Chapter Seven

Social Stratification

7.1 Introduction

The ‘Social stratification’ denotes the hierarchical order of a community or society. When studying a peasant community, the concept of social stratification is useful in understanding not only the community structure but also its changing patterns. In this chapter, we will attempt to describe the salient features of social stratification in Teripahe and also to delineate changes in the societal hierarchies arising from broader patterns of social change.

Sri Lankan rural society has essentially been a caste based society. The caste system in Sri Lanka does not reflect philosophical and religious aspect of the Hindu Varna philosophy. Yalman (1961: 26) identified that there is a close relation between the Hindu caste system and the Sinhalese caste system. In Sri Lanka, the caste system mainly reflects occupational and ritual hierarchy in rural society. Yalman (1961, 1967) stated that the rural people have strong caste consciousness and this is evident in their social relationships. “Caste is based on the belief that certain groups of people are inherently different from one another in biological as well as moral terms. Familial contacts between these separate groups are forbidden, there is no intermarriage or interdining between them, and the groups are hierarchically ranked” (Yalman, 1967: 58).

7.2 Caste Composition of Village Teripahe

Teripahe is a large village both in its physical size and population, compared to other villages in the Dry Zone Sri Lanka. It is located at the eastern edge of the
Walapane Divisional Secretariat's Division (DSD) and is divided into seven Grama Niladari Divisions (GNDs). There were five main caste groups (Goyigama, Achari, Kumbal, Berava and Hena) in the village when Yalman studied it in the 1954. Goyigama caste was the upper caste in the village. All other castes were considered as low castes and they were liable to serve them. Then, there were 1203 people living in 214 households. They constituted 234 low caste members and 969 upper caste Goyigama members in the village (for more details, see table 03).

The village caste system proves that it was a large village in the region, and had independent social and cultural life. However, there were small number of low caste members who migrated and settled in the village from Low Country of Sri Lanka before several years of Yalman’s visit. Today, the caste composition in the village is as shown in table 23.

Table 23: GND-wise Caste Composition of village Teripahe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Dulane</th>
<th>Mallagama</th>
<th>Ambagahatenne</th>
<th>Helagama</th>
<th>Bolagandawela</th>
<th>Hegesuila</th>
<th>Teripahe</th>
<th>Sub Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goyigama</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berava</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hena</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karava</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salagama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durava</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>07</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2207</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Caste population above age 18.
Source: Field Survey 1999

According to the table 23, the Goyigama caste represents 75 per cent of village population and they dominate in five GNDs of the village. The second majority caste is Beravas which represent about 19 per cent of the total population and they dominate two GNDs, the Ambagahatenne (centre of Teripahe) and Bolagandawela.
After the new administrative divisions the caste composition changed in these two GNDs, now dominated by the Beravas.

7.2.1 Goyigama Caste

The Goyigama households numerically and socio-culturally dominate the village Teripahe. Goyigama caste is the upper caste in the Sinhalese caste system (Pieris, 1956; Rayn, 1958; Yalman, 1967; Leach, 1968; Perera, 1985).

The Goyigama caste has three levels of internal hierarchy. Aristocrat members (feudal lords), who were associated with kings and held high ranked positions under the kings in the palace or in various regions, constitute first level. They were the regional rulers who assisted the king and had Vadakarayo (workers) to serve them. They were numerically less than the second in hierarchy of the Goyigama caste. There was such an aristocrat family called Amunumulle Mohottala in Teripahe. Today, there are several households who claim they have descended from him. There are several other households that claim descent from such aristocratic leaders. Second level in the Goyigama hierarchy is big landowners. There were such pedigrees that had workers in the Gâlpitiya (Mallagama) hamlet in the village Teripahe. They had pedigree names and house names such as Rattharan Muramudali Herath Mudiyanselage Thunhitiyave Gedara¹, Nissanka Mudiyanselage Tumpale Gedara, Dissanayake Mudiyanselage Wegolle Gedara, Ramanayaka Jayasekara Mudiyanselage Polgaharawe Gedara, etc. All these names have the common name, Mudiyanse or Mudali, which means a petty official title bestowed on them by the king or by regional governors. The third level in the hierarchy is Vadakarayo (workers). These Vadakarayo worked under the first and second levels of the Goyigama caste.
households. They were the herdsmen and they had large number of *thawalam* in the village. They did not have *Gedara* name and this distinguishes them from the other two levels. Yalman (1960: 88) remarked:

Now these Gālpitiya Goyigama were not only reckoned to be ‘low’ in status, they were also exceedingly poor. Nearly all of them worked as labourers on the fields of others. In contrast, we may note that there were some other ‘low’ Goyigama who had grown rich and thereupon changed their place of residence and successfully assumed aristocratic titles. Their social and economic situation has changed and now they do not supply free labour to any households in the village. Many of them have migrated to far away places and do not want to come back to their village. They have also changed their names to avoid the low status they held in the Goyigama caste hierarchy. They collectively wanted to change the name of their hamlet. Attanayaka Mudiyanseleage Sirisena, a member of this group, who became a Grama Sevaka (village officer) of Teripahe in 1972, attempted to change the hamlet’s name from Gālpitiya to Mallagama. The Member of Parliament of the area agreed to this suggestion and included the new name in the voter’s list. In addition he changed the hamlet’s name in other official records as well. This is a good example of how the low status members have used their power to establish a new identity for themselves. Although they managed to change their hamlet’s name they could not acquire other important status symbols of higher caste, namely paddy lands. Even, they do not own paddy lands in the Bolagandawela – main paddy field of the village.

Most of the upper Goyigama members are living in Helagama, Ambagahatenne and Hegasulla GNDs of Teripahe. Some of them live at Hingurewela hamlet of Teripahe GND. They try to keep distance with other Goyigama members of Mallagama. They never inter-marry with the lower Goyigama members, but few of upper hierarchy men keep concubines in Mallagama. One woman of upper hierarchy
Goyigama in Mallagam married a low caste (Berava) man who is famous as poet, drummer, dancer and astrologer. She eloped with him, and now they live in a very remote area of Dulane GND. Now, she also learned the traditional Kandyan dance and even her sisters too. Many upper hierarchy members are justifying the incident in which Ruwan, the Berava member, was supposed to have given her philtre.

