Chapter Four:

Development of Political Affiliation and Mediating Imperatives in Kurulubedde

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the development of political affiliation in Kurulubedde and its influence on the villagers from a historical perspective. As it was mentioned in the foregoing chapters, under the political transformation of 1931 which paved the way for outstanding distributive state penetration under the semi-autonomous government (State Council), universal suffrage was also granted to Sri Lanka. The granting of universal suffrage without considering property or literacy qualifications can be considered as one of the greatest factors which affected social change in rural society of Sri Lanka during the past decades in different ways. It laid the foundation not only for the political participation of the masses through the electoral system but also for the complex developments of ideas among the masses about the state and its role in local society as the distributor of its resources to the people. Because, as mentioned so far, the local political leaders who came to the State Council through the electoral political system since 1931 introduced the outstanding distributive welfare system in the country. However, until 1950s, politics and political affiliation was something distant and unknown to the lives of the villagers in the interior areas of the country. This situation was very specific to Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas as these areas were rarely
associated with the outstanding social transformation during colonial period. Accordingly, the significant turning point of the political dynamism in rural areas was marked by the popular electoral victory of Mahajana Eksath Peramune (MEP) led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1956 which emerged with the Sinhala nationalist ideology. This political backdrop was important for the rural society in Sri Lanka in several ways. In the first place, from this point, political power and the authority status in the village level changed significantly. Subsequently, from this point, politics, ‘dēshepalanaye’ in modern Sinhala, has become more popular among the masses, particularly for those who did not actively participate in politics earlier. This increasing popularity can be attributed to a series of steps the MEP government took in 1956 to empower the rural masses to ensure their active participation in the government machinery and development process. To achieve these desired goals, the MEP government established several statutory bodies at rural level. However, the influence of party political affiliation gradually became the basic ingredient of these rural level statutory bodies. This was mainly due to the fact that every successive government after 1956 has provided the institutional support to their rural level political cadres to handle state activities in the village areas within a politically biased background. Thus, influence of politics became very significant for handling state activities and dispensing the declining and limited state resources in the rural areas of the country.

In the view of these assumptions, the analysis in this chapter will first concentrate on the traditional political structure in Kurulubedde and the surrounding area from a historic orientation. More specifically, it is concerned with the political structure of the area before the arrival of new settlers to Kurulubedde. Second, the chapter will focus on
the emergence of new political affiliations in the village since mid 1950s against the traditional political power structure, authority position and political leaders of the area. As has been pointed out so far, the post independent Sri Lankan governments had already implemented a number of different developmental activities and socio-economic reforms in rural areas. And, those governments channeled various collective and individual state resources to rural areas. Many of these distributions had been channeled to the village areas through the different newly established and re-organized rural organizations. In this context, the third part of this chapter will discuss how politics has gradually become the means of handling these state resources in the village in a politically institutionalized manner. This was more so because, the growing proportion of these resources came to be means of individual rather than collective advantage. Accordingly, this part of the chapter will deal with these political developments with special reference to the period after 1970s, because, it was after 1970s that the politicization of the distributive mechanism of the state became more acute and more institutionalized. My discussion in this chapter will be more confined to the formation of the politicized society in Kurulubedde in the context of growing scarcity of state resources and opportunities in the village. This is followed by the conclusion of the chapter

4.2 Traditional political structure in Kurulubedde area

When I asked old villagers of Nelligahawile hamlet, “how was politics during the past?” they told me, “those days, Kōrale Mahatmayā or Ārāchchi asked us to vote for someone.” When I asked the same question from one politically active old villager named Adikari of Aluthwatte, he told me, “when we came here, political influence of
Korale Mahatmaya was immense. But, we changed the situation.” These two remarks are evidence for the traditional political structure and significant political transformation of the rural areas of the country which occurred during the mid twentieth century.

When the universal suffrage was introduced in 1931, there were no political parties in the country. As the agitations for constitutional reforms during early twentieth century were mostly confined to urban and sub-urban areas and some elite social strata, ordinary people of interior parts like Kurulubedde did not get many chances to be part of the newly introduced electoral politics. In this context, the control of the electoral politics in rural areas remained firmly in the hands of some established elites like Korale Mahatmaya (the chief headman of Koralaya), Ārāchchi (village headman) who had been the essential part of the colonial administration. During the colonial administration, they had become very authoritative, particularly, in the areas which were far away from the outstanding socio-economic and political changes of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They had controlled the relations between the mighty colonial administration and rural masses. Consequently, when political changes started in the country since 1930s, the influence of these native chieftains became very significant.

This situation was more particular in the villages like Kurulubedde which was located in the remote dry zone hinterland. As I explained in chapter three, Kurulubedde area had not been a part of the capitalist plantation economy until 1950s. Therefore, the influence of native chieftains of colonial administration in this area was very high. To understand the influence of the above-mentioned native chieftains on the electoral political structure and its transformation in Kurulubedde, it is therefore necessary to have an understanding of the period under British colonial administration.
4.2.1 Role of native chieftains in rural society

Although the British colonial government implemented a number of steps that led to drastic social and economic transformations in the island since mid nineteenth century, they pursued a policy of indirect rule in the country until 1930s. They maintained this indirect ruling system through the native chieftains who had been appointed in the mid nineteenth century. Among these native chieftains, the immediately answerable native chief to GA (Government Agent) or AGA (Assistant Government Agent) was called Mudaliyār in the Low Country and Tamil areas and Rate Mahatmayā in the Kandyan areas. As already pointed out in chapter three, there were traditional Sri Lankan administrative units called Pattus or Kōrales and village headmen divisions below the AGA divisions. The lesser hierarchy of native chieftains consisted of village headmen at the lowest level who were in charge of village, and superior headmen Vīdāne Ārāchchi or Kōralas who were in charge of groups of village headmen’s divisions within a Pattu or Kōrale (six to seven headmen divisions) (Silva, 1973a). The functions of these lower level native chieftains were to collect revenue from the peasantry and maintain the civil administration and justice among them. They also were the local intermediates between the high level officers of colonial administration and the natives. However, these appointed native chieftains were not salaried. They were expected to find their own income. Therefore, these officials were selected among the individuals who had property qualification and social standing in their respective areas. Therefore, many of these native officials of colonial administration scarcely differed from the traditional feudal landowner chieftain families of the country. Holding of these posts had been expected as honorary. During the colonial regime, these native
chieftains possessed more power in rural areas because it is they who represented the mighty colonial state at the village level.

Since 1870s, the influence of these native chieftains on the peasantry further increased. Because, from this point, the British decided to depart from the native affairs like control of cultivation, facilitation for irrigation, and other rural affairs. And, the British decided to give those responsibilities to the village committees. In this context, in 1871, the British colonial regime enacted the “Village Committee Ordinance” to initiate the village communal self-government (‘gamsabawe’). These village committees were established to include ten-village headmen divisions. Members for this committee consisted of the principal landowners in the area. Rate Mahatmaya, the native chief of native chieftains of the district became the ex-officio chairman of the village committees of the concerned district. And, these village committees had been expected to manage local affairs of the concerned area like constructions and maintenance of village paths, provision of education, handling of the minor level civil and criminal offence within the village (Silva, 1973a: 219-220). However, the implementation of the village committee system gave more powers to the hands of the native chieftains in rural areas. Because, there was no condition in “The Village Committees Ordinance” in 1871 for debarring the native chieftains like Korale Mahatmaya and village headman becoming members of the village committee. As I mentioned above, one of the basic qualifications for the appointment of native chieftains of the colonial administration was the ownership of the property. Accordingly, without doubt, these local level native chieftains became the members of the village committees because mostly they were the propertied people in rural areas. And, their position as part of the mighty colonial
administration in concerned village committee areas helped them to be members of the village committee easily. Consequently, the affairs of the village committees had been taken over by the native chieftains like Korale Mahatmaya (the chief headman of Kōralaya), Ārāchchi (village headman). In this context, when the outstanding social and economic changes were initiated in the country under the State Council in 1931, the role of the native chieftains like Korale Mahatmaya and village headman in the dry zone village like Kurulubede became very dominant.

In this backdrop, Korale Mahatmaya of Kumarawanni pattu remained as the most influential native chieftain in Kurulubede area till 1945. He resided in Bamunugame which was located about two miles southeast of Kurulubede village. He had done the general supervision of six village headman divisions which were under him including Nagawewe village headman division under which Kurulubede area came. Korale Mahatmaya, an intervening officer between village headmen and the high administrative officials (GA, AGA and Rate Mahatmaya of the district), carried out the influential duty of appraising the value of forestlands which were cleared for chena cultivation in this area during this time. Generally, the chena permits were issued by the village headman under the instruction of GA or AGA of the district. But, this process was particularly examined by GA or AGA through Korale Mahatmaya. Due to this situation, the influence of Korale Mahatmaya in Kurulubede and surrounding areas arose.

A commission, which was appointed in 1935 to study the native chieftain system recommended that posts of Rate Mahatmaya and Korale Mahatmaya should be replaced by qualified civil administrative officers as above native chieftains were not suitable for
modern social and political conditions. Under the recommendation of this commission, post of village headman became a salaried post. The recommendations were carried out in 1939 (Perera, 1985: 73). However, the incumbent Rate Mahatmayas and Korale Mahatmayas were allowed to function until they retired. Therefore, Korale Mahatmaya of Kumarawanni pattu held his post until 1945. Although Korale Mahatmaya retired from the post in 1945, his influence on the political arena in this area still remained as he had engaged in local politics in the area even after his retirement.

Under the State Council, in 1932, the village committee system called gamsabawe (rural self-government) was re-structured giving those gamsabawe’s more power to hold property, to impose taxes and make by-laws. Later, a number of amending orders were passed by the State Council to widen the powers of the village committees (Warnapala, 1973: 426). Particularly, since 1940s, the State Council concentrated on establishing new village committees in rural areas. Members for these village committees had been elected through the electoral wards. Accordingly, Serumaduwe village committee was established in 1946 containing thirteen village headman divisions. After his retirement, Korale Mahatmaya contested the Serumaduwe village council from the village council constituency of Nagawewe. There was no rival candidate for him in that year. After that, he was elected as the chairmen of Serumaduwe village committee. He held this post until 1964. Due to this situation, the influence of Korale Mahatmaya persisted in Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas even after his retirement from the post.

