



International Centre for Ethnic Studies

Up-country Tamils: Charting a New Future
Conference Abstracts – Day 1 (2nd August, 2017)

I. Keynote Speeches

Charting Uncertain Futures: Diaspora, Citizenship and Belonging among Up-country Tamils

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As Sri Lanka slowly emerges from decades of war and years of corrupt authoritarian rule, Up-country Tamils' place in the country remains unsettled. Up-country Tamils have lived on the margins of Sri Lankan society since their ancestors' arrival from India generations ago. In this presentation, I argue that analyzing Up-country Tamils as a diasporic community provides valuable insight into their ethnic identifications, political practices and struggles for citizenship. Up-country Tamils' precarious position bears significant similarities to other communities comprised of descendants of Indian plantation diasporas, in Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius and Trinidad. Repositioning Up-country Tamils as a diaspora provides a comparative theoretical framework to understand alternative possibilities for Up-country Tamils' future on the island. I focus on three aspects of Up-country Tamils' diasporic condition: ethnic identities, parliamentary and local politics, and understandings of citizenship and belonging. The rise of a distinct Up-country Tamil identity in the latter twentieth century provided new ways to conceptualize an identification with the island without renouncing their Indian history and heritage. Despite a history that might indicate the contrary, Up-country Tamils have consistently trusted in the power of government and democracy to enact change and improve their community. However, parliamentary politics has been full of unmet promises and many forms of local government are still unavailable to most Up-country Tamils. For example, tea estates are not included in Pradeshiya Sabhas, depriving Up-country Tamils resident on the estates of the same public services as any other Sri Lankan. In the 2011 census, fewer Up-country Tamils were officially counted than in previous years, although the precise reasons behind this shift are difficult to determine, leading to highly charged political debates. Altogether, these changes reflect greater issues of diasporic belonging, pointing to the difficulty in integrating minorities into post-war Sri Lankan society.

Keywords: Diaspora, Politics, Ethnicity, Citizenship, Identity

Migration towards North-East and emerging political leadership of Hill Country Tamils

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The recent Indian Origin Tamils also called as Hill Country Tamil / Malayaha Tamil were brought by the British colonialists to toil in the coffee, tea, rubber and coconut plantations were kept as captive labour force. The movement of the labourers were totally controlled by the Estate Management. Without the permission of the estate management, exiting from the estates were regarded as punishable offence. However, post independent policies of the government in relation to this community and the ethnic violence which occurred from time to time pushed these workers to move out from the plantations. Soon after the independence, the new government brought Citizenship Act and disfranchised the community and made them Stateless. This factor forced some of the plantation community to migrate permanently to South India, back to their mother land. The ethnic riot which occurred in 1958 forced section of the plantation community to voluntarily migrate to the North and East of Sri Lanka to settle down there permanently. This is the first inland migration.

The second voluntary migration took place with the introduction of Srimala-Sastri implementation Act in 1970's and the plantation nationalization in 1972 -1975. Following that 1977,1981 and 1983 riots led to a mass migration towards the North/East. The Hill Country Tamils who migrated towards North/East become part and parcel of the ethnic war and continued to live as Tamils. During the war, the youth of this community played a leading role in the freedom movement and this community was treated as equal citizen by the native Tamils of the North and the East.

However, the post war transitional justice scenarios pushed the community to look at their identity and to claim political representation. The TNA nominated a representative to the Northern Provincial Council for a period of one year to represent the Hill Country Tamils of Northern Province. The representative claimed in his speech delivered during the swearing-in ceremony said that he represents the voice of the Indian Origin Tamils of Northern Province.

II. Session 1: Place and Identity

Malaiyaha Thamilar: Identity Formation and Challenges

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What is identity? And why it is important? Identity is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others. Identity is important for every ethnic group to safe guard their stability in the long run. Basically a territory, language, culture or religion decides the identity of different group of people in the world.

There are twenty one ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Out of which there are four major nationalities Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims and Malaiyaha Thamilar (Up-Country Tamils). Others are small ethnic groups living different parts of the country.