Although marriages among the three sub-groups of the Goyigama caste were avoided, there was a tendency in which the Goyigama women were married to other caste men, who migrated to the village from outside such as Karava, Salagama and Durava – KSD communities. These three castes migrated from the maritime areas where westernisation has already influenced the social fabric and culture. Most of them are dynamic and English educated members who have migrated to many parts of the country (Roberts, 1982). The first Karava (fishermen) member migrated and settled in a neighbouring village of Teripahe in 1920s. One of his sons became the village school headmaster and settled down in the village by marrying a Goyigama woman from Karandagolla, a neighbouring village of Teripahe. They had five sons and three daughters. Two daughters were married to upper Goyigama men of Teripahe village and the three sons married from other parts of the country, but settled in the village. One son, Jayasingha Piyasena Coorey, was the field interpreter of Yalman.

The Goyigama upper hierarchy members generally are willing to ignore the caste origin of outsiders if they demonstrate high level of achievement in wealth and education as in the case of the headmaster. Likewise there were several marriages with other castes (Salagama and Durava) in the village. Most of them migrated to the village as businessmen. As Roberts (1982) identified, the KSD communities have
gone beyond the Goyigama members' social status in many parts of the country. The same process was taking place in village Teripahe. Roberts explained further and identified this as a process of 'Goyigamaisation' in rural society of Sri Lanka. It is difficult to justify the facts of degradation the Goyigama upper hierarchy members have in marrying with other low caste members within the village. Most of these are love marriages. As a result of free education and economic liberalisation policy of Sri Lanka, many young men and women have migrated to the urban centres. They have changed their traditional attitudes. Some of them broke caste etiquette by marring low caste members in the village. However, many of these members are from third hierarchy of Goyigama caste. Some of them are living in the village and others have migrated to other parts of the country.

These three groups in Goyigama caste can claim and entitle to have services from all low caste members in the village\(^2\). The low caste members are getting rewards or benefits according to the social status and wealth of these Goyigama caste members in the village.

**7.2.2 Achari Caste**

Achari is an artisan caste in Sinhalese caste system. Usually, they are identified as blacksmiths in the rural Sri Lanka. This artisan caste represents nine groups. Blacksmiths are the main group. Others are goldsmiths, painters, masons, carpenters, artists, wood carvers, granite carvers, and stonemasons. However, there are two groups in village Teripahe. They are blacksmiths and goldsmiths. The traditional occupation of blacksmiths consisted of manufacturing ploughs, knives, axes, mamotees, metal buckets, etc. For services, traditionally they used to claim paddy,
finger millets, corn, etc. But, today they charge money for their services. "This group is the smallest of the low castes and also the richest. It is distinguished by caste name, caste occupation, and personal names" (Yalman, 1960: 84). Now, there are only five Achari families (households) in the village. First family belongs to Arumanayide who is living in their ancestral house. Second belongs to Simanhami and he is the elder brother of Arumanayide living in the same compound but in a separate house. This house was the village weaving centre and he occupied it after the centre got defunct. Both of them are still engaged in their traditional occupation. Third family is engaged with goldsmith work in the village Teripahe. Fourth family is engaged with blacksmith work in Bolagandawela. I observed several villagers coming from main village to give them some orders. Fifth family is belonged to Hingappu. He was the richest Achari member of the village (Yalman, 1967: 70). Hingappu died intestate. His children failed to maintain good social and economic status like their father. Even, they have land disputes among them today. However, all these Achari members are very poor today and they are struggling to maintain their tradition because the younger generation is not showing any interest to learn their traditional occupation. Though the younger generation does not like to continue their traditional occupation, they are not serious even in formal education; even their parents are not able to stimulate them towards either end.

7.2.3 Kumbal Caste

Kumabal means the people who are working with finest clay and making pots, bricks, tiles, etc. They settled in the areas where finest clay is available for their work. The Kumbal (Potters) community is the smallest caste in the village
It was true of 1950s also. Yalman (1967: 71) explains:

The caste of Potters in Terutenne also consisted of a single family who were closely intermarried among themselves. They had apparently arrived in the village about forty years earlier, and had chosen Terutenne because there were no Potters in the near vicinity.

Today, there is one family of Kumbal caste living in their traditional place in the village. Some of them married other low caste members in the village and several of them migrated to various parts of the country. Their father (Kirinayide) was originally from Tissamaharamaya area in Southern province of Sri Lanka. He migrated to Walimada, a town close to Nuwara Eliya in Up Country and married Mañikhami. Then they migrated to village Teripahe in 1945 with several children. They had nine children but four of them died when they were infants. The second child of them – Selohami – married his cousin – Ranappu – and settled uxorilocally in the village. Her brothers and sisters migrated to other parts of the country. Selohami had ten children and five of them had died in their childhood. Other two sons had university education; one is working as a lawyer in Nuwara Eliya court and other son is a teacher. Elder daughter did not get better education and remained unmarried. Younger daughter passed advance level examination, and she is now working as a teacher. All of them are living in various parts of the country except the unmarried daughter. The lawyer is also unmarried and once in month he comes to see his mother and sister. Today, there is no any Kumbal member, engaged in traditional duty. However, the other caste members, especially the Goyigama members, address them as Valan Gedara (the House of Potters).

There was another Kumbal caste family that migrated to the village ten years back. They rented a small house in the centre of the village. It emphasises that there is an access in a village like Teripahe for service castes. But, they went back, because
there was not much business in the village. Today, the villagers have to buy and bring pots from Nildandahinne. However, the demand of pots is less, because most of villagers are using aluminium vessels.

7.2.4 Berava Caste

The Berava caste is the second largest caste group in village Teripahe. They have several traditional names like Berava, Beravayo and Nakathi. Berava is a short form of Beravayo. Bera means drums and vayo means players. The name Nakathi gives some other impression. That means, they are reading horoscopes and doing the necessary arrangements to save individuals from bad omen. However, they have different name, 'Badde.' They originally were settled in an unfertile jungle area of the village. This type of area is called Badda in Sinhala. After the gradual development of their settlement the area was named Baddegama. In Sinhala Gama means village.

