parents are not particular about sending children to schools. Most of the students who are admitted to school are over age and they do not have their birth certificates. Therefore the authorities do not take into account the age of the students for admission. Most of the school age students do not attend school. Those who attend school do so of their own interest and not because of their parents’ influence. The fact that there is no immediate gain through education has contributed to this pathetic situation. The other important factors are poverty and the Vedda way of life. Students happen to stay back to help their parents and look after their younger ones during the periods of cultivation and arrival of tourists. And also when the father goes out hunting his son accompanies with him. These factors lead to absenteeism and dropping out of the schools.

Indeed, these are very common factors in the education of tribals all over the world. For instance, Das Gupta (1984: 44) observed the education of tribals in Jhinkpani in India.
and says that in most agricultural families, the children help their parents with the agricultural activities and become tied up in some domestic work like rearing cattle, nursing younger siblings when the parents are busy in the field, etc. He adds that this is the major handicap for the children of most farm families who are engaged in or want to prolong their studies. Gupta interviewed the headmaster of Kokcho Middle School who told him that during the agricultural season a number of girls came to school with their young brothers or sisters on their arm.

On the other hand facilities provided by the Government to the schools of Vedda children are not adequate and also inferior to facilities provided to the other Government schools in the same area. For instance I was told by the principal of one of the Vedda schools, that when he asked for toilet facilities to the school at a meeting of the principals of the area the Ministry of Education officials responded in the following manner: "There is no need of toilets for Vedda children, as Veddas go to jungle for the calls of nature."

Moreover during my field study I noticed that there was not a single teacher for the main subjects such as mathematics, science, English etc., in the Dambana junior school. As there are no classes beyond grade ten those students in these three schools who are willing to continue their secondary education have to join Orubendiya central school. Only a handful of students continues in this manner. There are only three persons who had attained some position through their education. One of them a lady teacher who does not have a Vedda origin. Of the other two, who have a Vedda origin from their maternal side, one is Dambana Gunawarddena. He had his primary education at Dambana junior school and his secondary education at Orubendiya central school. From there he proceeded to the University of Colombo and passed out as the first and only graduate from the Vedda community. Now he is serving as a teacher at Dambana junior school. The other person who had a secondary education ended up as principal of the Dambana junior school.

The teachers are of the view that the students give due respect to them. But the various external influences which adversely affect the community have corrupted the young minds. Teachers say that the students are good at their studies. If they had proper facilities as well as a conducive atmosphere they could have done better. This is also my impression. While the field study was going on, Mr. Gunawarddena who was teaching in a 'scholarship exam training class' asked the Vedda children many questions to test the IQ. They succeeded in answering all the difficult questions.
ILO convention No 107 and 169 both stress the need to provide equal opportunities for access to education. And children belonging to indigenous and tribal communities should be taught to read and write in their own languages or in the most used language of the community (Roy 1996 : 6). Still the Government has not implemented any special plan to uplift the education of tribals in Sri Lanka. Almost all the projects initiated by the Mahaweli Development Authority to uplift the education of adults and children in Henanigala South have failed. Although there is plenty of room for improvement the Indian Government has recognized in the Constitution the need to develop the education of tribals. For instance, the framers of the Constitution have made specific provisions in Article 15 (4) and 46 for promoting education among the Scheduled Tribes. Article 15 (4) is an exception to the fundamental right of the people to equal treatment irrespective of religion, caste, race or sex granted under Article 15(1). It empowers the state to make any special provision for advancement of any socially or educationally backward class of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 46 contains a directive to the state Governments to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Verma 1995 : 88 - 89). But there is no such legal recognition or specific policy of education of tribals in Sri Lanka.

Although a developing country, Sri Lanka provides free education from primary to undergraduate level and also provides free text books from primary to class ten. Even though education and text books are free Vedda children do not have proper clothing and food to attained school. Accordingly the Vedda children cannot read the benefit of free education facilities because of their dire poverty.

2.8 Religious Beliefs and Rituals of the Veddas.

The study of religious beliefs and rituals of societies has greatly advanced our understanding of other people’s way of thinking. Evans Pritchard’s study of Zande witchcraft shows how beliefs in witchcraft and oracles may have important implications for the political authority system. In his account of ancestral cult and social structure among the Lugbara of Uganda Middleton shows that the status of clan elders depends on how effectively (in the Lugbara view) they can invoke the ancestral ghosts (Beattie 1972 : 74).

Robertson Smith’s (1889) account of sacrifice can be read as a direct inspiration or as the forerunner for much subsequent discussion of the relationship between religion and society. He thought of sacrifice as the typical act of worship in the Semitic religion. He
stressed the continuity of the rite. Worship was given specific forms. Religion cannot wholly remain a matter of inward ideas and feelings; people need to express them visibly and audibly in acts of worship. People are born into a particular society and learn the beliefs accepted in it. Robert Smith associated sacrifice with changing political and social circumstances; he noted how the imagery used to identify and interpret the relationship between God and worshippers reflected social experience — that of the pastoralist or the tribesman, the citizen, the suppliant and the experience of a people’s success or of their exile. Political change affected religious forms. The growth of the state, the central locus of the temple and priestly specialization led to changes in the sacrificial cult, in concepts of distance from God and his demands; the changes came with the control of the cult by temple priests. Issues of sin and salvation became important with priestly rationalization of the cult, leading to a more coherent formal system and the emergency of new ethical frameworks (Smith, quoted in Lewis 1994: 570).