Under the colonial administration, influence of village headman was also immense. During the colonial administration, the village headman was responsible for the civil
administration purposes like keeping the registers of births, marriages and deaths, to settle the disputes among the villagers and to represent the village to the outside world. Until mid 1940s, the village headman had another particular and significant duty: to issue the permits for the chena cultivation. When the government started to distribute state lands to landless people after 1935, he played a very influential role selecting allottees for the state lands. This post became a salaried post since 1939. During this time, there were several scattered villages under the one-village-headman division. In 1950s, along with Kurulubedde, there were another five villages under Nagawewe headman division. However, influence of headman to the Kurulubedde area was marginal as the Korale Mahatmaya resided in nearby village.

In this context, the most influential person in the area those days was Korale Mahatmaya. His influence on this area had grown due to another reason. That was his lineage relation with some other minor native officials in the area. Korale Mahatmaya had a close kin relation with a headman of Mohoriya headman division which was under Korale Mahatmaya's supervision. The headman of Mohoriya headman division was the younger brother of the Korale Mahatmaya's wife. Except that, the Vel Vidane, (irrigation headman) of Nagawewe headman division was also a kin of Korale Mahatmaya. Vel Vidane was resided in Nagawewe village itself. During this time, the principle duty of the Vel Vidane was the control of the paddy cultivation in the village and fair distribution of water from the village tank to paddy cultivation. However, the duties of Vel Vidane in Kurulubedde area were limited due to erratic and limited paddy cultivation. However, as a native official chieftain, his relationship was also helpful for
the power and authority of the Korale Mahatmaya and the village headman over Kurulubedde and surrounding area.

4.2.2 Influence of native leaders on electoral politics

In this context, when Kurulubedde opened to the wider political arena after 1931, the dominant force of Korale Mahatmaya and his group in Kurulubedde and surrounding areas had been able to control the regional political structure significantly. However, more information about the influence of this group on electoral politics in this area from 1931 to 1947 could not be gathered as old villagers could not sufficiently remember the events of this period. When the electoral politics established in 1931, the constituency to which Kurulubedde belonged was one of the biggest constituencies of the country containing a large part of present Puttalam district and a considerable part of the present Kurunagale district. From 1931 to 1947, two persons represented this constituency. From 1931 to 1936, a landowner who owned big coconut plantations in Kurunagale district represented the constituency for the state council. From 1936 to 1947, a retired Rate Mahatmaya of Kurunagale district represented the constituency for the State Council (Piyasena, 1967). For parliamentary election of 1947, a stepson of the same Rate Mahatmaya contested under the United National Party (UNP), which was established in the last phase of the colonial regime (in 1946). According to the old villagers of the area, the dominant power of Korale Mahatmaya and his group significantly affected the victory of the UNP candidate of this constituency during that period. One old villager of Nelligahawile who had shifted from Kandulassegode to Nelligahawile in 1942 told me,
Those days, we had no understanding of politics or election. One day, there was election meeting in Bamunugame. We went there. That day, Korale Mahatmaya of Bamunugame came with the stepson of retired Rate Mahatmaya of Nikewaratiye. Then Korale Mahatmaya told that the stepson of the Rate Mahatmaya is contesting the election this time as UNP candidate. He said, "you got land in Nelligahawile because D.S. Senanayake, the UNP leader implemented land distribution program. Therefore, you should vote UNP candidate to continue those works." Actually, we suffered much before we settled in Nelligahawile. So, we voted the UNP candidate.

In that election the stepson of the Rate Mahatmaya had won. In the next election in 1952, he had been elected again. The Korale Mahatmaya had helped him that time too. This situation enhanced the political power of the Korale Mahatmaya and his group in the area further. A good example could be identified in this regard. In 1952, the Vel Vidane post of Nagawewe was vacant due to the death of the Vel Vidane. As I mentioned above, the late Vel Vidane was a relative of the Korale Mahatmaya. Generally, when this post became vacant, the village headman called a meeting of all the paddy landowners of the Vel Vidane division at the presence of Divisional Revenue Officer (DRO). And, the paddy cultivators elected one skillful paddy landowner as the Vel Vidane. On this occasion, the Korale Mahatmaya and the village headman wanted to elect the son-in-law of the late Vel Vidane for the post. That time, he was only twenty-three years old. Therefore, many paddy cultivators were not willing to elect the son-in-law of the late Vel Vidane as he was too young and not having good skills for the Vel Vidane post. However, the Korale Mahatmaya and the village headman strongly requested that they appoint the son-in-law of the deceased Vel Vidane as the new Vel Vidane of the area. And they succeeded. I met this Vel Vidane in his house during my stay in the village. When I met him, he was seventy-seven years old. He told me, "those days, there was no one against us. Therefore, though there was an opposition against me, I was appointed as the Vel Vidane of Nagawewe headman division."
4.3 Emergence of new political alliances

The political structure of Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas radically changed since mid 1950s. As we have seen in chapter two, the regime that came to power in the aftermath of the independence did not represent all segments of the people. It was solidly based on a dependant bourgeoisie who were privileged under the colonial social and economic transformations (see chap. two, pp. 82-3). On the other hand, although the government had followed land distribution, free education, health-care facilitation etc, the first post-independent government of Sri Lanka continued the British colonial government’s policy of indirect rule. Accordingly, the village headmen were expected to maintain the order in their villages and manage the services or funds of the government. The government did not interfere much in the internal affairs of the villages (Robinson, 1975: 2). However, since early 20th Century, Sinhala Buddhist majority, particularly, Sinhala nationalist forces including the vernacular language oriented intelligentsia, rural level non-official middle class were waiting for the rehabilitation of Sinhala language, culture and religion. Independence did not mark a major breakthrough for them. The UNP did not have direct links with them and, therefore, they continued to be in a position of socio-political isolation. Within this situation, those groups themselves felt that they had become second-class citizens even after Sri Lanka became an independent state in 1948. Thus, since the very beginning of independence, there were criticisms and slogans against the UNP, the ruling party since independence till 1956.

However, the victory of the MEP in 1956 led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party – SLFP) ended the policy of indirect rule which was initiated
by the colonial masters and continued by the UNP during the first nine years tenure from Sri Lanka’s independence. The defeat of UNP in 1956 which was at the helm of the political power after independence was a beginning of great political transformation of rural areas. This situation provided opportunities for the articulation of popular demands of Sinhala nationalist force, and created and fostered a continuing political dialogue and encouraged the mass mobilization of political interests.

4.3.1 Change of political alliances in Kurulubedde after 1956

As it happened at national level, the dominant political force of Korale Mahatmaya and his group in Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas changed since mid 1950s. The arrival of the new settlers to Aluthwatte affected the emergence of new political alliances in Kurulubedde against Korale Mahatmaya and other established political elites. Many of the new settlers of Aluthwatte came from the densely populated intermediate areas of Chilaw district as well as of Kurunagale district. Unlike Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas, those areas were connected with the outstanding social, economic and political changes of the twentieth century. Particularly, the intermediate areas of Chilaw and Kurunagale district were subjected to the large-scale commercial coconut cultivation which was started during the end of nineteenth century and early twentieth century by the newly emerging westernized local elite groups. This large-scale coconut cultivation had led to the emergence of a large-scale landless population in those areas (see, chap three; p. 171). However, this plantation economy exposed these areas to the outside world. Therefore, unlike Kurulubedde area, the people of these areas were exposed to the social and political changes of the twentieth century. In this context, a considerable number of settlers who
came from those areas to Kurulubedde were to some extent educated and politically active in their village areas. And, during the general election of 1956, many of these new settlers were inclined to the MEP. When these new settlers arrived to Kurulubedde they emerged as a new political alliance with direct political links with MEP to work against the dominance of Korale Mahatmaya and his group. This situation can be further clarified through a brief description of the leading MEP supporters of Kurulubedde in 1956.

Among the leading supporters for the MEP in 1956 from Aluthwatte, Ganarathne, Adikari, Albert Fernando and Haramanis were prominent. Except Haramanis, the other three were in late twenties when they came to Aluthwatte in 1955. At that time Haramanis was in his early forties. I could not meet Haramanis and Albert Fernando as they were not alive. From the other two, Ganarathne came from a densely populated village in Kurunagala district about thirty miles from Kurulubedde. He was the youngest of his family and was educated upto GEC (Ordinary Level) in vernacular medium. Before coming to Kurulubedde, he had been politically active with the SLFP in his village. Adikari had come from an interior village close to Chillaw, about thirty-four miles west of Kurulubedde. He was educated up to grade eight. Before coming to Kurulubedde in 1955, he was also politically active with the leftist politics in his native place.

Except these active MEP supporters of Aluthwatte, there were other active supporters for the MEP in Kurulubedde during this time. There was a strong supporter for the MEP in Nelligahawile. He was also an outsider called Ausada Appuhami. He was an ayurvedic physician. His native place was a sub-urban area close to Chillaw and about
twenty miles from Kurulubedde. In 1955, he had started an ayurvedic treatment center in Nelligahawile hamlet. There was another ardent supporter for the MEP from Harumanwile hamlet, named Baddenayake. He was an old villager and a distant relative of the Korale Mahatmaya and the Vel Vidane of Nagawewe. He had been a Buddhist monk and resided in a temple in Kurunagale, the main city of Kurunagala district. Later, he had disrobed and settled down with his parents in Harumanwile and taken care of his parents’ lands. He was critical of the Korale Mahatmaya and his group as well as their political activities with the UNP. He actively participated in the MEP election campaign with new settlers.

During the parliamentary election in 1956, this group actively participated in the election campaign of MEP candidate. In that election, the Korale Mahatmaya and his group helped the former UNP MP, the stepson of the Rate Mahatmaya. The MEP candidate came from an ordinary cultivator family from the constituency itself. However, none of the new settlers could vote for the MEP candidate in 1956 as they were not registered in the electoral list of Kurulubedde. But many of these new settlers actively participated in the election campaign process, and, they canvassed for the MEP candidate in the surrounding areas. Their influence was so strong in the area that the work of these new settlers influenced some old villagers of the area too; particularly, the old villagers who did not accept the supremacy of the Korale Mahatmaya and his group helped the MEP with the new settlers.

The MEP candidates won the constituency in that election. As I have already mentioned, the popular victory of the MEP in 1956 was considered as the defeat of the westernized elite group at the national level, old-established dominant petty chieftains.
of colonial administration and the landlord strata at rural level who were in the helm of power and authority positions in the rural areas for a long time. In this context, the victory of the MEP candidate in 1956 affected the decrees of political influence of Korale Mahatmaya and his group on Kurulubedde and the surrounding areas. Simultaneously, it was a beginning of the new social, economic and, particularly, political changes in Kurulubedde and surrounding areas.

