Chapter Five

Real vs. Imagined Identities: Social Formation and Change in Village Teripahe

5.1 Introduction

This thesis aims at understanding social changes during postcolonial rural Sri Lanka. In Chapters One and Three, we discussed some major changes at the national and regional levels that have had significant impact on the rural society. These impacts have resulted in transforming the rural social structure as well as the social and cultural life of rural society. In this context, I would like to discuss, in this chapter, how these changes have transformed national, community and ‘self’ identity. I will argue that the changes in rural society not only changed the identity of the community and individuals, but more importantly have generated new and parallel “imagined” identities while coping up with these structural changes.

The concept of “identity” is an important question in modern world, and there exists a number of identity conflicts among various ethnic, religious and tribal communities. This means that a group of people may have several identities at the same time; there are cultural, social and historical boundaries and also a self-image started by the composite of all these identities. According to Epstein: “identity... is essentially a concept of synthesis. It represents the process by which the person seeks to integrate his various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self” (cited in Cohen, 1994: 11). Generally, the “consciousness of identity comes to surface when a group sharing it as part of its self image perceives a threat to the group [or community] by a force external to it” (Seneviratne, 1997: 5). The development of such consciousness depends on the articulation of identity and
the way their charismatic leaders are capable of mobilising the masses of people who share the identity for organised action.

The discourse on identity is a matter of anthropological method and epistemology. Ethnographers use “identity” to understand the peasants and other communities using it as a part of group perception or some times as what is imputed on a community as “their” identity. Identity is in fact an anthropological imagination created by the anthropologist himself.

The logic of imaginative creativity is not distinct from the logic of reasoning; they are aspects of the same capacity for intimation, which is part of our being ‘cultural’. Imagination is both constitutive and creative. It is a process, central to any event of understanding.

And this is the point: to acknowledge and to advocate an anthropological imagination is not to replace the scholarly standard of ethnographic presentation with a demand for creative writing. It is to explore the human potential for novelty in the real world. Anthropological knowledge is a creation that reveals... The intellectual craftsmanship of anthropology is not a matter of linking contexts of different scales, but of convincing the world that new kinds of shared knowledge are imaginable (Hastrup, 1995: 75).

Thus, all ethnographic narratives are, to some extent, imagined descriptions. Imagination helps to construct new anthropological knowledge.

The identity of any group or community is modulated and moderated by that of others. It basically depends on historical facts, gathered from the community and it is a historical process. In this sense most of historical factors are very important to the anthropologist. Carr (1973:22) explains the importance of the past as follows:

‘The past which a historian studies is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present.’ But a past act is dead, i.e. meaningless to the historian, unless he can understand the thought that lay behind it. Hence ‘all history is the history of thought,’ and history is the re-enactment in the historian’s mind of the thought whose history he is studying. The reconstitution of the past in the historian’s mind is dependent on empirical evidence. But it is not in itself an empirical process, and cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. On the contrary, the process of reconstitution governs the selection and interpretation of the facts: this, indeed, is what makes then historical facts.

If this explanation is more relevant to the historical studies, it gives very clear idea on
the past. The identity too is a fact that is evidently related to the past. The present depends on the past. However, it is very critical fact when we interpret the past acts such as identity. Moreover, Carr (1973:22-24) has shown that three vital realities are related to this. They are:

1. In the first place, the facts of history never come to us ‘pure,’ since they do not and cannot exits in a pure form; they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder.

2. The second point is the more familiar one of the historian’s need of imaginative understanding for the minds of the people with whom he is dealing for the thought behind their acts: I say ‘imaginative understanding,’ not ‘sympathy,’ lest sympathy should be supposed to imply agreement.

3. The third point is that we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present. The historian is of his own age, and is bound to it by the conditions of human existence.

Thus, according to Carr, history is not made ‘past,’ it is ‘present’ too. Though the facts related to the past are not pure, we have to depend on it, because we do not have any other verified means. Therefore, the process of imagination is very significant in decoding the past and hence the identities of various types.

In the post-modern discourse, the identity of a group or community has become a crucial factor. Identity in the post-modern discourse has become increasingly problematical issue. The issue of identity consists of how we constitute, perceive, interpret and present our self to ourselves and to others. From the post-modern perspective, “as the pace, extension, and complexity of modern societies accelerate, identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile” (Kellner, 1992: 143).
5.2 Identity in Modern Buddhist Sinhalese Society

In the context of Sri Lankan rural society, Buddhism dominates the identity of rural community. Sinhalese as the majority ethnic group (74 per cent) in Sri Lankan society are Buddhist. Buddhism is the main religion that has given a distinct identity to the rural Sinhala society. We cannot therefore study the Sri Lankan rural society without studying their Buddhist epics and beliefs which constitute the culture. Therefore, before beginning the discussion on the 'identity' of Teripahé village community, it is required discuss at least very briefly the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism.

The notion of Sinhala-Buddhist identity is a “concept” that has evolved during last two centuries, particularly during the colonial period. However, the metaphor of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism is related to Lord Buddha’s period (6th century B.C.). This particular historiography is based on the book called Mahāvamsa. “The Mahāvamsa¹ was written in the fifth or sixth century AD by a Buddhist monk of the Maha Vihara” (Nissan, 1997: 26). Seneviratne (1997: 6) calls this Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism found in the ancient chronicle Mahāvamsa as the ‘Mahāvamsa view’. The first chapter of the Mahāvamsa records three visits of Lord Buddha to Sri Lanka. The first visit was to the Mahiyanganaya in the Eastern part of Sri Lanka. During this trip, he quelled the ‘Yakshas’ (demons) that stayed at Mahiyanganaya. Mahiyanganaya is a leading pilgrimage centre, where people go to worship the collarbone relic of the Buddha and to propitiate the guardian deity of the area. During his (second) trip to Nagadeepa in the Northern tip of Sri Lanka, he quelled ‘Nagas’ (snakes). Nagadeepa is also a centre of Buddhist pilgrimage, but the flow of pilgrims is limited nowadays because of the ethnic violence in the North and the East. Lord Buddha’s third visit was to Kelaniya (near Colombo). During this visit, the Lord Buddha visited several
other places in Anuradhapura, which later became the first capital of the Sinhalese kings. Most importantly he left his footprints at the top of Samanala Kanda known as Adam’s peak. This Mahāvamsa view of Lord Buddha’s three visits raises several important issues regarding the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka. First, it implies that there were human inhabitants during the Lord Buddha’s visits. However, they were known then as Yakshas and Nagas. Second, if the Lord Buddha taught them, it is appropriate to believe that there were such Buddhist population, prior to Vijaya who migrated from North India. They migrated on the day of the Lord Buddha’s Parinibbana (demise). According to the Mahāvamsa the prince Vijaya married a local demoness called Kuveni. Later Vijaya discards the demoness and banishes her with the two children. He himself marries a princess from the royal family of South Madura; his followers also marry women from the same region and from these unions spring the Sinhalese race. The son and daughter of Vijaya and Kuveni, banished into the forest, also marry incestuously and from them spring the Vaddas (ethnologically aboriginal people of the island) of Sri Lanka. This interpretation based on Mahāvamsa implies that Kuveni described as demoness was a human and there was human settlement before Vijaya in Sri Lanka. The archaeological evidence in Sri Lanka proves this. The third question related to the above two is that though this Mahāvamsa view is a myth of origin of Sinhalese, there was Indian invasion since the Buddha’s time and it is problematic how Sinhalese are related to the Aryan clan when they married South Indian women.

