Chapter Six

Land Tenure and Economic Life

6.1 Introduction

Land is the most important wealth in rural Sri Lanka. Ownership of land is a mark of prestige. Land is also the main source of income for most of the villagers. “The main source of income and index of wealth in most Dry Zone villages is land” (Yalman 1967: 36). In this sense, land ownership is one of the deciding factors in economic life and social relations.

As discussed in Chapters One and Three, during the British colonial period, especially in the 19th century, the state took over most of the land cultivated by the villagers for plantations. The Walapane area where village Teripahe is located was affected by this state activity as early as in 1866. This incident in modern history of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) is referred to as the ‘Walapane evictions.’ Le Mesurier describes the incident as follows:

The total number of fields in the Division was 18,848. Of this 2889 or 15 per cent of the fields were sold default of payment of tax. Of those sold 1900 fields were recultivated by their new owners, while the rest were abandoned. Among the original owners of these fields 1048 were dead, and 382 with their families had left the district. The fields were bought by the following: 1001 were purchased by resident Kandyans, 1260 by Low Countrymen and Moors, 728 by the Crown (A.R. 1886) (cited in Obeyesekere, 1967: 119-120).

The Walapane evictions form a model of the pattern of land acquisition that took place in Sri Lanka (Ceylon). On these evictions, Obeyesekere (1967: 120) gives his view as follows: “The Walapane evictions were a great public scandal. It resulted in public criticism of the Government in Ceylon and England and several tracts were written on the ‘Ceylon Starvation Question.’ ... There was first the failure of coffee, secondly the depletion of the fertility of the land owing to the opening up of new
plantations, and thirdly over-assessment of the fields for taxation purposes. As a result people has no cash to pay tax – hence the land sales.” The intensity of the Walapane evictions in the 19th century had a strong impact on the local communities. In Teripane, there are several folk stories which maintain the memory of the atrocities committed by the state. Although the village was affected by the Walapane evictions, its lands were not acquired by the Crown or given for commercial plantations. On the one hand, some of the lands that came under the Crown control was given back to the villagers as part of village expansion schemes. For example, the forestlands around the village and the new paddy field in Bolagandawela were created under this scheme.

One important outcome of state intervention in land management is the introduction of western concepts of land tenure. Concepts such as forest land, highland and garden land were new concepts which also carried with their new social relationships the undesired land tenure patterns. In this chapter, we will attempt to discuss the major land tenure changes that had its role in the social relations in Teripane.

With respect to the land tenure and economic life, several changes took place in the village Teripane. I shall discuss the changes in land tenure and the economic life of the villagers, comparing these with Yalman’s findings of 1954. As I understood, land is the crucial factor in rural life and this factor helps to show how the village life and social structure changed due to development and modernisation efforts of last 50 years in Sri Lanka.

6.2 Types of Land

The lands can be classified according to the utility of the lands in rural society.
According to this perspective, there are four types of lands in rural Sri Lanka. They are:

1. Paddy lands
2. Garden/highland lands
3. Chena lands
4. Forest lands

### 6.2.1 Paddy Land

The paddy lands (*Mada idam*) are the most important type of land in rural Sri Lanka. Therefore, each villager attempts to acquire paddy lands. “The psychology of this attitude is significant. In the village it was felt that no other undertaking could compare to the acquisition of rice [paddy] land, in terms of productivity and prestige. All other investments were considered risky…” (Yalman, 1967: 38-39). The village Teripahe was a traditional village depending on paddy cultivation. In 1954 there was only 296 acres of paddy lands, its strength has increased by 199 acres by 1999 (total 495 acres). The village expansion scheme was the main reason for the increase of strength of paddy lands in the village. Of the 495 acres of paddy lands, 234 acres are in the Bolagandawela main paddy field of the village. The Moragolla project was the recent expansion of paddy lands (about 40 acres) in 1980s adjoining to the Bolagandawela field. All other expansions of paddy land were in the centre of the village. Most of paddy lands are in the steeply terraced hill areas in Bolagandawela as well as other parts of the village.

Before the legitimisation of ownerships, the Bolagandawela paddy fields was a *olagama* — a land being cultivated occasionally in the middle of the forest, mainly
by Goyigama members as well as by several low caste members around the main field. There is a part called Radawa Kumbura, cultivated by low caste Washermen. Bolagandawela paddy field came into existence even before 1923. The oldest deed I found in the village relates to the Waste Land Ordinance dated 26th December 1923. Bolagandawela had expanded and added to the total extent of paddy lands available in Teripahe in 1940s. It is watered by the Madulla Oya (small river). The government funds and maintains the dam and canal system under major irrigation system. The developed lands were distributed among those who participated in the development project. The Farmer’s Organisation of Bolagandawela is responsible for the management of irrigation water today; the president of the Organisation is in charge of this task.

Bolagandawela paddy field is covered by the forest and Uma Oya (main branch of Madulla Oya). There are few low caste (Berava) families around the field, and all others except smaller number of landowners in other villages are living in the various hamlets of the village Teripahe. Most of these farmers are daily walking to the paddy field when they have work there. Some of them are making temporary huts (päla in singular form) in the ground or on a tree. The ground huts are not safe because of the frequent trespasses made by the wild elephants. This wild elephant problem started after the AMDP in 1980s. After the construction of the two reservoirs the surrounding forest area was considered highly restricted area, and the elephants found and captured in other forest areas, cleared and developed for the agrarian purposes in the Dry Zone, were adopted and rehabilitated to this restricted forest around the Bolagandawela paddy field and the village Teripahe. Several times these elephants infiltrated the hamlets and killed several farmers during the last two
decades. Therefore, the work in the main paddy field has become very risky.

Most of the landowners of Bolagandawela field are not farming themselves today. There are two reasons for this: first; the danger from the wild elephants, second; the distance of around four Kms and the difficult journey through the hill areas. Therefore, many of them give their lands on rent or ande basis. There are 285 plots of paddy lands, and about 29 farmers are cultivating their own lands. All other lands are being cultivated by ande farmers. Many of the ande farmers are from deprived sections of the village.

The other paddy fields (261 acres) are situated in various hamlets in the village (see map 03) and these totally depend on rain or stream padded water. Goyigama caste members are dominating the land ownership in these paddy lands too. Mostly these lands are cultivated in one season (January to April) per year when rain water is available. However, the villagers are keen to tap the streams and divert water to their paddy fields. Many of the small dams are temporary. This system existed even in 1954 and Yalman (1967: 37) explained it as follows:

The rice [paddy] fields of Terutene are irrigated by an elaborate system of water channels tapping the various mountain streams. The small dams constructed across the streams are called amunu and each section of the field watered from one amunu is separately named. These field sections are unequal in size and follow the contours of the hills; the level areas are more fertile than the steeply terraced parts.

The village has many streams, one big tank (Vewa) and three small tanks. The big tank called Welahinda Vewa is in Teripahe GND. Earlier, it was used to store water for paddy fields in village Arukkwatta, a neighbouring village. But, this village was depopulated due to Randenigala reservoir. Therefore, the villagers of Teripahe are using it today. The tank was redeveloped with financial support from World Food Programme (WFP), and several permanent small dams across the water canal were
made in 1995. Rs. 615350 was spent for this project. After the development of this water tank and canal system, the villagers started commercial vegetable cultivation in this part of the village. As a result of these changes, most of the paddy lands now are being used for the vegetable cultivation.

Now, the Agrarian Services Centre (ASCt) is planning to develop Teripahe GND as a model agricultural village with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and WFP. The estimated budget is 10 million. The ultimate aim is better utilization of both paddy and highland lands in GND of Teripahe. The farmers of other GNDs also started using paddy lands for vegetable cultivation for the last ten years. Now, there is rapid utilization of paddy lands for this purpose. Before this new trend, there was tobacco cultivation in the paddy fields of village Teripahe.

6.2.2 Garden Land

The lands of garden or highland (Goda idam) are the localities where villagers built their houses in the village. However, a brief explanation is needed here to clarify the difference between garden and highland lands. The entire area with the exclusion of paddy land can be called highland lands. In the village Teripahe it covers 1269 acres and it is 72.0 per cent of the total arable land in the village. The highland lands (watte) also represent the large areas where villagers grow some crops like pepper, tobacco, banana, coconut and vegetables in large scale. But these types of large portion of lands are not available for every villager (see table 12). There are 10.8 per cent of landowners under this category. All other villagers have small portion of land around their dwellings. Typically this type of land can be called garden lands.
The size of these house sites varies according to their socio-economic level. Yalman (1967: 47) explains: “The garden lands (watte) of the village are used as house sites in the hamlets.” He uses the Sinhala term watte for these lands in the village. The reason was small number of dwellings and population and they could have large portion of land for their house sites during his time of study. Now the number of dwellings and population have rapidly increased in the village. Today, the population is 3595 compared to 1203 in 1954. The number of dwellings increased from 214 in 1954 to 907 in end of 1999.