4.3.2 Influence of new state policies on the village

As pointed out so far, the support of the rural population was important for the MEP government in 1956. It was their basic electoral strength. Therefore, the policies of MEP government in 1956 were vigorously oriented towards rural development including agriculture development, renovation of irrigation, initiation of rural level small-scale cottage industries, construction of infrastructure facilities and the like. The next significant thing was that most of these development programs were implemented through the newly established or existing rural level organizations. Hence, these organizations became the statutory bodies which had the legal recognition for state funded development programs in the rural areas.

Accordingly, the first such organization in Kurulubedde was a Rural Development Society (RDS). Although, the RDS was new to Kurulubedde, Department of Rural Development was established in 1947. It encouraged the villagers all over the country to form their own RDS. The major functions of the RDS were to provide income opportunities by increasing productivity in agriculture and promoting cottage industries and trade, to deal with cultural and social activities, and to provide public utilities with
the assistance of the Village Council (Silva, 1977: 19; quoted from Perera, 1985: 141). “Kurulubedde Suhada Grame Sanwardana Samitiya” (Suhada Rural Development Society of Kurulubedde) was established in 1957 making Aluthwatte its base in distributing official posts. Inspired by the victory of the MEP government, the active MEP supporters acquired most of the office bearer posts of RDS of Kurulubedde. And, they continued their tenure until 1964 in a dynamic manner. The main office bearers had been elected from the new settlers of Aluthwatte. Haramanis, one of the leading supporters for the MEP candidate in 1956 general election, had been elected as the secretary. And Jayesene, another active member of MEP, had become the president of the RDS. Ganarathne who was a dynamic character for MEP in 1956 became the treasurer of the RDS of Kurulubedde. Many new settlers of Nelligahawile also actively participated in RDS’s work. As Jayesene told me, during 1957 to 1964, RDS of Kurulubedde was greatly involved in the development of the village differently and dynamically. Due to this situation, even old villagers of Nelligahawile also participated in RDS’s work.

According to Jayesene, in 1958, RDS of Kurulubedde had decided to take the necessary action for the development of the village. RDS proposed and seconded the proposals on renovation of ruined tanks in the village, distribution of the paddy lands under these tanks, regularization of the confiscated lands in Nelligahawile and Harumanwile. The necessity for the construction of a deep public well system and granting of aids for lavatory to the Nelligahawile also were emphasized in RDS.

However, the accomplishment of these tasks was beyond RDS’s ability and it needed much state involvement. Therefore, RDS decided to meet the newly appointed MP of
the constituency and asked him to intervene in the above development work of the village. The MP did intervene. During the period between 1959 and 1964, under his influence, Agrarian Service Department allocated funds for the renovation of three ruined tanks which were located in Harumanwile and Nelligahawile hamlets. The two tanks had been renovated by Agrarian Service Department itself. The construction of renovation of other tank had been given to RDS of Kurulubedde. After the renovation, the paddy lands under these tanks had been distributed among the villagers. As a result of RDS's request, in 1961, the government took the steps for regularizing the confiscated lands in Nelligahawile and Harumanwile. Another significant work which had been done by RDS of Kurulubedde was the building of a temporary hall for Kurulubedde School. Since its initiation of 1957, Kurulubedde government vernacular school was confined to one building. This could not cater to the large number of students from Kurulubedde as well as from surrounding villages. In 1957, Ganarathne, the treasurer of the RDS of Kurulubedde had been appointed as a teacher of Kurulubedde School. He suggested to RDS to build up a temporary building. Accordingly, in 1961, through the 'shramadāna' campaigns (voluntary labour donation campaign), the RDS of Kurulubedde constructed a temporary hall in Kurulubedde School with mud wall and cadjans roof.

However, many of the MEP government policies which aimed to empower the rural areas of the country did not start in its tenure during 1956 to 1960. Later, the newly appointed SLFP government in 1960 led by the widow of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike implemented MEP policies that targeted greater rural development. However, from this stage, the influence of party politics on the village gradually became significant. The
handling of distributive mechanism of the state resources was established within the framework of the party political affiliation.

4.3.3 Establishment of political party branches in the village

Although there had been a clear party political demarcation in the village in 1956, the organizational structure of the village within the framework of competition between the major political parties had not been established comprehensively until the beginning of 1960s. The local branches of both SLFP and UNP in Kurulubedde were found for the first time before the general election in 1960. All the office bearers of SLFP branch were the active supporters of the MEP election campaign in 1956. They had basically settled in Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile. Ganarathne and A.P.C. Fernando, who had settled in Aluthwatte had been respectively elected as the president and the secretary of the SLFP party branch of Kurulubedde. Ausada Appuhami from Nelligahawile, Baddenayake from Harumanwile and other ardent supporters of the MEP in 1956 were also among the active participants in the local SLFP branch of Kurulubedde.

During the same time, Kurulubedde UNP branch also had been founded. All the office bearers of the UNP branch consisted of the new settlers of Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile. Korale Mahatmaya encouraged them considerably. Hector, a new settler of Aluthwatte, had been elected as the president of the UNP branch of Kurulubedde. His native village was in a sub-urban coastal area about forty-two kilo meters east of Kurulubedde. Wilfred Fernando, another settler of Aluthwatte who came from same coastal area to Aluthwatte was elected as the secretary of the branch. Both of them had helped UNP candidate in 1956 general election. The treasurer of the branch came from
Nelligahawile. He was Hector’s wife’s elder sister’s son, named Pestes. They settled in Nelligahawile at the end of 1950s (when Hector settled in Aluthwatte, he accompanied his relatives to Kurulubedde and they settled in Nelligahawile). And many old villagers of Nelligahawile hamlet had become the members of the UNP branch of Kurulubedde. As I was told by old villagers in Nelligahawile, their political identification had been based on land grants of Nelligahawile in 1942 (see, chap three, p. 183).

When we consider rural social change and mobilization in the country like India during post colonial period, it can be seen that there were strong peasant movements which were demanding land reforms, tenure rights of the sharecroppers etc. (SinghaRoy, 2004; 1992; Das, 1992 [1983]). Mostly, these peasant movements in India were organized within Marxist political base and it gave strong ideological base for those Marxist political parties among the agrarian communities. But, one of the interesting observations on the post colonial Sri Lankan rural society is that there were no such strong peasant movements which came forward with the demands on land reforms or any other agrarian reforms. Without such kind of peasant social movements, as we observed, Sri Lankan peasantry got tenure rights, other legislative rights and agricultural facilities from the state. Successive post independent governments significantly engaged to mobilize rural agrarian population of the country through the continuation of land distribution programs started in mid 1930s, enactment of legislative measures to protect tenure rights of sharecroppers and initiation of different agricultural subsidies programs.

In political term, this engagement of successive governments to enrich the rural agrarian society had major twofold aims. First, as I pointed out so far, within the electoral
political democracy, successive governing parties have to get the support from the rural constituencies that represented numerical majority of the electoral democracy. Second, this was a strategy to keep the rural population in rural sector further as a propertied agrarian class. The aim of this political strategy of ruling class was to prevent the growing strength of Marxist political parties which had strong political setup in urban areas during 1940 to 1960s. In such a context, those aims of the major governing parties became successful as rural agrarian population mainly centered on the UNP and the SLFP, the governing parties after the independence of the country. Even though Marxist political leaders were behind some of major agrarian enactments like Paddy Land Act of 1958 that ensured the tenure rights of sharecroppers, those parties could not get long-term social base among the rural masses.5

We have seen that the interrelationship between politics and masses within distributive welfare mechanism was based on the contending parties’ offer of the necessities to the masses to win or retain power through their votes. In this context, organizational party political formation in the village further strengthened the relationship between the villagers and politicians. It was significant both from the perspective of politicians and villagers. Firstly, it was significant within the framework of mobilizing electoral support for the outside politicians. Because, as we saw, with the increasing participation of the masses in the parliamentary electoral system, the Members of the Parliament became the patrons for dispensing favors and amenities for their constituents in return for the votes of the masses. In such a context, politicians were able to assure their support for their own party members through these local party bodies. Secondly, it was significant from the villagers’ point of view, as followers of both parties they could gain
access to the state resources, mostly through their party political affiliation. Therefore, effective connections with party politics became more important as a basis of power in the village to handle and gain state benefits, particularly within the context of a gradually diminishing material base of the state.

In this context, party political cleavages and competition also became stronger on the basis of power in the village, as such as political power was imperative for controlling state activities in the village. This situation could be seen in the village on different occasions. Firstly, in 1961, the UNP stalwarts of the village had competed to grab the power of RDS of Kurulubedde. As Ganarathne told me, Hector had tried to become the president of RDS. Ganarathne told, “that time, RDS got funds to renovate a tank in the village. Hector wanted to take that renovation contract. However that time, we had good support from most of the villagers because we had done more work for the village.” Therefore, until 1964, Ganarathne and other office bearers held the posts as they had more support from the village.

However, there was some dissatisfaction among the villagers about the office bearers of RDS by 1964. This was because of the irregularities in paddy land allocation under the renovated tanks. As the old villagers told me, there had been some injustice when those paddy lands were distributed among the villagers. RDS of Kurulubedde had coordinated the paddy land distribution. I was unable to identify the political identity of the villagers who had got paddy land under those renovated tanks as the ownership of those paddy lands had changed with some villagers selling their paddy lands to other villagers. On the other hand, I could not find clear official documents in this regard. However, as I was told by old villagers, many of the allottees of paddy lands wetted by a small stream
called Rathmaloye were office bearers of RDS, local SLFP branch and some of their relatives. Eight acres of paddy lands under Rathmal oye, a stream situated in the western boundary of Kurulubedde, had been distributed among the villagers of Aluthwatte one acre for each in 1963. Ganarathne himself (the treasurer of RDS and the secretary of the SLFP local party branch of Kurulubedde), his younger sister (who had settled in Aluthwatte in 1955), Jayesene, (the secretary of RDS), Haramanis (one of the founder member of SLFP branch of Kurulubedde) had been among the allotees. When I was in Kurulubedde, the ownership of these lands had been transferred to the second generation of first allotees.

