Chapter Three

State Intervention and social Change in Rural Sri Lanka

3.1 Introduction

The structure of the state in the third world countries is one of the contributions of colonial administration. As discussed in the Chapter Two, capitalism is a predominant factor in the post-independent Sri Lanka that developed along with this modern structure of state. In the context of world polity the capitalism is a deterministic factor to the countries like Sri Lanka. The state structure is another deterministic factor to the social structure of the country.

Towards the end of the colonial rule in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), the local government comprising of local elites who had initiated several social and economic reforms within the same political structure. Among these reforms the land policy and social welfare system (education, health, and social services) are prominent. After the independence in 1948 the structural reforms were accelerated. Meanwhile, the ideology of nationalist politics penetrated the consciousness of the rural masses. In the later part of 1970s the country's economy got liberalised through new economic policy. Simultaneously the social and cultural sphere has also been changing accordingly. These socio-economic and political reforms initiated by the state could introduce social changes in both the urban and rural areas of Sri Lankan society.

Here I shall try to explain how the state intervention contributed to rapid social change in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Further purpose, I will discuss land policy, social welfare system, open economic policy, and politicisation of the rural social structure, especially after the independence. While discussing these aspects, I
would like to make few assumptions related to the theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis. The following are the assumptions:

1. Sri Lanka has been following the capitalist mode of economy during the post independence period that was borrowed from colonial administration, and the country became a periphery of the world economy.

2. The social reforms of the post-independent Sri Lanka have directly affected the rural inasses. However, these led more to disintegration than development and modernisation. This disintegration has badly affected the rural masses who are now ‘politically frustrated.’

3. The peasants are economically, politically, socially and culturally fragmented because of the development and modernisation efforts of the country and now the peasants are linked with the capitalist mode of production.

With reference to these assumptions the rural social structure has been changing significantly during the post-independence period of Sri Lanka. Especially, village, the smallest administrative and social unit, has undergone several changes because of economic and social reforms introduced by the state. These reforms are being discussed in details in this chapter.

3.2 Land Policy

The land policy in Sri Lanka underwent changes during colonial period. As mentioned in the chapter one, they introduced major enactments (ordinances) in 1840 with the intention of establishing their control on land and to prevent the encroachment of natives on the so-called Crown lands. The Ordinance No.12 of 1840 (Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance) was the major legislation, used to prevent encroachment upon Crown Lands. “The ordinance practically limited the expansion
of the villages through population growth...[and] ... was intended to make land available for commercial plantations” (Hettiarachchy, 1882: 112). Furthermore, they introduced another ordinance, the “Registration of the Temple Lands Ordinance (No. 10 of 1856). The purpose of this ordinance was the preparation of the Register of Temple Lands” (ibid). Some of the temples had large stretches of land donated by the Kings as viharagam¹.

The Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance was amended by the Order in Council of 11 August 1841. Then there was Ordinance No. 1 of 1897, ‘An Ordinance related to claims to forest, chena, waste and unoccupied lands’ (Waste Lands Ordinance). Then they began to sell these lands too for commercial purposes. After this ordinance, the position of the peasants weakened further regarding the ownership of land property. “All the above ordinances were passed, and the peasants were deprived of their traditional land in order to allow the accumulating capital of the metropolis for chances of further investment” (Hettiarachchy, 1882: 113). This situation continued until 1935.

The Land Commission of 1925 with its report in 1929 was a landmark of colonial land policy in Sri Lanka. “The Commission’s recommendations were in fact put into effect by the Sinhalese-dominated government democratically elected in 1931 even before they were finally codified in the 1935 Land Development Ordinance” (Moore, 1985: 39). The most important character of this ordinance was the initiation of social change through redistribution of state-owned lands or Crown Lands among landless families. It effectively prevented the sale of crown lands. Under this ordinance the colonial government launched two schemes, known as Colonisation Scheme and Village Expansion Scheme.
3.2.1 Colonisation Scheme and Village Expansion Scheme

Colonisation scheme is a programme of resettling natives away from their home villages, especially in the Dry Zone. There were several purposes to initiate such programme. They are: (a) to reduce the population pressure in the congested Wet Zone; (b) to revitalise the Dry Zone agriculture and attract the village community towards the Dry Zone; and (c) to make the country self-sufficient in rice and other agrarian production. The programme was initiated by the government. “[T]he government undertook all jungle clearing; the ridging of all paddy land and stumping of 2 acres of it; the construction of irrigation channels and roads; the provision of houses, latrines, and communal wells; the issue of free seed paddy for the first season, of free planting materials for the high land, of tolls,… and the building of such communal facilities as hospitals, schools, and meeting halls” (Farmer, 1957: 167-68). Colonists were selected from many districts of both Wet and Dry Zones. Under this scheme 30 colonies were established and 12,106 peasant colonists were settled at the end of 1953. The district (Nuwara Eliya) where the present study of Teripahe is carried out was the second highest among the main Kandyan area where peasant families (1016) migrated under this colonisation scheme in the Dry Zone. It was 08 per cent of the total migration under colonisation schemes by the 31st of December 1953 (Farmer, 1957: 208). I found that several kindred families had migrated to these colonies in 1950s; but figures are not clear and there are no official accounts in the village Teripahe. This type of colonisation schemes was carried out in other Asian counties too. For instance, the Panjab Canal Colonies and Damodar colonisation scheme in India, and Dujaila scheme in Iraq.

During colonial period, with the rapid growth of population, villagers encroached on crown land, particularly on boundary of their villages. The State,
implementing 'Village Expansion Scheme', began to give small allotments to the landless villagers in order to ease population pressure in the villages. “It will be remembered that the Land Commission drew a distinction between 'Village Expansion', the settlement of peasants on land near their purāṇa village, and colonisation, their settlement away from their native village” (Farmer, 1957: 163). Unlike in colonisation scheme, those who had lands under the Village Expansion Scheme benefited more because of their kindred around them. This is one reason that government provided several infrastructural facilities to colonists under colonisation scheme. Moore (1985: 42) explains that “more than a quarter of the nation’s households currently reside on allotments obtained under Village Expansion Schemes alone. In the Dry Zone the figure is far higher”. However, the Crown Lands are redistributed through both Colonisation and Village Expansion schemes during the colonial regime itself and also after the independence of Sri Lanka.