In The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Durkheim (1915) argued that religion was essential to society to preserve its distinctive order and values. The sacred was serious, mandatory, and not to be questioned. The work of Robert Smith was particularly influential in leading Durkheim to this view of the obligatory quality of the sacred. In fact, it led him to view the concepts of the sacred, cleanliness and taboo as ways of defining social identity and social boundaries; to recognize the importance of the religious community and the heightened sense of fellowship created in communal worship and celebration; and to stress that collective values are reinforced by participation in ritual. And he endorsed Smith’s conclusion his study of sacrifice, that rites (the actions) were more durable and stable than the ideas and beliefs that people at particular times offered to explain them. (Durkheim, quoted in Lewis 1994: 571).

Radcliffe-Brown (1952) agreed with Durkheim’s postulate that the main role of religion was to celebrate and sustain the norms upon which the integration of society depends. But unlike Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown was concerned with the content of sacred symbols, and particularly with the reasons why one object rather than another was absorbed into rite or woven into myth. From his functional structuralist point of view Radcliffe-Brown considered, however, that man’s need for a concrete expression of social solidarity was not sufficient as an explanation of the structure of a people’s religious system. Something was needed to tie the particular objects awarded sacred status (or in his terminology, “ritual value”) to the particular social interests they presumably served and reflected. Radcliffe-Brown, resolute empiricist as he was, chose a solution Durkheim had
already magisterially demolished: the utilitarian one. The objects selected for religious veneration by a given people were either directly or indirectly connected to factors critical to their collective well-being. Things that had real, that is, practical, “social value” were elevated to having spiritual, or symbolic, “ritual value,” thus fusing the social and the social and the natural into one overarching order (Geertz 1968: 402).

Bloch’s (1986) study on rituals also stresses, according to Robert Smith, that there was a basic stability in the core features of the rite. He argues that the persistence of rituals may help to explain long-term cultural continuities. Rituals influence people’s perceptions of changing politico-economic circumstances and their reactions to them. But they may, in turn play a part in moulding events. The ambiguity of ritual half statement and half action leaves room for adaption to varying circumstances and allows it to survive little changed in the long run. The nature of the ritual may be revealed only slowly through its interaction with practical aspects of culture and historical events. (Bloch, quoted in Lewis 1994: 571).

As among other tribals in the world, Vedda religious beliefs and rituals are seen in the context of the purpose of material welfare. In fact, rituals cannot be demarcated by a clear boundary from other kinds of customs. It is manifest in religion and magic (Lewis 1980: 8). Accordingly, as means of solving problems encountered by the Veddas in their day to day life, religion and magic renders them a significant service. From among a host of very important changes that the Vedda social organization had been subjected to, the minimum of change has taken place in religion. The Vedda religion mainly consists of the cult of the dead and spirits or yaku (demon) of a benevolent nature. In addition to demons they believe in some Gods too. The agent who maintains the connection between religion and the followers is the exorcist. This agent who lives among his members, provides them with their needs and desires. The beliefs about demons and Gods could be identified as a major influence directing the social organization.

Relatives who take on the form of demons (Nae Yakku) after their deaths, help the Veddas in various ways in their life. In order to obtain more and more help from these ancestral spirits, offerings have to be made to them. If, however, the demons are provoked for some reasons, calamity would ensue. The calamities could come in the guise of preventing the people from securing something like food, destruction of the harvest, plagues and destructive weather elements. On the other hand, beliefs resting on ancestral spirits and Gods would bring fertility.
The belief in ancestral spirits is very common among tribals. Ancestral spirits are considered present where there is significant interaction between the living and the dead (Matlock 1995 : 162). Ancestors, like deities, are addressed commonly in prayer, both in African and in Asiatic societies and invoked by name and descent rank (Fortes 1976 : 10 - 11).

For instance, Sanuma Indians of the upper river Auaris valley in the NorthWest of Roraima territory in Northern Brazil is based entirely on the use of assistant spirits (*Hekula Dibi*) to act on the shaman’s behalf. Shamanism is used primarily in curing, which involves the destruction or chasing away, by the shaman’s *Shekuls*, of those other spirits (which can be of several different types) which have caused or which intend to bring about sickness and death. It can also be used to ensure hunting success (Taylor 1979 : 202). The Khasis, a hill tribe of Meghalaya, also believe in malignant spirits, deity and tree worship. The malignant spirits are worshipped to get rid of their evil influences. This worship is usually followed by a crisis, and there is no fixed time for it (Bhowmik 1971 : 144).

The Wola people of the Southern Highland province of Papua New Guinea believe that two kinds of demon spirits inhabit the montanious forests of their region. They call them *Saem* and *lyhtit*. When people are attacked by these frightening creatures, they are injured or fall sick and may die; their relatives perform rituals to drive the demons away and promote their recovery (Sillitoe 1993 : 220).