Table 24: Berava Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>[Comments]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual festivals of the Devale: Ankeliya and Gam Maduwa. Vihara ceremonies: Annual Katina Pinkama (offering of new saffron robe to the priest); birthday of the Buddha [Vesak]. Others: Bana (preaching), Pirit (chanting).</td>
<td>[Religious work such as Bana (preaching), Pirit (chanting) in private houses.] Illnesses – ritual healing and exorcism</td>
<td>There are no more such occasions in village life today. The younger generation of Beravas are also not interested to learn their traditional practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>A few members of the community provide the ceremonial drumming during rituals. Also, all public announcements are made by drummers.</td>
<td>Act as dancers, exorcists, and astrologers.</td>
<td>They do not act as public announcers today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Payment by the Temple Society for Vihara service.</td>
<td>Payment (depending on status and wealth of patron), from Rs. 5 and above per night per Tom-Tom Beater.</td>
<td>Today they make contract according to the duty. For normal duty such as Bana, one charges Rs. 300.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* [ ] Contents in square brackets are mine.

Economically they were very poor and their housing condition was very low (thatched
houses). The area where Berava members live is called Baddegama. The history of village Teripahe indicates that Berava members' ancestors were settled in Ankelipitiya hamlet of Helagama GND (for more details, see Chapter Five). All these names and meanings imply that they are doing several social activities in the village life.

The traditional role of Berava caste is two-fold: one is public and another is private. The service of Beravas is very essential in social and cultural events in the rural life of Sri Lanka. Their services are listed in table 24.

Several duties such as An-keliya are not observed since 1945 in the village. Therefore, their traditional duties are restricted to certain functions only today. Especially, with the development of modern health services, there is substantial reduction in exorcisms in the village. There was a young villager who had fever, vomiting and symptoms of mental imbalance in Hingurewela hamlet. They had many rituals and exorcism around four or five days, but finally they took him to the dispensary in the village. The doctor gave primary treatment for dehydration and sent him to the Nuwara Eliya general hospital by ambulance. When villagers get these kinds of experiences, it is natural that their belief on this kind of traditional treatments will diminish.

"The total Badde community was very highly intermarried within itself. Cross-cousin marriage was the rule, as among the high caste. When directly asked, most persons would say that all the Tom-Tom Beaters were 'one people' (eka Minissu)" (ibid: 63). Actually, Berava community has internal differentiation than any other caste. But these internal differentiations are not like Goyigama caste's internal hierarchy. The internal differentiations among Beravas are basically based on their...
traditional tasks. There are three pedigrees among the Berava caste in the village. They are: Vidyarathna Ganithayalage Ganithe Gedara, Tharukarathna Ganithayalage and Jothirathna Ganithayalage. These three pedigrees settled initially in the village Teripahe. They are specialists in many ways in their traditional duty. Vidyarathna Ganithayalage Ganithe Gedara pedigree is professional group in astrology, auyrvedic medicine, drumming, Bali exorcism and Kandyan dance. Tharukarathna Ganithayalage and Jothirathna Ganithayalage pedigrees are experts in astrology. Vidyarathna Ganithayalage Ganithe Gedara pedigree members performed their dance and drumming in Nuwara Dalada Perahara (annual procession of Lord Buddha’s Tooth relic in Kandy), most prestigious and sacred procession of Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

There are three Art Institutions for Kandyan dance and drum in the village. The professional jealousy caused the creation of these three separate institutions. Astrology, medicine, dance and drumming are prestigious activities and not considered polluted. The exception is funeral drumming. One family of Vidyarathna Ganithayalage Ganithe Gedara pedigree had performed this polluted duty. This family is named Gonnagahawatte Gedara. They had settled far away from the other Berava community in the village. They never took their drums inside the house. It was hung outside the wall of their house.

However, they are not practising funeral drumming now. The main reason for this is that one of his sons, G. G. Nandina became a politician in 1970s. He attended 7th standard at school and became a paddy cultivator. Later, he started tobacco cultivation and through the success of tobacco cultivation he became a landowner. As a politician he uses another name – Nandasena caste-free name. He as the SLFP
candidate contested *Pradeshiya Saba* election of 1997. He was elected as eleventh member of *Pradeshiya Saba*. He was supported by the Berava villages in Walapane area. His wife also changed the name – Bebei to Mala. Whenever there is a common meeting he is invited to deliver a talk. The equalisation with others is necessary for party politics as well as intercaste relationships. There was funeral of an army soldier in Mallagama GND of village Teripahe who was in battlefield in Jaffna where the terrorist problem exists. Nandasena had delivered a very patriotic speech before the gathering on the funeral day and the participants from all castes listened him very attentively.

As a result of these changes among the Gonnagahawatte Gedara family, they have gained access in the main Baddegama area. Earlier, they were settled in a corner of the village. Today, there are several Gonnagahawatte Gedara members in the main residential area of Berava caste including Nandasena’s family.

There are three main middle names (used in between surname and name) commonly used among the Berava caste members in village Teripahe. These subtitles are based on two paddy fields in the middle of their residence. When there is rain these two paddy fields get covered with water and it looks like *Vewa* or reservoir. One paddy field in the middle is called Madavewa and the family near the *Vewa* adopted the name ‘Medavewa Gedara’ (middle reservoir house). The paddy field above the Medavewa is named Udavewa and the family near it adopted the name ‘Udavewa Gedara’ (upper reservoir house). The family in between Medavewa and Udavewa adopted the name ‘Meda Gedara’ (middle house). Those who are descending from these three families use their Gedara names. Many of them are not using their surname for general purposes as well as for official work like voter’s register of
respective GNDs. The adoption of Gedara name is acquisition of Goyigama caste status. They have their Gedara name with Surname. But, Berava members are using Gedara name because if they use it with surname, anybody can easily identify their caste. However, they do not give traditional names for the new generation. I shall discuss the changes in low caste names at another part of this chapter (section 7.5).

The Berava caste members are famous in keeping secret liaisons with upper caste members in the village Teripahe. Yalman (1967: 64) describes the situation of 1950s.

As in every Kandyan community, there were certain transgressions of the rules of caste endogamy in Baddegama. Certain liaisons between Tom-Tom Beater women and high-caste men were public knowledge, and there was a single case of a ‘marriage’ between members of two different low castes. The liaisons between men of high caste and women of low caste were considered improper but not intolerable. Indeed, young men of the high caste looked upon the women of the low caste as fair game, and as long as nothing permanent developed, the families of men would wink at the matter...The Village Headman, who was married to the daughter of the former Village Headman and had extremely important kinship ties through this connection, had kept a mistress in Baddegama for many years. He did not, of course, reside in her house, and he would visit her very pointedly after mealtimes, in order to indicate that he did not ‘eat’ with her.