Table 01: Crown Land alienated under the Land Development Ordinance, 1935-70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of scheme</th>
<th>Area alienated (thousand acres)</th>
<th>Number of allottees</th>
<th>Average size of allotment (acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village Expansion Schemes</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>580,104</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation of Acquired Estates</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55,063</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Colonisation Schemes: Paddy Land Highland</td>
<td>211 116</td>
<td>74,265</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Colonisation Schemes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8,755</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Leases</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>187.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation of Marginal Lands</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,108</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-Class Schemes</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>11,627</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Settlement Schemes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2,281</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,398</strong></td>
<td><strong>733,411</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Crown Lands alienated under the Land Development Ordinance during 1935-70 is shown in table 01. According to the table, there is a clear distinction in average size of allotments between Village Expansion Schemes and Major Colonisation Schemes. The reason is availability of land in the Dry Zone and the reluctance to migrate to the Dry Zone because of environmental factors. Furthermore, the expansion of cultivable land area was intended, as Nakamura and others argue. They say:

The irrigation, colonisation, and land settlement schemes were intended firstly, to increase the overall cultivable land area by providing irrigation facilities to new lands and secondly, to increase the cultivated land area in the yala season, particularly in the Dry Zone of the country. The Mahaweli Development Project started in the 1970s was the latest of the colonisation and land settlement programmes (Nakamura et al, 1997: 267).

The Mahaweli programme covers the northern parts of the central highland area, entire north central province and most of eastern province of the country. The Master Plan of the Mahaweli Project initially envisaged the resettlement of 1.5 million people in family farms over a period of 30 years. But this long period was telescoped down to be completed within five years under the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme (AMDP). By 1981 the total cost of the AMDP shot up to 400 per cent higher than its original estimate of Rs. 8,000 million. Among the most significant changes from past colonisation practices was the size of the allotments. It was reduced from four acres of low land and three acres of high land, which was considered 'unmanageable', to 2.5 acres of irrigable land and a homestead plot of 0.5 acres. Under the AMDP 92,071 families were settled and 119,574 hectares of new land were cultivated since 1976 till 1998 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report-1998, Tables 34, 35).
3.2.2 Land Reforms

In the final stage of colonial administration there were four main categories of larger landowners in Sri Lanka. They were (i) the state, (ii) the owners of plantations, (iii) the owners of paddy lands leased out in small lots on a sharecropping basis, and (iv) large rice farmers making extensive use of hired labour. Each of these categories of landowners has been attacked through different policies during the post-independence period in Sri Lanka. The main objective of these policies was to render defunct feudalism and its fundamental relationships throughout the country.

Sharecropping was at the heart of feudalism and it was outmoded and inefficient as a system. Breaking the social relationship of sharecropping was the path to a more efficient agricultural economic system. This sharecropping system is called as ande in Sri Lankan rural society. “In point of fact, there is pressure of population on land, and in consequence the landlords are able to procure ande tenants and lessees on terms more unfavourable to the cultivator than anywhere else in the county. Whereas in many other areas the landlord gives the cultivator seed and buffaloes, and share the harvest on a 50:50 basis” (Farmer, 1957: 62). The sharecropping of paddy land by ande system is widespread in rural Sri Lanka, especially in the Sinhalese dominated areas.

Sri Lanka as a agricultural society have paid more attention to paddy cultivation during post-independence period and the state made several attempts to protect its farmers in many ways. In 1953, the government of United National Party (UNP) came up with the Paddy Land Act of 1953. This Act was applied only to the two districts of Hambantota and Batticaloa where the tenure situation was judged most in need of regulation. But, the Act did not have any direct impact on the
landlord-tenant relationship. However, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), the coalition government of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and some Marxist parties, introduced a more comprehensive Act in 1958. It is known as the Paddy Land Act of 1958 (Paddy Land Act, No. 1 of 1958). The ineffectiveness of 1953 Paddy Land Act “provided stimulus and justification for more effective measures, and generated more interest in ande tenure, especially among the Marxist parties” (Moore, 1985: 54). The main intentions of this new Act were to register ande tenancies, grant security of tenure, limit rents to a small fraction of the crop, and above all, to establish special institutions to enforce these measures. For instance, according to the Paddy Land Act of 1958 ande tenants should pay no more than a quarter of the harvest as rent. “In the Low Country Wet Zone the Act is generally respected...in the Kandyan areas many tenants continue to pay the traditional half share as rent (Morrison et al, 1979: 9-10). Under the 1958 Paddy Land Act, the Cultivation Committees, intended to be organised at the grass-roots level, were set up.

Under this new Act the Irrigation Headman system – Vel vidane was abolished. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the Department of Agrarian Services was established to administer the 1958 Act. The village organisation of agriculture called Cultivation Committee (CC) functioned till 1979.

The other most important land reform during independent Sri Lanka is Land Reform Law, No.1 of 1972. As per the provisions of this Act, all privately held lands above an individual ownership ceiling of twenty-five acres of paddy land and fifty acres of other lands were acquired by the state. “The Land Reform Law also provided for the setting up of a Land Reform Commission (LRC) vested with powers to acquire privately held land in excess of the ceilings and to facilitate the development of the land so acquired in accordance with the economic and social policies of the
government” (Peiris, 1996: 148). This had directly affected the large-scale landowners of the country. Three years later, under the Land Reform (Amendment) Law, No. 39 of 1975, all the lands held by private companies are nationalised. Peiris (1996: 147-48) explains the ultimate goal of these land reforms in 1970s as follows:

“Leading the country towards socialism” was the declared goal of the United Front government which assumed office after the general parliamentary elections of 1970. Among the strategies that were adopted by the government in pursuance of this goal was a program of land reform designed mainly for the purpose of extending state control over the plantation sector. The reform was also expected to facilitate an increase in agricultural production and a diversification of agriculture, expand farm employment, release some land for plantation agriculture for redistribution among the landless peasantry, reduce the prevailing inequalities in income and wealth, and change the external and internal production relations in plantation agriculture.

All these nationalisation programmes were prompted by political reasons. The most important reason was the abortive revolution in 1971 led by JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna – the People’s Liberation Front) youth movement.

Through these land reforms all plantation estates held by foreign and local landowners were acquired by the state. “These two measures resulted in the acquisition by the state of 563,000 and 418,000 acres of land respectively. Out of total of 981,000 acres thus acquired, 801,000 acres were cultivated. This equalled 18 per cent of the cultivated area of the country...” (Moore, 1985: 65). These land reforms temporarily suppressed the development of capitalism in Sri Lanka.

With these land reforms, the United Front government intended to encourage agricultural activities in the village level. Therefore, the government passed two Acts, the Agricultural Productivity Law of 1972 and Agricultural Lands Law of 1973. The Agricultural Lands Law superseded the paddy Land Act of 1958 and abolished old Cultivation Committee (CC) system and its election system. Instead, it introduced a new CC system with appointed members to function as the village level agents of a new divisional agrarian agency called the Agrarian Productivity Committee (APC).
The office bearers in both CC and APC were appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands on the recommendations of the respective Parliament Members from each electoral constituency. "The New Committee was responsible for the promotion, coordination and development of agriculture, including the preparation of the annual production targets covering crops as well as livestock in its area" (Perera, 1985: 144).