Mahāvamsa went further justifying the relationship of the Sinhalese and the Buddhism with the emperor Asoka’s missionary work. The king Asoka sent his son, Arahant Mahinda and his followers to the Sri Lanka and the king Devanampiyatissa of Sri Lanka is converted to the Buddhism. “Relics are enshrined in a stupa and a further symbol of Buddhism, a Bodhi [ficus religiosa], a sapling of the tree under
which the Buddha reached Enlightenment, is planted in the capital... The ideology that Sri Lanka is the land where Buddhism is protected, that it is the trust and duty of the Buddhist Sinhala king to ensure that protection..." (Seneviratne, 1997: 8) is conveyed by *Mahāvamsa*. In this sense, the *Mahāvamsa* gave utmost attention to the kingship of Duttagamani. “Ten of the thirty-seven chapters of the work are devoted to Duttagamani while about sixty rulers are allocated the rest of the book, which averages about half a chapter each” (ibid). Duttagamani4 was the king who fought with the Elara when the capital of the Sinhalese kingdom fell into the hands of Tamil king who came from South India. However, the *Mahāvamsa* view described by Nissan (1997: 27) is as follows:

His [the author of *Mahāvamsa*] account of the foundation of Buddhism in the island provides symbolic demonstration of the unique sanctity of the Maha Vihara as against rival monasteries of the time. There is very little reference in the chronicle to major temples which belonged to these other establishments... The bias of the author of the *Mahāvamsa* has been reproduced in history. Had a chronicle from the rival monastery, Abayagiriya, survived we might today see a rather different sacred geography of the city.

As Nissan believes, we should not depend only on the *Mahāvamsa* view of Sinhalese national identity. There were many South Indian invasions like those during Anuradhapura period in Sri Lanka. The kingdom had shifted to various places in the country before the European colonialism. When they colonised the country the Sinhalese Kingdom (Kandyan Kingdom) was in Kandy. I shall described the situation of Kandyan Kingdom in a later part of this chapter.

The most crucial period of Sinhala nationalism and identity is the later part of nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Sinhala elite like Anagarika Dahrmapa!a and Buddhist monks like Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Mohotivatte Gunananda were the leading figures of the new discourse of Sinhala-Buddhist identity during this period. After independence, extremist political leaders
such as Bandaranaike dominated the 1950s. However, two ideologies are found combined together, that is, religion and ethnicity, in the fabrication of the Sinhalese identity. The language became important in 1956 with Bandaranaike’s Sawa basha policy. The Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978) has given principal place to Buddhism.

This is a very brief summary of Sinhala or Sinhalese-Buddhist identity. It is very hard to discuss Sinhala without Buddhism. It is the cultural symbol of Sinhalese identity. However, during the colonial period, the religion of the rulers primarily Catholicism, spread out among Sinhalese as well as Tamils in Sri Lanka. The catholic missionary work too caused the stimulation of the Sinhala-Buddhist identity during colonial period. The modern ideology of Sinhala-Buddhist identity has diffused to the grass-roots level through the national education system, Buddhist temple education system (Daham Pasala or the Sunday School system), and political participation after independence of Sri Lanka.

5.3 The Mechanism and Manifestation of identity in the Village Teripahe

The village Teripahe is not merely a traditional village now, and it was not so even in Yalman’s time in 1954. The low country migrants had already settled and several government institutions were set up in the village, and they had some linkages with the urban centres even before Yalman’s visit. This is evident from Yalman’s study. But compared to the other villages, Teripahe was not much affected by outside influences. This argument too is not valid today, as the village can be identified by many ruins, related to the past. The foremost character of Teripahe is the identity of the village. When we examine the identity of the village, it is difficult to confine to the entire village community only. The village represents also other groups or sub-communities in the village. There are five distinct caste groups excluding few caste
members migrated from the other parts of the country. They all have been enunciating their caste identity, equalising with other castes and showing their desire to emancipate from the social caste restrictions.

The cases of the identity of village Teripahe and its castes bring in the concepts of ‘great tradition’ and ‘little tradition.’ “In a civilisation there is a great tradition of reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities” (Redfield, 1956:70). The Buddhist epics such as Mahāvamsa, Chūlavamsa, Jātaka Potha and Pīrit Potha, the main religious centres and their creations, customs, rituals, etc. come under the great tradition of Sinhalese culture. The rural temples, shrines, local deities, rituals, customs, regional languages, etc. represent the little tradition in Sri Lanka. However, the great tradition is not confined to few groups or stratas of the Sri Lankan society, as Redfield defined. Buddhism represents the great tradition and it is utilising each and every Sinhalese village. Here, most of the great tradition traits are interrelated to and interdependent on the little tradition. There is no argument that the little tradition gets more feedback from the great tradition. The peasants represent both great and little traditions unlike the urban elite of today.