The garden lands benefit the villagers in many ways. Firstly, most of the gardens have fruit bearing trees like jack fruit, breadfruit, butter fruit, banana, papaya, coco, orange and areca nuts. Most of them make “an important contribution to the diet of villager, and it is seldom marketed outside the village” (Yalman, 1967: 47). However, today, many villagers sell their fruits to the vendors in the village as well as the vendors who come from other villages. Because of road structure and transport services several villagers collect their produces as well as other things and take them to the urban centres like Nuwara Eliya, Ragala and Walapane. In this way they are earning some money from the garden lands. Most of the garden lands have jaggery palm (kithul) trees. This tree is very useful to the villagers. They can get toddy and jaggery from the palm and use the trunk (stem) of it for making houses, huts, etc. Some villagers earn money from toddy and some of them make jaggery from tender toddy. There is good demand and price for jaggery. The occupation of extracting toddy and preparing jaggery is not confined to a specific caste in this village.

The highland lands are mostly steep land. The cultivation in these lands is not easy. Hence, most of the highland lands are not used for permanent cultivation in the
village. The villagers use these lands for tobacco, finger millet, horse gram and several vegetables. They cultivate these lands during rainy season only. It is very difficult to manage water supply during the dry season (July to December). As mentioned above, the highland land was mostly used for tobacco cultivation since 1960s till 1980s during the rainy season. It was a new cultivation to the village and most of the villagers used these lands in arbitrary ways. They cut all type of trees and cleared for tobacco cultivation. They even cleared lands around the streams. As a result of this environmental disaster linked with tobacco cultivation, there came up several problems like lack of enough water, soil erosion, etc. Today, we can see that many hill areas became grasslands in the village. This deforestation has badly affected the AMDP's reservoirs nearby the village. Therefore, the government and the Mahaweli Development Authority have introduced reforestation programme in village Teripahe along with other villages of this region. As cultivation has become very difficult, the villagers are cultivating horse gram in these highland lands now.

6.2.3 Chena Land

_Chena_ lands were the jungle lands once cultivated on a slash-and-burn basis. The Sinhalese word for _Chena_ land is _hēna_. It was a simple cultivation system that used to start at the beginning of every dry season. In the Teripahe region, this started in September. This was not individual based cultivation. It was organised collectively by the community. Mostly it was based on caste. The higher caste – Goyigama – as a dominant community in the village started the cultivation in a separate place of the forest. Likewise did the other caste communities. In this village Berava and Hena castes followed this cultivation. Other two castes did not have such
numerical strength to start this kind of work. Moreover, they were artisan castes of the village. There were several groups in the same community because of some distinction related to hamlet and sub-caste. Each community had a leader who had to decide the place and the manner those portions to be divided among the participant members. Such leaders were experts in the planning of chena cultivation, astrology, and also on wild animals. The portions related to the fence had to be divided among the hunters and other clever members. The middle areas were divided among the weak members of the community.

The entire Chena cultivation has several stages. They are: First, they cut and burned the forest area. Each person had to clear his own part for the cultivation. But, all these members had to share the task of clearing the same collective space in the forest. Secondly, they used to make a huge fence around the cleared area to safeguard the crops from wild animals by using the burned logs and branches. Thirdly, each member had to build a hut on top of a tree. The tree was selected at the beginning of the work and it was protected from the fire. This was the hut for accommodating the person or family during this cultivation. They used to do all these before the rain starts in November. Then fourthly, various kinds of grains and vegetable seeds are sown all over the land. Lastly it was the reaping and threshing season in February. Before the Sinhala New Year celebrations of 13 April, they used to transport all the harvest to their permanent houses in the village.

"Chena was an inclusive activity. All could participate and men and women, young and old, kin and neighbours co-operated in the harvest, it was not completely open, though" (Spencer, 1990: 125). This cultivation has integrated certain cultural practices into it. This is the season most of village bachelors get married. This is the
season when they share their collective labour. This is the hunting season. Moreover, this is the season they get bumper harvest to enjoy their simple life in the village. The cultural life of chena cultivation is depicted by Jonathan Spencer (Spencer, 1990: 4) as follows:

This [chena] was always unpopular with British colonial administrators, who saw it as both a profligate use of natural resources and a sap on the moral fibre of the cultivators. Despite colonial hostility, chena remained the main economic activity of most villagers until the last decade or so, in which population pressure and more effective regulation have seen it virtually die out in the immediate area. Obviously the demise of chena marks an important change in the material circumstance of life in the village. But it is more than that. Chena was not simply a matter of agricultural technique, nor even of work and property relations; it also embodied values and feelings and ways of interacting. The chena fields were necessarily dispersed, although a group of neighbouring plots would be co-operatively cultivated. For a young man, going off to watch his own chena plot for the first time was a sign of maturity and adulthood; to ask a young woman to accompany him was public sign of sexual liaison, often the only marker there was of impending ‘marriage’ and domesticity. The men on the chenas would spend nights in their huts, calling out songs and rhyming riddles to the occupants of neighbouring huts – these were often on religious themes, sometimes intertwining the doings of the gods with features of the local topography. At the harvest of the staple kurakkun (finger-millet) the holders of neighbouring plots would join together [it is called kayiya in village Teripahe] and cut their way across the whole cultivated area; again there were special songs of celebration to accompany the process and whole families would join in together.

The chena cultivation was continued in various parts of dry zone areas with or without the approval of the government. However, “in 1955 most of the chena lands of Terutenne were Crown land and could be worked on annual permits from the District Revenue Officer [DRO], easily obtained at a rental of one rupee per acre” (Yalman, 1967: 46). Though the villager takes permit to one acre, he used to cultivate at least two acres land, there were some illegal cultivations also. The area and plots of chena cultivation were used only for one term of cultivation and after that the area was allowed to revert to jungle. The cycle of cultivation in Teripahe was between four to six years. However, the chena cultivation was exclusively prohibited in the
Walapane region after the AMDP by Emergency Order (forest) No. 01 of 1992 (Special Gazette No. 707/8, Government of Sri Lanka). Though the government prohibited this cultivation, still they like it. They proudly cherish their pleasant memories of the past.

6.2.4 Forest Land

The forest lands (Kela idam) form a very essential part in the villager's life. In the village Teripahe all GNDs have forest lands except Mallagama GND. Hegasulla GND has the highest acreage of forest lands (7500) and Bolagandawela is second (500) to it. The total acreage of forest land in the village is 8342 and it covers 82.5 per cent of entire area of the village. Earlier, the villagers used forest lands for chena cultivation as well as for other purposes. In this sense, there was no separate forest land for chena cultivation. The villagers selected an area for chena cultivation. Most probably the area was in the middle of the forest land.

Forest provides many valuable substances to villagers: timber for making houses, fruits, vegetables, meat for daily consumption, bee-honey, many ayurvedic medicines, fodder and fire wood. The thawalam owners in the village kept and fed their cows in the forest during the non-farming season. Therefore, the forest lands are part of the village life. Though the utilization of forests was completely prohibited by 1992, the villagers are still depending on it. It is difficult to bring in a sudden change in their life. Some of villagers totally depend on the forest; for instance, the blacksmiths are making their coal from one particular small plant from the forest, and the hunters are doing their job despite the code of law against the invasion of forest. The latest development is that all hunters in the village are not selling the meat in
retail for the villagers, and they sell the whole animal to the businessmen in the nearest town. There are several reasons for this new trend. First, the hunters want to be safe from the Forest officers and the policemen. Second, if they sell it in the village, they do not get more profit because some of the villagers do not give money. Third, there is big demand for meat in the town areas than in the village. They do not stop hunting. They do not like shift to other profession such as farming, because they think the farming is risky and it does not generate quick money.

6.3 Transmission and Ownership of Land

As ownership of lands is a vital factor in the rural society of Sri Lanka, it is important to understand the transmission of ownership. In a village like Teripaehe, a complex of norms works behind transmission of ownership. It is more difficult to understand these because the ownership is basically organised with traditional and modern transmission norms. Land may be transmitted from individual to individual in a variety of ways. It may be bought and sold, it may be transferred by gift, and it may be bestowed by endowment upon a child while the parent is still living, or it may pass at death by inheritance proper. All these possibilities are very relevant though some are of greater significance than the others.

Before the colonial administration of Sri Lanka, there was a customary law related to the land and other property inheritance. The Dutch administration introduced a formal structure of law to the maritime province. It was further changed during the British colonial administration, especially after it captured the entire island including Kandyan provinces. The British introduced several laws to control the entire land property in Sri Lanka. At the same time, they accepted the Kandyan customary
law for matters raised in the respective region. Today, in Sri Lanka, there are four separate systems in relation to property and inheritance rights. They are:

1. The Kandyan law – applicable as a personal law to the Kandyan Sinhalese (identified as the descendents of those domiciled in Kandy at the time the Kandyan provinces were annexed by the British in 1815).