Another important step taken by the state during 1970s, in relation to the plantation sector in the central highland areas of the country was to constitute the Department for Kandyan Peasantry Rehabilitation. "The Department has its origins in the work of the Kandyan Peasantry commission, which was appointed immediately after Independence..." (Moore, 1985: 76). The Commission has investigated the causes of poverty and landlessness of Kandyan Peasantry. The Department of the Kandyan Peasantry Rehabilitation has been engaged almost entirely on stepping up public expenditure on social infrastructure in the two provinces (Central and Uva Provinces), mainly related to the Kandyan domain.

Though the state nationalised the lands held by the big landowners and private companies, "the total amount alienated to villagers was very small, and that was mainly low value, uncultivated land" (Moore, 1985: 81). However, in the first year of the UNP government elected in 1977, 39,000 acres of state lands were distributed to the peasants. "This was followed by special legislation, the Land Grants (Special) Provision Act, No. 43 of 1979 under which it was planned to grant free to the landless, and under full ownership rather than under permit, 190,000 acres of land under the control of the Land Reform Commission" (Moore, 1985: 81). Later the government named these grant of land as distribution of 'Swarnabumi Deeds'.

The new UNP government has changed the agrarian policy by reversing most of the steps taken on the basis of the Paddy Land Act of 1958. In 1979, the
Department of Agrarian Services drafted the Agrarian Services Act of 1979, a comprehensive revision of agrarian law. "This incorporated a substantial, if extremely covert, weakening of the legal and procedural protection previously granted to the paddy land tenant, thus reversing for the first time the trends set in motion in 1953" (Moore, 1985: 64). However, under this Act all lands – paddy and highland lands – should be registered with the respective Agrarian Services Centres including all the tenants.

Land policy in Sri Lanka changed after the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1987. The purpose of this Amendment is establishment of Provincial Councils of Sri Lanka. Under this Provincial Councils Act of 1987, except the state land all the other types of land became the subject of the respective Provincial Councils. This Act led to the establishment of the National Land Commission under the supervision of the Government of Sri Lanka, and the Commission became responsible for the formulation of national policy with regard to the use of state land. The Commission has provision to include representatives of all Provincial Councils in the island. It is also newly enshrined in the Constitution that the "national policy on land use will be based on technical aspects (not political or communal aspects) and the Commission will lay down general norms in regard to the use of land, having regard to soil, climate, rainfall, soil erosion, forest cover, environmental factors, economic viability, etc." (Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of 1987: 31). In addition, "the powers shall be exercised by the Provincial Councils having due regard to the national policy formulated by the National Land Commission" (Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of 1987: 30 – 31).

Presidential Task Force (PTF) was established in 1989 to implement the land related recommendations made by the National Land Commission of 1987. The
The purpose of this PTF is proper utilisation and distribution of lands controlled by Land Reform Commission (LRC), plantation companies and co-operatives, and other privately owned lands. “It was expected that this programme could distribute around 500,000 acres of state owned land and 700 acres of LRC owned paddy land worked by ande cultivators” (Jayasena et al, 1999: ix). Since land is a devolved subject, Provincial Councils are supposed to play a major role in this process. “The PTF considered to distribute land up to 50 acres for large scale farms” (Department of National Planning, 1992: 32). Several of these new policies on land were promoting the capitalist mode of agriculture in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, during 1990s the Sri Lankan Government initiated privatisation of state owned plantations. This was another landmark in land and agrarian policy in recent history of the country. However, as the following information shows, the government changed the track towards capitalism.

Following the recommendations made by the steering Committee, 449 state-owned estates were regrouped into 22 independent Regional Plantation Enterprises, each consisting of between 15 to 25 estates. Twenty-two private-sector companies with a proven track record of sound management were selected competitively to manage these enterprises on a profit sharing basis. Under this arrangement about 95,000 ha. of tea, 59,000 ha. of rubber, and 11,000 ha. of coconut came under management contracts (Department of National Planning, 1992: 30). The second step of privatisation of plantations sector was planned, “but not implemented by 1994” (Kelegama, 1997: 484). Perhaps, the reason might be political, as the power has changed from UNP to People’s Alliance (PA) in end of 1994. The PA’s election manifesto was against the privatisation of state property. However, after few years the new government also gave in vigorously to the process of privatisation. To keep up a facade of difference with the previous government, the plantation sector was excluded from the purview of privatisation.
3.3 Social Welfare

Sri Lanka has a long history of social welfarism since the formation of Buddhist ideology in 3rd century B.C. The tradition was directly related to Lord Buddha and his previous births. Buddhist literature says that there are ten Pāramitas, which all Bodhisatvas followed for attaining Buddhahood. Dāna or alms was the most important Pāramita that Lord Goutama Buddha followed. This is explained through the Jātaka Stories of Buddha. Therefore each and every Buddhist practises dāna whenever and wherever one can do within the limits of social life. The ideology of welfarism developed with this social and cultural background in Sri Lanka. However, it was not an institutionalised ideology. The ideology of welfarism was institutionalised during the colonial period, especially in its last stage of power. As Jayasuriya and others argue, the welfarism in Sri Lanka has a western origin.

The modern social welfare system in Sri Lanka has its origins in British colonial social policy, and this is clearly reflected in the nation’s early social legislation. Subsequent social reforms were, however, introduced in response to agitation by the Western-oriented Sri Lankan political elite, especially the left, who had been influenced by Fabian social-democratic ideals. These influences were reflected in the emphasis on income redistribution and responsiveness to universal needs, key features of Sri Lanka’s social welfare system (Jayasuriya and et al, 1982: 279).

In addition, the social problems such as poverty, youth unrest, and malaria plague developed at the last stage of colonial period have influenced the promotion of the ideas of social welfare in the country. In this connection, several Commissions were appointed in 1930s and 1940s. Among these, three stands out as important Commissions. They are:

1. Kannangara Commission of Education (1943)
2. Jennings Commission of Social Services (1947)
3. Cumpston Commission of Health Services (1950)
The three reports of these commissions are the landmarks in Sri Lankan welfare system that developed during the colonial administration.

3.3.1 Education

The Kannangara Report on Education recommended the establishment of a system of universal and compulsory free education from kindergarten to university. The recommendation was implemented in October 1945. Most of the schools were run by Christian denominational bodies, and few others were controlled by Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim religious organisations. Therefore, the government took gradual steps to absorb these private schools under the Ministry of Education. The medium of instruction in the schools had been changed to Swa Basha, native language in 1956. The university education too followed the Swa Basha policy from 1960 onwards, and it is still continuing in Sri Lanka. Though the Swa Basha policy has been of little value to the English education, it has made a huge impact among the rural unprivileged people. But, the other policies on education have been changing from time to time, as and when there was political change of power. In 1980s the UNP government started to offer free textbooks for all school children, and in the later part of 80s the government began providing school uniforms and mid day meals free of cost. These reforms of education have been inclusive of all other schools run by religious institutions in Sri Lanka. In 1977, after the economic liberalisation, many private technical education institutions have sprung up, especially in the urban centres of the country. “(S)ocial and cultural changes that have accompanied economic liberalisation such as the expanded use of English and the establishment of private schools and colleges offering instruction in the English medium and preparing them for British and American Examination” (Hettige, 1999: 306). However, the strong
emphasis on education over the years has resulted in a very high level (91.1 per cent in 1999) of literacy among the people.