Accordingly ancestor worship is part of the religious systems which include beliefs in a supreme being, nature divinities, magic and witchcraft, personifications in the shape of deities of epidemic diseases or cosmic forces, and the experience of good and evil, chance and destiny (Fortes 1976 : 3).

As far as Vedda ancestor worship is concerned the most honoured *Kande Yakka* (demon of the mountain), is a chief from among the deceased. He is invoked to endow a person with success in hunting.

```
Kande damane kanna       gona
Rath Nuga pathanate enna  gona
Issa hita depayata eli bee  gona
Kande deviyo denavada mata  gona
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Rath Nuga pathanata enna    gona
Kiri Nuga pathanata        gona
Ang visi hatharak          gona
Kande aluth devi denavada  gona

(U. W. Sudubandi at Watuyaya on 21. 09. 1994)

Translation: "Oh! God of the mountain will you help me to hunt the stag with twenty four horns, the one which comes to the sacred red banyan trees."

The above verses depict an invocation which calls for the help of the mountain demon for purposes of being favoured with a prey for food. Hunting happens to be the primary means of life in the distant past of the Vedda society. It was by making such invocations to the demons of the mountains that these tribal folk obtained their food provisions.

The demon of the mountains is a cruel being. It appears in the form of a God too. While the demon of the mountains supplies food to these people, it does not hesitate to bring upon punishment if some wrong has been done. The brother of the demon of the mountains is known as Bilindi. This demon is a powerful being among other powerful demons who are Kalu Bandara, Maha Kohomba Bandara, Irugal Bandara, Sandu Gal Bandara, Mavaragal Panikka, Lepat Panikka, Rerangala Panikka, Indigolla Yakka, Maralu Yakka, Serang Yakka and Dives-Yakka means ‘Demon’.

Within this demon and God worship, provincial influences were seen as not lacking. The Veddas indulge in various forms of witchcraft and occult practices extracted from Sinhala shamans for the rituals akin to the Uva Bintenna province. For instance the Hethma ritual is performed annually by both the Sinhalese and the Veddas in Uva Binthenna. The purpose of this ritual is to gain prosperity and to be free of epidemics. A similar type of ritual called ‘Gammaduwa’ is performed by the low country Sinhalese for the same purposes. Both the Sinhalese and Vedda shamans perform dances together in this ritual. This is one of the best examples to show the provincial and Sinhalese influences on the Vedda practices. The Elle Yakka is someone special to the Vedda folk, particularly in relation to eliminating their fear of plagues and sickness. Though a number of rituals practiced throughout the ages have become obsolete today, the belief in demons and Gods is
portrayed through the remaining practices of rituals and the forms of offerings. While there are numerous forms of offerings attached to the purpose concerned, in such instances, it is another demon or God who is invited by the shaman. Some of these are:

2.8 - An event from Hethma Yagaya.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offering</th>
<th>Invited demon or God</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nae Yakuma</em> (Ritual for a deceased relative)</td>
<td>The demon of the mountains, demon <em>Bilindi</em> or other deceased relatives demons.</td>
<td>To be favoured with a prey, fertility and protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lethale Netuma</em> (The dance of the arrow. This is no longer practiced)</td>
<td>The demon of the mountains</td>
<td>Protection for the offspring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Anguru Mas Yahana</em> <em>Adukku Bambara</em></td>
<td>The demon of the mountains, demon <em>Bilindi</em> and other deceased relatives demons.</td>
<td>Offering for prey received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bambara Yakk Pujawa</em> <em>(Demon Bamhura)</em></td>
<td>Demon <em>Bambura</em></td>
<td>To be favoured with types of potatoes and for hunting-down pigs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dole Yakka Netuma</em> <em>(The dance of Dole demon)</em></td>
<td>The <em>Dole</em> demon</td>
<td>To be favoured with honey and for alleviation of sickness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rahu Yakk Puja</em> <em>(Demon Rahu)</em></td>
<td>The demon <em>Rahu</em></td>
<td>To be favoured with honey and for alleviation of sickness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wanagatha Yakk Netuma</em> <em>(The Wanagatha demon dance)</em></td>
<td>The <em>Wanagatha</em> demon</td>
<td>To be favoured with a prey and for protection while hunting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kiri Amma Pujawa</em> <em>(The Kiri Amma)</em></td>
<td>The <em>Kiri Amma</em></td>
<td>Protection for the offspring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pena Belima</em> <em>(Light reading)</em></td>
<td>The demon of the mountains and other deceased relatives demons.</td>
<td>To figure out the particular relatives demon who causes the illness to the patient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hethma Pujawa and Kirikorha Naetiema</em> <em>(The Hathma and the kirikoraha dance)</em></td>
<td>The twelve Gods, the Elle demon, the <em>Gale</em> demon, the group of demons, the demon of the mountains, demon <em>Bilindi</em> and other deceased relatives demons.</td>
<td>To be favoured with a prey fertility, for dispelling the fear of sickness, protection and for alleviation of trouble and calamity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kapurale (Shaman) has the power and knowledge of invoking the *Yaku*. In the offering ceremony of the dead or *Nae Yaku Natanawa* (the dancing of the *Nae Yaku*), the sorcerer calls upon the spirit of the recently deceased person to come and take the offering. The shaman soon becomes possessed by the *Yaku* of the deceased. The spirit then speaks through the mouth of the shaman in a hoarse and guttural voice that he approves of the
offering and he promises to assist his relatives in hunting and in all other important affairs of their daily life. Thereafter the Yaku leaves the shaman. Then the offerings made are distributed to all the assembled men, women and children. The associated belief is that the taking of a part of these offerings is important in the sense that it brings health and fortune to the participants.