In the context of village Teripahe, some of the social and cultural traits are found very specific to the great tradition. Sometime, it is giving a controversial picture about the Sinhalese identity that Mahāvamsa narrates. Here, I would like to explain some of cultural and historical myths and practices found in the village Teripahe.
5.3.1 The History of Village Teripahe

"We are Kandyan." (api udara minissu.) This is a common statement used by all villagers of Teripahe. It refers to the Kandyan kingdom or domain before the conquest of the entire country by the British in 1815. The Kandyan kingdom maintained its independence under the Kings of Kandy from Vimala Dharma Suriya I (1591-1604 A.D.) to Sri Wikrama Rajasingha deposed by the British in 1815. In the Introduction of Sir John D'Oyly's book *A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom*, the editor very briefly mentions the essence of this period of Sri Lankan history. The introduction says:

In the three hundred and forty years of its existence the Kandyan Kingdom played a significant part in Sri Lanka's history. It was the direct lineal successor to the great Sinhala Buddhist Kingdom which had flourished for over one thousand seven hundred years in the Rajarata with its capitals at Anuradapura and Polonnaruwa. Kandy also withstood successfully for over three hundred years the full brunt of the military power in turn, of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. These three nations were in their day the most powerful maritime empires in the world and for a small Asian nation like Kandy to have resisted them militarily was no mean achievement. The Kandyan kingdom with a Sinhala and a Buddhist king also played another significant role. It kept alive the dual traditions of Buddhism and Sinhala language and culture which had illumined the Anuradapura and Polonnaruwa periods. If such a Sinhala Buddhist kingdom had not retained its independence in the central highlands of the island while the maritime districts were under European rule, and the whole country been brought under foreign domination, Ceylon would have been denationalised and its indigenous religion, language and other institutions totally destroyed as happened in the other island civilisations in Asia taken over by the Europeans, such as Philippines (1975: i-ii).

The above paragraph clearly pictures the prestigious identity of the Kandyan people.

The village Teripahe is a Kandyan village.

The village is located in Walapane Divisional Secretariat Division of the Nuwara Eliya District. This area is an isolated area with a difficult topography, surrounded by mountains. The village history goes back beyond the Lord Buddha’s first visit to Mahiyanganaya. The distance between the village and Mahiyanganaya is
about 25 Kms. Villagers believe that Lord Buddha then visited Hegasulla mountain located in the village to trace his footprint, and later he however gave up the plan as he was disappointed with the villagers. He saw a group of farmers ploughing some land in the near vicinity of the mountain with cows. According to folk tale, it was after four in the afternoon. Lord Buddha thought that the people who use their animal for long hours are not kind and might not be able or willing to protect a consecrated place in their village. In other words, Lord Buddha thought that an inhabited place would not be appropriate to establish sacred place. This folk tale emphasises the historical background and cultural identity of the village as Sinhala-Buddhist.

However, the Lord Buddha traced his footprint on Samanala Kanda in his third visit to the Kelaniya. He came there because of the invitation by God Saman who was particularly in charge of the Sabaragamuwa Province. Samanala Kanda or Siri Pada (sacred footprint) located in Sabaragamuwa Province is another sacred place to all Buddhists. This Samanala Kanda is two thousand feet taller than the Hegasulla (3944 feet) mountain; its shape is very similar to the Samanala Kanda. This might be one reason to equate Hegasulla with Adam’s peak. The villagers imagine that they have a long history going back to the Lord Buddha’s first visit to Sri Lanka. This belief has had a major impact on villagers. They stopped using cows after four in the afternoon and even farmers stop work at four to meet the status that the Lord Buddha explains for them. However, we have seen few farmers working after four in the main field called Bolagandawela, a field four Kms away from the centre of village. But, it is not popular in the village. This myth is symbolic of the fact that they are farmers from the very beginning. Farming is the most prestigious occupation in rural Sri Lanka. Therefore, Teripahe villagers’ imagination can be generalised that they claim the greatest heritage in this regard. They have emphasised not even
farming but even the technology they had at that stage.

The name of the village changed during the British colonial administration. Sir John D’Oyly, the then Civil Serviceman and Commissioner of the British Ceylon named the village as ‘Telipehe’ in his diary. The other names that he has mentioned are used even today. Telipola was the name used by a Village Headman called ‘Amunumulle Mohottala.’ We have studied several land deeds issued by him to some of the villagers and these bear the name, Telipola. According to the folklore of the village, this was the village that produced herbal oil for the king of Kandyan kingdom and because of this its Rajakariya assimilated the name (villager’s compulsory duty for the King or other feudal Lords). The same usage is found in one of the Buddhist sacred books that indicated Buddha’s ‘Sutra’ and sacred Buddhist palaces in the country called ‘Pirith Potha’ in Sinhala. Perhaps, the present name is derived from the colonial usage. However, according to most of the senior villagers and the last Village Headman, the name Teripahe is derived from its relationship with the ancient Buddhist temple in the village. The temple is called Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya. This is one of the important factors related to the identity of village Teripahe.

The folk tale of village Teripahe reveals that this temple was built by the king Kavantissa (205 B.C.-161 B.C.) who ruled the Southern part of the country called Ruhuna. During this period, king Elara who came from South India ruled the Northern part of Sri Lanka. The king Kavantissa favoured Buddhism and built many of Buddhist temples in his kingdom. Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya in Teripahe is one of temple that the king Kavantissa had built. There are several other Buddhist temples around the village. Duttagamini, the son of king Kavantissa, defeated king Elara and his successful target united the country and protected the Buddhism. The
ten giants from various parts of the country helped Duttagamini, and after the war several of them joined the ‘Buddha Sasana’ and became Monks. One of them named Teraputtabaya meditated at the Lihiniyagala (a monastic place) nearby the village Teripahe and got Enlightened (arahat). After his Enlightenment, the monk Teraputtabaya came to the Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya and stayed there.

Teripahe village was the place of the enlightened monk Teraputtabaya and there was his residence. Therefore, the name Teripahe came up by the usage, which means Teraputtabaya’s residence. In another sense, Teripahe village was one of Buddhist centres in those days. In Sinhala Terun means monks and Pahasa means get touched or sensed, and especially here, it means get consecrated by monks. The place consecrated by monks became Teripahe. The origin of the village name has many interpretations. However, these myths related to the history of village emphasise that the village has a long history related to Buddhism.

Yalman in his study describes the village with D’Oyly’s quotation that the village (Terutenne) “was selected as a place of banishment by the king...” (Yalman, 1967:10). D’Oyly’s account mentioned that Kandyan kings “occasionally imprisoned... one of the following established places in the country... In Walapaney – Madulla, Telipehe, and Danagomuwa... They are selected as places of imprisonment both on account of the remoteness of their situation, and frequently with the view of consigning the culprit to a lingering death” (1975:89). I could find such a place. But it is far away from the centre of the village Teripahe, and the villagers name it Sohontota Wala. The area is now part of Bolagandawela (see map 03). Villagers tell that the people who are banished to Sohontota Wala definitely die because there was no food except tamarind and water in the Uma Oya. Therefore, Teripahe village cannot be said to have begun from these convicted prisoners during
the Kandyan domain.