The Village Headman – Agalakumbura – maintained this connection until his death in 1971. He had given 2.5 acres of paddy lands to her. She had two children from him. Now these two children are not living in the village after the death of their mother. Many villagers insulted them. The Village Headman’s son, Piyasinha also had secret connections with Goyigama women. However, his daughter who married shopkeeper, Kirthi, had casual connection with a Berava member and simultaneously kept long term secret connection with Goyigama member also in the village.

T. P. R. Nissanka, the Chairman of the Village Council, was very concerned with caste etiquette in the village. One day a Berava member went in front of his house to find out his misplaced cow, wearing sarong folded above the knee. The
Chairmen addressed him “Ado Beravaya Sarama Pahalata Dala Pala, Geval Langin Yanna Danne Nadda” (Hey Pariah – Beravaya – pull down your sarong and go, don’t you know how to go in front of houses). The Berava member’s sarong was damaged and it was difficult to dress as usual, and so he folded his sarong. The incident was reported to his father and the father went in front of Chairman’s house with the damaged sarong, tied up at the edge of a stick. He shouted at him explaining the reason, and held the stick with sarong on the fence.

The Chairman’s younger son had a love affair with Berava girl when this incident occurred. Then a group of Berava men planned to catch him in the girl’s room when he came to see her. One day they caught him as planned and sent a message to Chairman that his son had been caught in such a situation and that he could come to take him back. Chairman and his elder son came to see him. The Village Headman’s son, Piyasinha Agalakumbura insisted upon the Berava men to register the marriage, as he wanted to disgrace them on political grounds. The group planned to register the marriage but girl’s father did not agree. The following day morning they released him and the children followed him accompanied with a big noise made from coconut shells. Later, the incident was published in a newspaper. The girl’s father could understand the social, cultural and ritualistic gap between two castes and then he did not agree to get the marriage registered.

There is a hunter from Goyigama caste who has several secret connections with Berava community women. When the women’s husbands go to paddy field in Bolagandawela, he visits them. Few young Goyigama members told me the Berava girls and women are attempting to trap them when they are passing the Badde area while going to Bolagandawela field. The way to Bolagandawela is through the main
Berava caste residential area. The young Goyigama members are afraid to develop connection, because they suspect that it might end in marriage with them. There is a bus conductor, Odiris, who belongs to Berava caste, keeping two wives of same caste in the village. Both wives are living in separate houses at a certain distance and he is visiting both of them daily. He has children from both wives and all children and wives are visiting each other. He is practising polygyny without any conflict so far.

7.2.5 Hena Caste

The Hena (Washermen) are the most important low caste community whose services are considered essential. “The function of the Washermen caste is to turn pollution into purity. For this reason they are needed at all ritual occasions in the Kandyan village” (1967: 68). Their services are expected in all rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage, death and other ceremonies in the village life. The services of Hena caste are summarised in table 25.

When they supply clean cloths for marriage ceremony, they are getting rewards (Panduru) in several steps of the ceremony. These rewards are besides the main payment. There are very important functions like spreading a white cloth (Pawadaya) at the main entrance of both bride’s and groom’s houses by a Hena member. In each place, the new kinsmen put reward (usually money) to the cloth and Hena member collects it. If he is not satisfied with the amount, he can ask more without folding the cloth. When there is a puberty ceremony, Hena Woman should participate to bathe the girl on the auspicious day. After the bath Hena woman gives her clean white cloth to wear before taking her inside the girl’s house. The cloths and jewellery worn when the girl attains puberty is removed on this occasion, and those
entire things become Hena woman’s property. Then, the parents offer new clothes to their daughter, and Hena woman’s cloth is given back along with reward. Some Hena members bargain for their payments, and some of them do not on such occasions.

Table 25: *Hena Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>[Comments]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devale: Ankeiya and Gam Maduva. Vihara ceremonies: Annual Katina Pinkama (offering of new saffron robe to the priest); birthday of the Buddha [Vesak]. Others: Bana (preaching), Pirit (chanting).</td>
<td>Annual festivals of the Devale: Ankeiya and Gam Maduva.</td>
<td>All rites of passage: birth, female puberty, marriage, death, [and Bana and Pirit occasions].</td>
<td>There is no much change in public occasions, but there is substantial change in private occasions. Especially, many Hena members are not doing their general laundry services today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>On all these occasions, Hena provide ‘clean’ (ritually pure) cloths to decorate the temples. They make effigies of goddesses from starched white sheets for Gam Maduva.</td>
<td>The nature of the service is to change ‘polluted’ cloths into ‘pure’ ones. They wash polluted persons [puberty girls] as well.</td>
<td>Especially, the private duties of Hena caste such as birth, puberty and marriage are replaced by modern activities. Today, they go to the dispensary for childbirth. Puberty and marriage rituals are done by family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Payments by the Temple Society</td>
<td>Payments from Rs. 2 up, depending on the status and wealth of the patron.</td>
<td>Today, they are getting around Rs. 600 from Dana (alms giving to Buddhist monks) or Pirit ceremony, and more from marriage ceremony.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Contents in square brackets are mine.

Hena man is called *Hena Mama*, and Hena woman *Redi Nanda*. Some use the word *Nanda* only for Hena woman in Kandyan villages. It is a kinship term (Father’s sister or mother’s brother’s wife.) in the Low Country. Kandyan villagers call them mostly Nandamma (*Nanda* + *Amma* [mother] = *Nandamma*) instead of *Nanda*. *Hena Mama* participates in all public services in the village. *Redi Nanda* participates in rituals like births and puberty ceremonies, but *Hena Mama* also accompanies her in such occasions. In a busy day their children also go with them. If there are two ceremonies in the same day both husband and wife select the place each would visit according to the importance of the patron. Both of them participate in marriage...
ceremony, and there is a special custom that Redi Nanda should participate. This is the inspection of wedding couple’s first night white bed cloth by the elder women from both sides in the second day of ceremony. Redi Nanda represents as a member of community or society. However, it is confined to certain families only, especially wealthy families in Village Teripahe. This custom is very important in Low Country marriage ceremonies.