Malaiyaha Thamilar officially known as Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka. This identity was first given to this community by the British rulers in 1911 to differentiate them from Sri Lankan Tamils. Like other ethnic communities in Sri Lanka other than the indigenous (Veddhas) community Malaiyaga Thamilar also migrated and settled community in Sri Lanka from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The identity of ‘Malaiyaga Thamilar’ was strongly emphasized after 1960s by the activists from this community. This Malaiyaha Thamilar identity is attached to the land they live. ‘Malai’ means mountain based up or hill country and ‘Yaham’ means inside. This identity relates to the insides of the people who live in the up or hill country or highland of Sri Lanka.

At present there are various challenges to this identity of Malaiyaha Thamilar. There are people from inside and outside this community has different opinion on this identity. They have different identity names for this community. They are Indian Tamils, Indian Origin Tamils, Indian Origin Up-Country (Malaiyaha) Tamils, Indian Origin Sri Lankan Tamils, Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamils. But people who have this different idea on identity are small in amount.

There are valid reasons to say how and where this community is different in identity from Sri Lankan Tamils while both communities are speaking the same language known as Tamil. Further, there are valid reasons to say why this community should not call as Indian Tamils and why this community should called as Malaiyaga Thamilar.

“Telling of My Identity Myself”: A Positioning theory analysis of Up-Country Tamil People’s Complex Self-identification

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The research strived to gain insight in to the complex and nuanced self-identification of the Up-Country/Estate Tamil (UCT) people of Sri Lanka. The UCT people, apparently inextricably linked with their colonial past, are often identified (i.e. Positioned) by others, such as in the official forms and in their day-to-day dealings. Interchangeably called “Estate Tamils”, “Tamils of Indian origin” or “Up-Country/Hill-Country Tamils”, their identification is based on a ‘place’ (where they came from, where they stay) or their ‘job’. This simplistic ‘positioning’ by others excludes the nuanced complexity of ‘self-identification’. The UCT people of this research are multi-religious, complex in their familial ties, working within and outside of the Estate sector, and often multi-lingual. More than that, the one-dimensional ‘positioning’ of these UCT people do not take into account their links with Tamil people of the North and East and in Tamil Nadu, or with the Sinhala and Muslim people within the country. Nor does it explain the fluidity in their religious affiliation or in the traditions they follow. Such basic place/work-based identification takes away the gender dimension, concerns, aspirations or the duality of a need to assimilate or remain isolated from in to the greater society.

Utilizing Positioning theory as the analytical lens, this research triangulated data from interviews, observations and (primary and secondary) data to illustrate the nuanced self-identification by the UCT people themselves.

The research finding illuminate how the first-order positioning of the UCT people themselves differ from that of the externally-imposed positioning by the others. These insights are of profound importance for two reasons. Firstly, without insights into how they identify themselves, it is impossible to ponder how to design policies, activities, etc. without comprehending their own self-identification, their aspirations, their concerns, their taboos and their relationships. Furthermore, designating a group based on place/work hinder post-conflict social harmony.

Key Words

Estate Tamils, Social Harmony, Identity, Positioning theory, Gender

Caste and Gender: The Politics of Identity

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The contemporary globe which faces the most threatening challenge is identity. There is always a dichotomy between the personal construction of the self and the social construction of the self of others. It may fairly be stated that identities in contemporary societies are being fragmented. The recent past, individuals have a number of central elements to the construction of their identity such as family, locality, nationality, and ethnicity to mention a few. At the same time it is claimed that identities are more fluid in contemporary societies. People can change identities over their life time. They can choose to whom they want to be in a society in which traditional royalties are broken down. Giddens, for example, argue that one of the key features of modernity is what he calls, 'the reflexive project of the self'. Individuals reflect on their own identity and continuously rework it.