Another fact, mainly related to the village identity, is the irrigation system in the village. It has three very small water reservoirs (tanks) and one medium size reservoir. This kind of irrigation system is very common to the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. And it has a very long history in the Sinhalese civilization. Leach (1961: 16-17) describes how this irrigation system has persisted in Sri Lanka: 7

The classical Sinhalese kingdom, with its capital at Anuradapura, was a striking and characteristic example of what Wittfogel has called 'hydraulic civilization'... The modern irrigation works of Nuwarakalaviya, like their ancient predecessors, fall into two distinct categories. There are the small reservoirs (tanks) associated with individual villages and the very much larger central reservoirs and feeder canals which now, as formerly, are under the control of the central government... Of the smaller reservoirs – the village tanks – there are today several thousand in actual use. Almost all are of ancient origin, but only a few have been in continuous use over the centuries. Most of village tanks emerged according to the need and topography of the village.

The village Teripahe has many streams that can be utilised for paddy cultivation. Therefore, it does not need large reservoirs. However, there are several tanks that seem to have long history since the times of ancient cities of Sri Lanka. The main tank in Hingurewela called Welahinda Vewa occupies around four acres. It can store more water for paddy cultivation. Earlier, the neighbouring village that lies four miles away from Teripahe was using it. The village Arukkwatta had depended on this tank for their paddy cultivation and it was blocked due to Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme (Randenigala Project). Now, Teripahe villagers use this tank for vegetable and paddy cultivation. This tank was renovated several times, and as such it could not give any evidence to prove its beginnings. Three factors, i.e., tank, temple, and paddy lands, are considered to constitute the physical structures in ancient cities. Teripahe village has all these three characteristics. Perhaps, if one does archaeological research related to the historical places in the village, he would be able to find some more
concrete evidence in this regard.

5.3.2 The Identity of Village Communities

We think that the life in the village was very simple, contrary to the urban life. But it is not simple as we think. The social and cultural structure of a village is very complex. Most of the villages consist of at least five or six caste groups. It is difficult to find a village of a single caste group. Teripahe has five castes, and each caste group has separate imagined identities of their origin. They interrelate with the village social and cultural system in different ways. The caste groups are Goyigama (land owners/farmers), Achari (Blacksmith), Berava (Tom-tom beaters), Kumbal (Potters) and Hena (Washermen).

Usually, Goyigama caste is defined as farmers. However, in the context of Teripahe village, it is not the only fact, and there are some other ritualistic factors that define such group as a caste. They follow many caste etiquette in their village life. We have to identify these etiquette that define the caste and the sub-caste. For instance, Goyigama caste has three sub-castes and each has clear and distinct characteristics. Goyigamas are: (a) aristocrats, (b) cultivators/farmers, and (c) tenants (Obeyesekere, 1967: 15-16). The larger group is that of farmers. They do not confine their occupation to only cultivation. There are astrologers, ayurvedic doctors and ritual specialists among them. But in common caste categorisation, astrology and most of ritual parts are basically the domain of the Berava caste. We can find excellent ayurvedic doctors among other caste members. In Terutenne, the richest and largest landlord belonged to the Achari caste (Yalman, 1967: 70). Therefore, we can not exactly identify one's caste identity with occupation. Caste can be identified with the caste etiquette observed by each group in their social and cultural life. The identity of
each caste can be studied by their myths of origin.

There are thirteen lineages in the village Teripahe. Among the Goyigama caste members there are two pedigrees claiming their origin from the very beginning of the village and their superiority over the other. They are *Thumpaele gedara Nissanka Mudiyanseelage* and *Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanseelage* lineages. These two lineages were closely related to me when I was doing fieldwork in the village.⁸ Both lineages have one well-known leader each in the village. T.T.A.N.M.P.B. Sri Nissanka, the last Village Headman and the ayurvedic doctor in the village represents *Thumpaele gedara Nissanka Mudiyanseelage* pedigree. *Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanseelage* pedigree is represented by S.S.H.M. Jayawardane senevirathne, a retired schoolteacher.

Sri Nissanka explains his lineage identity as follows:

*Our lineage is linked with the king Nissanka Malla.*⁹ One of forefather (Nissanka Mudiyanse) came from Anuradapura and settled in the village Teripahe. He built a small house in the Ankelipitiya area of the village. This house was called Uttum pala (honoured house). During the Kandyan period one of our forefathers was a very powerful leader in this region, and he helped the king Senarath (1604-1635 A.D.) who battled against the Portuguese in Badulla region. (The Kandy-Badulla path passes through Village Teripahe.) *When he went to the battlefield, his Queen, Dona Katharina¹⁰ or Pushpasana Devi lived under security in our forefather’s house. The King won the war and sent a message to the Queen with the guard for carrying her. She was pregnant and when she reached the king, she delivered the prince Rajasinha II. The King was very happy and gave a Sannasa (deed) and gold sword to our forefather. The Sannasa, gave the power and authority to claim the entire land*
in Teripahe. However, unfortunately the Sannasa was misplaced. During the British period, another of his forefathers organised an army to join with the Wellassa rebellion during 1817-18. We are descending from this Ankelipitiya pedigree. That is why I am using my name as Teripahe Thumpaele gedara Ankelipitiya Nissanka Mudiyanselage Punchi Banda Sri Nissanka (T.T.A.N.M.P.B. Sri Nissanka).12

This might be an imaginative story. However, it reveals one aspect of the identity of village Teripahe and also one of its lineages. The other story shows the significance of self and community identity in the Teripahe village.