Both white magic and black magic rituals are prevalent among the Veddas. While human welfare is brought about by white magic rituals, black magic rituals attract the opposite. White magic ritual is used by them in relation to such things as an abundant harvest, protection of the harvest, to be favoured with a prey and for protection. Black magic ritual, which James Frazer has explained as ‘contagious magic is more popular’, and is outstandingly observed among the Vedda community. Just as much as the Azande inhabitants, the Veddas believe in witchcraft. Among the black magic practices they engage in, are taking revenge upon another, winning over someone's heart and restricting of delivery after conception. Seligmann and Parker have written at length about the aforementioned beliefs and rituals.

While lofty ideals such as emancipation, Nirvana or salvation are not, part of the Vedda religion, its focal motive has been man and his environment. Accordingly, from destruction of harvests to plagues, from favouring them with a prey for food to calamities happiness, it is the Gods and demons who maintain this interrelationship. This reminds one of the idealism in E.B. Tylor’s book which speaks of Animism (See Tylor 1871 : vol II). Santhals in India, Ava Chiripa in the Eastern region of Paraguay and many other tribals also believe in animism.

Veddas do not have strong beliefs in cosmology. The Veddas show little interest in nature and accept it as it is. Hence, there are no myths or legends concerning natural phenomena such as the sun and moon, stars, rain, rainbow, animals and birds etc., which from a regular part of mythology in most primitive groups (Meegaskumbura 1990 : 108). Verrier Elwin has collected a large number of such myths dealing with natural phenomena found in the Mahakosala area of India. Though there is no special kind of ritual as in the case of the religious system of Totem worship, which symbolises purity and is practiced by the Australian aborigines, the belief about ‘impurity’ exists among the Veddas. In cases of rites of passage (relating to birth, attainment of puberty, death), pollution could make the Yak-Pettiya (devil - box) impure. The devil - box is a box in which are deposited the main items used during tribal invocations done in connection with offerings. A Yak Pela (devil -
hut) erected somewhat away from the houses of the inhabitant, contains with the devil-box in order to protect it from pollution by the inhabitants. Pollution of the devil-box brings about calamities to the inhabitants, and to dispel such calamities, a ritual has to be performed.

Though the Vedda society has already changed, they still live within their system of beliefs. According to John Dart (1990 : 72) even the coastal Vedda who is keeping contact with the Tamils believe in devils. These beliefs are being successfully perpetuated by these folks from the distant past. As such it is observed now religion and magic, which centres upon their rituals and beliefs, play a continuous role within the Vedda community.

2.9 The Present Position of The Veddas

The social change within the Vedda community in a wider scale will be discussed at a later stage. However, for the scale of completeness the current position of this community, will be briefly mentioned here the introduction.

At the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the aborigine was described in the following manner:

The term Indigenous People ........ describes social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process (World Bank Operational Directive 1991 : 4. 20).

It is important to consider the applicability of the above statement of the Vedda community in relation to the present position. The Vedda community is undergoing suffering on the one hand, striving to further maintain their hereditary living pattern in connection with certain aspects, and on the other hand experiencing frustration as a result of not being able to enter the common track in the modern social stream. Though they are not prepared to discard their usual activities of cultivating chenas and the jungles, the modernization concept has dawned on them in various forms. The Veddas do not use their bow and arrow any further. But yet, could one say that they have entered into the mainstream of development? It cannot be said that the Veddas have so far become full
members of the modern socio-economy. This community which has approached the decisive stage of transition, have faced the true crisis of existence.

They have been successful in retaining within themselves to some extent their socio-economic structure up to the middle of this century. The initial change in the social structure of the Vedda community has commenced as a result of the extensive irrigation projects that were launched after the country gained independence. While new Vedda settlements came into being through these projects, the vast extent of jungle land which they had been occupying and utilising until then had dwindled in size immensely as a consequence of the construction of reservoirs and roadways. “The inauguration of Minneriya, Minipe and other irrigation and colonization schemes in the Polonnaruwa and Mahiyangana regions during the 1930s and 1940s led to a shrinkage of the forest land and a steady influx of Sinhalese and Tamil colonists into the region. The completion of the Gal Oya scheme in the 1950s affected the Vedda population even more drastically. The massive reservoir at Inginiyagala which came to be known as ‘Senanayake Samudraya,’ the largest in the country, inundated some of the Veddas’ best hunting and food-gathering areas along with several of their favourite cave dwellings” (Dharmadasa 1990: 148).

Finally, the Mahaweli Development Scheme which came into operation in 1977 eroded the Vedda socio-economy. Due to the Mahaweli Development Project, the Madura Oya forest was converted into Madura Oya National Park. The 4,500 hectare area bounded by the Madura Oya stream, the Mahiyangana - Maha Oya road, and the park boundary is recommended for sanctuary status in order to control land use, to provide a connection between MAOY and the corridor to Gal Oya National Park, to protect the catchments of several small tributaries, and to reduce the already high potential for human-elephant conflict (Master Plan, Madura Oya National Park 1985: 31).