2. The Thesawalamai law (Tamil customary law) – applicable to Tamils with a permanent home in the Jaffna province.

3. The Muslim law – a religious law and applicable to all adherents of Islam by birth or conversion. It is different from other customary laws.

4. The General Law – an amalgam of Roman-Dutch and English law, applicable to all those who do not fall within the purview of any of the above, including non-Kandyan Sinhalese, who constitute the bulk of the Sinhalese population.

Today, the property devolution among the Kandyan Sinhalese continues to be in accordance with customary law, which makes a distinction between the deega and binna forms of marriage, disadvantaging deega married daughters in patrimonial inheritance. Non-Kandyan Sinhalese are governed by the General Law, under which women (irrespective of the form of marriage they contract) have the same rights as their brothers in their father’s estate. Also children of both sexes have equal inheritance rights in the mother’s property. When a spouse dies intestate, the surviving spouse inherits a half share of the property. A widow may inherit the whole if the husband leaves no descendents, ascendants or collaterals capable of inheriting his property. She can also sell her deceased husband’s property (movable or immovable) to pay his debts.

Thus, the transmission of land is different from region to region in rural Sri
Lanka. It could be confined to a certain group or community. Leach (1968: 130) says:

Ideally the cardinal rule is that land should never be allowed to pass outside the variga [the group of kinsmen descended from one common ancestor]. Sales and gifts of land should only be between members of the same variga. If these rules were always maintained variga heirs would necessarily be within the variga.

Leach studied a village – Pul Eliya – in North-Central province of Sri Lanka. However, the variga system is not significant in other rural parts in the country. Obeyesekere studied a village in Southern province of Sri Lanka. He found that the land ownership has been changing rapidly. There were many land sales in Madagama village. According to the Obeyesekere (1967: 40):

In summary we could say that the legal right of the individual to sell his pravēni property to outsiders inter vivos absolutely diminishes the shares of the family in the same property, for members of the family have no legal power of preventing such alienation. It also weakens the vāsagama (line), because property which should ideally remain in the vāsagama could leave it permanently.

Furthermore, he emphasises that the selling of pravēni (inherited) lands or property diminishes the importance of kinship and consciousness of the kindred in the village.

It is difficult to control land going outside the kinship group because of the modern law introduced under the colonial administration in Sri Lanka. However, Obeyesekere (1967: 41) explains two basic principles of land inheritance by citing Hayley and Sawers.

Fundamental to Sinhalese rules of intestate inheritance are two principles. First, as Hayley (1923: 330-1) states, equality of division among all children is a cardinal point of the Sinhalese system of inheritance. Secondly, the principle felicitously phrased by Sawers, and in agreement with other authorities, that property should ultimately revert to the source from which it came.

The first principle – bilateral – is based on family norm, the right of a man’s family of procreation against all others. When a man dies intestate, his widow and his children are his immediate heirs of the property. The second principle – unilineal – is not simply an injunction that, in the absence of heirs, property should revert to its original
source, that in fact rarely happens. But, its central governing principle is that pravēni should not leave the source, this being in Sinhalese society, an agnate source (vāsagama). However, with the enforcement of modern law, the first principle – bilateral – is governing the land and other property inheritance in majority of the rural areas of Sri Lanka. Especially, in this sense, the most important mode of land transmission is marriage – deega and binna – in rural Sri Lanka.

One can classify the patterns of marriage into two categories: deega and binna. In deega (verilocal resident), the woman comes to live with man in his house. In binna (uxoilocal resident), the man gives up the land where he lives and goes to live in the house of the woman. Either deega or binna, most of these marriages took place among the cross cousins, and this is so especially in the Kandyan society.

Deega marriage is popular and common in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Most of the deega marriages among the higher caste and wealthiest families are arranged by the parents of both sides and celebrated according to the traditional customs. Mostly people get together and make family union according to the cross cousin relationship and their willingness. Usually, the couples of ordinary background start their new life in the small hut made in the chena plot. Later, they visit their parents. They do not receive dowry like in wealthy families. In deega marriages, children inherit their vāsagama (surname) and property on fathers line or patrilineal line.

There were also special marriage patterns related to the deega marriage in the Kandyan society. It called eka geyi kaema (eating in one dwelling) or eka geyi raksha veema (living in one dwelling – polyandry). This polyandry is described by Ribeiro (cited in Ralph Peiris, 1956: 205) as follows:

Their marriages are a ridiculous matter. A girl makes a contract to marry a man of her own caste (for she cannot marry outside it), and if the relatives are agreeable they give a banquet and unite the betrothed couple. The next day a
brother of the husband takes his place, and if there are seven brothers she is
the wife of all of them, distributing the nights by turns, without the husband
having a greater right than any of this brothers. If during the day any of them
find the chamber unoccupied, he can retire with the woman if he thinks fit, and
while he is within no one else can enter. If it chances that there are more
brothers than seven, those who exceed that number have right over her; but if
there are two up to five, they are satisfied with one woman; and the woman
who is married to a husband with a large number of brothers is considered
very fortunate, for all toil and cultivate for her and bring whatever they earn to
the house, and she lives much honoured and well supported, and for this
reason the children call all of the brothers their fathers.

There is no doubt that the practice of polyandry minimized the fragmentation of
ancestral property. For, three brothers having four sons by a joint-wife would
certainly have had to provide for twelve heirs if each had a separate wife. If they
contracted a polyandrous union their four sons would hold the paternal estate
undividedly. However, the polyandry unions are very exceptional today, and I could
not find any such case in Teripaha.

The form of deega marriage is changing today. Earlier, these were mostly
arranged marriages among the upper caste and wealthier families. Cross cousin
relationship is also important, especially among ordinary peasants in rural Sri Lanka.
But, today these factors are not important. Love marriage has become common in
both urban and rural societies. Both males and females are educated and there is high
competition to get good education and reputed job. As a result of these changes, the
dowry and other inherited properties lost their importance as factors of marriage. If
there is a love marriage it is difficult to request land and other property. If the bride
has important achieved status than the ascribed status it is becoming a good dowry for
stable family life. I found many young couples who had love marriages. However,
some of them who got married out of love, especially those from the upper caste and
wealthy families, did not find a ground to claim inherited property, but expected it
indirectly.
Binna marriage is not a very common pattern of marriage in rural Sri Lanka. But, this form of marriage is essential in certain circumstances in rural Sri Lanka. Yalman (1967: 123) describes the circumstances of a binna marriage as follows:

Binna is meaningful only in contrast to deega. There are two reasons why the parents of a girl will allow her to bring her husband home: either they have no sons and wish one of their daughters to stay on with them and bear children to continue the family, or the sons are still young and someone is needed to help in the management and labour of the lands. In either case, the groom (who is invariably a poorer man) settles in binna, lives with the daughter, and is given lands to work on his own account.

In binna, all property is inherited to the children from the matrilineal side. Children inherits also mother’s vásagama. Most probably the binna marriage is arranged with a cross cousin. There were several binna marriages in Teripahe, but the system is not common today. The common reason is that the role of binna husband became a target of ridicule and joke in rural social life. The decline of binna marriage is caused to changed the land ownership of females in the village.

As a Kandyan village, in Teripahe the situation of land and other property inheritance was not much different from that of the other villages of the region. However, as Yalman (1967: 131) explained, the rich and poor families do not act in the same way.

Both rich and poor allowed sons to inherit. The rich, however, actively controlled the property rights of the daughters and used this as a tool in the arrangement of marriages. In contrast, labourers did not control the property rights of the daughters and all siblings shared alike. There was no emphasis on unilineal descent among them.

The reason for this was very strong patrilineal ideology among the rich families. “It will be said that sons remain in the family but that daughters ‘out,’ to ‘other people’, the family seat, the house (mul gedara), must always be given to the sons; names descend only in the male line” (Yalman, 1967: 132).

In this sense, gender is another vital factor of land ownership in rural Sri
Lanka. As a result of new laws introduced by the British, there was scarcity of land in rural society. This scarcity reduced the share for women when the next generation inherit the lands. Bina Agrawal (1994: 182) explains: "as land scarcity grew women increasingly lost land: between 1901 and 1921, the number of Sinhalese women paddy landowners fell to half, while the number of women wage earners and other labourers increased dramatically... Women also lost land as a result of changes in marriage and divorce laws: these led to shifts in post-marital residence towards virilocality, which adversely affected women's access to inherited land." Other studies also point out the gender discrimination in land inheritance. For instance, when Sarkar and Tambiah (1957: 58-59) examined how paddy land and highland land devolved between men and their first sisters in six Kandyan villages, they found that while children of both sexes inherited land, the bias was distinctly in favour of sons. In land owner’s families, 68 per cent of the male respondents and 56 per cent of their first sisters received some paddy land. Gender differentials were marked in the acreage of paddy land (males received 0.375 acres and their first sisters received 0.068 acres as dowry). The situation of village Teripahe in 1954 was not much clear. However, it could be the same as other Kandyan villages in Sri Lanka. The situation of today is shown in table 19.