Most of the Hena community members are living in the Mallagama GND in village Teripahe. Each family has selected the area or village that they offer their services. Hena members give their service not only to the main village, but also to the neighbouring villages. However, many Hena members are not doing their general laundry services today. Their children are insisting them not to practise it. The children are educated, doing some other prestigious jobs like teaching, working in police and armed forces, etc. Many of the elder Hena members continue servicing and participating in rituals and ceremonies in their selected village or area. One Hena member, Suduhenaya, had to stop his general laundry services. One of his sons studied in advance level classes and deserted the school due to vulnerable economic situation of the family. Now he is working as a mason in Colombo and one day he came to see his parents with one of his friends. In that particular day, one Goyigama neighbour entered their compound addressing Redi Nanda. Therefore, the friend came to know their caste position, and the son got angry. Finally, the son destroyed the big vessel called Vella Haliya, used to boil polluted clothes. After the incident they stopped the general laundry services. This incident is a pointer to the conflicts of status and role and also the dysfunction of generation gap in rural society of Sri Lanka.
Most of the old Hena members are devoted to their religion – Buddhism. Some of them are holding prominent place in their temple. According to Yalman:

One of the Washermen in particular, Kiriunga, was fairly affluent by Terutenne standards; he owned five pāle of rice land. Still another, a young and intelligent man known as James, owned six pāle. Both these men had had much to do with the reconstruction of one of the temples [Maluwewoda Temple] in Terutenne... Kiriunga as a good Buddhist had undertaken to rebuild the temple and provide a living for a priest... It is noteworthy that although ‘the Benefactors’ Society of the temple included mostly Goyigama, James the Washerman had been elected as its president (1967: 69).

The devotee Kiriunga is no more, but Jamis (James) is leading the Washermen community today. Like in 1950s he is a religious man and all of them respect him. He knows astrology very well that he learnt from Low Country school headmaster (Coory) in 1940s in the village. He is doing several rituals and all rituals are related to on Lord Buddha’s Dhamma (Pirit). When I had severe knee pain during my fieldwork he treated me in that way. He is observing Sil on every Poya day (Full Moon Day) and cooperating with Goyigama members equally. They sit, observe and discuss Dhamma, having meals (Dāna) together in a same hall, and interact with monk without any caste discrimination. I had seen Jamis as a leading member who discusses many religious matters with other Upasaka and Upasika in temple Dhamma hall.

However, the question is why most of the low caste members are more religious than the upper caste Goyigamas. They believe in the Karma theory (though it is interpreted in another way)³ of Buddhism. Then, they always practise religious activities whenever they get chance in secular life (Weber, 1958: 336-337). This situation emphasises that the low caste members, especially elders are mentally suppressed with their low status and this mentality prompted them to religious life. In other words, with the experience of present life, especially as member of suppressed caste in the village, they want to avoid this situation in next life. In this sense, religion
became an instrument by providing manifest function to the villagers.

7.3 Changes in Caste Relationships

Conflicts can be identified at inter-caste and intra-caste levels in the rural society of Sri Lanka. It is important to mention here that the Rajakāriya System primarily and literally means service to the king; it is not dissimilar to corvee labour; this is also extended to cover services to noblemen, a Vihara (temple) or Devale (shrine) by tenants occupying their service and lands. This system was abolished on 12 April 1832 by the British. It was the first landmark step against caste system from the side of colonial administration in Sri Lanka. As discussed in Chapter Three, there were several infrastructural reforms such as land reforms, social welfare, political reforms and administrative reforms before as well as after the independence of the country. These reforms were the second landmark. Especially, the social welfare policy has effected changes in the social, cultural, attitudinal and political background of Sri Lanka.

Education was another tool used. Most of the rural members had been mobilized through education. Education played a prominent role in village Teripahe. Many Goyigama members got educated and employed in various sectors. They now hold white-collar jobs such as university lecturers, principals in senior and junior schools, teachers, Grama Niladari, bank officers, etc. Low caste members also hold such white-collar jobs like government administrative officer, Grama Niladari, teachers, lawyer, etc. There are two university lecturers who grew up in village Teripahe. Their father was a Low Country settler. Their mother belonged to Kandyan Goyigama caste and she was a teacher in a school. The siblings of their mother are
educated well and most of them are doing teaching in various parts of the country. Their grandfather (Treasurer of TTCCS) was a principal in the village school. Their grandmother was also a teacher in the village school. The lecturers attended school in the village and Nildandahinne town. Later, their parents migrated to Kandy with them. The two lecturers are settled in Colombo now. Most probably, they will not come back to the village Teripahe.

Compared to Goyigama caste, low caste members occupy very important positions. There is a Berava caste member who works as an additional secretary in a most important ministry in the country. He attended his preliminary classes in village school. They could not sit in a desk in the classroom because of their low status. They sat on the floor when Goyigama classmates were sitting on chairs. However, the Berava member got through the scholarship in class five and got admission in the central college in Hanguranketha (Poramadulla Central College). He had English medium education and entered the University of Peradeniya in Kandy. He was employed as a teacher in Nuwara Eliya district after the university education. When he was teaching, the Goyigama caste Members informed the other staff members of the school that he is a Berava caste member. Then he had to face many difficulties from the staff members and even from students. He was transferred to another school where also he had same experience. In the meantime he got through the Ceylon Administrative Service examination and was appointed as an Assistant Government Agent (AGA) in Maturata AGA division. There also he faced same experience because Goyigama members had informed the office about his caste status through Village Headmen. However, he did not suffer much as he had as a teacher. Now he is in a higher position and ordinary Goyigamas could not do anything. Later, he became
Government Agent in various districts and when he was working in Kandy district he visited village Teripahe and spoke to the villagers. But they did not respond to him regarding village development efforts. These unpleasant experiences have kept him away from the village affairs. Now he is settled in Colombo and visits the village once a year. He has a plot of paddy land (one acre) in Bolagandawela field. Why is he holding a paddy land in his village? Does he have nostalgia of village life? Does he want to keep his identity? He told me that there are many low caste people who migrated from village Teripahe, and never mentioned about village origin because of the fear caste discriminations. He keeps the land as a symbol of his past experience. He is the ideal and successful person for the Berava people in the village. Several Goyigama members divulge his village identity and his real name when they discuss about his success. This emphasises that caste status is still valid and predominant in village life. The achieved status of a low caste member cannot completely eradicate this low-ascribed status. But there are some avenues for low caste members to overcome such parochial disadvantages and to move in the modern Sri Lankan society. Otherwise, it is difficult to achieve such status for a Berava caste member in rural society of Sri Lanka.