The plan of the park comprises of two buffer zones and two main boundaries. The boundary situated towards the east and South of the park was named as a buffer zone while the North and West were defined as the boundaries of the park (Master Plan, Madura Oya National Park 1985: 31-32). The Vedda and those not categorised as Veddas (the Sinhalese; and the Vedda and Sinhalese mixed) living in the 5 villages of Kandegamwila, Keragoda, Indiatta, Thimbirana and Kotabakiniya who lived in the portion of land belonging to the park were evacuated from those areas and resettled in the Mahaweli B and C zones. Every resettled family was allotted two acres and two roods of paddy fields and two hectares of

51 In 1983 under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance.
bare land with a boundary erected for purposes of constructing a house. People were resettled by the State in blocks of land belonging to the Mahaweli Authority in accordance with the regulations governed by the amended Land Development Ordinance of 1969 No. 16 and 1981 No. 27 in pursuance of the conditions issued in its subschedule. There are seventeen conditions listed in the subschedule. The third condition is as follows:

No person whatever should be named by the individual bearing the permit as a successor for any portion divided within this block of land.

The seventeenth paragraph of the Declaration stipulates that:

If this permit is subjected to cancellation on the grounds that conditions appearing here have been neglected, the permit-holder has no right, whatsoever to claim compensation from the State.

The State had decided to resettle 133 Vedda families living within the locality of the park in Kandegamwila and other villages in the Mahaweli C zone known as Henanigala. Initially, the Vedda community displayed a dislike to move into the new colonies. A community which had made hunting and chena cultivation their main occupation, had no real understanding about new projects, technology and a new living pattern. Mr. Gamini Dessanayake, who held the Ministership of Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development, approached the Vedda people. He addressed the Vedda chieftain Ooru Warige Tissahamy, Tala Warige Tapal Bandi and Kalu Appuwa particularly, and said:

President J.R. Jayawardena's Government hopes to render a service not second to the one that Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake’s and D.S. Senaayake has given to you (Kaurunaratne 1983: 9).

However, Vedda chieftain Ooru Warige Tissahamy entertained no further trust about colony projects. Though the Kandegamwila colony was distributed in 1955 among Tissahamy and other Vedda families on a promise given by Mr. D.S. Senanayake for the purpose of maintaining the ancestral traditions as they then existed, what happened subsequently was that outsiders invaded the colony and transformed the Vedda culture into a state of corruption. Tissahamy who had a clear understanding about the situation prevalent among the Vedda families of Kandegamwila, remarked that the same thing would occur if one would go to the Mahaweli colony. He totally rejected moving into the new colony, saying that the two and a half acres donated by the Mahaweli to him and the half an acre offered to his Wariga was like "a parrot put inside a cage and being reared that way" (Karunaratne 1983: 10).

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52 According to the permit issued under the Land Development Ordinance 19(2)(464th Authority).
However, descendants of the second and third generations maintained a great desire to move into the Mahaweli settlements and commence a new life. They stuck to the belief that living in the jungles gave them no future, and that gradually they were being drawn into depression, and that they had to escape from that situation (Karunaratne 1983: 11).

The resettling of the Vedda families began in November 1982. While the Vedda chieftain Tissahamy and some of his families remained in the jungles familiar to them without giving heed to requests made by the Government, the State was successful in bringing the rest of the Vedda people into the Mahaweli Project.

In this manner 133 Vedda families living in villages belonging to the Madura Oya park ultimately gained possession of the Mahaweli lands. Lands belonging by right to Henanigala and where they were resettled was 519 hectares. Of these, 343 hectares were distributed among the Vedda community. The rest of the area was common property, allocated for the reservoir, the jungle and the highway. The extent of irrigable land distributed among the Vedda farmers was 273 hectares on a total of 343 hectares. The rest of the non cultivable land, seventy hectares was distributed at the rate of two hectares per family the total population was 274 individuals or 133 families for the purpose of erecting houses and latrines.

The Mahaweli implemented a programme of aid and advice necessary for the villagers in order to transform the already distributed irrigable land into paddy lands. The land were prepared suitable for this purpose by utilising bulldozers and tractors. The World Food Organisation provided food rations for two years to the Mahaweli immigrants, and three years for the Vedda community. This food ration, which was supplied on a monthly basis, comprised of rice and other dry rations in accordance with the number of members of each family. In addition to this, the bank provided loans for irrigation purposes and further, more farming co-operatives were established among the colonies. The Mahaweli colonies were brought under the regulations and official bureaucracy of the Mahaweli Authority.

However, it did not take long for those of the Mahaweli Authority and those living in Henanigala South to have their hopes shattered. The villagers who were akin to a solitary existence in the jungles soon fell into a state of utter despair over the behaviour of the officials of the Mahaweli and their rules and regulations, and also as a result of the new behavioural pattern they had to face, which was alien to them. It was not at all easy for the Vedda folk who were engaged in chena cultivation from hundreds of years to adjust themselves to the new technology. Though the People’s Bank provided loans for