Since the inception of industrial revolution, the human society aspires to have an egalitarian society. The fact is that, in reality it remains as an utopian ideology. Even though the human society is stratified in diversified forms, considering the conceptual content of the research paper, more emphasis is devoted to the stratified elements which are caste and gender. However, certain other forms of stratification have also been given limited emphasis to validate the argument.

Caste is a form of social stratification which involves a system of hierarchically ranked, closed, endogamous strata, the membership of which is ascribed and between which contact is restricted and mobility is theoretically impossible. In its purest form in Hindu India the caste principle is religious. Castes are ranked in accordance with the degree of 'ritual purity' ascribed to members and their activities. Since as it is mentioned by many scholars, the origin of caste has its roots in Hindu India. Sri Lankan Tamils (Dravidians – South India) and Sinhalese (Aryans – North India) settled in Sri Lanka arriving from India. Indian Tamils were brought by the British Raj in early part of 19th century to work in the plantation sector. Therefore there is no doubt that the Indian form of cast structure is deeply rooted in Sri Lanka in different forms and levels.

Gender, as far as South Asian societies are concerned, is another form of stratification. Sociologies and social psychologists argue that while sex refers to the biological characteristics by which human beings are characterized as 'male', and 'female'. Gender refers to, 'masculinity' and 'femininity' which is socially constructed reality. Sri Lankan society, as it is the historical heritage, is a male centered and patriarchal society. Even there have been women empowerment events taking place considerably in the estate sector, it is literally ineffective. There needs much more to do to liberate, specifically, the Up-country Tamil women from the clutches of the hegemonic administration of the estate.

Key words.

Caste, Gender, Identity, Stratification, and egalitarian.

III. Session 2: Land, Housing and Public Services

The Impact of Estate Worker Housing on Sustaining the Plantation System in Sri Lanka

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The plantation system all over the world depends on two main factors for its sustainability; availability large extents of fertile land and access to cheap labor. The shelter conditions of the estate worker community of Sri Lanka have been effectively used for the control and the supply of labor force from the inception of plantation industry in the island.

In spite of several shelter improvement programmes implemented, more than 65% of the estate worker community still occupy the dilapidated and congested single or double barrack type housing. The shelter condition is a significant factor which contributes to their marginalization status. There is a strong social stigma linked to living in line rooms which does not provide basic spatial requirements or mandatory social desires such as sense of privacy and territoriality. It is the place of residence that brings humiliation and not the place of work. This is evident as the villagers who work in estates are not looked down.

The present estate owned social housing of the workers acts as a major force in strengthening the hegemony of the management or the trade unions and prevents the upward social mobility of the occupants.

One of the successful examples of shelter improvement programmes implemented in estates is the construction of 25,000 units of new detached houses by the “Plantation Development Support Programme” from 1998 to 2005 period, employing the enabling strategy. It also addressed the issue of “right to land” through a pragmatic and innovative approach considering the issues of socio- ethnic equilibrium and stability of the system of the management of the estates.

The research studies indicate that the detached houses with private land plots support the process of social mobility of the worker families. They facilitate the development of economic as well as human capital through varying means.

This paper will present the evolution of housing in Sri Lankan plantations in general and the impact of shelter conditions on the social- economic and cultural conditions of the community in particular.

Keywords: - Plantations, Estate workers, Housing, Line rooms

Public Service Delivery, Quality of Government and Institutional Trust: An Examination on the Working of Public Institutions in the Plantation Sector of Sri Lanka

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Introduction

This paper endeavours to examine how the nature of public service delivery, institutional working and practices affect the quality of government (QoG) and institutional trust in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka. A large body of literature suggests that quality and equal public service provision, impartial and effective public institutions and officials significantly influence the quality of government and citizens' trust in government institutions. Thus, there is close nexus between public service delivery, QoG and institutional trust (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008; Rothstein & Stolle, 2003; La Porta et al, 1999). According to Rothstein and Teorell (2008) QoG refers to the impartiality of public institutions that exercise government powers through implementing various policies and programs. They argue that public institutions and officials need to adhere the key principles of QoG: impartiality, fairness and rule of law in implementing policies and programs without bias regarding citizens' affiliation and it should be a norm of institutional working.