3.3.2 Social Services

The Jennings Report on Social Services (1947) recommended the adoption of a health insurance scheme, an unemployment insurance scheme and a national provident fund, all of which were to operate as contributory schemes financed by the contributions of both employers and employees. However, the Employees Provident Fund was established in 1958 only (Jayasuriya et al, 1982: 296). But, it had little relevance for the vast majority of the population. The Department of Social Services was established because of the recommendation of this report. It is more important because this department is handling most of the social services in the country and coordinating with other Government Departments and Ministries, and even with Non-Governmental organisations.

The social security is basically related to the formal sectors only. However, the government attitude on agricultural farmers was very positive and they have introduced several subsidies for rural farmers before and after the independence in Sri Lanka. “Agricultural subsidies mainly consist of guaranteed price scheme, subsidy on inputs, the crop insurance scheme and subsidised tractor services for ploughing” (Perera, 1985: 67). Mick Moore (1985: 103) who studied the peasantry and politics in Sri Lanka explains the government’s response to the farmers:

At the political and official levels at least, the conventional view is that the paddy farmer is a net recipient of subsidies, not only in the form of credit, fertiliser subsidy and irrigation development, but also through the operation of the Guaranteed Price Scheme (GPS)...when the GPS was introduced in 1948, the cash price paid to the farmer for his rice was substantially above both the price paid by the Food Commissioner for rice imports and local open-market prices.
The government planned to buy paddy and other selected agricultural produces at prices fixed from time to time. "Until the establishment of the Paddy Marketing Board in 1972, the Co-operative Societies functioned as agents of the government in buying paddy and other produces under the scheme. A paddy fertiliser subsidy scheme was introduced in 1951" (Perera, 1985: 67). However, the GPS is still continuing in Sri Lanka. Crop insurance scheme was initiated as a pilot project in 1954. It was legalised by Crop Insurance Act of 1961, and the Act led to the establishment of Crop Insurance Board. This scheme "is heavily subsidised by government and guarantees farmers a minimum income, even in times of crop failure, and lessens the need for 'distress credit'" (Jayasuriya et al, 1982: 296). The other social security scheme launched by the government with proper intention to protect farmers was the Farmer's Pension and Social Security Benefits Scheme. "The scheme was operationally launched in 1987 and now embraces a total membership of approximately 235,000 farmers" (Amarabandu, 1995: 35). As most of the farmers are suffering in their old age due to lack of income, this scheme was intended to give benefits to them.

3.3.3 Health

The Cumpston Report resulted in National Health Policy, and the Health Services Act No. 12 of 1952 further supported it. However, "its relationship to the development of health care policies was not as critical as the Kannangara Report was to education, because the basic policy decisions relating to a national health care system had been taken prior to the Cumpston Report" (Jayasuriya et al, 1982: 293). The reason for this was the widely spread malarial plague especially in the Dry Zone during 1930s. The government health department has been providing services free of cost except for a brief period during 1970-77 when a very nominal rate was charged.
This progress in health services of Sri Lanka resulted in the development of better network for the rural areas also. The special feature of rural health care is indigenous medicine. Most of the peasants go for indigenous ‘Ayurvedic’ health treatment. If there is vulnerable health problem, then only they go to the Western allopathic treatment in the government hospital. Some governments have made attempts to promote the indigenous medical system. In this regard, Peiris (1993: 203-04) reports:

When the UNP assumed office in 1977 it had made an election pledge to “restore the high standards of health and disease prevention that existed earlier (i.e. presumably, prior to the tenure of the previous government, 1970-77) and to make further improvements on our health services particularly in the rural areas through both the Ayurvedic and Western systems”. Early in the tenure of the new government, Sri Lanka became a signatory to the United Nations Alma Ata Health Charter which placed emphasis on the development of Primary Health Care as a means of achieving ‘Health for All by the Year 2000’. The promotion of primary health services was later adopted as a major strategy in the Health Development plan of 1983, which also declared as one of its principal themes that of facilitating “the integrated use of health care resources available in all sectors for health development in the country”. Along with public health care services, the governments have simultaneously promoted the same in the private sector too. After the economic policy of liberalisation, the government provided fiscal incentives to private investment in the development of health service infrastructure, and permitted doctors employed in the public sector to engage in part-time private practice. These appear to have resulted in the rapid expansion of private ‘western’ curative services. Now there are many private hospitals and health services in the urban centres of Sri Lanka. This is another important feature of capitalist development during the last two decades in the country.

3.3.4 Food Subsidies

The principal elements of government policy in Sri Lanka concerning food supply, which took shape during the Second World War, continued and remained more or less unchanged throughout the first three decades of independence.
The rice ration scheme has been in operation since then for more than one and half decades. Under this scheme, everyone was eligible to obtain subsidised food. However, in the second half of the 1960s the allocation was reduced by half, but given free. Later in the late '60s it was reduced in quantity and was limited to non-income tax payers. This was further limited to the lower 50 per cent of income levels among the population in the late '70s, and finally was converted into a Food Stamp Scheme restricted to low-income households in 1979. Subsequently, the programme was changed into a nutrition programme in the form of Poor Relief Food Stamp Scheme for pregnant and lactating women, infants and pre-school children. The Food Stamp Scheme was introduced to replace the Food Subsidy Scheme, which was in operation prior to 1979. This marked a fundamental change in the state’s intervention policy in the provision of minimum consumption levels to the population. Thus, a commodity specific subsidy to a direct income transfer programme or income support programme aimed at a target population came to an end. With this change, all price subsidies on food were removed. “This measure was accompanied by a relaxation of certain controls on private sector food imports and the removal of price controls on a range of consumer items in the retail market” (Peiris, 1993: 208). In other words, the rationale for the shift in the policy stance was to reduce government intervention in the market place, to shift resources for development purposes in keeping with the growth-oriented liberalisation policies of the new UNP government. In 1989, as part of the poverty alleviation strategy, the UNP government of a second successive term in office, launched the Janasaviya Programme.

This programme was continued up to 1994, covering five Rounds of Stages in 123 Divisional Secretariats and 580,670 recipients or families (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report, Series 1991-1995). However, this programme collapsed due to
political reasons, as the political power went into the hands of People’s Alliance in 1994.

The PA government launched a new poverty alleviation and income-generation programme known as the *Samurdhi* programme or ‘prosperity movement.’ The objectives of this programme was to broaden opportunities for increased income and employment, integrate the poor into economic and social development activities, and to link family level economic activities with community development projects at village, divisional, district and provincial levels. The *Samurdhi* Authority Act was passed in Parliament in 1995 and the Authority was established in January 1996. The Authority functions as the executive and administrative arm of the programme. It conducts its operations through District *Samurdhi* Committees, and is responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of the programme at the national level. Since the commencement of the project, 22,861 animators and 1,196 managers have been appointed to identify *Samurdhi* beneficiaries and subsequently to assist in other development projects. One *Samurdhi* Task Force each has been set up in each Grama Niladari Division to identify and implement suitable projects based on available resources in the area. Furthermore, the *Samurdhi* Bank Foundation and Rural Bank Societies have been established under this programme.