irrigational purposes to the villagers, they were unable to pay back those loans. They were also accosted for having engaged in unauthorised hunting in the Madura Oya Reserve Forest -- being unable to pay the penalty, these villagers tended to lease their paddy fields sans legal sanction, mortgaging the lands or giving them on a tenor basis. This they do in a number of ways:

i) Leasing the paddy fields illegally once a year for a sum of Rs. 7,000/= for both the *Yala* and *Maha* seasons in order to secure the cash in a single payment. (This method of leasing the paddy fields was mostly adopted so that they were able to pay the fines to the court when accosted for unauthorised hunting).

ii) Leasing the paddy fields illegally twice a year for a sum of Rs. 3750/= for both the *Yala* and *Maha* seasons in order to secure the cash in two payments.

iii) Aged villagers illegally transferring their paddy fields to another. The elderly who were in possession of paddy lands which they were no longer able to cultivate transferred them in return for the promise that the other party would hand over half of the harvest reaped (*Wee Poronduwa*).

iv) The mortgaging of paddy fields or on a tenor basis.

As a result some officers of the Mahaweli Authority, Sinhalese villagers from outside and other officers ultimately became inheritors of these paddy lands (on a mortgage level) belonging to the Vedda villagers. The landowners became tenant farmers and labourers of their own lands. In the meantime farmers occupied with paddy cultivation have been gripped by problems due to their unfamiliarity with the environment. According to what the villagers say, an amount of Rs. 15,000/= is expended each time a paddy field is harvested. Such an amount of cash is not a small amount for a farmer of Henanigala South. Though fertilizers and insecticides were supplied at a reduced rate in the early stages by the Mahaweli Project, the farmer is now compelled to buy them from the private trader. The Vedda farmer who is not in a position to purchase fertilizers and insecticides for ready cash is compelled to buy these at a higher price from the black-marketeer in the village on the promise that he would pay back the money after reaping the harvest. These farmers, who are not familiar with the usage of insecticides, find that their harvest was not that rich. Further, they are unable to understand the guidance extended to them by the field officers to prevent the soil becoming infertile as a result of cultivation over a period of time and to compensate for it by engaging in cultivating additional crops. In addition to this, constant
conflicts have arisen by the villagers over the limited amount of water supplied to the paddy fields through canals by the water supplier. To add to this, since no systematic method exists to sell the harvest reaped under such trying conditions for a reasonable sum of money, these circumstances have placed the farmer in a precarious position. The stores at the Paddy Marketing Board in Nawa Medagama, Paranagama, Girandurukotte or Henanigala North would purchase this village produce only if it were of a real high quality. Farmers in Henanigala South, who are unable to offer paddy at such a quality level now have resorted to offering the harvest reaped at a comparatively low price to private traders who approach them from such far off places like Polonnaruwa, Minneriya and Minipe. Even though their harvest was not bought, the farmers complain that their paddy is bought by the Paddy Marketing Board from the private trader without any form of a quality control check. Though farming co-operatives have been established within the Mahaweli units by the Mahaweli Authority for the welfare of the farmers, since the farmer of Henanigala South is unable to comprehend its role, this has not brought him any gain.

With urbanisation the cost of living for the villagers in Henanigala South is indeed high compared to the villagers in Dambana. Apart from paddy cultivation, there is no other way in which villagers of Henanigala South could derive an income. Labour is available only during periods when paddy cultivation work is in progress. These villagers possess no knowledge about engaging in any handicraft activities or rural industry as such. There is only one Government officer for this entire village and there is only one Vedda woman who serves as a attendant in the Government hospital. When compared with the Vedda people of Henanigala South, the Vedda community of Dambana makes more liberally use of lands for chena cultivation. The Veddas of Dambana earn a living through the tourist trade. Thus, those who reside in Henanigala South encounter a worse economical fate than the than Dambana folk. Apart from the food stamps given by the State the State does not supply any aid to them on the grounds that they are dwellers of land belonging to the Mahaweli scheme. As a result of discontinuing the aid system all over the island by the Government, food stamps are no longer available to them.

During the middle of this century, it was Prime Minister D.S. Senanayaka who issued Government permits for the Vedda people in possession of arms. The Vedda community, who made hunting their main mode of income were issued the notice that indulging in hunting was out of bounds once the Madura Oya National Park come into

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53 A form of minor aid offered in the form of dry food rations and kerosene oil on a monthly basis to the number of members in the family.