The dissatisfaction among the villagers about the paddy land distribution under Rathmal oye led to efforts to change the office bearers of RDS of Kurulubedde. On the other hand, the UNP was voted back to power in the 1965 general election. This election victory elated the UNP members of the village. Due to all these facts, Hector, the president of UNP branch of the village became the president of the RDS of Kurulubedde. But, since then, as old villagers mentioned to me, RDS of Kurulubedde has been inactive. There were several reasons for this inactiveness. In the first place, several other rural organizations had been established in the village. And some of the duties of the RDS had been taken away by these organizations. One of these organizations was the Cultivation Committee. It looked after the agricultural activities which had been under the purview of the RDS earlier. The next significant fact that led to the disintegration of RDS was the unpopularity of the new president of RDS among the villagers and his negligence of RDS responsibilities. Ganarathne, one of the founder members of the RDS of Kurulubedde, told me, “although he wanted to take over the
RDS, he did not want to perform its duties systematically.” Consequently, RDS of Kurulubedde did not function properly.

A: Cultivation Committee election

The influence of organizational political formation in the village along competitive party politics could be seen clearly in the village with the establishment of the Cultivation Committee (CC) of Kurulubedde. In accordance with the MEP government’s policy for agricultural development, the Paddy Lands Act (PLA) was enacted in 1958 aiming for agricultural development. Under this enactment, the Vel Vidane post was abolished and a new Cultivation Committee system was introduced mainly to enhance the productivity of the paddy lands and provide security of tenure to the tenants. The CCs raised its funds mainly through the collection of annual acreage levy from the cultivators. Like RDS, CC had become another statutory body in the village which had legal recognition for minor irrigation contracts etc. One CC covered around 8 villages consisting of 10 committee members. According to the PLA, the committee members should be elected from the qualified cultivators of paddy lands wholly or mainly lying within the local jurisdiction of the committee for three years tenure period. However until early 1960s, the CCs were not established in many of the rural areas as the Agrarian Service Department, that was in charge of the CCs was not fully organized in every district (Perera, 1985: 138). The successor SLFP government which came to the power in 1960 continued the policies of MEP government of 1956 and many CCs in the country were actually established during the tenure of SLFP government in 1960-64.
The CC of Bamunugame was then established in 1963. Kurulubedde came under Nagawewe CC constituency. Although one of the principal aims of the initiation of CC system was to provide security of tenure to the tenant, there had not been a large scale established owners-tenants paddy cultivation system in Kurulubedde area because of the limited paddy lands and erratic paddy cultivation. But, as I was told by ex-Vel Vidane of Nagawewe, there had been an acute competition in 1963 for selecting a CC member to the Nagawewe CC constituency. Two persons had contested for the CC member post: the ex-Vel Vidane of Nagawewe and Baddenayake of Harumanwile. The political background of both these candidates was very significant to secure this post. Ex-Vel Vidane of Nagawewe was an ardent UNP supporter and he was a relative of the Korele Mahatmaya of Bamunugame, the chairman of Serumaduwe village council during that time. Karunanayake was one of the ardent supporters of MEP in general election of 1956. Korele Mahatmaya strongly helped the ex-Vel Vidane. And, they asked paddy cultivators of Kurulubedde and Nagawewe who had the rights for voting CC election to vote for ex-Vel Vidane. In contrast, Ganarathne and other SLFP supporters asked new paddy landowners of Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile to vote for Baddenayake. Majority of these new paddy landowners were SLFP supporters. Hence, they helped Baddenayake. And Baddenayake had managed to get the help from some of his relatives of Nagawewa village. Consequently, Baddenayake was elected as CC member for Kurulubedde and Nagawewe CC constituency. However, after three years tenure, he was defeated by ex-Vel Vidane in 1966 during the UNP regime. Then, ex-Vel Vidane held the post until SLFP government introduced the new system in 1973.
B: Village Council election

Another remarkable change in the political arena in Kurulubedde and surrounding areas could be seen in 1964 when the village council election was held. This movement had been significant for the village in several ways. Particularly, it was significant in the context of change of the dominance of Korele Mahatmaya and the role of party political affiliation to the village. Although the village council existed since the end of nineteenth century, it did not properly function until 1930s. However, village councils were given more powers under the State Council of 1931. Particularly, in 1946, the State Council enacted the 'Village Council Ordinance No. 53.' Under this ordinance, the village council had been given more responsibilities including maintenance of satisfactory public health and sanitation services, construction and maintenance of village roads, foot-bridges etc. in its area of authority. The village councils had its principle sources of finance through tax (land tax and license duties), revenue from the public utility services, grants from the central government etc. However, most of the village councils in rural areas could not get much income through tax and revenue from the public utility services. Hence, the central government grants were the principal sources of money for most of these village councils. When S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was the Minister of Local Government during 1940 to 1950, both under the State Council and first independent government, the village council got enough money for rural development.

Until 1964, Kurulubedde belonged to Serumaduwe village council. From 1946 to 1964, Korele Mahatmaya of Bamunugame, the ardent UNP supporter in the area was the unbeaten representative to the Serumaduwe Village Council from Nagawewe constituency to which Kurulubedde also belonged. And he remained as the chairman of
Serumaduwe village council throughout this period. In 1964, a separate village council was established as Bamunugame village council containing seven constituencies. And later, this village council was renamed as Kumara-Pallam Pattu village council. Kurulubedde came under Nagawewe constituency of Kumara-Pallam Pattu village council. The election was held for this new village council in 1964. In that election, Korele Mahatmaya contested for Nagawewe constituency. Adikari, one of the leading supporters for MEP from Kurulubedde in 1956 who turned a leading SLFP figure of Kurulubedde henceforth, also contested the same constituency. Korele Mahatmaya got the help from the majority of Nagawewe villagers and the old villagers of Nelligahawile hamlet. Hector and the other UNPers of Aluthwatte also helped Korele Mahatmaya. Adikari got the help from majority of new settlers of Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile. And he managed to get some votes from some old villagers of Nagawewe and Harumanwile with the help of Baddenayake, CC member for Nagawewe. As Adikari told me, in that election he got 187 votes; Korele Mahatmaya got 171 votes. As a result, Adikari defeated Korele Mahatmaya by 16 votes, a fairly narrow margin. However, the important aspect of this was that a new settler as well as a SLFP supporter was elected to Nagawewe constituency against Korele Mahatmaya, the unbeaten UNP village council member since 1946. Later, Adikari was appointed as vice chairman of Kumara Pallam Pattu village council.

Election of the village council was essential for the village due to the competition between SLFP and UNP. However, the villagers could not get individual state resources, such as land grants, agricultural credit facilities etc. from the village council. Even communal activities of the village council had become limited with the passage of
time because the successive governments started to channel state resources directly to the village level organizations. During its first tenure in 1964 to 1969, the only service rendered by Kumara-Pallam Pattu village council in Kurulubedde, as pointed out by Adikari, was the construction of four public drinking water wells. Three such wells had been constructed in Nelligahawile in 1967 and another in Harumanwile hamlet in 1968, as these two hamlets had been badly affected by the lack of clean and clear drinking water facilities.

4.4 Rise of political mediators in the village

I have sought to emphasize that the changes of the state policies in 1930s laid the foundation for the conviction among the people that the role of the state and its role in the country, particularly in rural society is as the distributor of its resources to the people. At the same time, under the representative democracy, an electorate system was introduced with the tradition of universal franchise. Though there was no deep-rooted political party system during that time and most of the state resources to the masses were of collective rather than individual advantage, political affiliation was not the main criterion for dispensing state resources to the masses.

However, as we have seen so far, the government intrusions have amplified since mid 1950s in allocating various resources to rural masses. At the same time, these resources were channeled to the village mostly through the rural organizations. Before that, most of those resources were handled by village headman. However, the administrative reforms in 1963 abolished the Village Headman system, and villages were assimilated into the central administration through a gramesevake, (lit. village servant) who was
selected by an open examination and *viva voce* by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Although *gramesevake* was the authorized village level officer who was responsible for state affairs, influence of politics in the village level became more significant. The rural level organizations had been the statutory bodies of obtaining many resources from the state. As I portrayed in the preceding sections, since 1956, most of these rural organization came under the hands of rural level political party leaders. When local branches of the major political parties, the SLFP and the UNP were founded in the village, this situation was explicitly established within the party political context.

The next significant development since 1960s was that the growing proportion of the state resources came to be a means of individual benefits rather than collective growth. Under the SLFP government in 1956, the nationalization process was commenced and the government established different departments and corporations. Under these initiations, lots of minor and middle level public sector job opportunities were given to the rural masses. Rural population, particularly the educated rural youth which was produced by the free education system was able to gain job opportunities from the public sector. The government subsidies for housing development, agricultural credits, government loans, or even title for new lands etc. also could be considered as individual benefits. Simultaneously, demands for these resources also increased due to the population expansion, the direct result of malaria eradication and expansion of free health services.

Party politics was thus entrenched as a prominent feature in Kurulubedde since 1956. The local political leaders began to hold the posts of the village level organizations, when such organization started in Kurulubedde. However, their activities during this
time mainly targeted common needs like renovation of ruined tanks, provision of drinking water, regularization of confiscated lands etc. But, when the state resources became individual oriented and limited, party political affiliation became the determining factor for the allocation of those resources. And, the party political leaders began to play a significant role for the allocation of those resources. Even since early 1960s, this situation could be seen in Kurulubedde to a certain extent. For instance, paddy lands distribution under the small stream called Rathmal oye in 1963 can be pointed out. Further, the villagers told me that Ganarathne and Albert Fernando, the leading MEP supporters during 1956 election got teaching appointments with the help of newly appointed MP of the constituency. Ganarathne himself told me that both Ganarathne and Albert Fernando had worked as voluntary teachers in their native villages before their coming to Kurulubedde. When the government started Kurulubedde primary vernacular school in 1957, they worked there for a few months as voluntary teachers since the school lacked enough teachers. Later, both Ganarathne and Albert Fernando were appointed as the teachers for Kurulubedde School in 1958. Old villagers told me that, during the UNP government of 1965 to 1970, a number of youths in Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile who had political loyalty to UNP were able to obtain public sector job opportunities through their political affiliation. This situation escalated since the SLFP government came to power in 1970. By this time, the ability to follow distributive state policies had gradually narrowed down due to the low level economic development of the country. However, the demands for the advantage from the state escalated; particularly, demands intensified for individual benefits, such as public sector job opportunities, agricultural credits, government loans and new lands. The next
development was that the allocation of these limited resources began to get institutionally politicized in a legitimate fashion with the help of successive governing parties particularly since 1970s.