3.3.5 Housing

“In the period before independence, government involvement in the development of housing in Sri Lanka was largely confined to certain statutory controls over standards of residential building construction in the main urban areas and in the plantation sector” (Peiris, 1993: 213). In contrast to the colonial period, during the first half of post-independent Sri Lanka, housing became an urgent national
problem with rapid population growth. For reasons of national economy it continued to be a generally neglected sphere (Wilson, 1974: 70). However, the change in attitude of the state was “reflected in the establishment of a Ministry of Housing in 1953, and the passing of the National Housing Act of 1954 which provided for increased involvement of the ministry in implementing housing schemes, providing assistance to private house builders, and enforcing earlier legislation relating to the public health aspect of housing” (Peiris, 1993: 214). As far as the government’s housing policy is concerned, it remained without much change or improvement till 1970. During the early 1970s, the government took interest to protect public’s rights in property and housing. “This resulted in the adoption of several legislative enactments among which the Rent Act No. 7 of 1972 and the Ceiling on House Property Law No. 1 of 1973 were most important. These laws provided for the control of house rents and owner-tenant relations in housing in all areas of the country…” (Peiris, 1993: 215).

Different from the earlier policy, the UNP government took active interest in housing. It launched a massive housing programme during the last two decades (1977-94). This programme was linked with Gam Udava or ‘Village Re-awakening Movement’ in which housing development was one of several objectives. It was not only innovative but was also acclaimed as one of the humanitarian methods of reducing poverty in a direct manner. The United Nations honoured the Sri Lankan leader R. Premadasa who initiated this vigorous shelter programme to provide houses for the homeless by getting the United Nations to declare 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The National Housing Authority, as the major implementing agency of the 1.5 million-housing programmes, has been directly responsible for the two public sector shelter programmes, the Rural Housing Sub
Programme and the Urban Housing Sub Programme. These two programmes were intended to improve housing conditions of poor families in rural and urban areas. However, after the change of government in 1994, not only the Village Re-awakening Movement, but also the shelter programmes were encapsulated to the Samurdhi programme. The new government has not taken interest in the housing needs of the poor.

3.3.6 Politics of Welfarism

It is very important to see the hidden political agenda of welfare system behind these main social welfare programmes in Sri Lanka. After the colonial administration the local government too followed the same model of welfare system. This situation is clearly explained by Hettige (1999, 299):

The dominant ideological and social forces that surfaced towards the end of the colonial period and in the first few decades after independence prevailed upon the post-colonial state to ensure that successive post-independence regimes pursue vaguely anti-Western, largely welfare-oriented economic and social policies which were by and large aimed at safeguarding the interests of the lower social strata, in particular in the rural areas. The increasingly protectionist policies, however, did not mean that the country or its people could break away from the colonial legacy and pursue a path of independent development. This was so not only because the aspirations of the country’s population were decisively shaped by the colonial experience. It can be safely said that rulers have selected welfarism as main theme of the governance of Sri Lanka. In other words, the local government selected “first social welfare and then economic growth” policy as the path of the country’s development. This policy however helped in achieving the high quality of social indices of development of Sri Lanka today. In contrast to other Asian countries, India selected a policy that “first economic growth and then social welfare” as the country’s pathway of development and India has reached the high standard of economic and industrial
development today. Though India has low quality of social indices the nation can stand to any troublesome political situation.

Social welfarism in Sri Lanka is a key feature of political agenda. The volume of food subsidy proposed to the people by each political party and its manifesto has been the deciding factor of political power in each and every general election since independence.

The role of the government in relation to food supply during the past four decades reflects some of the more important aspects of policy formation, and the broad objectives towards which welfare policy in Sri Lanka has continued to be directed. To focus now on these aspects, it seems clear that, at least during the first three decades after independence, food policy was to a large extent guided directly by electoral considerations. Even by the time Sri Lanka gained independence, the concept of a food subsidy had become a deep-rooted expectation of the people which could not be ignored in policy formation (Peiris, 1993: 209).

The electoral promises of welfare programmes to the masses led to mutual dependency of people and leaders in political arena. It has been clearly visible since 1970. On the one hand this type of politics helps to promote the dependent population to the detriment of moral sustenance of any society, and on the other hand it is an ecstasy to political elite. However, the ultimate result is the creation of a politically fragmented and frustrated society. Welfare as such is good. But mixing it with electoral politics led into wrong results and values.

3.4 Open Economy

During the first half of the post-independence Sri Lanka, all the governments followed state-centred development path with closed mode of economy. The year 1977 initiated the policy of economic liberalisation. The question whether it was not implemented before 1977 or not is debated. “We should not neglect that there were attempts to introduce open economic policy by 1975. For instance, the proposal was
passed by the cabinet to start Free Trade Zones, but it was not implemented” (Gunasinghe, 1990: 3). The situation actually changed when the new UNP government focussed economic liberalisation programme in 1977, the new “policy of economic liberalisation and integration into the global capitalist system which has had far-reaching consequences for the economy and, less certainly, for the social structure” (Moore, 1985: 231). However, “though the political, social and cultural implications of economic liberalisation appear to be as important as the economic ones, these aspects have not received the attention they deserve” (Hettige, 1999: 300).

There are two main consequences of this economic liberalisation policy that began in 1977. “One was the relaxation of rules, controls and regulations that impeded the free movement of goods, service and finance between the country and the outside world. This step, along with other incentives was expected to facilitate foreign investment in the country. The second major consequence was the privatisation of many state-owned enterprises and the reduction of the state bureaucracy. This prevented the further expansion of the state sector” (Hettige, 1999: 303). As mentioned earlier, this privatisation process has been continuing and its repercussions have affected the rural society of Sri Lanka. The privatisation of state-owned plantations and selling of the lands to the private companies for large-scale farming are instances. With this new economic policy, the foreign industrial firms have made investments in the newly established Free Trade Zones (FTZs) in the country. Two of them (Katunayake, 1978 and Biyagama, 1982) are established close to the capital, Colombo, and the other in Galle (Koggala, 1991), southern part of Sri Lanka. This is a dualistic model of development. Myrdal (1957) termed this kind of model of development as ‘spread effect’ vs. ‘backwash effect’ and Hirschman (1958) termed this ‘trickling down’ model vs. ‘polarisation’ model of development. Both the
theorists are concerned with the same pattern of development through their dualistic concepts and models. “Myrdal and Hirschman developed a centre-periphery model and almost similarly conceptualised the mechanism relating to national sub-systems” (Patnaik, 1981: 3). The ‘spread effect’ or ‘trickling down’ model of development has favourable effects. “Rapid growth in the relatively advanced regions will benefit the less developed regions in many ways. Expansion in the growth poles provided more employment opportunities to the people of the less privileged areas, and the consequent decline in disguised unemployment there will tend to raise the marginal productivity and hence the living standards of labour... But in the early stages of growth, spatial concentration is bound to have adverse effects on the less developed regions, which are called ‘backwash’ or ‘polarisation effects’” (Mahajan, 1982: 7-8). These unfavourable effects in regional developmental areas can be identified as: (a) labour migration, (b) capital migration, (c) central government policy for more allocations of capital to sub-core areas to provide infrastructural facilities.