7.3.1 Caste Conflicts

The caste relations in Teripahe have changed today. Now, there are equal opportunities to students of all caste groups who study in Maha Vidyalaya (school). The Berava caste students are the second largest caste in the village studying competitively today. When the principal and his staff select the head prefects, one post is reserved for a Berava caste student. If they do not get an opportunity, they
fight for it. In the Literature Society of school one post is reserved for them. Conflicts occur between Goyigama and Berava students in the village at times. Goyigama students joke the Berava counterparts by calling nicknames or singing disgraced songs. Despite all these, many of them are studying in Nildandahinne national school and Walapane central school. However, it is clear that the Berava members constitute a competitive community.

A similar situation can be observed in Daham Pasala (Sunday school) at Wekumbura temple. When the Daham Pasala started the principal monk had selected one teacher from Berava community also. Today there are three teachers from them. There is a nursery school in Wekumbura temple. The nursery started very recently. Each family that sends children are giving breakfast daily; these Berava and other low caste families are also distributing food on their days. So far, no problem cropped up. On the one hand, when they are working competitively the caste consciousness is revitalised in the village life. On the other hand, dominant caste always has to mind about the low caste communities when they are going to do any kind of common function in the village.

The caste system has changed now and caste conflicts have mounted in the recent past in village Teripahe. Reverend Thibbotugoda Darmarama, second to incumbent priest of Wekumbura temple and vice principal of Maha Vidyalaya, believes that the power equilibrium among castes has changed after the tobacco cultivation and politicisation of the villagers. Especially, Berava members had also started tobacco cultivation; they got tobacco barns, and became active in politics. The changes of economic and political status created a bargaining power for low caste members, especially among the Berava caste members.
There was conflict between a Berava family and Grama Niladari of Bolagandawela GND at the beginning of 1999. On the day of this conflict, village bus had skidded off from the road into a steep area just before the Beddegama area of village. Then the driver, passengers and Grama Niladari tied up the bus to a tree cross the road by cable until engineering service reached there. Meanwhile, Siman’s son (a Berava) who is a soldier of Sri Lankan Army came with his several friends by a van from Colombo. When they reached the place of bus accident, the driver and Grama Niladari were not there, as they went to take bath. The group who came by a van released the cable and entered the village in van. When the bus driver and Grama Niladari got the news, they came there and inquired about it. Army soldiers and Siman had arrack at the moment and both sides quarrelled on the issue of cable. Siman’s argument was that his son came after a long time from the battlefield in Jaffna with his friends and they wanted to take their van. The Grama Niladari’s argument was if the bus had slipped further, the village would not have got bus service for few months; as the bus accident was in his GND, anybody cannot interfere with it without his permission. Grama Niladari belonged to Goyigama caste, and most of the Goyigama members in that area supported him. The Berava members supported Siman and his son. Finally the soldiers could not go back for several days until the bus was taken back to the road. They could not use the Teripahe Meeriyabadda road because of opposition from Goyigama members. The Grama Niladari justifies the case with his bureaucratic power and universal norms. The low Caste Berava members justify it in their own particularistic way. Though Siman’s son is a soldier the Grama Niladari did not adopt any sympathetic view on the incident.

A very serious conflict took place once between Berava and Goyigama castes
in 1999 that ended in violence. It was the Sinhala and Hindu New Year day (April 13) and one Goyigama person who came to visit their relatives in the village went to buy a cigarette from a shop owned by a Berava. The shop was closed because it was inauspicious time of the New Year. Then he moved to another shop owned by another Berava member and he brought cigarette. However, several Berava members who stood near the shop had used some sarcastic words against him, and he complained the incident to their relatives. They were a prestigious and politically motivated family in the village. Their father was a Village Headman from 1926 to 1956. All of them started fighting with the Berava group in the market area of Berava caste. The Berava Pradeshiya Saba member led their side. Both sides used swords, knives, stones, etc. Goyigama members were injured seriously and even the school buildings also got damaged in the fight. Finally the Beravas did not allow to take the injured people to the Nildandahinne hospital, as the main road access was through Baddegama, the area where Berava people live in the village. Then several neutral villagers intervened and made agreement to dispatch patients to the hospital. The Goyigama members made complaint to Walapane police which arrested miscreants. Pradeshiya Saba member went underground. Later, Goyigama members in Udamadura village retaliated those Berava members who were involved when the village bus went through their village. However, the conflict did not continue further. The police post started during JVP insurrection in 1988/89 was reopened. The police post remains even now.

The Berava caste members are vigilant about their representation in all social activities taking place in the village. When there is a ceremony in the temple (Wekumbura temple), they are expecting their representation as do the Goyigama
caste members. As a consequence of this the Temple Society had divided the village territory of temple into six divisions. Baddegama area is one division, and then this division gets responsibility and participation for each function in the temple. Some ceremonies are organised for seven days. Each day is allocated for each division, and the seventh day is for all divisions. The day of Baddegama is very colourful because they are performing their traditional dances and drumming in the temple ground. The day is popular among the other castes. Berava representation is accepted by the temple authority as well as other caste communities in the village. That is why the Temple Society is following democratic policy on temple matters. However, something untoward happened once. One day, Berava Pradeshiya Saba member and a Goyigama Pradeshiya Saba member from a neighbouring village of Teripahe came to meet the incumbent of Wekumbura temple. The incumbent monk, pointing his finger to Goyigama member mentioned, “This is our person.” Then Berava Pradeshiya Saba member got embarrassed by this reflex and quarrelled with the monk and assured him that they are initiating a new temple for them. All these are instances of simmering caste tensions that symbolised the deep social divide that is not yet over.

There is certain caste etiquette when low caste person contacts or enters the Goyigama member’s house in the rural society of Sri Lanka. The caste etiquette was very strict in village Teripahe (Yalman, 1967: 90-95). When low caste persons enter the Goyigama house, there was a low height stool called kolombuwa from for them. There are several Goyigama houses where this kolombuwa is found. Some low caste members do not enter their houses and they like to communicate standing at the doorstep. The low caste member can eat from upper caste house but upper caste members can not eat and sit in low caste house. Yalman (1967: 93) explains the
situation as follows:

Ideally, there should be no give and take of food or [and] women between castes (maximum separation and distance). When there is give-and-take, it must be asymmetrical as follows: (a) Low-caste persons may take and eat cooked food offered by the high caste, but not vice versa, and (b) Low-caste women may have sexual intercourse with high-caste men, but high-caste women are prohibited to low-caste men.