This process occurred in several ways. The SLFP led government in 1970-77 started to appoint local bodies for local institutions related to rural development and state distribution instead of allowing them to be elected by the people themselves. In this context, under the Agricultural Lands Law of 1973, the old cultivation committees and its election system was abolished. Instead, a new "Cultivation Committee" (CC) system was introduced with ten appointed members to function as the subordinate village level organization of a new divisional agrarian agency called "Agricultural Productivity Committee" (APC). APC was established under the Agricultural Productivity Law of 1972. Appointment of committee members of the both CC and APC was done by the Minister of Agriculture and Land on the recommendation of the MP of the concerned area. The new APC and CC were the sole statutory organizations which were responsible for the promotion, co-ordination and development of agriculture of the concerned area including distribution of agricultural loans and other agricultural subsidiaries like chemical fertilizer for the people under its jurisdiction. Except these, appointments of the office bearers of RDS which was still receiving government assistance was also taking place within the party political framework as the registration of RDS needed the approval of the local MP of the area during this period (Perera, 1985). Along with these developments, allocation of public sector job opportunities, crop-planting subsidies, and other individual state benefits also gradually went in to the framework of party political alignments.
In the subsequent segments of this chapter I will discuss the influence of political party alignments on the village, particularly after 1970s. I discuss this situation in accordance with two-time frames: during 1970 to 1977 and after 1977, as these two periods possess special characteristics of their own. I will discuss the development of exclusion and inclusion of the villagers from the state benefits according to their political identification in the context of the growing scarcity of those resources and opportunities in the village.

4.4.1 Factional political identity of the village in the 1970s

As villagers told me, during 1970-77, the SLFP identity had established itself prominently in Kurulubedde. The influence of the SLFP political figures on state activities in the village had been dominant. Particularly, the influence of Ganarathne on the village had been strong. He was the chief SLFP organizer in Kurulubedde area during that time. He maintained a very close connection with the MP of the area. Before the SLFP government came back to power in 1970, he was working in Hanguranketha, a town in the Central province which is situated more than one hundred and twenty miles away from Kurulubedde. As he told me, this had been a political transfer after the general election in 1965 to punish him for his political relations with the SLFP. According to him, after SLFP came to power in 1970 he could come back to Kurulubedde School. Due to his close political connection with the MP of the area he was able to get the headmastership of the school. When I met Ganarathne, he himself told me; “those days, the MP of at that time and me were not two persons, but one.” According to other villagers, Ganarathne always used this close relationship with MP to derive benefit firstly for his relatives, and secondly for other SLFPers in the village.
Except Ganarathne, Ausada Appuhami and Baddenayake had also been very influential SLFPers in the village during this time. The SLFP government’s policy of appointing office holders for the state sponsored rural institutions which were responsible for the implementation of government policies strengthened political power of this group, and they had dominated the affairs of newly established “Cultivation Committee,” and “Agricultural Productivity Committee” in Kurulubedde. Hence, the activities of those organizations in the village reflected the explicit SLFP political identity.

The new Cultivation Committee (CC) of Bamunugame, which comprised Kurulubedde, Nagawewe, along with Bamunugame village, was established in 1973 with ten members from those villages. Two CC members were appointed from Kurulubedde, one from Nelligahawile hamlet and the other one from Harumanwile. As the old villagers informed me, both the appointees were strong SLFP supporters. However, during this time, the most influential statutory body on agricultural activities was Agricultural Productivity Committee (APC).

The APC of Kurulubedde had been established in 1974. Its jurisdiction covered Kumara Pallampattu village council area comprising twelve CCs. In the same year, the Agrarian Service Center of Kurulubedde was set up. According to the APC Act, Minister of Agriculture and Land appointed ten members for the APC of Kurulubedde under the recommendation of the then MP of the area. Baddenayake of Harumanwile, one of the strong SLFP leaders in Kurulubedde was appointed as one of the APC members representing Bamunugame CC judiciary. The president of the APC, a strong SLFP supporter, came from Pallepitiye. The secretary of the APC was ASC’s clerk. When the ASC was formed, a daughter of a leading SLFP supporter of Kurulubedde (Haramanis)
had been appointed as the clerk on temporary basis. At that time, this clerk, Sumanawathi, was the secretary of SLFP youth league of the area.

As I mentioned above, since its initiation, both APC and CC were the most important statutory rural organizations which carried out various government programs. During 1970-77, the SLFP government followed 'import substitution economic policy' vigorously. On the other hand, during this period, Sri Lanka experienced an acute shortage of foreign exchange. Therefore, the government policies aimed to develop local industrial and agricultural activities in rural areas. Particularly, growing more food in the country itself was a major target of the government. The most influential statutory organizations for implementing those government policies in the village level were the APCs.

In this context, the APC of Kurulubedde encouraged the people for cotton and onion cultivation programs, as these crops were suitable for the dry climate and soil formation of the area. The APC intervened to give bank loans and other necessary facilities to the farmers who were willing to cultivate those crops. I could not get precise information from the Agrarian Service Center of Kurulubedde on how many villagers got the bank loans and other necessary facilities for these two programs from the government as there had been no documentation in this regard. But, several villagers told me that most of the farmers who had got those bank loans and other facilitation for cotton and onion cultivation were SLFP political allies or relatives of the office bearers of APC and CC and SLFP branch. Particularly, they pointed out that with the influence of Baddenayake, the APC member, and Ganarathne, the then chairman of SLFP branch of Kurulubedde, the APS of Kurulubedde had purposely bypassed UNPers for giving loans and other
facilities under these two programs. They further pointed out that with the influence of these two persons, the APC had given loans to some SLFP supporters who did not have enough highlands in the village to cultivate cotton or onion and even for some outsiders who were not under the judiciary of APC. After the general election of 1977 Ganarathne and Baddenayake had to face some problems from the villagers regarding this situation, which will be discussed in chapter five.

The next place where SLFP political identity functioned was in the milk farmer’s society of Kurulubedde. In 1976, with the inspiration of the government policies which aimed to encourage economic activities in the rural areas for improving available resources, the APC coordinated the establishment of market-oriented dairy farming industry in Kurulubedde. By this time, small-scale milk farming had been already practiced by the villagers. One petty businessman who came from Chillaw had been collecting milk from the villagers. However, the APC intervened with the necessary guidance for the milk farmers through Cooperative Development Commissioner of Chillaw (see, chap. three, p. 143). After that, the villagers organized the Cooperative Society of Milk Farmers (CSMF) of Kurulubedde. Ausada Appuhami, one of the strong SLFP supporters of Nelligahawile hamlet became the chairman of the CSMF of Kurulubedde. From the initiation of CSMF of Kurulubedde, the government assisted the milk farmers of the village in numerous ways. At the end of 1976, through the CSMF of Kurulubedde, the government had given non-interest loans to the villagers to buy high-milking cows. Although I could not gain exact information from the CSMF on identity of the villagers who got those government benefits, many old villagers told me that
Ausada Appuhami and other officer bearers misled the CSMF of Kurulubedde when it got the funds and other aids from the government.

The office holders of the RDS of Kurulubedde in 1970s had a clear SLFP political identity. As I explained earlier, after 1965, the RDS of Kurulubedde was inactive. But, since the end of 1960s, the RDS has been re-organized due to several reasons. Since the end of 1960s, Puttalam district experienced a prolonged drought. Therefore, the government started to provide some food subsidies as relief aids. For the relief food subsidies, the villagers had to participate in some community works as relief works. Coordination of this program had been given to the RDSs as it was the grass root level statutory organization for community development. Conversely, the SLFP government in 1970-77, aimed to implement a non-agricultural development program in rural areas through the RDS. Thus, since the beginning of 1970s, RDSs were revitalized in rural areas to implement government development policies.

By the beginning of 1970s, two RDS were established in Kurulubedde: one in Aluthwatte with its jurisdiction including Kandulassegode, and the other one in Nelligahawile with its jurisdiction containing Nelligahawile and Harumanwile. According to my identification which was based on the details provided by the villagers, both of these RDSs had a clear SLFP identity. Ganarathne had become the president of RDS of Aluthwatte. During that period, he was the president of SLFP branch of Kurulubedde. Ausada Appuhami was the chairman of RDS of Nelligahawile. According to the villagers, both RDS of Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile did very little for the development of the village except for the distribution of the drought relief aids.
According to them, since the office bearers tried to use RDS for their personal purposes, the villagers did not want to participate in RDS work except in relief works. The villagers pointed out one such incident in Nelligahawile. In 1975, the government approved funds for three public drinking wells for Nelligahawile RDS. Construction of these wells was to be done with the relief works. At that period, there were not enough drinking wells in Harumanwile, compared to Nelligahawile hamlet. Hence, Villagers of Harumanwile hamlet asked the RDS to construct two wells in Harumanwile, which had suffered badly from water shortage. But, only one well was built in Harumanwile. Other two were built in Nelligahawile. And, one of them was built inside the personal garden of Ausada Appuhami, RDS president of Nelligahawile. One villager told me; “it was not a problem to build up that well in Nelligahawile. But the thing was, he built it up on his own land. That time, they were the people who had political power and therefore, they did so.”

There were other criticisms against the SLFP leaders in the village, particularly against Ganarathne and Ausada Appuhami during 1970-77 about the interference in the allocation of state lands. For instance, in 1976, GA of Puttalam district held a Land Turbulence in Kurulubedde Agrarian Center to regularize confiscated land in Harumanwile and distribute the remaining state lands in Pahalakale, the nearby northwestern area of Kurulubedde, to the landless people in the area. The application for the new lands had to be sent through the RDS. Many villagers from Aluthwatte and Nelligahawile had applied. But, according to the UNPers, many UNP members of Kurulubedde could not obtain new lands from Pahalakale. This situation could be seen more explicitly in the process of recruitment for the public sector job opportunities.
During the SLFP government of 1970-77, the practice of inquiring about the political background of the new recruits to the public sector appointments was introduced, particularly after the 1971 youth insurrection. According to Perera (1985: 168) this 'political sifting' of candidates for the recruitments in government sector was justified, as it was a way of stopping the infiltration of the public sector by anti-government elements. It soon became a legitimate process. Accordingly, before making any appointment, the officers or departments who were in-charge of recruitments were expected to refer the selected names of the candidates to the MP of the area. The MPs in turn depended on their village level political organizer for confidential reports on the candidates. Though this requirement was only to detect anti-state elements (like JVP members after insurrection in 1971), the village level politician extended the process to eliminate non-SLFP supporters and, some times, their personal opponents.