Table 19: *Gender and Land Ownership of Teripahe in 1999*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Paddy Land Owners</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Highland Land Owners</th>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1269</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Agrarian Services Centre’s Land Registry in Teripahe*
According to the table males are dominating both paddy and highland land ownerships in the village. Female’s paddy land ownership is slightly higher compared to the proportion of highland land ownership in the village Teripahe, both in terms of number of ownership and acreage. Among the female landowners, there are several landowners who are married to the villagers, especially from neighbouring villages. These figures show that there is well-established patrimonial process of land inheritance in the village. Still Kandyans are following their traditional system of inheritance in the village life.

There are 565 highland landowners and 455 paddy landowners in the village today. Most of the owners acquired more than 1 acre of highland lands. The highland landowners who owned ¼ acre are 0.9 per cent, 7.6 per cent owned ¼ to ½ acre, and 15.8 per cent owned ½ to 1 acre. Above 5 acres of highland lands in the village are owned by 10.8 per cent. (For more details, see tables 12 and 13.) The traditional state of land transmission in the Kandyan society that Yalman explained in 1954 has not changed much today. But there are new modes of land transmission. The individual holdings can be acquired either by purchase, or by gift, or by inheritance. Anybody can sell today his or her land inherited through the parent or any other sources.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the land is a symbol of wealth and prestige in rural Sri Lanka. Thus, every villagers attempt to acquire lands in their life. Acquisitions of land depend on many reasons. First, the financial betterment is most important. If somebody earns money through the occupation, the first priority is given to purchase land, especially paddy land. In the village Teripahe, shopkeepers in the village and in Nildandahinne town take interest to buy these lands. This trend was identified by Yalman too. He (1967: 51) says:

They [shopkeepers] are in an excellent position to acquire land – always a
sensitive matter in peasant communities – not only because they are the only people in the village who can pay spot cash to clinch a sale with a wavering villager but also because they can cajole their debtors to mortgage and eventually sell their lands in return for what they owe the shopkeeper. One of the familiar complaints of the villagers in Terutenne was that the shopkeepers had tricked innocent people into selling their ancestral lands.

Kirthisingha (*Kirthi Mudalali*) is a shopkeeper in the centre of the village. His father married a woman in the village who was a daughter of Andradige Nikolos Appu, who came from Low Country and settled in the village. In 1954, she had Rs. 600 worth shop and 4 pale (2 acres) lands acquired in 10 years of business (*Yalman*, 1967: 51). After the death of Nikolos Appu and his wife, the daughter (*Rosalin Nona*) – Kirthisingha’s mother – continued the shop. Later, as an elder son of the family Kirthisingha started the business since 1976. His parents migrated to Mahaweli colony in 1985. During the last 24 years of business, Kirthisingha acquired 1½ acres of highland lands and 8 acres of paddy lands. One piece of land (¼ acres) was purchased just in front of his shop very recently. This small land cost him Rs. 3 lakhs because another shopkeeper (*Amarakoon*) too tried to get it competitively. All paddy lands he purchased are situated in Bolagandawela field and generally the value of one acre here ranges between Rupees eighty thousand to one lakh. He purchased several plots of land under his children’s names. All paddy lands have been cultivated on a sharecropping basis. The paddy fields in Bolagandawela can be cultivated in both seasons and it gives good harvest as well. Therefore, everybody interest to buy these paddy lands.

*Secondly*, there are landowners who do not have clear transmission of land holdings that need to inherited from the parents. H. B. Dissanayake in Helagama hamlet personally acquired 13 acres of highland lands and 2 acres of paddy lands. He was a leading tobacco cultivator and was successful in this. He did not get his share
demarcated because there was struggle to acquire the lands among the siblings. His father was a shopkeeper as well as a landlord in Helagama. However, most of his lands were acquired by the elder son – Wegolle Kalubanda [U. B. Dissanayaka] (Yalman, 1967: 55) – and later several paddy lands too were acquired. The three sisters of him did not get any lands and still there are several acres of lands without clearance. The old house (mul gedara) was repaired and an annexe was added to it by H. B. Dissanayake. He was living in the old part and his younger brother is living in the annexe of the house. H. B. Dissanayake migrated to Anuradhapura, the place of his wife, to start commercial vegetable cultivation because of land disputes among the siblings. The elder brother U. B. Dissanayaka was a school teacher and later transferred to the government service as a clerk in AGA office. All other family members were claiming that he could have settled the land disputes as an elder brother after the demise of parents but he failed to do so because he was acquiring lands and made fresh deeds when he worked as a land officer in Walapane AGA office. However, he transferred two plots of paddy lands to the elder son and a daughter before his death. One elder son is married and settled in Kalutara and he does not like to come back. Other two sons did not get lands because there was a suspicion that these two sons were from his younger brother, H. B. Dissanayake. His wife and younger brother had secret love affair. The village has many lands which do not have any clear title-holds. Therefore, all siblings are using these lands as their common property. In this sense, as a result of land disputes among the kindred, everybody attempts to acquire other lands under his or her name. H. B. Dissanayake becomes a big land owner in the village, because he does not inherit his parents lands clearly.
Thirdly, if somebody migrates to the urban areas the other relatives expect his or her lands as a gift, or otherwise they would like to purchase it at a low rate. Sometime, they simply occupy the land and later pay some amount in instalments. Ariyaratne who migrated to Colombo district and settled in Padukka, a sub-urban area, had sold his lands to the relatives in the village Teripahe. After settling down in other parts of the country, it is difficult to keep land-holding in a village like Teripahe. Coory, a retired headmaster of village school who migrated from Low country area (Kalutara) had acquired 24 pale (12 acres) of lands in the village in 1954 (Yalman, 1967: 55). He had 3 daughters and 5 sons. Three of them migrated to various parts of the country after they got their occupation. Therefore, they sold their lands to one sister in the village. She is married to A. N. M. Gunaratna in Hegasulla hamlet who was a postman in the village and secretary of TTCCS. They acquired 18 acres of highland lands and 6 acres of paddy lands in the village. However, several acres of highland and paddy lands were inherited by their children. Likewise, many of villagers are keen to acquire lands in this manner. However, all migrants are not practising the same way of land selling or gifting it to close relatives in the village. One low caste (Tom-Tom Beaters) member from this village who became an Additional Secretary in a very important ministry of the Sri Lankan government has a plot of one-acre of paddy land in the Bolagandawela field. He is permanently settled in Moratuwa – an urban area near Colombo. But he is holding paddy land in his native village as a symbol. It emphasises the identity of the self and community.

Fourthly, mortgage is made use of as a way of land acquisition in rural Sri Lanka. Whenever the villagers have financial crisis, they borrow money from the wealthier persons in the village or outside the village. Sometimes these villagers
directly mortgage the land and take money. All these cases are due to poverty of these farmers in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Some of them borrow money for cultivation only. If the person could not get good harvest he would be indebted to the moneylender. Finally these kinds of money exchange and liability cause the passage of land into the hands of the moneylender. There are many cases of land ownership managed in this way in village Teripahe. Especially, the shopkeepers in Nildandahinna, a nearest town to the village, offer money lending and mortgage facilities to villagers. One shopkeeper – Wimal Gunawardana – acquired 17 acres of paddy lands in Bolagandawela field. He came from Matara – the city of down south Sri Lanka – and settled in the Nildandahinna. Most of lands are given in sharecrop (ande) basis and many of them are previous landowners of the village Teripahe. There is another merchant named Marshal Appuhamy who came from Matara as an employee of a shop in Nildandahinna and later started his own business in the same place. He married from Dimbulana Valawa (mansion) in Udamadura, a neighbouring village of Teripahe. His wife’s mother was married to Dimbulana Valawa from Hingurewela, a hamlet of Teripahe GND. Then this merchant was heir to lands of his Mother-in-law, and he was following the same ways of Gunawardana. Most of the lands he acquired are from Hingurewela hamlet only. Six acres of paddy lands and 22 acres of highland lands are owned by Marshal Appuhamy. Today, he rented out several acres (Rs. 3000 for flat land and Rs. 1250 for slope land for one acre per year) to one villager from Hingurewela for vegetable cultivation.