S.S.H.M. Jayawardane senevirathne represents Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanselage pedigree in the village Teripahe. He was a school teacher. However, according to the villagers as well as his own statements he led an arbitrary life earlier. Now, he follows a hermit life with meditation system developed by him. In his description, he shows first the identity of the village and then he explains his pedigree's identity with its superiority over the Thumpaele gedara Nissanka Mudiyanselage pedigree. He explains his pedigree's identity as follows:

*Walapane was a Dissawa* (an administrative region according to the Kandyan regime) before the 20th century. There was a large paddy field cultivated with diverted water resources from Uma Oya on the one boundary of the Wellassa. This paddy field used to supply the food for the Kandyan King’s army. It was named as Olagam Wela (lit. the land or paddy field occasionally used for cultivation in a jungle or remote area). *Today it is called as Bolagandawela and it is the main paddy field of the Teripahe village. Teripahe was a safe place to hide for several Kings, and they were associated with the ‘Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya’ in the village. It was a permanent place*
for them. That means that this was a permanent building for them. Therefore, the name of village Teripahe is derived from this usage. In Sinhala Isthira Prāsadaya means Thira Paha. From this emerged the name Teripahe. There are several pedigrees with the surname Mudiyanse. Those pedigrees are very prestigious. In 1848, one person called ‘Nissanka Mudiyanse’ organised an army and joined the Gongale Goda Banda (Weera Puran Apphu) against the British. However, the British army got this news and sent a battallion from Kandy under a Sinhala leadership. They arrested Nissanka Mudiyanse and his army. Then the British Governor William Gregory (1872-1877) had appointed the Sinhala army leader (Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyan selage Ukkurala) as an agent (in Sinhala ‘Ratemahatmaya’) of British administration in Walapane. Meanwhile, the British settled the Nissanka Mudiyanse’s problem by giving him ‘Vee Thune Pale Kumburu dame’ (Three pale of paddy land. ‘Pale’ is a Sinhala word, used for measure of paddy lands. 2 Pale = one acre). That is the reason that Nissanka Mudiyanse lineage has the ‘Thumpaele gedara’ surname. Our forefather settled at the edge of the ‘Ukwattha’ paddy field in the Teripahe village. Then he got the ‘Welakona Watta’ name.

This is not a smooth story of imagined identity. It is very problematic imagination when compared to T.T.A.N.M.P.B. Sri Nissanka’s imagination.

In addition to S.S.H.M. Jayawardane senevirathne’s imagination of his lineage, there is a genealogical chart written by one of his brother’s son. This chart was prepared in 1957 and most probably it was influenced by Yalman’s investigations of genealogies in the village Teripahe. It reveals that Ukkurala Ratemahatmaya’s father, Loku Banda migrated to Kandyan highland after the great rebellion of 1818 (Wellassa
rebellion) with his brother and his brother went to Wellassa. It also reveals that the Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanسلage lineage do not have much longer identity than what the Thumpaele gedara Nissanka Mudiyanسلage pedigree has. Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanسلage pedigree embedded one part of their surname called 'Welakona Watta' after the misconduct of Ukkurala. Herath Mudiyanse's daughter in Hingurewela (part of village Teripahe) whose marriage was arranged with one person from 'Dimbulana Walawa' (mansion of Dimbulana in Uda Madura area) was taken by force by Ukkurala. He did not legally marry her. This kind of behaviour was neglected by many of the villagers. Therefore, Ukkurala settled in a land at the edge of paddy field, but later he deserted her and two children by her and again married (legally) from Yalagamuwa village in Walapane. The descendents from deserted wife's children do not use the part of surname 'Welakona Watta.' This image related to the Senanayake Senevirathne Herath Mudiyanسلage Welakona Watta lineage is common among other lineage in the Teripahe. This is a good example of imagined identity of self and community.

The caste system in the rural society of Sri Lanka was rigid. Especially, the higher caste Goyigama maintained much exclusive etiquette in their social life. However, when we investigate the identity of the low caste groups they are claiming that they do not have any big difference with higher caste. This is also a question of imagined identity. Their old generation never highlights these things. They accepted the social and cultural order of the village unquestioned. But members of the new generation are keen to question the tradition, but on a moderate level. The low caste Berava (Tom-Tom Beaters) leader 'Ruwan' explains their identity as follows:

*Our forefathers came to Sri Lanka from South India during king Panduvas period. He was the successor after the king Vijaya who came from the Lala*
country in India. The king Panduvas had frightened the demoness Kuveni and our forefathers came to treat him. They are descendents from Brahmana lineage. After this incident the king had given a place in Matara (a place in southern part of Sri Lanka) for them to settle in the country. Today this place is called 'Sitina Maluwa.' They did not take food from others. They used amphora with pure water and part of small palm tree leaf as a spoon. Therefore, the other people understood that they were not eating from us and then they used a name for our people in plural form 'Nokathi' (not eating from anybody). Later this word became Nakathi. They are found taking food separately when they came for a ritualistic occasion in a higher caste dwelling.) One of our famous forefathers, 'Barana Ganitha' has written the message-poem of 'Neela Kobō Sandeshaya' in the medieval period. Their descendents had settled in various parts of the country. However, there are four pedigrees in the village Teripahe. They are 'Vidyarathne,' 'Tharukarathne,' 'Jothirathne,' and 'Ponne Ganitha.' All pedigrees are specialists in mathematics, astrology, all kind of ritualistic methods, and other aesthetic areas like drums, dances, music, etc. This means that we are the people who learn, practise and teach science and arts. There was one lazy grandfather famous as 'Ponne Ganitha' in the village. He settled in the 'Ankelipitiya' area (close to the place where ancestor Nissanka Mudiyanse settled). He had practised occult science and was in command of two demons. Other villagers noticed all the new things. They found that if they do not do important traditional practices such as storage of grain, etc., the demons harm them. These demons have done many things in the village that surprised the ordinary people. We are the one group that had been practising kandyan
dance and drums in the procession of Lord Buddha's Tooth relic in Kandy since the beginning. Today, our members are represented in the top level of government and its administration. This is one who works as deputy secretary in the most important ministry.\textsuperscript{15}

This claim of identity has made passing reference to the Vijaya myth of Sinhalese origin. This imagination has also shown that they do not have much difference with the Goyigama caste. As mentioned above, they too practised authority to some extent in the village. Like the Berava caste, the other low caste groups too claim their identity in similar manner. The lowest caste – Hena (Washermen) – in the village Teripahe also does farming, astrology, ritual practice and indigenous health practices.\textsuperscript{16} One of its member (Suduhenaya) told us: \textit{We all were same in the past. But the king had hard life and then he ordered us to wash his clothes. We lived in a place of ‘hena’} (slash-burden cultivation). \textit{We continue this work even today. ‘Hena’ is a common name for many of Washermen caste males. They have the surname ‘Lanka Haluwadana’ with the other names. ‘Haluwadana’ means prepare and supply the clothes for auspicious occasions.}

\begin{table}[h!]
\centering
\caption{Caste names in the Village Teripahe}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
Caste & Male & Female \\
\hline
Goyigama & Banda, Band\={a}ra, Appu, R\={a}la. & Menika, Kumanhami, Kumari. \\
\hline
Achari & Heen Appo, Appo Naide, Mackappu, Naidehami, Aruma Naide, Jeevan Hami & Sopia, Suduhami, Poddie, Manikhami, Tikirihami \\
\hline
Berava & Nandina, Munissiriya, Maddiliya, Pinsira, Ranbandiya, Siripina, Punchi Hatana. & Pinsiri, Rankendi, B\={a}li, Gar\={u}, Randi, Baddari, Mahimi, Emie. \\
\hline
Hena & Ranahenaya, Kirihenaya, Suduhenaya, Kudahenaya, Samel, Kirungahenaya. & Karalina, Roslin, Kalureddee, Suduredee. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: Field Survey 1999

Names are very important to identify the caste identity in the early period.
But, today many of them have changed their names to escape caste identity. Then, the only way of find out the caste identity is to search for the surname. The names used by several caste groups in the village Teripahe are listed in table 18. It is evident from the imaginations and myths that caste identity (identity of community) becomes more and more problematic. Though caste identity was rigid, it did not get a serious place in the early period of history. Through imagined identity, it is becoming predominant after modernity emerged out of colonialism.