Several UNPers of Kurulubedde who were seeking public sector appointments had to face difficulties due to this situation during 1970 to 1977, as they told me. For instance, one berava caste youth, Sirivardene, whose parents settled in Nelligahawile in 1942, had applied for a post of police constable in 1975. He had passed G.E.C. (Ordinary Level) in 1973. But, he was unable to get that post as he could not get the recommendation letter from the village SLFP branch. Another youth named Lionel from Aluthwatte who was educated upto G.C.E (Ordinary Level) had applied for a job in Ceylon Transport Board in 1974. But, like Sirivardene, he too could not get that job because he was also unable to get a recommendation letter from the local SLFP branch. According to Lionel, Ganarathne had asked the MP to give that post to an active SLFP supporter in Aluthwatte. Similarly, another goigama caste youth, named Premerathne,
could not get a post of security officer in Coconut Cultivation Board. According to Premerathne, Ganarathne had asked MP to appoint SLFP supporter for the post too. Consequently, the SLFPer got the post. When I met Premerathne he told me, “those days, those people were very powerful. If some one wanted to get a government job, they had to meet MP through those people; Ganarathne, Ausada Appuhami or Baddenayake.” As villagers told me, Ganarathne used this method for benefiting his family members. Accordingly, in 1975, Ganarathne’s younger daughter was appointed as school dental nurse. But, according to the villagers, this dental nurse appointment firstly came for a young woman in Aluthwatte. However, before, she assumed the post, Ganarathne met the MP and informed him that she had a UNP background and asked the MP to cancel the appointment. After that, he managed to get that post to his daughter.

4.4.2 New dimensions to political identities after 1977

The formation of the UNP government in 1977 with a landslide victory was a significant event in the political, economic and social life of post independence period. The newly appointed UNP government of 1977 moved from import substitution strategy to open liberal economic policies. Therefore, unlike any other post-independent government of Sri Lanka, the UNP government in 1977 was given generous development aids by international donor agencies (Spencer, 2000 [1990]). But, the reduction of the welfare expenditure was a major component of donor agencies. In this context, although the UNP government in 1977 implemented more new development programs than any other post-independence governments, it had cut down its individual welfare distributions such as the ‘free rice ration.’ Simultaneously, competition for the
state resources and the influence of factional political alignments on handling the state affairs and dispensing the state resources in Kurulubedde also came to a new juncture. Gaining benefits from the state was more competitive than ever before. This situation has to be understood in the context of several other interrelated reasons. In this context, it is necessary to have some further clarifications on the social base of UNP and SLFP in Kurulubedde in order to understand the political dynamism in Kurulubedde by 1977 despite my previous analysis of the political structure of Kurulubedde village.

A. Changing nature of social base of the parties

It was constantly argued that the UNP was a conservative party which had had a natural social base with the relatively privileged social groups in rural areas. And, they were often natural leaders in terms of social status in the village level. Conversely, it was said that the SLFP connected more strongly with the poor in the rural level. As we have seen so far, before the arrival of new settlers to Kurulubedde, politics was a strange phenomenon for the ordinary people of the area. The political power of the area was in the hand of Korale Mahatmaya and other established administrative officers like village headman. They belonged to the goigama caste, the highest caste of Sinhala caste system. Many of the active supporters of Kurulubedde for MEP in 1956 belonged to the new settlers who were landless in their native areas. However, as I have portrayed, the social strata which was active with MEP politics in Kurulubedde in 1956 had been politically active at the rural level for a long time. Many of them belonged to the goigama caste, the high caste of Sinhala caste system. After 1956, they dominated state affairs in Kurulubedde village. Ganarathne and Adikari in Aluthwatte and Ausada Appuhami and Baddenayake respectively in Nelligahawille and Harumanwille became
the SLFP leaders in the village. I did not identify any low cast member who held an official post of local branch of SLFP in Kurulubedde in 1960s. When the local branch of UNP was established in Kurulubedde at the same time, karāva caste persons (Hector and Pestes) held the official posts. According to Sinhala caste system, karāva caste is only second to goigama caste. By 1960s, many low cast families including drummer caste old villagers in Nelligahawile hamlet had settled in Kurulubedde. However, they were not part of active politics in the village.

In this context, although the election victory in 1956 appeared to be a victory of the 'common man,' it was clear that the social layers which were empowered in 1956 did not represent all the lower layers in Kurulubedde. Therefore, social stratum which connected with SLFP in 1956 has been identified as the 'intermediate class who were excluded from the active political arena until 1956. As we have already observed, these groups engulfed the statutory rural organizations in the village and controlled the state resources that had been channeled to the village after 1956. And, they themselves benefited through handling of those organizations. From 1956, their position in state affairs in rural level became influential as they got many chances to hold the positions in rural level statutory bodies. On the other hand, they prevented others getting benefits from the state. Accordingly, this group gradually emerged as another conventional political leadership in the village by 1970s.

In this context, the lower layer of the village including lower caste people could not enter the village political arena with a distinct platform of its own until the end of 1970s. However, they benefited highly from common welfare distributive programs, particularly land distribution, free education etc. Since 1960s, many youths of these
social layers were waiting for prestigious public sector job opportunities and social position of the village level. However, they could not achieve those targets fruitfully, because, as already mentioned, the ability of the state for dispensing government jobs, lands or other benefits was gradually decreasing. On the other hand, handling of these decreasing state resources ended up in the hands of the above-mentioned newly established dominant political groups in the village. This group intervened in the distributive mechanism according to party political affiliation. As a whole, the lower layers of the village did not have adequate chances for participating in political affairs until the UNP mobilized them as active participants of the village level politics since the mid 1970s. When J.R. Jayewardene took over the leadership of the UNP in 1973, he reorganized the party towards the participation of lower layers of the rural peasantry including low caste people. This situation resulted in considerable changes in rural level political arena. The impact of these changes upon Kurulubedde was substantial.

In 1977, the chief UNP organizer of Kurulubedde, Podi Mahatmaya, was a new comer to Kurulubedde. He was a schoolteacher. By 1977, he was in his mid fifties. He settled in Aluthwatte at the beginning of 1970s after getting married to a widow from Aluthwatte. Since he settled in Aluthwatte, he was politically active with the UNP. He had criticized the SLFP fractional activities in the village, particularly, the fractional activities of statutory organizations. During his carrier as a teacher he had taught the chief UNP organizer of the constituency. Due to this relationship, Podi Mahatmaya had become the chief UNP organizer of the village since mid 1970s.

At the time of parliamentary general election in 1977, there were two UNP branches in Kurulubedde: one was in Aluthwatte and the other one was in Nelligahawile. Podi
Mahatmaya was the chairman of the UNP branch in Aluthwatte. And, he was the patron adviser of the UNP branch in Nelligahawile. The chairman of the UNP branch in Nelligahawile was Pestes. Earlier, he was the secretary of the UNP branch of Kurulubedde. Except those two, many of the other active UNP members of these two party branches were villagers who had not been a part of village politics in the past. Some of these villagers, particularly many youngsters had been politically victimized during 1970-77 when they had applied for the public sector employment opportunities and the state lands. For instance, Sirivardene, the secretary of the UNP branch of Nelligahawile was a berava caste youth who had passed G.E.C. (Ordinary Level) in 1973. As I mentioned above, he had applied for a police constable post in 1975. But, he was unable to get it as he could not get the recommendation letter from the local SLFP branch. The secretary of the UNP branch in Aluthwatte was also a durāwe caste youth named Nimalasinghe. He was also victimized during the SLFP government 1970-77, when he applied for a job in Chillaw bus depot of Ceylon Transport Board. He could not get a recommendation letter from the SLFP branch of Kurulubedde. The treasurer of the UNP branch in Aluthwatte was a goigama caste youth, named Premerathne. He was also educated up to G.E.C. (Advanced Level). According him, he could not get a security officer post in Coconut Cultivation Board, because of his political loyalty to the UNP.

Although the UNP got a landslide victory in 1977 general election (140 seats out of 168 seats of the parliament), Serumaduwe where Kurulubedde belonged was among the 8 parliament seats won by the former governing party, the SLFP. However, the SLFP lost Serumaduwe electorate in less than one and half years in the beginning of 1979 because
of an election petition filed by UNP candidate. According to this petition, the former SLFP MP of the area had distributed drought subsidies in the electorate through local SLFP branches of the area just before the parliamentary general election of 1977. The court accepted this argument and, ordered a by-election. The UNP candidate won the by-election which was held in the beginning of 1979. Just after the UNP victory of this by-election, many of the active UNPers of the village were benefited from public sector job opportunities and other perks. However, the UNP government in 1977 introduced new strategies to legitimize a system of resource allocation along party politics and political allegiances.

B. Legitimization of political patronage

In this context, the UNP government of 1977 followed 'Job Bank System' (Employment Data Bank) for giving public sector appointments to their party allies. Although it claimed to be an impartial system of recruitment for public sector employments, it was a system to coordinate legitimate political distribution to the governing party members, because nominees should come to 'Job Bank' through the MP of each constituency. At the initiation, each MP was asked to nominate 1,000 names for the recruitment of middle and lower rank posts of the public sector. Every MP made this list through their village level party leaders. These village level leaders selected nominees from their party members for those public sector jobs.

Only five job cards had been given to Kurulubedde. Podi Mahatmaya had given one form for his wife’s former husband’s daughter (of whom father had died). She got a teaching appointment through the ‘Job Bank.’ Podi Mahatmaya had given other forms
to another four active UNP youths of the village. In addition to ‘Job Bank System,’
several other active UNPers also got the public sector employments. Nimalasinghe was
appointed as a bus conductor in Chillaw bus depot. Sirivardene was appointed as a
security officer in Puttalam bus depot. One of his elder brothers was also appointed as a
technical officer in Irrigation Department. Premerathne was appointed as a security
officer in Ceylon Fisheries Cooperation. Podi Mahatmaya was able to take an
appointment for his wife’s former husband’s son (of whom father had died) as a peon in
AGA office in Serumaduwe. During this time, the treasurer of the UNP branch in
Nelligahawile was named Mudalali Mahatmaya. His stepdaughter was appointed as a
trading assistant in Agrarian Service Center of Kurulubedde. After his retirement in
1980, Podi Mahatmaya had been appointed as an elderly education officer in Regional
Education Office in Serumaduwe under the contract basis.