These are several ways of land acquisition in rural Sri Lanka. However, these forms of land acquisition do not form the traditional way of land transmission, the bilateral inheritance from the parents.
Apart from these forms of land acquisition, there are two complex cases of land acquisition and ownership in the village Teripahe. First, the acquisition of lands by the Wekumbura temple and the Maluwegoda temple in village Teripahe. These holdings were not significant in 1954. If these were so, Yalman could have indicated the land ownerships of these temples in the village. Both the temples mostly acquired paddy lands rather than highland lands. Wekumbura temple has 13 acres and Maluwegoda temple has 6 acres of paddy lands in the village. The total allotments of these land holdings amounts to 57 for both the temples (34 allotments to Wekumbura temple and 23 allotments to Maluwegoda temple) and the allotments have been cultivated by sharecroppers of the village. There is a common belief in the village that these sharecroppers were the previous owners of these lands. Both the incumbents of the temples purchased most of these lands in their names. However, there are some allotments in the name of the temples. These acquisitions of land emphasise that the temples are accumulating the capital from the villagers. The incumbent priests are using their traditional power to become big land owners in the village.

The second complex case is related to encroachment of government lands. Many families in Hegasulla GND got displaced owing to forest reservation for AMDP. Nearly 54 families were resettled in Valikanda zone under the AMDP. This area has been affected by terrorist attacks by the Tamil rebellious groups in Eastern parts of the country. During my fieldwork, several families as a whole and some members of families came back to their native places in the village. I observed that there were encroachments of government forestland in several GNDs in village Teripahe. Though they have encroached highly restricted government lands related to the AMDP, they have access to political avenues to see that the law does not go harsh
against them. The Assistant Divisional Secretary has started investigating these encroachments with the intention of legal transfer of these lands to them. DSD is planning to redistribute government highland lands for them from a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ acre to a maximum of 1 acre. However, if they are not affected by the terrorism, the attempt of AMDP by resettling them in a new colony could have been successful.

6.4 Land and Caste

Caste was more important as a social stratification system in the rural society of Sri Lanka than the other systems of stratification. It was organised as a system of occupation as well as ritual system of village communities (the structure and organisation of caste system in village Teripahe is discussed in Chapter Seven). When we discuss the caste as an occupational system, the relationship with land and land ownership are the important factors. We usually understand that farming and land holding are the affairs of the Goyigama caste in rural society of Sri Lanka.

Table 20: *Paddy Land Ownership among Low Caste in Terutenne (1954)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Adult Population (Over 20)</th>
<th>Actual Land Holders</th>
<th>Total Land Held in Pale (in acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 (10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washermen</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.5 (9.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom-Tom Beaters</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.5 (16.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>71 (35.5)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yalman, 1967: 64

However, the other caste communities also, while practising their occupation, have held both paddy and highland lands and cultivated those lands. The situation of land
ownership among the low castes in village Teripahe in 1954 is shown in table 20. According to the table 20, Blacksmiths and Washermen castes had substantial acreage of paddy land in the village. One Blacksmith member – Hingappu had 20 pale (10 acres) of paddy land and it gave him social prestige. He had given some lands to other villagers on sharecropping basis. “Some of these sharecroppers were high-caste men” (Yalman, 1967: 70). In this sense, in the village Teripahe, farming and land holding are not just confined to the high caste Goyigama. Washermen are considered the lowest caste in the village Teripahe and they also practised this prestigious occupation.

Today, as the population has increased, one finds land alienation among all caste groups in the village. Despite the fact of population increase, there was also increase in paddy and highland lands under the Village Expansion Scheme. Under these circumstances, today, the low caste members acquired substantial acreage of both paddy and highland lands in village Teripahe. These acquisitions of lands reveal that the land ownership is not confined to the Goyigama caste only. The relationship of caste and land ownership of village Teripahe in 1999 is shown in table 21. The GND wise caste population is important to compare with caste and land ownership in the village Teripahe. It is given in table 23 (Chapter Seven). Among the low castes, Kumbal caste does not have paddy land ownership in the village. Now they are not doing their traditional work in the village. However, they had collected clay from other paddy land owners’ plots in the Helagama GND.

Unlike Yalman’s accounts, Achari caste does not have bigger landowners today, and Hingappu’s children had sold their lands inherited from father to others in the village. Several of them migrated to somewhere else and only one son is living in
the native place. Among the low caste Berava landowners now, Heen Punchi Baba has the highest acreage of land – 3 acres of paddy lands. He has also 4.5 acres of highland lands.

Table 21: *Caste and Land Ownership of Village Teripahe in 1999*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Paddy Lands (acres)</th>
<th>Actual Land Holders</th>
<th>Highland Lands (acres)</th>
<th>Actual Land Holders</th>
<th>Population*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berava (Tom-Tom Beaters)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karava (Fishermen)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achari (Blacksmiths)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hena (Washermen)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumbal (Potters)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durava (Toddy Tapers)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyigama (Upper Caste)</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1069</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>1664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders**</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>1269</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>2204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Population above 18 years.
** These outsiders’ caste is not clear.

Source: Field Survey 1999

Earlier, the Beravas had two separate small plots of paddy lands in the central area of the village. They settled around these paddy fields and the names of these two paddy fields had used to identify their pedigrees. Gonnagawahatte Gedara Nandina – Member of *Pradeshiya Saba* representing Beravas’ owns 9 acres of highland lands in the village. Lanka Halugedara Jamis from Washermen caste owns 5.5 acres of highland land and 4.5 acres of paddy lands, and he has the highest acreage of land among Washermen caste. Karava is a low caste in Maritime Provinces that had migrated to interior parts of the country including isolated villages like Teripahe. Surasena Coorey, a Karava member has 4.5 acres of highland lands and 2.5 acres of paddy lands in the village. His elder sister holds the highest acreage of highland lands (7.5 acres) among Karavas. Their father, retired schoolmaster, had 24 *Pale* (12 acres) of lands in 1954 (ibid: 55). The significant fact is that many outsiders keep their
paddy land ownership in the village Teripahe, and both acreage and the number of ownership is higher for paddy land than for the highland land. Most of their paddy lands are cultivated on a sharecropping basis by the villagers in Teripahe.

6.5 Value of Lands

The value of lands in villages is not high compared to that of the urban areas and small towns. But, if the village is close to urban centres or if the village has some access to reach easily to these centres, the value of lands becomes higher than that of the other remote and isolated villages. If a village is situated in hill area and in the Dry Zone, the value of its lands remains less compared to that of other parts of rural society in Sri Lanka. Village Teripahe comes under this category. It is one of the very isolated villages in Walapane area. It did not have a road until 1972. The government bus service started in 1974. The electricity supply to the houses (only the central locality of the village) came in 1986. The Ambagahatenne-Helagama road was completed in 1986. This road was extended up to Meeriyabadda under the Janasaviya development programme in 1992, and it was repaired with the assistance of South Asia Poverty Alleviation (SAPAP) in 1998. These are several factors deciding the value of lands in the village Teripahe.

Today, the village has access to the nearest town, Nildandahinna, through two roads. Now, the value of lands has changed. The value of paddy lands is higher than that of highland lands. One acre of paddy land in the centre of village can have a price that ranges from Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 70,000 today. It was Rs. 10,000 in 1985 and Rs. 15 in 1929. The main paddy field – Bolagandawela – costs higher than the paddy field in centre of village, because the former can be cultivated in both the seasons of the year.
Currently, one acre of paddy land in Bolagandawela can be sold at Rs. one lakh or above. It was Rs. 500 in 1954 and increased up to Rs. 8500 in 1985. Today, the value increased dramatically because of tobacco cultivation in the main paddy field. Many landowners rented out their lands for tobacco cultivation for above Rs. 10,000 for one acre per season. However, there is one group who does not allow or agree to cultivate tobacco, because of the environmental disaster from the tobacco cultivation. Especially, tobacco cultivation eats upon the fertility of the land. The farmers got less harvest from the lands in the centre of the village that once cultivated tobacco. The paddy lands in the Hingurewela hamlet (Teripahe GND) is expensive (Rs. 75,000) today, because of vegetable cultivation.

The value of highland lands in the centre of village is higher than the value of other areas of village. If the land is plane or flat, it is more costly (above Rs. 75,000 per acre). The village has very few plots of plane lands. This type of land was costing only Rs. 1000 in 1954. One acre of highland lands in hill areas today costs between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000. This increase in price for highland lands is the result of tobacco cultivation in the village. The price was Rs. 100 per acre in 1923 and the same decreased to Rs. 25 in 1945. That could be due to malaria plague in the village. The local government dispensary has records to show that the village was subjected to malaria plague during this period. (Most of land values depended on the values included in respective deeds of lands) In this area, the land was being measured in traditional way of measurements. It was officially changed after the Agricultural Services Act of 1979. Under this Act, all agricultural lands measured in acres had to be registered in the respective Agrarian Services Centres (ASCt) of the country. The villagers are using this new measurement system today. In this manner, the villagers
later learned also the metric measurement systems.