The Sri Lankan government planned the first two main FTZs in suburbs of Colombo. The capital Colombo as the core, most developed area of the country, can make strong interrelations with these sub-core areas. By developing infrastructure, most of the Trans-national Companies have been attracted to these FTZs in Sri Lanka. “The net foreign direct investment flows to the country is 40.9 Millions of US$ during 1978-82. It has decreased up to 35.3 Millions during 1983-89 and again increased up to 87.2 Millions during 1990-92” (Athukorala, 1997:401). In contrast during 1970-77, it was only 0.2 Millions. The FTZs have absorbed thousands of workers, specially young women, and “new industries were mostly low-paid, unskilled ones, not the type the country’s educated youths have been looking for” (Hettige, 1999: 304). Relatively these industries did not absorb unemployed male youths in large numbers,
but they have been getting employed in construction, and transport sectors, which developed extensively after the open economic policy. Many young men and women have migrated to these sub-core areas of the country in various employments.

"Policies of liberalisation, implemented during 1977-82, led to substantial concentration of incomes and wealth in the hands of a few and to a high degree of inequality in their distribution" (Lakshman, 1997: 9). The lowest income group (30 percent) gets only 6.94 per cent, while the highest income group (30 per cent) gets 67.82 per cent of the national income. Apart from the economic factors, the social and cultural factors are also very important for the rural areas of Sri Lanka that have made through the economic liberalisation during last two decades. Those who have migrated to the core and sub-core areas are experiencing quite a different culture. They have changed to the urban culture, and their customs and values now are not directly linked to rural culture. They have inculcated fashion life of the modern world – love affairs, and usage of sophisticated things like TV, radio, cassette, films, etc. On the one hand they have changed themselves, and on the other hand they represent as agents of change. When they go back to the village for spending holidays and leave-periods, others who observe them get influenced by them. Most probably, they aid others interested in the village into some job opportunity in the city. These new recruits undergo the same kind of changes. Some of them have been migrating to the Middle-East for earning more money.

Hettige (1999: 312-13) explains the social and cultural impact of the open economy as follows:

Economic liberalisation and the consequent shift of focus from the public to the private sector have placed Sri Lanka in the midst of transnational, social and cultural currents as well. Introduction of television in 1982, transnational migration of labour involving thousands of Sri Lankan workers, mainly women, flooding of local markets with all sorts of consumer goods, expansion
of tourism, establishment of dozens of international schools and colleges in the capital city providing English education to the children of the wealthy and the members of the NUMC [New Urban Middle Class], live telecast of all major cricket matches on TV sponsored by key multi-national firms, commencement of programming by major global TV networks, increased foreign travel by the members of the NUMC, rapid expansion of the advertising industry, flooding of city streets with Japanese and European cars, rapid transformation of the urban landscape, in particular that of the capital city, as evident from new office buildings, luxury hotels, shopping malls, supermarkets and dozens of modern restaurants, are all indications of the consumerism. Even though modern consumption is restricted to the wealthy segments of the population, in particular in the large cities, the impact of the consumerist ideology is far more penetrating and disruptive. Today, even the small tea boutiques sell Coca Cola instead of local tea!

As a result of the open economic policy, the core areas have changed rapidly and established a new social order. This created several political problems too in Sri Lanka. The ongoing ethnic conflict and the second abortive revolution effort by the JVP in 1988/89 are rooted in the open economic policy. However, the major repercussion of open economy in Sri Lanka is linked with the modern world capitalism.

3.5 Politicisation of Rural Social Structure

Politics is the key word for many activities in today’s world. It hardly talks something without any political affiliation. A country like Sri Lanka is no different. In Sinhala, the term is desapalanaya. And it has a long history to show how the Sri Lankan society and its structure has been getting politicised. According to Spencer, it became a central cultural phenomenon in Sri Lanka. He (1990: 208-09) says:

Politics as a public activity has grown in importance in rural Sri Lanka over the past half-century (since the introduction of universal adult suffrage in 1931). In particular, between the populist victory of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike’s SLFP in 1956 and the Presidential Election and subsequent referendum in 1982, village party politics became, I believe, a ‘central cultural performance,’ a cultural arena within which all sorts of contradictory social and cultural impulses might be represented and worked through.
Social change led to the search of its roots and patterns of development during the recent history of Sri Lankan politics, as the political development in a society is a crucial factor for social change. Perera explains “that the changes in rural Sri Lanka in the last five decades were more often due to political factors: penetration of state activities and its concomitant process of politicisation of rural communities” (1985: 7). This modern political ideology was introduced by the colonial administration and it had already given a new role to the peasants in Sri Lanka. The way of articulation of politics by the elite who led the independence movement gives one perspective to understand this question. And the other perspective is how the peasants perceive this situation in Sri Lanka.

In this chapter, we have seen how the social welfare ideology developed and how the state intervened in it in Sri Lanka. The ideology of Social welfare has been in the political agenda in all the general elections after independence. This type of consideration can be identified in both colonial and postcolonial administration. Spencer explains “the role of the colonial and postcolonial State as a provider of resources, and as a key instrument in local social mobility; ... as a provider—perhaps guarantor...” (Spencer: 208). The welfare ideology has created this kind of perception or attitude among the people of Sri Lanka. As I have pointed out, party politics is the main reason for this, and each party gives several promises to their members. With experience of free food, health facilities free of cost, and other social services the people started expecting more and more from the government that they have elected. Simultaneously the parties, which gained the power, have started organising the villagers in their favour by instituting several administrative reforms during post-independence Sri Lanka.
Sri Lanka attained Independence under the leadership of a political organisation, the United National Party, which largely represented the English-speaking, Westernised capitalist class of planters and businessmen. The same class dominated the public bureaucracy. At village level the UNP was in large part represented and organised by the ‘non-official administration’, the village headmen and superior headmen. The dominance of the UNP was ended when S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike left the party and formed his own alliance of different groups, later to become the Sri Lanka Freedom Party...the infant SLFP, then known as the MEP [Mahajana Eksath Peramuna], swept the polls at the 1956 General Election...The leadership of the SLFP at village level is often said to have been in the hands of [Buddhist monks], ayurvedic doctors, Sinhala-speaking school teachers, and petty traders. The ideology of the SLFP could be summarised as Sinhalese nationalism° (Morrison et al, 1979: 31 – 32).