The next important development that took place after 1977 election was that the above
UNP group in Kurulubedde occupied all the strategic positions of the village. They
occupied the statutory bodies which had been mainly engaged in the state affairs of the
village. As I mentioned above, during the SLFP regime, these organizations had been
under the hands of Ganarathne and other SLFP stalwarts like, Ausada Appuhami.
However, the most significant statutory organizations in the post 1977 period in
Kurulubedde were RDSs and CSMF, because the UNP government abolished the APC
and CC, the popular statutory organizations in the rural areas that had been established
during the SLFP regime. This was due to criticisms of these organizations about their
partisan activities of distributing state benefits, corruptions and imprudent spending of
money. Therefore, just after the general election in 1977, the UNPers asked Ganarathne
and others to resign from RDS and CSMF. After that, the UNP stalwarts occupied those organizations. Podi Mahatmaya became the chairman of RDS of Aluthwatte as well as CSMF of Kurulubedde. Nimalasinghe, the secretary of the UNP branch in Aluthwatte became the secretary of RDS. Sirivardene, the secretary of the UNP branch in Nelligahawile became the chairman of RDS of Nelligahawile. Another active UNPer in Aluthwatte, a karāva caste schoolteacher named Chali Fernando became the secretary of CSMF of Kurulubedde.

The handling of state affairs in the village according to party political affiliations after 1977 was further legitimized due to two actions taken by the UNP government of 1977. The first was appointing of two grassroots level officers at the village level to handle the state affairs in the village level, namely the ‘Special Service Officer’ (SSO) under the Department of Social Service and ‘Cultivation Officer’ (CO) under the Department of Agrarian Services. There were some significant political reasons behind these two appointments of UNP government in 1977.

Firstly, when the opposition comes to power after remaining considerable period in opposition, they think that they cannot implement grassroots level development programs successfully or according to their political party agendas because the grassroots level officers were appointed by the previous government and hence they would be still loyal to the previous political party which appointed them. Secondly, within the context of the rapid exhaustion of material resources and increasing demands for those resources, successive governing parties have to patronize their vote bank in the village with food subsidies, agricultural inputs etc. For that purpose too, it is necessary to have officers appointed by the governing party itself in the village level because the
officials appointed by the previous government do not often fulfill the expectations of governing party members. This was the rationale behind the appointment of SSO and CO in 1977 by the newly appointed UNP government. The root of this attitude of UNP can be traced to steps taken by the SLFP government in 1963.

As I pointed out earlier, even after independence, the village headman was the person who conducted the state affairs and other services or utilization of state funds at village level. Most of these village headmen had political affiliations to the UNP. One of the main aims of the SLFP was the destruction of privileges of established social strata (Jayasuriya, 2000: 98). In this context, in 1963, under the SLFP government, village headman post was replaced by a new grassroots level post called ‘grămesevake’ (village servant) that was filled by written examination (Robinson, 1975: 192). The grămesevake (GS) was responsible for all the works in the village which had been fulfilled by village headman earlier. Further, they implemented government development policies in the village areas. However, as this post was created during SLFP regime, the UNP had the idea that most of GS’s had loyalty to the SLFP. Therefore, when the UNP government came to power in 1977, they appointed SSOs in every GS divisions to handle the registration of rural organization and social service in the village level. The appointment of SSOs was directly based on the recommendation of the UNP MP or party organizer of the concerned constituencies. The duties of SSO were earlier covered by grămesevake. In this backdrop, although the post of grămesevake remained further, his works in the village level became constrained. The SSO of Kurulubedde came from a nearby village. He had a clear UNP political background. The MP of the area acknowledged his appointment.
The next such political appointment was that of the Cultivation Officer (CO). The UNP government in 1979 introduced this post under the Department of Agrarian Services to replace the cultivation committee system and to handover COs the responsibilities of agriculture developments including credit facilitation and other agricultural subsidies, which were held by APCs during the SLFP regime. Like the SSO, appointment was completely based on the recommendation of MP of the area. Therefore, the new COs was drawn from the local UNP cadres only. The CO of Nagawewe was the chairman of UNP branch in Nagawewe.

The UNP government of 1977 formed an influential new statutory organization called 'Gramodaye Mandalaye' (village awaking broad) in every grāmesevake division in 1981 to carry out the village level development programs including infrastructural, social welfare, culture and community development. 'Gramodaya Mandalaye' was the shadow of the concept of 'Grame Rajya' introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. This organization was established amending District Development Council Act of 1980. Later, it was given state funds directly under the Gramodaye Mandale Act of 1982 (Abeysinghe, 1993). The members of the Gramodaye Mandale consisted of presidents of registered voluntary organizations and field officers of the government in the concerned area. The chairman of the Gramodaye Mandalaye was elected among these members by themselves. However, the UNP MP or the party organizer of the area acknowledged the chairmanship of Gramodaye Mandalaye. This step was taken to ensure the political power of the governing party in the village level. The political background of UNP in Gramodaye Mandalaye was further ensured by appointing the
SSO, one of the grassroots level political appointments of UNP government of 1977 as the secretary of *Gramodaye Mandalaye*.

Kurulubedde belonged to Nagawewe ‘*Gramodaye Mandalaye*.’ It was established in 1982. Podi Mahatmaya (president of UNP branch of Aluthwatte) and Ganarathne (SLFP leader of Kurulubedde) contested for the chairmanship. During this time, Ganarathne was the chairman of Sanase Samitiye of Kurulubedde (Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society). As I mentioned earlier, the members of registered voluntary organizations and field officers of the government in the area like CO and *gramesevake* could vote for electing the chairman for the *Gramodaye Mandalaye*. Accordingly, only eighteen persons were able to vote. As UNP persons dominated the statutory organizations after 1977, majority of the voters were also UNP persons. And, CO was also a politically acknowledged appointment. Thus, Podi Mahatmaya became the first chairman of Nagawewe ‘*Gramodaye Mandalaye*.’ Ganarathne got only three votes. After the establishment of ‘*Gramodaye Mandalaye*,’ it became a powerful statutory body for rural development. Due to this situation, other statutory bodies like RDS became non-functional.

In this context, the interplay between party political affiliation and distributive mechanism of the state resources after 1977 became prominent. One middle-aged man of Aluthwatte, named Nilantha, told me “if Ganarathne, Ausada Appuhami and other SLFPers did something according to the political affiliation before 1977, UNPers, particularly Podi Mahatmaya, did more than that after 1977. A number of youths in Kurulubedde could not get government appointments. The UNP leaders, particularly, Podi Mahatmaya asked the MP of the area not to give government appointments to

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those youths as they were not UNPers. The best example is me.” This man was educated upto GCE (A/L) in science subjects. As he said, in 1983, he applied for a PHI (Public Health Inspector) post in Health department. There were only two vacant posts in Serumaduwe area. Recruitment for the post was done on the basis of written examination. However, the appointment of qualified candidates was directly subjected to the approval of the MP of the area. This was the continuation of the practice of inquiring about the political background of the new recruits to the public sector appointments introduced by SLFP government in 1970-77 (particularly after the 1971 youth insurrection) (see pp. 231-32 in this chapter). This ‘political sifting’ of candidates for the recruitments in government sector was more methodically utilized by UNPers after 1977. Nilantha had earned the highest marks in this examination. But, he could not get the post. He told me that, Podi Mahatmaya and the other UNPers in the village had asked the MP not to give him the post as he was a SLFP supporter. Nilantha further told, “Those days, list of qualified candidates of any examination directly came to the MP’s office and the MP selected whoever the people for whatever the post.” As it happened during SLFP regime, the MP referred his local agents for this selection.

Nilantha faced the same situation again in 1988. In that year, the government recruited schoolteachers according to the existing vacancies of certain schools. That time, there were three vacancies in the government school in Kurulubedde. Nilantha was also among the applicants. And, as he told, he got the highest marks in the interview. But, he could not get the appointment. At that point, Podi Mahatmaya intervened and asked the MP of the area to appoint his younger daughter and the other two persons who came from an active UNP background. Other villagers also confirmed these incidents. As
Nilantha told me, when he got to know that the results of the teaching interview could be seen in the MP’s office in Serumaduwe, he had gone there. Podi Mahatmaya was also there. When Nilantha met the MP he said that the results had not come. Nilantha told me, “I came back, because, I understood that I would not get the chance. After two months, the appointments had been done. But, I was not selected. Podi Mahatmaya had said to others that UNPers had to be benefited first. After that only others can get benefits from the UNP government.”

Although, it was not easy to verify the first incident which Nilantha mentioned, the villagers, particularly UNPers also verified this second incident which Nilantha faced. As pointed out by Sirivardene, one of the strong UNPer from Nelligahawile hamlet, even the UNPers criticized Podi Mahatmaya’s action against Nilantha at that moment due to two reasons. The first reason was that by that time, Podi Mahatmaya had got government jobs for all of his family members. As I pointed out, Podi Mahatmaya was also appointed as an elderly education officer under the contract basis after his retirement. Second, although Nilantha was a SLFPer, he had been a popular character even among the UNPers.

I heard a number of other incidents in Kurulubedde about how party political affiliation bolstered the villagers when they competed with each other for state resources after 1977. The villagers told me a number of incidents of how Podi Mahatmaya and other UNP stalwarts intervened in the distribution of the state resources, and how Podi Mahatmaya and others misused their political power for getting benefits when they were holding posts in village organizations. For instance, after the UNPers gained the control of CSMF of Kurulubedde after 1977, they replaced its former manager with a
new manager who was the wife of the new secretary of CSMF, one of the most active UNPers in Aluthwatte. As villagers told me, Podi Mahatmaya had to resign from the chairmanship of CSMF of Kurulubedde in 1984 as he had misused more than thirty thousand rupees of CSMF’s funds during that time. According to the villagers, Podi Mahatmaya had resigned from ‘Gramodaye Mandalaye’ in 1986, due to the same problem, misuse of funds of ‘Gramodaya Mandalaye.’ Interestingly, after Podi Mahatmaya’s resignation, the CO of Nagawewe, another strong UNPer of the area became the chairman of Gramodaye Mandalaye. However, even after that, Podi Mahatmaya was in a firm position controlling village affairs in the village because of his firm stand as chief UNP organizer in the area and due to his close relationship with the MP of the area.

4.4.3 Continuation of the national system of patronage

So far, we observed that the simultaneous process of political mobilization and distributive welfare mechanism of the state has led to the creation of a national system of patronage in the rural society in which the political parties, the state and the rural masses closely linked. In this context, we have seen how politics became the most determining factor for handling state distributions and other state affairs in Kurulubedde village. This system gradually institutionalized and legitimized. And, it paved the way for distribution of state resources along political affiliations and personal advantage. The next step in this regard was to appoint politically biased officers directly at the village level to handle the state distributions according to the political identity of governing parties like SSO and CO under the UNP government in 1977, as they wanted...
to ensure this politically motivated distribution and party control over state affairs in the village level.