6.6 Varieties of Crops and Forms of agriculture

There are three common varieties of crops in the village Teripahe. They are: paddy, vegetable and tobacco. These three crops constitute the village economy today.

6.6.1 Paddy Cultivation

Rice is the main food in rural society of Sri Lanka. This is so in village Teripahe too. Therefore, each farmer’s main target is to get good harvest from his paddy fields. Most of them are cultivating paddy for domestic consumption only. If there are five members in a family, for three meals they want at least 2 Kgs of rice per day. When they were doing chena cultivation, they had finger millet, corn, various types of beans and green gram for their daily consumption. Ironically, the government prohibited the chena cultivation, and they have to depend on paddy cultivation only. However, there are few villagers who cultivate these types of traditional crops in their highland lands or paddy lands during dry season. Paddy cultivation is done during twice a year and these two seasons are called yala and maha. Yala in village Teripahe is from February to June, and maha is August to December. The farmers who have lands in the main field of Bolagandawela can cultivate both the seasons, and most of the paddy fields in the centre of village can be cultivated only during yala.

Farmers invest their own labour to prepare the paddy field for cultivation. However, there are four various practices of cultivation followed by the owner of paddy lands. Sharing labour, paying labour, sharecropping and renting out lands are the four dominant practices. First, he may work the land himself with the assistance
of his family members, close relatives and friends. The relatives and friends who assist him will be reciprocated when they want assistance for preparation of their paddy fields. This is a traditional method of exchange of peasant's labour in the rural Sri Lanka. The most usual form of labour exchange is *attam*, a reciprocal arrangement whereby obligations are carefully reckoned in precise terms. There are other forms of reciprocal labour, like *kayiya*, where large numbers of people, usually women, are collected for the paddy harvest, but the reciprocities are not so closely calculated as in *attam*. In addition, most of farmers want to hire cows and buffaloes in ploughing and reaping-threshing stage. Finally, he wants to take *thawalama* to transport the harvest to home.

Second, the farmer can employ coolie labour for the entire cultivation cycle. This method is open only to those with ready cash, and only large landlords will attempt it. This method is not popular among the farmers. But, they used coolie labour along with the family labour. A coolie was paid Rs. 2.00 per day in 1954 (Yalman, 1967: 45) and it is increased to Rs. 100 today for male labourer and Rs. 75 for female labourer. The contribution of female labour for paddy cultivation is very high. They are involved in planting of paddy plants, weeding, reaping the paddy and winnowing the harvest.

Third, the farmer can cultivate his or her paddy lands on sharecropping basis. This method is a traditional form of cultivation called *ande*. The farmers who have more lands or who are unable to cultivate paddy lands for several reasons (occupation, unhealthy condition, special duties like wedding in the family, etc.) give their lands to one kin, neighbour or friend for cultivating with an arrangement of sharing the harvest. Yalman (1967: 44-46) mentioned:

[1]In Terutenne the *ande* agreements followed several different patterns, in
which four factors of production were considered: land, labour, seed, and buffaloes. In one version of ande, the landlord provided the land, the worker offered his labour, and the cost of the seed and buffaloes was shared between them. At the end of the harvest the landlord and worker split the crop fifty-fifty. Sometime, however, the landlord provides, in which case the worker reimbursed the landlord for his share of buffalo expenses after the harvest...

There were two reasons for this. In the first place, close kinsmen used ande among themselves. (We must except fathers, sons, son-in-law, full brothers, and brother-in-law, for they may lend rice land to one another, if they are on good terms, without formal arrangements.) Second, large landlords often preferred to give the land on ande, on a fairly permanent basis, so as to acquire supporters in village intrigues and elections.

Today, the second reason mentioned by Yalman is not much valid. The Village Council system was replaced by the Pradeshiya Saba system. In this system no candidate contested from the upper caste Goyigamas, but one lower caste member (G. G. Nandina) from Berava caste contested and was elected to the Pradeshiya Saba of Walapane from village Teripaha. The shopkeepers of the village and of Nildandahinne town who acquired most of paddy lands give their lands for sharecropping to maintain good market relationships. The farmers take all the daily needs, fertiliser, weedicide and insecticide, and borrow money from them. Usually, when they divide the harvest into 50-50, they separate the seed portion and buffalo’s share, employed in ploughing and threshing season as landlord’s share. According to the Paddy Land Act of 1958 the sharecropper’s portion would be ¾ of the harvest. But, it was not implemented well in the Kandyan region. The situation in Teripaha village was same like other Kandyan villages. Today also, they are following the same method when there is sharecropping in paddy. The total sharecroppers are 324 in this village. These farmers undertake some other paddy lands, owned by outside landholders around the village Teripaha.

*Fourth*, the farmer can rent out the land and can get fixed amount of money in each season. The landowners who do not have time to engage in sharecropping rent
out land. Those landholders who are settled outside the village prefer to rent out their lands.

Few of farmers are cultivating paddy for commercial markets in the village as well as in small towns near the village. There are two ways of commercial paddy marketing in the village. First, the shopkeepers who have more paddy lands produce rice and sell in their shops. Second, there are few shopkeepers and rice mill owners who give money to farmers in advance. The poor farmers borrow money and reciprocate the relationship by giving paddy instead of money and interest. During the harvest period price of paddy goes down and they purchase paddy under the lowest price. They store paddy and sell it at high price later. These developments in paddy cultivation show that there are changes in economic values among the villagers. They attempt to link with the profit oriented business in the urban centres of the country.

In this way some of the poor farmers do not get substantial share of paddy for their daily consumption. Some of the sharecroppers who work in the Bolagandawela field are secretly selling a small share of paddy to these moneylenders in the village at low cost before they share the harvest with the landlords. Shopkeeper, Amarakoon is a rice mill owner in the village and he lends the daily consumption items to the farmers and finally balance the bill during the paddy harvest. The rice mill owner, Nandasena also is practising the same method, and he is purchasing paddy as well at rates as low as possible. There are a number of low caste (Berava) farmers-cum-sharecroppers. These farmers borrow money from a shopkeeper (Jayananda) of the same caste. He initially started tobacco and paddy cultivation. Later, he shifted to paddy and tobacco business where he failed because of political reasons. In 1989, JVP ordered them to purchase one bushel of paddy at Rs. 75 instead of at Rs. 50. After loss
in this business, he started shop keeping in 1989. Today, he is doing both shop keeping and paddy business simultaneously. He is a very successful businessman in the village.

The rice of Walapane region has a special demand, because it is tastier than the rice of other parts of the country. The paddy lands here are very fertile and they use less chemicals for cultivation. I used the rice in the village during my fieldwork, and found it tastier. The other factor directly related to the paddy cultivation is the low level technology used. Till recently, there was no modern machines used and the village totally depended on the traditional way of producing rice. That is mortar and pestle. This was a women’s work and they had separate room in their houses. The first rice grinder worked with diesel engine, and was installed in 1961. The machine was managed by a woman in the centre of the village. However, after her death, her son Nandasena started the rice mill with modern equipments that work with electricity power in 1993. In the same year, shopkeeper, Amarakoon also started the same type of rice mill in village Teriphe, and today the village can produce rice competitively.

Green Revolution has affected the paddy cultivation. In the sense of new technology, farmers are not using sowing method of paddy today. They initially make nursery for paddy in part of the field and then transplant it after few weeks. They use new varieties of high-yield seeds, fertilizers, weedicides and insecticides for paddy cultivation.

6.6.2 The Management of Paddy Cultivation

The management of paddy cultivation in Sri Lanka has long history. During the British period, they have introduced the Paddy lands Irrigation Ordinance...
of 1856, and the post of *Vel Vidane* was created by this Ordinance. The Ordinance of 1856 legalised the management of paddy cultivation in Sri Lanka. In each village, paddy land owners elected their *Vel Vidane*, and normally one of the biggest land owners was elected to the post. Whenever the post became vacant, the Village Headman arranged a meeting of all paddy land owners in the village to elect the *Vel Vidane*. The post remained until 1964 when the Cultivation Committee (CC) was introduced. The Cultivation Committee was the oldest farmer’s organisation introduced by the Paddy Land Act in 1958. The CC was formed in 1964. After the CC, there was Agricultural Productivity Committee (APC) introduced by the Agricultural Lands Law of 1973. The APC remained functional until 1979, and it was replaced by the Agrarian Services Committee (ASC) under the Agrarian Services Act (No. 58 of 1979). These committee members were appointed by the Commissioner of Agrarian Services and there was a permanent salaried officer called Cultivation Officer (CO) in each committee. These ASCs were established in each Grama Sevaka Divisions or Grama Niladari Divisions (GND). Actually, the CO system was introduced in 1978 and legitimised in 1979. The CO was a political appointment by the respective Member of the Parliament in each electorate and the Commissioner of Agrarian Services approved it. The CO system was abolished in 1988. The present Farmer’s Organisation and Agricultural Research and Production Assistant system were established in 1995. All these organisations and voluntary or salaried officers had been employed to improve the paddy cultivation in rural Sri Lanka. Moreover, there are several other organisations and officers above the grass roots level in zonal, regional, provincial and national levels to administer the paddy and other cultivations in the rural society of Sri Lanka.
6.6.3 Vegetable Cultivation