5.3.3 Festivals

Festival is one main approach to emphasise the identity of a community. Sri Lanka is a plural society and it has been celebrating many festivals annually. In this sense, the village Teripahe is not a much complex society like the other parts of the country. It is a Sinhalese Buddhist village and all festivals are organised on this line. The important festival for the Sinhalese-Buddhist is New Year celebration on 13th April every year. Before the 1950s, all rich people used to cook food for other villagers. The villagers usually visit them and follow all customary and ritualistic practices. But the low caste members do not visit other higher caste members in the village. They are particular on these customary and ritualistic matters with other castes. With the development of market economic relationships, especially after the introduction of tobacco cultivation in the village in 1950s these collective practices have been increasingly diminishing, and these are now confined mostly to the close relatives. The latest development was that the villagers organised New Year games in the village school ground. They have organised twice and each time the celebrations ended in caste conflict. This is evidence to show that they still practise their caste identities. In 1998, during the auspicious time of New Year, one Goyigama
member has gone to the Berava member’s shop to buy some cigarettes. This is the
time that nobody makes any contact to each other. Then, several other Berava
members have hinted the ‘wrong’ involved and it led to verbal fight among them.
Finally, this got developed into physical fight between the two castes during New
Year.

Buddha Purnima Day (Vesak) and the following full moon day (Poson that
commemorates king Asoka’s mission to Sri Lanka by sending his son Arahath
Mahinda and his followers) in March are the most important festivals for Buddhists.
Each temple in the village organises religious and other entertainments during these
days. Wekumbura temple mostly emphasises Vesak day and Maluwegoda Raja Maha
Viharaya (temple) emphasises Poson day. Wekumbura temple closely associates itself
with low castes also. Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya mostly represents Upper
Goyigama caste in the Helagama part of the village. When Wekumbura temple has a
ceremony, Berava community members display their traditional dance and play
drums. They play daily the drums in the morning and evening in the image house of
Buddha. The temple has been paying small amount for this service, and for the other
special religious occasions they get competitive payments according to the demand
from other temples around the village Teripahe. The temple development society of
Wekumbura temple consists of six parts of the locality of the temple, and Berava
community represents one. However, Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya doesn’t
practice these customs. Moreover, there was a tradition when any temple organised
any kind of celebration in this area several processions used to go to that particular
temple from the nearby villages. Today, this tradition is not continued in the village.
5.3.4 Rituals

Teripahe is a village that symbolized its independent social and cultural history by several factors. They are: first, it is a Buddhist Sinhala village; second, it has separate identity among the other villages in the regional and national level; third, it has several service castes with majority upper caste Goyigama; fourth, the village has its own physical and social boundaries; and finally, agriculture is the village’s main source of economic life. All these characteristics emphasise that village Teripahe has independent social and cultural background. The system of rituals of the village reveals the social and cultural life of villagers.

Historically, the rural society in Sri Lanka inherited many rituals. However, many of these rituals represent the little tradition. Teripahe as a traditional village is not much affected. However, since 1945, the village has not practised some rituals like An Keliya. An means horn or hook and Keliya means the game or play. This game of post-harvest is dedicated to Goddess Pattini and it symbolises the success and fertility of village social life. The rituals related to the Pattini are practised all over the island and represent great tradition as well. After the leading member’s death who organised An Keliya, there was no such occasion in the village. The new cash crop (tobacco) introduced into the village in latter part of 1940s gradually grabbed the villager’s interest in these kinds of rituals in the village. This was a ritual played by Goyigama members in the village. They were involved in tobacco cultivation since 1950. Later, the villagers got politically motivated and were polarised into two camps, UNP and SLFP. These political developments also could cause to stop An Keliya in Teripahe village. However, the An Keliya is now confined to some areas only, and it was a symbol of village identity.

There are two other rituals practised in village Teripahe. They are: Deva Dane
(the ritual associated with family members only) and Gam Maduva (the ritual associated with almost all villagers). Deva Dane is a ritual where alms are offered to the deities by a farmer after the harvest in his compound of dwelling. After the ritual practices, small portions of the alms (milk rice and oil cakes) are distributed among the neighbours and the kindred. A Gam Maduva is expected to be organised by the villagers once in a season of paddy cultivation. It is a colourful ritual when the Berava (Tom-Tom Beaters) members performed their ritual dances. The Hena (Washermen) members also take part in this ritual for supplying the clothes for dancers. However, the upper caste Goyigama members are the patrons of this ritual. Both Deva Dane and Gam Maduva are giving foremost respect to the regional guardian deity, Kirthi Bandara. Both the rituals are symbolising the paddy cultivation and harmony of the village. However, there was two Gam Maduva in June 2000, one in Bolagandawela main field and the other in Kapurugala Devale (shrine) situated in Helagama GND. Two groups organised these Gam Maduvas and they were politically polarised into two main parties. Most of the Bolagandawela farmers belonged to UNP. Most of the villagers who organised another Gam Maduva in Helagama belonged to SLFP. Both rituals occurred in the same day and at the same time. These kinds of political conflicts are damaging the harmony and the common identity of the villagers.