This corrupt political syndrome was the basic reason for the appointment of two minor level officers called *Samurdhi* Development Officer (SDO) and Agricultural Research and Production Assistant (ARPA) in every Grame Niladari Divisions (GND) under the newly appointed People’s Alliance (PA) government led by SLFP in 1994. In 1992, SSOs and COs who were appointed by the UNP in late 1970s were absorbed by the GS service, and they became the fully authorized officers in the village to handle the state affairs including *Janasaviya* poverty alleviation program (major election pledge of UNP election campaign in 1988) and other state distributions. Although the PA government attempted to cancel the previous government’s inclusion of SSO and CO in the GS service, it failed due the intervention of the Supreme Court. Then, the PA government appointed SDO and ARPA to control the available state distributions in the village according to their political willingness. Appointments of SDO and ARPA were completely based on the recommendation of the MP of the concerned electorate. The responsibility of SDO was to handle the new government’s poverty alleviation program called ‘*Samurdhi*.’ ARPA’s duty was to handle the agricultural activities of the village level including subsidized fertilizer distribution and other agricultural inputs.

I do not intend to present an extensive analysis of the situation in the village during the post 1994 period under SLFP led PA government as that will be the major preoccupation of the next chapter. However, I present two examples to portray the situation in Kurulubedde under the SLFP led PA government in its initial stage. By 1994, Kurulubedde village was divided into two GN divisions as Nelligahawile and
Kurulubedde. The SDO and ARPA for these two GN divisions could secure these posts basically due to their strong SLFP affiliation. The SDO for Nelligahawile was Ausada Appuhami’s own son. The ARPA for Nelligahawile was Baddenayake’s younger brother’s younger son. During that time, both of them were active SLFP members in the village. Both SDO and ARPA for Kurulubedde GN division came from Aluthwatte. Both of them were politically active youths of SLFP during that period. According to the villagers, the influence of these two political appointments could be seen clearly when the recipients were selected for the Samurdhi development program. According to the Samurdhi program, selected low-income families were given Samurdhi subsidies under the five categories from Rs. 140.00 to Rs. 600.00. This categorization must be based on the income level of the families. But, according to the villagers, some SLFP allies in the village had been selected for Rs. 600.00 category without considering their income level. Some villagers who were in favour for UNP were selected for low categories although they had to be put in Rs. 600.00 category.

The next example to highlight the entrenchment of party politics and political allegiances in Kurulubedde after 1994 is related to the distribution of lands to initiate two-model villages in the neighbouring Bamunugame area. As I mentioned earlier, the extent of state lands in Kurulubedde area was exhausted by early 1980s. However, there were some uncultivated middle class lands in the neighbouring Bamunugame area. In 1953, these lands were distributed to landless people from outside who possessed a sufficient income to develop these lands under the Land Development Ordinance of 1935. But, some plots of these lands were abandoned without any cultivation. When the PA government came to power in 1994, the SLFP MP of the area intervened to
confiscate two plots of middle class lands (twenty five areas of each) which had been abandoned. This was for the initiation of model-villages targeting landless youths in the area giving them a quarter of an acre. More than twenty villagers had been selected for this program from Kurulubedde. But, there was no UNPers among them. All the recipients had been selected directly due to their political loyalty to SLFP, and according to the consent of the SLFP MP of the constituency.

4.5 Concluding remarks

My purpose in this chapter was to analyze the development of political affiliation and mediating imperatives in Kurulubedde village from a historical perspective. In particular, the aim was to show how politics and political affiliations have become the basic ingredient in the social life of Kurulubedde. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1931 without considering either property or literacy qualifications was one of the greatest factors of social change in rural Sri Lanka. However, as we have seen, the control of electoral politics in rural areas like Kurulubedde firmly remained in the hands of very few as well as privileged social strata until the mid 1950s. They controlled state affairs in the village. Even after independence, there was no perceptible change in this dominant political structure of Kurulubedde.

According the above discussion, one basic political implication is that the post colonial state in Sri Lanka has extensively influenced the social life of the masses, particularly rural masses. Considering post colonial India, Atul Kohli pointed out that an interventionist state in the early stages of development has difficulty in establishing a separation between the public and private spheres in social life. Next, he pointed out
that an interventionist developing state typically controls a substantial proportion of economic resources. Given the scarcities in a poor economy, the competitive energies of the many individuals and groups seeking economic improvements tend to get focused on the state (2006 [1990] 392-3). These new social groups have been easily mobilized within electoral reasons, as the state has been organized within electoral democracy.

What we saw in Kurulubedde since mid 1950s, particularly with the emergence of the new MEP government in 1956, reflects significant characteristics of interrelationship among the state, politics and masses. Since then, the political participation of the villagers increased and the dominant political leadership in the village also changed. New social groups who were not active in rural politics became active in politics in the village in state and government affairs. This was a turning point for a transition in the political affairs of the village. The MEP government's policy of giving status and more responsibilities to the rural people in the government machinery through the newly established and re-organized rural organization changed the political culture in the village further. From this point, successive governments channeled various collective and individual state resources to the rural areas through those statutory bodies which allowed office bearers of these organizations to handle those resources.

However, gradually it could be seen that party politics got established firmly within that mechanism. Politically dynamic villagers who dominated those statutory bodies were in a position to include or exclude the villagers from state benefit. The establishment of the local branches of the SLFP and the UNP in Kurulubedde further ensured the organization of the village along political party lines. This situation could be seen particularly in the context of a growing proportion of state resources ending up as
means of individual rather than collective advantages. In such a backdrop of depleting state resources, the influence of those politically dynamic villagers in the village became stronger in handling those limited resources according to the pursuit of purely personal and factional interest. For instance, though there was a strong demand for the paddy lands in Kurulubedde in 1960, there were very few paddy lands available to distribute.

This situation also led to the disappearance of the ideological base of the political leaders of the village. As I have described so far, the group that was politically mobilized in Kurulubedde during 1956 was a dynamic social force. Those who embraced Sinhala nationalist ideology was dissatisfied with the post-independence UNP regime. When MEP emerged as a new political movement at the beginning of 1950s that group moved towards it. When the village got entrenched in a network of patronage and dependence on party political affiliation, the ideological foundation of the leaders disappeared. Appointment of politically biased officers in the village level to control, handle and dispense the state activities fostered the idea that allocation of state resources in the village should be based on party political affiliation rather than on the principle of equity, or any other qualifications. The development of this idea and its pursuit created conflicts in the village in many different ways which will be discussed in the next chapter.
According to K.M. de Silva (1973a: 219), “The native chiefs formed an integral part of the administrative structure at the district level and below. Districts were divided into chief headmen's divisions (110 in all); and these in turn into 613 sub-divisions under superior headmen and 4000 or so villages and sub-divisions of villages under village headman.” See, Silva, K.M. De (1973a) ‘The Development of the Administrative System, 1833 to 1910,’ in *History of Ceylon*, ed. K.M. De Silva. Colombo, University of Ceylon, Pp. 213-225

Many of these native officials of the colonial administration scarcely differed from the feudal overlords of the Kandyan kingdom. During the Kandyan period, political and hierarchical formation was grounded in the agrarian structure of that time. It had been sustained by a tributary mode of production operating through a complex system of land tenures that was articulated in the idiom of cast service. At the apex of this system was stood the king. The next layer was the landholding aristocracy, called *radala*. They were the upper layer of *goigama* caste, the higher caste of Sinhala caste system. They held the monopoly of high ranks of the staff posts of the kingdom. Tenant cultivators of various categories, lower layer of *goigama* caste and low caste people cultivated their lands. In the village level, members of the yeomanry who belonged to *goigama* caste held the lower level posts like village chief. For Further information; see, Gunasinghe, Newton (1996)'Land Reforms, Class Structure and the State in Sri Lanka: 1970-1977' in *Newton Gunasinghe: Selected Essays*, ed: Sasanka Perera, Colombo: Social Scientists Association, PP. 53-76; Brow, James (1988) ‘In Pursuit of Hegemony: Representations of Authority and Justice in a Sri Lankan Village,’ in, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 15, No. 2, PP. 311-327

*Vel vidâne* (irrigation headman) post was established under the “Irrigation Ordinance of 1856.”

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was assassinated in 1959. After that, his widow, Sirima Bandaranaike became the leader of SLFP and won the general election in 1960 and became the prime minister of Sri Lanka.

The architecture of the ‘Paddy Lands Act of 1958’ was a leading Marxist leader at that time. However, Marxist parties were unable to make foundation among the agrarian society in the country. In contrast to Sri Lanka, communist parties of India played major role in mobilization of Indian agrarian society and those parties were able to make strong stance among the masses. T.K. Oommen pointed out “the communist parties of India were and still are in the forefront of peasant mobilization” (1995: 134).

The concept of intermediate class is based on Michael Kalecki’s (1972) conceptualization of the intermediate regime in the Third World countries which
emphasize the political dominance of an alliance of the lower middle class or petite bourgeoisie and richer peasants. According to Kalecki, in 1950s and after that, the lower middle class of most Asian and African third world countries which did not belong to the capitalist high class or labour class were able to influence the ruling class within the context of anti-imperial and anti-feudalistic base. See, Kalecki, Michael (1972) Selected Essays in Economic Growth of the Socialist and Mixed Economy, London: Cambridge University Press.

Interestingly, under J.R. Jayewardene's leadership, deputy leadership of the UNP was filled by a lowest caste of the Sinhala caste system. Due to these leadership changes, low caste people were attracted to the UNP significantly.

At the May Day meeting on 1st May of 1978, then President J. R. Jayewardene, "We have asked every M.P. to send us 1,000 names to be included in the job bank for this year. It would be possible in this manner to find jobs for 168,000 persons." See, Jayewardene, J.R. (1978) 'A New Deal for Workers' (Speech made by J.R. Jayewardene, President of Sri Lanka, at the May Day Meeting on 1st May 1978), in A Better Life for the People. Colombo: Government Press, P. 52

Interestingly, when SLFP led PA government came to power in 1994; they tried to cancel the previous government’s inclusion of SSO and CO in the GS service, as these officers were direct political appointment by UNP government during UNP regime. Then, all the SSO and CO officers who were included in the GS service filed a case in Supreme Court. The court ordered the government to accept the inclusion of the SSO and CO officers to GS service.

In 1994, when Samurdhi development program was initiated, subsidiary categorization was Rs. 140.00, 250.00, 350.00, 400.00 and 600.00. But, when I was in the village, it was increased to Rs. 210.00, 375.00, 525.00, 600.00 and 900.00 respectively.