existence in 1983. It was unbearable for these people to accept the fact that this forest land which was their motherland had now become a prohibited land for them. In accordance with the Wild Life Protection Act\(^4\) in each instance that someone was accosted for entering the forest, in possession of any arms, and hunting within the forest, a fine of Rs. 10,000/= was imposed, or he was subjected to rigorous imprisonment for a period of one to two years. Accordingly, if a person were to commit such illegal acts a number of times, the fines imposed would increase from Rs. 10,000/= upwards. During the past period the number of Veddas who were nabbed by the law enforcement agencies for having gone hunting within the Park was about forty five. The Park has been divided into three ranges which have been named as Ulhitiya, Iddapola, and Madura Oya. These three ranges have been further divided into eleven Beats known by the names of Thimbirana, Gurukumbura, Kandaganwila, Ulhitiya, Rathkinda, Padawala, Damanawela, Kudawela, Kadopeharalla, Henanigala and Galkoriya. Guard points too have been posted at all such locations by the Wild Life Protection Department. On occasions when Veddas who go hunting are nabbed by law enforcement officers, the two enforcement parties often engage in disputes and conflicts. In such instances records prove that three Veddas and one official have already been killed.

Forty per cent of the Vedda population still roams the jungles on hunting sprees. The easiest and the speediest manner in which these people who are not equipped with any skill or are familiar with paddy cultivation, could earn some money is through unauthorised hunting. Unlike in days gone by, the jungle no longer belongs to them. Instead its control and rights now belongs to the Government officials. As a result of this situation, the Veddas do not desire to protect the jungle anymore. In order to secure some prey the hunters set fire to the jungles according to their whims and fancies, behind the back of the Department’s officials. For lack of moisture kirinda trees\(^5\) have withered away on the earth which has dried and cracked for want of water. The fire is carried away in the direction the wind blows, and thus acres of forest in the village area get burnt out. The odour of the burnt kirinda trees and the grass attracts deer and stags to the location. Hunters hide in the Park for days, and they hunt the animals that come in search of food. These hunters then creep stealthily into the village and fleece the animals they had hunted dry the flesh, bundle them up and finally with the aid of middlemen, transport them to trading locations found in Nawa Medagama, Girandurukotte, Mahiyangana and Kandy. They transport these quite successfully via police guardpoints on the way offering bribes to the security guards. Apart from this Veddas in the

\(^4\)469th Authority.

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Dambana area quite easily sell this hunted flesh to local tourists who come in search of them.

Even Sinhalese traders persuade the hunters to engage in hunting. These traders have shops in the village and supply food items to the hunters on a loan basis to enable the latter to roam the jungles. The hunters go on their hunting sprees and subsequently sell the hunted flesh to these traders to pay off the money borrowed from them. The trader offers the food items on a loan basis while the hunter finds the opportunity of going to the jungles. In this manner, the trader is able to sell his food items comparatively easily and for a higher price.

The greatest destruction that these hunters indulge in is the killing of elephants. The elephants pursue the hunters and in order to escape them, the hunter shoots at the elephant. If the shot strikes a vital of the elephant, it could prove lethal. Apart from this, during the period when chena cultivation is in operation, in order to safeguard their cultivation from these animals, the Vedda villagers erect planks with nails in them and place the planks at points where these animals cross. The elephant which treads on them finds his feet embedded in the nails. Unable to bear the pain, the animal then moves or shakes his leg violently, which ultimately results in the plank being thrown away and the nails remaining embedded in the soles of its feet. Due to the aggravating condition of the wound the elephant becomes seriously affected and eventually passes away after suffering severely.

Felling of trees for timber also takes place within the Park, and the Veddas too engage in this activity. Those who engage in this activity on a wider scale are of the Vedda-Sinhalese mixed community. This group of plunderers supply the Vedda villagers with sawing equipment required for the purpose. The villagers saw the timber within the Park, totally unknown to the officers. This sawn timber is sometimes most stealthily loaded into Government vehicles and thus the transport planned in advance. They are also clever enough to evade the long arm of the law during the transportation process.

In this way the Sinhalese racketeers, traders, officials and sometimes even those connected to politics have their wants and needs fulfilled very cunningly through the Vedda folk. While they thus fill their pockets through such misdeeds, the Veddas are compensated with a meager offering. This shows how the Vedda community is ignorant of the fact that these racketeers use them to commit such a national crime that they are being

\[35 Coix lacryman - jobi.\]
and exploited. On the other hand, what need is there for this community which is engaged in a continuous battle with existence to understand such matters?

The officials and villagers of Henanigala South have frequent serious conflicts between them. The reason for this prevailing situation is that neither the villager is able to understand the concepts of the officer nor the officer can understand the concepts of the villager. The villagers are utterly depressed with the activities of the officers. The villagers make complaints with many examples to prove that the officers rob them of their financial aid and even the dry rations that are made available to them by the UN organisations. The officers in turn reply by saying that the villagers of Henanigala South do not give them any co-operation where their development is concerned; that in this regard, they only display a sense of poor response, and that they maintain the concept that the development of the Mahaweli resettlers is bound to be carried out by them alone. In response, the villagers remark that these Mahaweli officers even call for a rejection of the leadership of their elders and order them not to come to the office clad in their traditional dress of the loin-cloth with the hand axe hung over the shoulder. The aforementioned situation has arisen because the officers answer that the Yedda community was brought to the Mahaweli colonies so that they would not live as Veddas anymore. Due to these antagonistic mentalities feelings of instability and frustration exist within the Vedda villagers.