Another important crop contributing to the economy of village Teripahe is vegetable cultivation. There are two types of vegetable cultivation today. They are consumption-based or non-commercial vegetable cultivation and commercial vegetable cultivation. The consumption-based vegetable cultivation existed since the beginning of village life in Teripahe. At the time when Yalman studied the village, there was no such significant trend to grow vegetables. Yalman says: “Inadequate irrigation made the growing of vegetables difficult and risky, and since the market was less sure than the rice market, no one attempted to grow vegetables on rice lands” (1967: 48). When there was chena cultivation, the farmers were cultivating vegetables in the chena lands. They cultivated several verities of long beans, gourd, cucumber, brinjal, pumpkin, etc. These vegetables did not have good market in urban centres. Therefore, the villagers depended on Harasbadda fair (Sunday fair) 12 miles away from the village (a small town in Walapane-Ragala road) and they had to transport every thing on their back or by thawalama. These negative factors never favoured the commercial vegetable cultivation in the village.

However, the situation has changed today with the Agrarian Services Centre (ASCt) of Teripahe established in 1989. Moreover, the villagers had good experience on cultivation of commercial crops like tobacco. Tobacco cultivation had been well managed by the CTC. ASCt is not doing well-integrated management in the village, but several villagers are keen to manage themselves the commercial vegetable cultivation in the village. Some NGOs like World Vision had introduced new varieties of vegetables in recent past. Some of the villagers have contacts with commercial farmers in other areas (Nuwara Eliya is a one of district that grows vegetables
commercially in the country) and assimilate the technology of vegetable cultivation.

They mainly cultivate bean and cabbage and occasionally cultivate tomato, carrot, beetroot, chillies and brinjal. Now there is more access to commercial vegetable cultivation, especially after the development of roads in the village and the availability of modern transport vehicles. The commercial vegetable cultivation is popular in Teripâhe and Dulane GNDs. Now this new trend of commercial vegetable cultivation is fast spreading to other GNDs also. They have started cultivation in paddy fields and some of them are not at all interested in cultivating paddy. Their products are sent to the main vegetable markets in the country such as Kandy and Dambulla.

If the village has more developed road structure and irrigation facilities, the commercial vegetable cultivation will expand all over the village. The commercial vegetable cultivation will improve in the Teripâhe GND because of rehabilitation and developmental programmes under the ASCt assisted by the Asian Development Bank.

However, the Agricultural Research and Production Assistant – Jayasinha – in the Teripâhe GND who is attached to the ASCt of Teripâhe has been dominating the commercial vegetable cultivation and most of the poor farmers have become labourers under him. He was President of the Farmer’s Organisation of Teripâhe GND and he arbitrarily used villager’s property like Welahinda Vewa for his vegetable cultivation. His father was one of the main tobacco cultivators and the family had acquired good experience on commercial cultivation. Jayasinha is planning to buy a lorry to transport his production to the main markets in the country, and he has ability and access to lead the vegetable cultivation in the village. When I was doing fieldwork, he struggled his best to get the post of president in the Farmer’s
Organisation, but finally he failed because group of villagers opposed to his efforts of exploitation of poor farmers in the village. However, he is a dynamic character and has started to dig agricultural wells to store water for his vegetable cultivation. He is using motor pumps, and he has installed solar power plant to generate electricity. All these emphasise that he is an agent of change in the village.

6.6.4 Tobacco Cultivation

Tobacco cultivation had made greater changes in the social life of Teripahe. It was introduced to the village by around 1950. When Yalman came to the village in 1954 it was gradually spreading over all the hamlets of the village. He (1967: 48) says:

Another crop which the villagers of Terutenne experimented with was tobacco. Some of the chena highlands were covered with this crop, but the cash returns appeared to be very poor. Persons with ready capital to invest in tobacco “barns” where the leaf was cured skimmed off most of the profits. (In 1955 the villagers sold the uncured leaf for 15 cents a pound. When cured, the price was about Rs. 2.50.)

The barn owners had exploited ordinary tobacco farmers at the beginning of tobacco cultivation in this village. Because of this unequal distribution of profit and exploitation of poor farmers, the Teripahe Tobacco Cultivators Cooperative Society (TTCCS) was founded in 1956. The headmaster T. N. M. Kiribanda Nissanka, last Village Headman T. T. A. N. M. P. B. Sri Nissanka and village’s first postman A. N. M. Gunaratna are the founding members of this society. TTCCS initially gave membership to tobacco barn owners and farmers in the village and later started several barns under its management. The tobacco company, CTC, collaborated with TTCCS. TTCCS purchased tobacco, cultivated by its members in the village. The TTCCS initially charged one cent and later two cents per each pound of raw tobacco
and the money was deposited in society's bank account. The TTCCS had an amount of Rs. six lakhs as deposit with interest by 1986, and the money was invested to build the two-storey building with a big meeting hall in the centre of the village. However, the TTCCS is defunct today.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, all arable highland lands and most of paddy and chena lands had been utilized for tobacco cultivation. This cash crop had divided the villagers into proprietors and labourers since 1950s. Mostly big landowners became barn owners and landless villagers became labourers. The tobacco cultivators had paid Rs. 3.00 for male labourer, Rs. 2.00 for female labourer and Rs. 1.00 for child labourer per day in 1970. The expenses of tea, two times per day, had been deducted from the wage. They sold one pound of cured tobacco at about Rs. 3.30 in 1970. When the children of poor farmers were working as labourers, most of the barn owners' children went schools in the village or nearest towns.

The table 22 shows that the cultivator who had a tobacco barn is able to make good profit in each season. It indicates that tobacco cultivators had used fertilizer and insecticide for their cultivation and it was an innovation to the village agriculture. This new technology and knowledge led to change the patterns of paddy and vegetable cultivation in village Teripahe. The dates of tobacco harvest show important cultural integration among the villagers in celebrating the New Year in 13th April. As the table 22 shows, after the harvest of 11th April, they returned to work in 29th April that doubled the harvest. It clearly indicates that this commercial agriculture did not devalue the traditional custom of village life. Perhaps, it gave better opportunity to celebrate the New Year because of availability of money among the villagers.
Table 22: Total Expenditure and Income of Tobacco Cultivation of D. M. W. H. B. Dissanayake in First Season of 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Amount Rs.</th>
<th>Date and weight of tobacco harvest (pound)</th>
<th>Amount Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial cleaning of lands</td>
<td>418.35</td>
<td>23.03.70 - 204</td>
<td>676.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firing the cleaned weeds</td>
<td>201.68</td>
<td>02.04.70 - 544</td>
<td>1967.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditch making</td>
<td>145.44</td>
<td>11.04.70 - 357</td>
<td>1163.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditching holes for plants</td>
<td>346.70</td>
<td>29.04.70 - 762</td>
<td>2263.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the holes</td>
<td>168.68</td>
<td>07.05.70 - 326</td>
<td>1071.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting measures</td>
<td>148.83</td>
<td>08.05.70 - 284</td>
<td>609.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>73.30</td>
<td>09.05.70 - 645</td>
<td>2061.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a hut</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>17.05.70 - 967</td>
<td>3026.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizing</td>
<td>432.00</td>
<td>31.05.70 - 908</td>
<td>3038.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecticide</td>
<td>50.50</td>
<td>08.06.70 - 623</td>
<td>1920.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarding</td>
<td>192.00</td>
<td>17.06.70 - 374</td>
<td>1516.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer</td>
<td>1786.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn preparation</td>
<td>729.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport of fertilizer</td>
<td>242.00</td>
<td>27.06.70 - 006</td>
<td>18.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire woods</td>
<td>998.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning of weeds</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>2285.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>120.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8367.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>6000</strong></td>
<td><strong>19332.70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Budget Records of D. M. W. H. B. Dissanayake

However, both barn owners and labourers had experienced money economy with the tobacco cultivation in the village Teripahe. This situation gradually changed the lifestyle in the village. They purchased radio, sewing machine, furniture, chinaware and daily utilities such as cloths, soap, talcum powder, canned fish (sardine), etc. Some of them started using taxi. Many elders were given money in charity in the name of the two temples; they travelled and visited various other pilgrimage centres in the country. Both the temples in the village have got basic requirements needed, and these centres of worship became main landowners in the village. There were 12 shops in 1954 and these had increased to 29 in the village today. During this long period few shops were closed for various reasons. However, the increase in the number of shops shows that there has been consistent demand for...
daily consumer items in the village.