There is a tradition of worshiping Mahiyanganaya. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the village has very close connection with Mahiyanganaya, the consecrated ancient Buddhist pilgrimage centre. Obeysekere emphasises it as “obligatory pilgrimage” (1997: 364). Till last decade there was no easy way to reach there except by footpath through the jungle. Most of the villagers in Walapane region used to go there, and the footpath is traced through the village Teripahe because it has easy rocky way to cross the river Uma Oya. All villagers according to their hierarchy
are organised as *Nadê* (pilgrimage group) with *Nadê Gurā*. Even though they are organised as several *Nadês*, all of them start the journey together. However, after the AMDP, new road has been constructed and it is shorter than other roads. Even the government public transport buses come to the village when there are such special occasions like Full Moon day. Earlier, the pilgrimage was an affair of three days walk. Now, there are no such *Nadês* in the village and all members from each caste are travelling in a same bus. The modern technology and development have changed the life style of village Teripahe. Now the visits are not confined only to *Poson Poya* day.

Childbirth is a very critical and important occasion for all family members. When a woman got labour pain, the husband or some other responsible member had to run to collect a midwife. Earlier, there was no officially trained midwife in village Teripahe. There were few traditionally trained midwives for each caste in the village. When she came to the particular house, she prepared a herbal drink with gingelly oil. It helped to increase the pain to make it easier to give birth. When the child was born she cut the umbilical cord with normal scissor after tying it up by a thread, and the child was bathed by her with boiled water. In the meantime the family members could collect a mother from suitable family for breast-feeding the newly born child. The midwife woman never allowed them to give rich food to the mother who gave childbirth. The mother’s abdomen was rapped with bandage until the first bath after seven days. Then she was allowed to eat rich food. The first milk (few drops) taken from the other breast-feeding mother had been given to the child by the father with a clean fibre of grass or his little finger. Wealthy families had given the first milk (*Ran Kiri*) to the child with a little rubbed gold. In spite of care given to the child and mother, I found at least one child had died in most of the families in village Teripahe.
There were many occasions when the mother had died after childbirth. However, the situation had changed since 1981 when the village dispensary had got a maternity ward. In 1987, the village had two official field midwives and they are doing very important service to the villagers today. If there is a critical childbirth case the doctor is sending them to Nildandahinne or Walapane hospital by the ambulance of dispensary. This ambulance service started in 1993. Moreover, the field midwives are prompting the villagers for birth control and they are giving the treatment for it. Now there is no foster mother for few days to give breast-feeding in the village. The traditional practices are changing and modern concepts and attitudes replaced the tradition. Rituals related to childbirth are also decreasing. However, still they are following astrological beliefs and practices in such occasions.

Death is considered as a separate ceremony from all other rites of passage in village Teripahe. All other rites of passage are called magul (good or auspicious) and death is called ava magul (bad or inauspicious). When there was a death, the rich people and those who had materials made a coffin. Others used to have a shelf like carrier to lay down the dead body and take it into the cemetery. They did not embalm the dead body. If the dead body is in good position, they used to keep it at least for two or three days. During these days they did not cook and the neighbours provided food. Other villagers read religious texts such as Jataka potha, Vessanthara Katava, Yasodara Katava, Mahiyangana Vanuma, Daham Gatamale, Sathipattana Suthraya, etc. This reading helped to keep the people in religious interest and it also helped to reduce the sorrow among the family members. The death was informed to all relatives who were living in other distant villages. At the last day, the Buddhist monks came to do the religious rites and then the dead body was taken to Kitulpitiya cemetery. It had separate part for Goyigama members. All the low caste members use the other part of
the cemetery. Wealthy and landlord families are using a small part of private land to cremate or bury their family members. Poor people are using the common cemetery. However, today there is no such interest to read religious text in a bereaved house. It was replaced by a gambling (*büruva gaseema*) act related to playing cards. Even, there is another growing social problem that is alcohol. The legal or illegal arrack as well as cannabis are available in the village. All these problems are diminishing the identity of self and community in Teripahe village.

Village Teripahe had a very strange custom that is difficult to be found in other villages of the country. When a son or daughter shows good performance in education or some other social events, the parents, especially mother, prepare *kavum* (oil cake) and she massage her son’s or daughter’s body with a lukewarm *kavum*. After the massage she or he gets *kavum* to eat. By doing this custom they are expecting to avoid the evil breath, evil word and evil eye. It is a white magic. But, it is not practised like in earlier times. These rituals are symbolising the identity of village than anything else.

The caste system as a ritualistic process is practised as their way of life in village Teripahe. Before the 1970s there was very strict caste system in the village. The dress code was strict, and the low caste members were imposed restrictions in this regard by the higher caste Goyigamas. Low caste members could wear their dress in different style. For instance, they had to wear their sarongs short, just below the knee. They could wear shirts only on special occasions. They have to remove their headgear and drop the ends of their sarongs in the presence of high caste members. Low caste members could sit always below the high caste members (for more details, see Yalman, 1967: 89-95). In this manner anybody can easily identify his or her superiority or low status. The caste etiquette also represents the identity of self and
community.

5.3.5 Dress

Villager’s dress style has changed very recently. Earlier, both the male and female used very simple dress. Men used sarong and shirt for ceremonial occasions and banian and sarong for village life. Women used chintz clothes and very simple jacket for both ceremonial and normal life. All children had a full covered jacket without sleeves and it is called *gedi kamisaya* in village Teripahe. It had big pocket in its front side. These traditional dresses were made by hand sewing. However, three reasons were behind the change in these traditional dresses. First is the influence of Buddhist nationalist movement since 1956. Men started using national dress introduced by the nationalist leaders. All political leaders are using this dress. Women started using sari and blouse. Girls use special dress called *lama sari*. It is a full covered white blouse with clothes. They use this *lama sari* only for religious festivals and other ceremonies. Otherwise they are using western style frocks. Secondly, the women who were married to village Teripahe from distant villages, especially close to Kandy and the women who married Low Country settlers used sari for daily use as well as for ceremonial occasions in the village. This sari is acculturated according to the Kandyan style, and is named *osariya*. The women who are married and settled in Teripahe were the changing agents of dress in the village. They taught the other women in the village. Thirdly, there was gradual entry of sewing machines in the village after the expansion of money economy by tobacco cultivation. Then, these women prepared their own dresses as well as they could satisfy the needs of other villagers.

The situation further changed with the younger generation in village Teripahe.
They are the group, mostly migrated to urban centres and they are influenced by modern dress, that is, trouser and shirt for men and skirt and blouse for female. Mainly, the members from the urban society and from the villages associated with these urban centres are westernised today. Then these styles are gradually adopted by the villagers in Sri Lanka. The other reason is that the villagers who worked in government offices mostly used these western styles and later other villagers imitated or acculturated these styles. Today, the students of upper classes also use this western dress in the *Maha Vidyalaya* of village Teripahe. Earlier, the formal European dress was confined to the privileged families only. Today, the dress is not symbolic of village identity.