Nationalism sharpened the way for the politicisation. After SLFP led MEP formed the government in 1956, they abolished the village headmen system and replaced it with Grama Sevaka system (lit. village servant) in 1964. Grama Sevakas were appointed by the Ministry of Public Administration. They introduced Cultivation Committees as the grass-roots level organisation (the structure of village level organisations are described in Chapter Four, section 4.1.7) by enacting the Paddy Land Act of 1958.

“The SLFP government rejected the idea of indirect rule and instead actively implemented political and economic policies designed to alter internal village structure in accordance with the new ideals” (Robinson, 1975: 2). These state interventions have caused a divide among the rural communities on party lines. Robinson (1975) has studied precisely how the Sri Lankan peasants got fragmented with party politics in her village. “We have said that by 1967 Morapitiya was a village without leaders. No longer, however, is it a village without groups. Morapitiya is now divided into two groups, defined by political party allegiance” (ibid: 208). As Spencer says, “party political identification is extraordinarily strong in all sections of Sri Lankan society. People and whole families are habitually referred to by their party identification: ‘he is an SLFPer,’ ‘they are an old UNP family,’ and so on” (1990: 211). The UNP leaders at the village level represent elite groups; “they commonly
control village level organisations which are either self-appointed, like temple committees, or which are elected, like Village Councils, Rural Development Societies, and until 1973, Cultivation Committees” (Morrison et al, 1979: 32-33). The politicisation was predominant in 1970s under the SLFP led National Front government.

The main two parties, UNP and SLFP had been exercising the political power since independence. However, the alienated groups, especially rural based youths have organised against the coalition government in 1971. This is commonly known as ‘JVP abortive insurrection.’ The conventional hold of elder people at the village level and even at parliamentary level over party politics led the youths to revolt and hence this revolutionary effect. Because of the domination of the elders, the youths were not represented in the political arena. The other main factor was that the movement believed no more solution for the burning socio-economic and political problems in Sri Lanka except socialism, though there was lack of strong class-consciousness generated by the capitalism among the suppressed classes of Sri Lanka. However, this insurrection paved way for many reforms. On the one hand, the government launched several reforms in its policy towards the rural masses, and on the other, the youths who have Marxist or socialist ideas were labelled as terrorists and were outcasted.

The National Front government in early 70s had introduced some new institutional bodies and changes. The new institutions appointed its members rather than electing them at the village level. One such new institution was Agricultural Productivity Committees (APC) and their subordinate bodies, the Cultivation Committees (CC), introduced under the Agricultural Lands Law of 1973. The committee members and office bearers of both the APC and the CC were appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands on the recommendations of the Member of
Parliament (MP). The co-operative societies, introduced under the Co-operative Ordinance of 1936, had got revitalised during early ’70s as Multipurpose Co-operative Societies (MPCS). “The distribution of the rice and other rations, along with other essential consumer items and fertiliser was in the hands of the appointed board of Multipurpose Co-operative Societies. The MPCS also ran various kinds of development projects and acted as wholesalers for various products in some areas…

A large proportion of the Village and Municipal Councils, especially those controlled by opposition parties, had been suspended and their functions exercised by Special Commissioners” (ibid: 33). The politicisation process that exercised during 1970-77, was extensive and intensive than that in the early period of post-independence. In this period, that “an MP could, if he wished, exercise authority over any public agency working in his electorate” (Morrison et al, 1979: 33-34). Furthermore, this was the period that witnessed a revitalisation of productive activities. The farmers were promoted in many ways for increasing their production, such as through the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign. However, this state-controlled economy resulted in a clear sweep for the National Front Government in 1977 general election.

The UNP has promised to provide dole for all unemployed youths and initiated job card system in election campaign in 1977. After the power they have implemented these two programmes as they promised, and each unemployed youth had got Rs. 50 per month. Most of the villages had several employment opportunities under the job card system. The new UNP government started to restructure the grassroots organisations. They have introduced a new post called Cultivation Officer (CO) for agricultural services in every Grama Sevaka division. “The post of CO was created by the UNP government in 1979 to replace the Cultivation Committee system. He was appointed to the post by the Department of Agrarian Services on the
recommendation of the MP of each area” (Perera, 1985: 93). All these posts went to the party leaders in villages.

Another major manifestation of politicisation of the rural social structure can be identified as the Gramodaya Mandalas system (Village Awakening Board). This system, established “for the purpose of ensuring more effective participation of the people...,” was initially vested with the function of submitting their recommendations in relation to the needs of their areas. Subsequently, under the Gramodaya Mandala Fund Act of 1982, they have been empowered to undertake village works which would contribute towards strengthening of the village economy, its social welfare, and cultural and community development. Only the chairperson of the Mandalas is elected from the members representing the specified voluntary organisations at the level of grassroots. Therefore, the UNP village leaders had enjoyed more power than under any of their previous stints by electing its members for all the village level organisations.

Along with the political participation of this kind, there was a well-structured youth organisation called Yavevana Samaja (Youth Societies) for youths in each Grama Sevaka division. Many of the youths got engaged in this programme and participated in many fields like sports, aesthetics, information technology, and other technological fields. Despite the fact that there was such a movement without political affiliations, the JVP movement could gradually come up with some subordinate organisations such as Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya.9 There was some political grounds for the re-emergence of JVP in the 80s again. The two occasions were more crucial, that is to say, first, when the JVP was banned in 1983, and second, when the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord was signed in July 1987. The emergence of JVP activity
in late 80s led to political violence, affecting each and every political party as well as the civilians in Sri Lanka.

After the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, the cry first coined by the JVP – “motherland above all” – became a generalised battle cry, and was suitably (and humorously) adapted to their needs by university students, secondary school students, and scholar monks in seminaries as “Motherland first, degree second”, “Motherland first, school second”, and “Motherland first, pirivena second” (Amunugama, cited in Tambiah, 1992: 88).

The JVP have totally controlled some parts of the rural Sri Lanka. However, “the government of Premadasa [UNP], the security forces, and their paramilitary organs have succeeded in killing the leadership (“the Politburo”) of JVP and have followed that with the final decimation and capture of the dispersed JVP rank and file” (Tambiah, 1992: 99). By 1990, the President, Premadasa, has appointed a Commission to study the problems of the youths in the country. The Commission has paid more attention to rural society where most of the violence occurred. The most important suggestion made by the Report of Presidential Commission of Youth (1990) was to follow strict merit while doing appointment in the government service. After this, measures were taken to conduct written examinations for recruitments by the government through Department of Examination. Without any political discrimination, anybody can get a job under this policy.