This situation has started changing in village Teripahe. However, some of the villagers still are interested in maintaining the caste etiquette in village life. One day I went to meet a Berava member (Siman) with one research assistant in the evening. When I came back my landlady asked, “Son, where did you go today evening?” Then I told her, “I went to meet Siman.” Immediately she asked again “Did they give tea for you?” I replied, “Yes.” Then she told me “They could have given drink taken from the shop.” Another day two university students came to meet me in our residential place. My landlady did not oppose it, but they sat with us with less confidence. My wife treated them with tea and they accepted it. The Goyigama farmers employ low caste members as coolie labourers who work in Bolagandawela field. When they are having food low caste members also take food with them in the field. But, in their houses it does not happen.

A group of villagers organised a pilgrimage to Katharagama – sacred ancient Buddhist temple and shrine in Southern Province of Sri Lanka – with low caste members. When they cooked food together several Goyigama members did not accept food, and they cooked separately. Some of Goyigama men can drink toddy together with low caste members but the same persons reject cooked food with them. It is difficult to understand how cooked food makes pollution. When I went to Berava dwelling in Bolagandawela paddy field with Berava and Goyigama members they offered milk for us. The Berava and Goyigama members are very good friends. The
dwelling belonged to son-in-law of Berava friend. Initially, the Berava member talked to Goyigama friend and he came to me and told: “They are preparing milk for us. Do you like to have it?” Then I replied, “Yes.” I decided it because I had ulcer in my mouth and milk is good to control body heat. When I came back with Goyigama friend I told him that I have ulcer in my mouth. Suddenly he replied, “We had milk from low caste place and that may be the reason for it.” Milk is very pure and auspicious thing in the rural society of Sri Lanka. But, if we drink it from low caste member it becomes a polluted thing for upper caste members. The food cooked by a low caste woman is polluted but sex with her is not polluted for upper caste members. The question is only ritual purity and pollution. It is merely a manifestation of social hierarchy in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Some of them take food without any problem of conscience. Such interdining will make new avenues for change in the situation. There are two Berava Grama Niladaris in village Teripahe. One of them works in Dulane GND. The Goyigama members are addressing him *Ralahamy* (Sir). Otherwise, they could face some negligence if they neglect him, because he represents official and achieved status.

7.3.2 Intercaste Marriage

There were very few cases of intercaste marriages in village Teripahe (ibid: 62-95). There was a strong attitude on endogamy, especially upper caste Goyigama members are always concerned about caste relationship in their marriages. However, the situation has changed rapidly when Low Countrymen were settled in the village. First, Karava caste school headmaster married Goyigama caste woman in neighbouring village and settled in village Teripahe. His father too did the same but it
is uxorilocal marriage in a neighbouring village. School headmaster’s daughter was married to Amunumulle Navaratna Mudiyanseilage Gunartna who claims aristocrat status in the village. Meanwhile, several other low countrymen migrated and settled. Before these developments in the village, there were no such trend to marry from other caste member; if they marry, they deserted their relatives and settled in another village of the region. After the Low Countrymen settled in the village, the trend to marry from another caste is on the rise. Comparatively, it is less between original castes in the village, but it is more between migrants who belong to Karava, Salagama and Durava (KSD). These castes are lower than the Goyigama, but higher than the other low castes in Village Teripahe. The process of Goyigamaisation led the KSD castes to marry from Goyigama members in the village. However, they did not marry other low caste members in the village. It emphasises that KSD communities also have caste conscience against other low castes in the rural society of Sri Lanka. They are interested in marrying from the Goyigama caste only. The present situation can be shown in table 26.

Table 26: Status of Intercaste Marriages in Village Teripahe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Intercaste</th>
<th>Dulane</th>
<th>Mallagama</th>
<th>Ambaguthenne</th>
<th>Helagama</th>
<th>Bolaganda wela</th>
<th>Hegasilla</th>
<th>Teripahe</th>
<th>Sub Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercaste marriages with Teripahe castes members</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercaste marriages with migrants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 1999

The figures show intercaste marriages with migrants are higher than the other category. However, these migrants are not only the ones who migrated in 1950s or before. There is substantial number of migrants who migrated very recently. After the economic liberalisation in 1977, hundreds of young women migrated to the Colombo
based Free Trade Zones (FTZ) and regional urban centres like Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. Some of them fell in love in these urban centres and got married; then they came back to the village with their husbands. I found many of them settled in Ambagahatenne and Bolagandawela GNDs. Several migrants belong to Goyigama caste. However, their social background is not clear. The intercaste marriages among village’s castes are very low in Helagama, Hegasulla and Dulane GNDs, dominated by upper hierarchy Goyigama caste. Helagama GND is the heartland of upper hierarchy Goyigama members and it is difficult to find migrants also in the centre of GND. The migrants of Helagama GND settled in its boundary to Ambagahatenne GND. After the latest reform of administration division (Grama Niladari Division), one congested area belonging to the centre of village (market area) was attached to the Helagama GND. Most of the KSD castes members who migrated in 1950s and before had been assimilated into the Goyigama caste (Goyigamaisation) in village Teripahe. These adjustments or flexibility had resulted in change of caste etiquette in the village. The Kumbal caste is numerically as well as socially not important today. Kumbal members are socially more mobile than the other low castes and some of them got absorbed into other castes in the village. The most educated and upward mobile man, the lawyer and one of his sisters are from the Kumbal caste and they are not married. Technically he can marry without much obligations. Does the caste status make barriers against his marriage?

The villagers who had intercaste marriages with low castes in the village are mostly from Mallagama, Ambagahatenne, Bolagandawela and Teripahe GNDs. These GNDs have many low caste families. Especially, the third hierarchy of Goyigama caste living in Mallagama GND had married low caste members in several GNDs of
7.3.3 Changes in Caste Names

Caste and its social and cultural background are symbolized by the vāsagama and personal names of the individuals of each caste. As discussed in Chapter Five (for more details, see table 18) each caste has distinct personal names, and the identity of respective caste is symbolized through these distinct names. However, after the Sawaw Basha policy and Sinhalese nationalism in 1956, many villagers used typical Buddhist and Sinhalese names for their children. Indeed, several of them started to change their names legally. The new trend affected initially the hinterland of urban centres of the country. I am a Sri Lankan born in early 1960s and my parents had given me Buddhist name. The same situation affected village Teripahe after a decade. When I examined villagers’ names carefully, I found that the change began in 1970s. In the mean time, the village economy and social attitudes had been changing with tobacco cultivation, a cash crop. Some of them changed their personal names. When we examine carefully, the modern name like Siripala Meda Vewa cannot exist or be used for a Berava caste person born in 1940s in a village like Teripahe. It could change Siripina to Siripala. The table 27 shows the manner of change of each community’s personal names in the village. It was not confined to low castes only. As mentioned above, the upper caste Goyigama members also changed their names. The main reason was the Buddhist nationalism in late 1950s. Most of the Buddhists gave names to their children that denote Lord Buddha’s personal qualities. Unlike the Low Country Buddhist, the Kandyans are proud about their tradition and then the upper Goyigamas changed or modified their names without any harm to the pedigree. They add these
new names with the aristocrat names such as Bandara. Moreover, the structure of personal names had changed in Teripahe as follows:

Table 27: *Cast-wise Change of Personal Names in Teripahe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>1970s and onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyigama</td>
<td>Banda, Bandara, Appu, Rala</td>
<td>Ajith Kumara, Gamini, Piyasiri, Indrarathna, Sampath, Dammika, Wimalaratne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achari</td>
<td>Heen Appo, Appo Naide, Mackappu, Naidehami, Aruma Naide, Jeewan Hami</td>
<td>Sumanaratna, Kumara, Bandula, Sarath Kumara, Ariyadasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berava</td>
<td>Nandina, Munissiriya, maddiliya, Pinsira, Ranbandiya, Siripina, Punchi Hatana</td>
<td>Nandasena, Samarapala, Mahinda, Priyanta, Jayanada, Siripala, Ajith Kumara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hena</td>
<td>Ranahenaya, Kirihenaya, Suduhenaya, Kudahenaya, Samel, Kirungahenaya</td>
<td>Ariyapala, Wimalasiri, Dayananda, Nandasena, Jayaratna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The names under 1950s columns are same as Table 18

However, low caste members adopted the common names, used by dominant caste – Goyigama. Therefore, it is difficult to identify their caste through personal names today. There is high similarity with these personal names in each caste. But, low caste members have to use their vāsagama. They cannot change the vāsagama without legal approval. Then many low caste members modified their vāsagama, names, and used the ones for general purposes. For instance, Berava members modified their names as follows: *Meda Vewa Gedara Senarath Meda Vewa, Uda Vewa Dedara Bandula Sri Vidyaratna*. Most of the Hena Caste members’ vāsagama is *Lanka Halu Gedara* and some members use their vāsagama as: *Lanka Gedara*, or
Lankage, a shortened form of vāsagama, used at the end of their personal names (Kamal Lankage, Samanthi Lankage, etc.). The change of caste names and modification of name and vāsagama structure are important channels of social change. It is a micro level modernization of village social life.

7.4 New Trends of Social Stratification

Caste system is changing in the village and is getting replaced by a new structure of stratification in rural society of Sri Lanka. It is clearly evident from the situation of village Teripahe. There are new trends in economic and social status of villagers in Teripahe. There are many villagers who are economically well off in every GND. The village shopkeepers, rice mill owners, vegetable cultivators, and other traders are rich. The government or private sector employees are another group. The labourers on the other hand, are poor. There is clear consciousness about rich and poor status in the village. If we refer somebody, the villagers categorically divide them either as rich or as poor people in the village. In this sense, there is possibility to stratify the villagers in economic status. The other vital factor is social status of villagers. There are several status groups in village Teripahe. They are Buddhist monks, politicians, indigenous doctors, teachers, Grama Niladaries, etc. These status groups cannot be defined in economic criterion alone. They have prestigious social background than the economic status in village life. Furthermore, there is the political stratification also. The villagers are politically polarised into the two main parties, UNP and SLFP. This is a common factor in the rural society of Sri Lanka (the political changes and political stratification in the village is described in Chapter Eight). However, the ruins of the caste system are prevalent in the village and its
influence will remain for another few decades in the rural life of Sri Lanka.

7.5 Chapter Summary

The social stratification in the rural society of Sri Lanka is based on a caste system, organised as occupational and ritual hierarchy. Caste system was very rigid in a village like Teripapa even in the recent past. The importance of caste system in the rural society of Sri Lanka had diminished for many reasons.

They were related to colonial administration as well as the reforms introduced after the independence. The social reforms in macro level affected the rural society of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the commercial cultivation of tobacco was the main reason that weakened the caste system in village Teripahe. The migration of KSD communities was a vital factor for change in the caste etiquette in village Teripahe. They have opened the caste barriers by acquisition of lands and marrying upper Goyigama members in the village.

There were many intercaste marriages in village Teripahe during the last 50 years, and intercaste marriage was precluded earlier in the village. Many low caste members are not practising their traditional duties today. The new generation of low castes has experienced upward mobility in the society. In the light of these changes, the caste system will not remain for long. However, the conflicts between Goyigama and Berava castes revitalised the caste consciousness in the village. Though there is such tension between upper caste and second largest caste in the village Teripahe, with the new dimensions of social stratification, the social equilibrium will be changed in village Teripahe. The economic status is more vital than the other factors such as traditional occupations, rituals and social status in the village.
End Notes:

1 *Gedara* name (house name) identified the common ancestor who had first settled in the village.

2 Each caste had traditional midwife women for their needs. *Goyigama* caste’s midwife woman lives in Helagama hamlet. She did not have any formal education. She learnt the job from one of other Goyigama women who had served the villagers. While she worked for her caste members, she did service to other caste members also. But they had to invite her and somebody should come to collect her. She did not accept meals or any other gift that were usually given by her caste members for her vital service. Likewise other castes also had traditional midwives in village Teripahe. Today, their service is replaced by the maternity ward in village dispensary. The dispensary was armed with maternity ward in 1981 and the dispensary acquired an ambulance in 1991.

3 The Buddhist theory of *Karma* explains that the person’s intention when the action takes place is the most important and deciding factor. If the intention is good or bad, the result is getting accordingly at the moment or at some other stage of life circle. But most of villagers believe that the power they got at their birth is the *Karma*. It gives a wrong interpretation of *Karma* as well as worldly or secular life. Then they always are thinking about next life and its satisfaction. For better life in next life they have to gain more merit in this life than the previous life they had. The ultimate result is no betterment in the present life for most of the people.

4 The soldiers gain good reputation in Sinhalese dominated areas despite the caste and other social-cultural factors in the rural society of Sri Lanka. Due to the terrorist problem in the country soldiers get good respect, and are considered ‘heroes.’