5.3.6 Language

Language is a key feature of identity in a plural society like Sri Lanka. Sinhala language symbolises the identity of Sinhalese. Teripahe as a Sinhalese-Buddhist village shows uniformity in this matter. However, it has its own style of language. When they communicate many of the words end with ‘ta’ usage. For instance, *kanta* (eat), *bonta* (drink), *yanta* (go), *nanta* (take bath), *inta* (stay), *duwanta* (run), etc. This is another characteristic to show the little tradition of the village. The style of language helps to identify the identity of the village. In fact, the entire kandyan territory has several specific words for their indigenous communication. In Teripahe, these words are in use. Most of these words are related to the kinship terminology. For outsiders to the area, these words seem foreign. Thus, they can easily identify the person who is not a member of the village or the Kandyan domain. This is one of the distinctions between the low country and the up country. Moreover, the village has its own set of words that is not in use in the other areas of the Kandyan
society. The selected set of words is given in Appendix Three. However, after being linked up with other parts of the nation in various ways, most of these words went out of use, especially among the younger members of the village.

5.4 Chapter Summary

The identity is an essential thing for any person or community in society. It is a process of social and cultural practices of a community. Some of the members of a community purposely imagine their identity. But, most of these imagined identities are not very rational and basically depend on myths. The better example for this is the Mahāvamsa view of Sinhalese identity. It is a biased view, related to the Aryan concept and Buddhism. Even though it is bias, it gives some clues for the analysis of Sinhalese identity. In this sense, can we say that the identity of Teripahe is authentic one? The answer lies in the fact that it is different from the Mahāvamsa view and extends the history beyond the ‘Vijaya’ myth. As mentioned at the beginning, the discourse of Teripahe identity is related to Lord Buddha’s first visit of Sri Lanka and the paddy culture of village. As we know most of the practices based on Buddhist doctrines have changed in the country today. Already, polytheism is absorbed into Buddhism. The great tradition based on Buddhism is now changed to a popular religion. With the mix of great and little traditions it is very problematic to search for the original identity of Sinhalese. However, village Teripahe is not much affected by other belief systems. This is a village that does not have any permanent place for polytheism in the Buddhist temples (no shrines in the Buddhist temple ground). The village has polytheism in the little tradition only. It emphasises that there is clear distinction between great and little traditions, though these traditions have interrelationships. The identity of Teripahe shows genuine basis for the Sinhalese-
Buddhist identity. The identity of the village, the identities of self and community, and the historical contribution of each caste in building the combined identity are self-evident in the study of village Teripaehe. It is also a history of how these castes have organised themselves in the rural society, their distinctions, and how these changed them historically. Still, the leading adult members of each caste communities in the village guard the village identity. However, the identity of self and community has been challenged by the younger generation of the village.
End Notes:

1 The *Mahāvamsa* was continued at later dates under different hands. The continuation is known as the *Chīlāvamsa*. As a whole, *Mahāvamsa* narrates a continuous royal and Buddhist history of the island until colonial times.

2 *Samanala Kanda* is a Sinhala word today for the Adam’s peak. In addition *Samantha Kiita* is also being used in Buddhist literature. The Buddha traced his footprint after the invitation of God *Saman* who is empowered to the Sabaragamuwa Province in Sri Lanka.


5 The Constitution of the Democratic socialist Republic of Sri Lanka of 1978 says:

“The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster the Buddha *Sasana*, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14 (1) (e).”

*Article 10*: Every person is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion of his choice.

*Article 14 (1) (e)*: the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching; (pp. 5-8).

6 Yalman has investigated the Grain Tithe Registers of 1857 for this village in the Nuwara Eliya government offices (*Kachcheri*) and there was the name of this Amunumulle Mohottala (Yalman, 1967: 30).
7 For further information on Sinhalese irrigation system in early stages, see R. W. Ievers, *Manual of the North Central Province, Ceylon*, 1899, Colombo.

8 As a result of this close relationship with the villagers, several villagers who represent their castes or lineages have voluntarily gave me written descriptions on various village matters. These two village leaders too submitted descriptions on their lineages. This kind of voluntary work emphasise two things related to my research work in this village. First is the interest of these two leaders on their identity of self and community. Second is the rapport that I have made with the villagers.

9 There was a king called Nissanka Malla (1187-1196 A.D.) in Polonnaruwa period.

10 She was a daughter of king Rajasinha I in *Sitavaka* regime. She married King Wimaladharmaśuriya of Kandyan kingdom. However, the King died in 1604 and his brother Senerath was the successor. He married the widow of his brother.


12 The same story was cited in Yalman (1967: 146).


14 Nakathi is one word used to indicate the people of Berawa caste.

15 I do not indicate the name and other details related to this bureaucratic personnel because it might be harmful to his personal and professional life.
When I had knee pain during my fieldwork, two elder members came to my place, and one member (Suduhenaya and his wife also) treated me with ayurvedic medicine and the other member (Jamis) practised astrological and ritual treatments for me. Many of this ritual practices are linked to Lord Buddha’s ‘Dharma’ (Suthra).

There are few Catholic families who migrated from Low Country (maritime region), but they don’t have religious institutions in the village and near vicinity. They are living there as alienated group in the village. However, when there are important festivals they are attending these.

These two temples belong to two sects. Maluwegoda Raja Maha Viharaya belongs to Siyam sect and Asgiriya Chapter (one main lineage of temple of Tooth Relic at Kandy). They don’t accept low caste member for the order. However, Dambulu chapter and forest monks neglect this caste consciousness. Wekumbura temple belongs to Amarapura (Kandyan) sects. They too do not accept low caste members for their order. But, the some other divisions of Amarapura sect (total 21 divisions) accept low caste members. The other main sect in Sri Lanka is Ramangnnha sect, and this sect totally negates the caste base.

This ritual game (hook or horn play) was described by Yalman as follows: “In this ‘game.’ The village was divided into two teams, Udu Pita and Yati Pita (Upper Side and Lower Side), the lower side representing the goddess Pattini and the upper side her consort Palanga. The game consisted of locking the ritual horns of the teams together and having a tug-of-war to see which horn would break. It was considered more auspicious if Pattini broke the horn of her consort. An Keliya, which I have described elsewhere (1966), would impart health and fertility to the fields, animals, and human beings of the village” (1967: 28).

The name itself indicates the imagined identity, Buddhism in Sri Lanka.