This policy continued till 1994 without political intervention. However, after the change of political power, the PA government led by SLFP is not following the policy. They have not innovated such new development programmes for the rural masses till date. Mostly the status quo is maintained, and sometimes the running programmes are proved inefficient than the earlier. The Samurdhi programme for poverty alleviation launched by the current government is more or less equivalent to Janasaviya under the UNP regime. The only distinction of the Samurdhi programme is that the Samurdhi Assistants in each village are appointed by the Samurdhi
Authority on the recommendation of the MP or the party leaders. The other politicisation of the rural social structure related to the agrarian services is the appointment of Agricultural Research and Production Assistant for each Grama Niladari Division (GND). This too is political appointment like that of the COs in UNP administration. The COs were terminated in 1992, and those officers were replaced by Grama Niladaris during the UNP government.

All the governments in postcolonial Sri Lanka have brought in many social, economic and political reforms in the partisan manner; they never followed any universalistic approach beyond narrow party interests. Only one occasion to follow the universal norms was when the youths got government job opportunities during last few years of UNP rule. However, this trend has again given in to the party politics after 1994 under the PA rule. All this implies that politicisation is predominant in postcolonial Sri Lanka. It has been directing the younger generations for demoralised political participation at the rural level. This situation has resulted into a socially, economically, politically fragmented rural society in Sri Lanka. At the same time, the rural society is also linked with the global capitalism.

3.6 Chapter Summary

As I discussed in this chapter, the state had been intervening in post-independent Sri Lanka. It started during the colonial administration but it had picked up momentum after the independence in 1948. It was mainly the state intervention that led to several structural reforms in land policy, social welfare system, economy and polity in Sri Lanka. Most of these structural reforms were meant for the rural society. The aim was to awaken the rural masses and revitalise the rural economy and villager’s life. The social welfare system of the country was helpful to achieve this
aim to some extent. Therefore, the majority rural community has been improving their literacy, health, life style and other infrastructural facilities related to the development and modernization. However, the economy has not rapidly improved like the social sector in Sri Lanka. The reason was that the state has given more priority to social welfare system since independence till open economic policy in 1977. Before this turning point of the economy, the state continued with the same model of economy that was borrowed from the colonial administration. After 1977, the economy was liberalised and it has been reared as part of the world capitalism. But it is a dependent capitalism. Most of the transnational companies have been penetrating the economy, including the rural economy in Sri Lanka. However, this was not the first time that transnational companies were linked with the rural economy. The village like Teripahe had links with the CTC (British American Tobacco Company) since 1950s.

After the economic reforms in 1977, the urban centres had expanded and grown rather than the rural society and as a result of these changes, most of the skilled members have migrated to these urban centres.

When these structural changes were taking place in Sri Lanka, most of bureaucratic structures also got gradually politicised. The movement of nationalism led by the elite started before the independence and it got momentum in the 1950s. The party politics infiltrated the rural community. However, those who (the JVP members) lost faith in the economic and political system developing in the country had launched an abortive revolution in 1971. In the meantime the ethnic disturbances increased in 1970s. After the liberalisation of the economy in 1977, the politicisation got strengthened. In 1980s, the ethnic problem had taken to serious dimensions in the Sri Lankan history. Simultaneously, the JVP insurrections had started again in the last half of the '80s, especially in the rural areas. The main reason for all these
disturbances was the politicisation of the society of Sri Lanka during the last 50 years. All parties and politicians want to develop their vote bank and want to be in power. Ultimately, the poor peasants are victimised by this process of politicisation. In this sense, the state intervention worked as a crucial factor of social change in rural Sri Lanka.
End Notes:

1 The lands belong to Buddhist temples. The Kings donated these lands as dedicated to the Buddha and Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks, for their benefits.

2 Paddy crop in Sri Lanka is raised in two distinct seasons per year: Maha (October-February) – main season and Yala (May-September) – minor season. In the Dry Zone, where sufficient irrigation facilities are not available, only Maha crop is possible. Sri Lanka is divided into two agro-ecological zones based on the difference in the amount and the pattern of rainfall called Wet and Dry Zones. The Wet Zone covers the southwest portion and the western parts of the central highlands of the country and has a higher annual rainfall than the Dry Zone.

3 The last Kingdom colonised by the British in 1815 had its own traditional way of life. Most of the native scholars and other intelligentsia believe that colonialism had affected this traditional Kandyan society, especially by the acquisition of peasant’s lands through the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance amended by the Order in Council of 11 August 1841 (Ordinance No. 1 of 1897). Because of this attitude the Kandyan Peasantry Commission of 1951 investigated the situation of Kandyan peasant life after giving due weight to the historical background of the area. This commission already identified and recommended several steps that should be implemented by the state.

4 The Vessantara Jātaka explains how the King Vessantara practises the Dāna Pāramita as a Bodhisatva in one of Gautama Buddha’s previous birth. He offered all his wealth including his wife and two children. This Jātaka story is the ideal example in Sri Lanka of redistribution of wealth that somebody earns among Buddhist community. For more details see The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 1993, Edited by E. B. Conwell, D. K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd, New Delhi (Pages 246-305).
The national Income distribution in Sri Lanka since 1953 to 1986/87 is shown as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Lowest 30%</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>9.35</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>6.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle 40%</td>
<td>24.37</td>
<td>26.79</td>
<td>32.11</td>
<td>27.10</td>
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<td>25.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highest 30%</td>
<td>67.04</td>
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<td>58.54</td>
<td>65.54</td>
<td>67.06</td>
<td>67.82</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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The lowest 30 per cent of the income receivers still remain poor and their living standards remain low.

In wider perspective, Janasaviya is a people-based programme. Therefore, it differs from other development programmes in many ways. In essence, the Janasaviya programme (a) intends to put people first, (b) considers human beings as the primary resources, (c) depends mainly on self-reliance and bottom-up, basically in decision making, (d) is culturally harmonious, and (e) can be realized on a truly island wide scale.

Janasaviya is a Sinhala word meaning 'strength of the people'. The programme was introduced in 1989 with a view to upgraded the quality of life of the poor by investing in the improvement of their natural levels and skills. Janasaviya beneficiaries are selected from among the Food Stamp recipient families, and on the basis of their current levels of income. The criterion for one to become eligible to receive benefits under the Janasaviya Programme has been that one's monthly family income at the time of selection must not exceed Rs. 700. Those who are selected to benefit from the programme will be entitled to a monthly income of Rs. 2,500 for a period of two years.

The amount Rs. 2,500 is itself divided into two portions, one portion for saving and the other for consumption. The saving component is Rs. 1,042 per month and is entered in the name of both the husband and wife in a saving passbook.
7 Mick Moore has argued that welfarism has very close relationship with politics in Sri Lankan rural society. For more details see *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka*, 1985, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

8 At the beginning it was identified as 'Pancha Maha Balawegaya' (lit. the great five forces) viz. Sangh (Buddhist Monks), Vedha (Ayurvedic Doctors), Guru (Sinhala-speaking Teachers), Govi (Farmers), and Kamkaru (Labourers).