Today, tobacco cultivation is not popular in the village like in the past. There are several important reasons for this sentiment against tobacco cultivation. They are:

1. *Low productivity:* As a result of soil erosion and other environmental disasters due to tobacco cultivation itself, productivity went low. There emerged many diseases related to cultivation, and this also reduced the productivity.

2. *Politisation of tobacco barns ownership:* Since 1970, politicians in the region were able to influence the barn permits of the CTC. The CTC registers and issues permits for the barns approved by the politician in the respective electorate.

3. *High cost of production:* Gradually the cost of labour, fertilizer, insecticide, etc. had been increasing while the price of tobacco was not. Then, the farmers could not afford the cultivation with marginal profit. The CTC and other institutions started loan scheme to the tobacco cultivators. But, due to lack of profit, they could not manage well and finally many farmers had ended in debt to CTC and other institutions.

4. *Defunct TTCCS:* With lack of profit from the tobacco cultivation, the TTCCS also could not collect the loan advanced to the farmers in the village. In the mean time, the treasurer of TTCCS had died and other office bearers could not manage it properly. Today there is no proper accounting, and the properties of TTCCS are in disarray.

In 1987, another company – Inter Bex – attempted to revive tobacco cultivation in the village and they had also released loans. But, they also failed to lead the farmers because of unproductivity of cultivation. However, several petty bourgeois sections in
the village, especially from Berava caste, are still attempting to maintain the tobacco cultivation with CTC. They did a failed attempt to shift the cultivation to Bolagandawela main field, but most of other farmers opposed it. When I was doing fieldwork in the village, there was a seasonal meeting of Bolagandawela Farmer's Organisation with Additional Divisional Secretary and District Irrigation Officers. Many farmers opposed the tobacco cultivation in the main field, and government officers also warned against cultivating tobacco by using main canal water. Then CTC issued motor pumps to the tobacco cultivators to pump water from Uma Oya. Finally, the other farmers agitated against it and a case was registered in the Walapane police station. Then decision was taken by the District Divisional Secretary not to allow cultivation of tobacco in the Bolagandawela main field. This juncture may become the last attempt of tobacco cultivation in village Teripahe.

6.7 Shop Keepers in the Village

Village economy is not rich and prosperous today, as it was once at the peak stage of tobacco cultivation in the village. The village has a dependent economy. Many villagers are working in government offices or private sector companies (for more details see table 15). These salary or wage earners are the main sources of income for the shopkeepers in the village. They maintain account book for the issue of daily needs and finally collect the money at the end of month. On the one hand the shopkeepers could maintain certain number of permanent customers in their business, and on the other hand it is a very risky business for them. Some villagers have two or three accounts in different shops in the same hamlet or in different hamlets. If there is a problem in the relationship, the customer easily shifts to another. With experiences
of actual situation of their daily customers, they maintain a certain limit in the maximum amount that can be afforded to each customer in the village. The shopkeepers have gained a good understanding about villager’s capacity of purchase and pay. There is a section with increased purchasing capacity. Especially, after the economic liberalisation in 1977 there emerged a massive demand of skilled and unskilled labourers in Colombo and other urban centres, and many villagers had migrated to these urban centres in the country. Even the escalated ethnic war had made opportunities to both young men and women in the armed forces of the country. Most of the garment workers and other employees, who work in distant places like Colombo, visit their parents or family once a month and settle these accounts. Simultaneously, many of shopkeepers are loosing thousands of balance dues. Some of them had become bankrupt due to mismanagement. There are few shopkeepers who do not issue any item on account basis. Therefore, they do not have many customers with monthly account. There are several business companies in Nildandahinne, Walapane and Kandy that supply various products to the village shops.

There is a tendency among the villagers, of taking loans from any institution in the village or Nildandahinne town. These loans are released for developmental and business work of the respondent. Especially, these institutions, banks and NGOs are issuing loans for investments in agricultural and industry-based programmes in the village. The Up Country Development Bank (Central Province branch of National Development Bank) is giving Rs. 15000 loan to any farmer for a season. The manager – Chandrasiri Dissanayake – of this bank and two officers are living in village Teripahe. Their view is that if the harvest is good, the villagers are settling their loans, but if it fails, they do not have any other resources to settle the loan. Many villagers
do not have proper understanding regarding investment in agricultural business. Therefore, the bank has launched an awareness programme for them. A NGO, SAPAP, is issuing loan up to Rs. 50000 for investment in business line. One Berava member in Helagama hamlet started a bakery with modern equipments under the SAPAP direction. But, most of the villagers rejected his bakery products because he is a low caste member. The SAPAP is rejecting this claim, but still the caste consciousness is there among the upper caste Goyigama members. Usually upper caste members are not eating together with low caste members. They consider it pollution. Perhaps, the other two bakery owners could spread such attitudes against the new bakery in the village. Currently, the Samurdi Bank, under the poverty alleviation programme, is also issuing agricultural loans to the villagers (for more details, see Appendix Two).

6.8 Chapter Summary

Land is the most vital factor in the rural society of Sri Lanka. There were four types of lands, i.e., paddy lands, highland lands, chena lands and forest lands in village Teripahe. Except paddy lands all other types of lands are subjected to restricted use as a result of development efforts in the national and regional level. Especially, chena lands was very important to the village like Teripahe as well as any other village in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. Chena cultivation maintained the villager’s social and cultural life. Though it was harmful to the natural environment, it satisfied the villager’s physical and mental needs. The prohibition of chena cultivation and less utility of forest resources had changed the villager’s social life. Paddy cultivation was the main economic activity as well as the source of income in the
village Teripahe. It was replaced by tobacco cultivation in 1950s. The tobacco cultivation had introduced a new social life in the village. It was profit oriented commercial cultivation, and it initiated capitalist mode of economy in the village. It developed two social strata in village Teripahe – petty bourgeoisie and labourers. The transnational tobacco company, CTC had become part of the villager’s economic life. The change in economic life caused the acquisition of lands in the village by several shopkeepers and several business minded villagers. The experiences of the commercial cultivation of tobacco had made it easy to shift to commercial vegetable cultivation in village Teripahe. It is the new trend today, and modern technology has penetrated the rural economy and brought in changes in the society of Sri Lanka. Several infrastructural developments had led to change of village life in Teripahe. This emphasises the role of state intervention in the changes that took place in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Especially, after the economic liberalisation the villagers have migrated to the urban centres from the villages, and it has furthered the dependent economy in the villages.
End Notes:

1 Under this project they have planned to develop infrastructure of the Teripahe GND. They include development of the Valituduwa tank, road access to the hamlet, new houses, water sealed toilet facilities, communication centre, soil conservation, development of land utility for paddy, vegetable, fruit, and minor export crops, development of drinking water resources, common bath places to villagers, animal husbandry and bee keeping.

2 According to custom, a shawl hung up by the brother or a winnowing fan kept by the woman outside the door was a sign that the joint wife was engaged.

3 There is a famous proverb related to the binna marriage. The proverb is that the binna husband should take care to keep constantly ready at the door step of his wife’s room a haramitiya (a walking-stick), a talpat (a traditional umbrella made with palm leaf) and a hulu atta (a lamp or torch made with coconut leaves), and that he may be prepared at any hour of the day or night, whatever may be the state of the weather or of his own health, to quit the house on being ordered.

4 Sinhalese traditional measurements referred to the paddy land are 3 Seru = 1 Kuruni (Laha); 4 Kuruni = 1 Timbaya; 10 Kuruni = 1 Pale; 4 pale = Amuna. These measurements are actually baskets of different sizes, used to measure various quantities of paddy. When used in connection with land, they indicate the extent of land that can be sown with a certain quantity of seed. The acreage of land corresponding to, say, one pale basket of seed may be slightly larger on steep slopes than on flat lands. Two pale of land are more or less equivalent to one acre of land. The measurements for highland lands are not much clear, but it was measured by Kuruni, here used in relation to measure of Kurahan (finger millets).

5 One day, I observed customer’s behaviour in a shop of Helagama hamlet. Two children – girl and boy – came to the shop and requested several items on their account. I noticed these two children on several occasions when they came to the
shop. (These shops are very good places to gather very important information and at least we can hunch about the fact that we want to explore.) I requested from the shopkeeper (he was very friendly with me) about the children and I heard the tragic story that how a man sexually exploited these children's mother for a long time. She had five children to him. Finally she went to Colombo and villagers believe that she is working in a brothel. The five children (four girls and one boy) are living in a small house with their grandmother. Another day I talked to them and found their immediate needs of education. Accordingly I gifted a mathematics tools box and several note books. After few days, they came to meet me and thanked me.

However, there is no big demand for bread and other bakery products in the village, because they are not taking bread as a main meal in their life. If one bakery make bread the other bakery do not makes it on that day.