The housing problem is the other great problem that these people of Henanigala South are faced with. The people of Kandeganwila were settled in Henanigala South in 1982 with the promise given to them that each family would be provided with a house. The Mahaweli Minister had said that, “the key would be given, and the door should be opened by themselves.” However, 133 families could get only twenty houses. The rest of the families were given Rs. 1000/= and Rs. 1,500/= for the purposes of erecting houses and toilets. These villagers say that even this money was not justly distributed among them because of the irregularities the officers. The Veddas were used to constructing houses using raw material obtained from locations around the forest. But at present nobody is permitted to enter the jungles to secure any form of timber, Iluk, or to dig for clay. As a consequence they have faced a severe shortage of timber and Iluk. A bale of Iluk now fetches Rs. 40/- and price of timber is even higher. The total lifespan of a house constructed with the aid of raw materials secured from the natural environment happens to be about three years. Due to this reason a house has to be repaired at regular intervals. But with the aforementioned problem, how could this be done? They had informed the politicians about
the housing problem. The Minister for Lands, Land Development and the Mahaweli Development, Mr. Gamini Atukorale at that time, broadcasted that a sum of Rs. 45,000,000/- had been allocated for housing construction in South Henanigala. Yet, up to now neither the houses nor the money had been forthcoming. In the meantime, during the thirteen years that have elapsed, the 133 families that were brought from Kandegamwila to Henanigala have produced over 200 sub-families (commonly called ‘non-farmer’ families in the Mahaweli region). Marriages among children of the Veddas have contributed to a rapid increase of the sub-families. Blocks of twenty perches have been allocated to only twenty individuals. Members of the rest of the subfamilies have begun to erect unauthorised shanties in the Mahaweli lands. Thus the Mahaweli officials together with the police have taken steps to demolish these huts that have been put up with the greatest difficulty by these villagers. It is the villager who has had to face the negative consequences of the Government’s unsystematic planning of the land distribution. It was decided to allocate ten per cent of the lands in one Mahaweli unit for the purpose of distributing them among the subfamilies that were to spring forth in the future. But what really happened was that the politicians had distributed these lands to their political followers on an electoral basis as being those who were deemed fit as alternative recipients to receive such lands. It is in this manner that the authorities have tended to neglect the future of the children of families who have had to come over to the Mahaweli colonies having lost possession of their ancestral lands.

The present fate of the Veddas of Dambana. As a result of the local and foreign tourists coming to Dambana, the villagers have to face different types of experiences when compared with their counterparts in Henanigala. A further discussion about the social changes that have occurred under this situation is necessary. It must be said that the Vedda people of Henanigala today exist in a man-made society. It is not at all surprising that a community which enjoyed nature is now unable to adjust themselves to a man-made society. Even the Veddas of Dambana lead a life with no expectations in having forfeited their ancestral mode of living. The desire to take possession of their forest land has still not left them. Hunting is still their most enjoyable mode of income. They are not prepared to abandon the feeling that the jungle belongs to none other than them. They complain that it was because the State took over control of the jungles that at their independence was threatened. The officers make allegations that the Veddas destroy the forest. The Veddas respond by saying that it was not they who had destroyed the forest but the officers.

56 The television news at 8.00 p.m. on 8th July 1992.
themselves and the politicians who are responsible for it. The policy of distributing lands to the middle class which took place in the middle of the 1960s as a result of the State Policy for distributing lands which have now come under the control of the Park has amounted to destruction of the forests and caused after problems of dislocation. The elderly Veddas of Henanigala are even ready to go to Kandegamwila, which is more familiar as well as native to them. There are two groups among the youth. The experiences faced by the adolescents at the time they left Kandegamwila cannot be recalled by them. This second generation say that life in Henanigala is quite familiar to them now. But those approaching adulthood and belonging to the second generation still reminiscences interesting information about their life in Kandegamwila. They had even gone to the extent of filing legal action, stating eleven demands to retrieve the jungle which was once in their possession. In this instance they claimed an extent of 198.72 sq. miles which was a part of the land which now has become a part of the Park. However, half way through the legal proceedings things came to a halt because they had begun to pin their faith once more on the politicians. The Vedda chieftain of Henanigala, Thala Warige Tapal Bandiya, began to entertain hopes once more about the forest because of the written promise given by the People Alliance Party, before the elections. It is clear that these people once more have become a prey to the administrators without any gain resulting in their favour.

Politicians as well as the authorities have attempted to drag the Vedda community into the mainstream of society without considering the anthropological factors. Veddas have not been able to adjust themselves to the situation and have now begun to engage in unauthorised activities from the perspective of the officers. This faces the identity crisis, a crisis in their traditional modes of living and they are trapped in a vicious circle bestowed on them by politics, bureaucracy and so-called development process.