Put differently, high quality of government increases the quality of public institutions as well as quality of public services, which eventually improve citizens' trust in government. Scholars argue that when public institutions tend to perform its duties based on the key principles of QoG, it is more likely to provide equal avenues to access public services for all segments of society (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006; Persson et al, 2013; Rothstein and Stolle (2003). In this backdrop, the study aims to examine how institutional working, practices and nature of public service delivery affect quality of government and citizens' trust in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka. This paper is an output of eight months' field study conducted in 2015 in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya Districts of Sri Lanka for a three-year research project titled '*citizenship, public service delivery and quality of government in Sri Lanka*'.

As empirical evidence indicates, plantation people appear to view public institutions and officials negatively due to discriminatory practices, ill-treatment, partiality, unfairness and particularism. The analytic narratives show that these practices are more likely to single out plantation people from being able to enjoy public services. Moreover, identity affiliations (ethnic and social), language of business, political and administrative patronage and corruption have an influence in shaping the behaviour of public officials and the working of public institutions in the plantation sector – service delivery appears to differ based along these lines. This study shows that since public servants are from particular social backgrounds, their association naturally reflect their social background and affiliation in service delivery, which means certain institutional cultures, social norms and organisational citizenship behaviour are more likely to dismantle key values of impartiality and equality before the law. This pattern seems to have a considerable effect on quality of government and institutional trust.

The study argues that although the subsequent governments give high priority to service delivery, quality of goods and services in terms of access, equity, equality and efficiency, have progressively

deteriorated over the years, which appears to have an impact on institutional trust and led to strong negative perception of public institutions among plantation communities. Interestingly, experiences of discrimination and ill treatment by public officials seem to have an influence on their children, families and community members, which generate a negative perception regarding neutrality, benevolence, competency, integrity and helpfulness of public institutions and officials, eventually the government as a whole. This indicates how perception of trust has been transferred to generations in this community. Moreover, apart from one's own experience on the working of public institutions, impressions and experiences of their families, parents, friends and members of their community seem to have an impact on institutional trust and quality of government. Empirical evidence shows that plantation people are more inclined to observe how they are treated in line with procedural fairness and impartiality. This pattern seems to emanate from a sense of feeling as a full citizen or legal citizen of the country. Especially, the younger generation is critical about particularism, ill-treatment, discriminations and partiality by public institutions, though they have relatively high trust in them.

This study finds that public officials seem to have a lack of trust on this community, which particularly emerges when plantation people tend to access identification documents, poverty/humanitarian relief, government subsidies, employment and social security payments. It can be argued that patronage, partiality, unfair treatment and patron-clientelism become visible in selective public services, where officials are more likely to pursue and reflect associational relationship and other affiliations, which eventually result in cheating, blaming, questioning, complicated procedures, and unfair eligibility criteria. This is more likely to deny universal ideas and values in service delivery and single out deserving plantation people. Through this study, it becomes evident that plantation people encounter relatively much more discriminations in selective welfare programs (means-tested) than that of universal welfare services, though the latter remain unequal. Further, weak diversity management and unfair practices within public institutions have negatively affected the efficiency and performance of officials belonging to the minority. Therefore, they seem to play a passive role in shaping public policy process, implementing policies as well as serving their own community.

It is safe to argue that low quality of public institutions and their unfair working have resulted in poor subjective human well-being, social development and fragile social citizenship in this community, which has generated a low level of trust in public institutions and officials. Moreover, unequal public service provision and low quality of government have also resulted in discriminations in governance, poor participation in governance structures, persistent ill-treatments, vulnerability, lack of social capital, voicelessness, weak human capability and social deprivations, which has generated a '*non-economic form of poverty*' among the plantation people. Therefore, improving the quality of government is likely to increase the extent of access and service delivery more visible to the plantation community, which can improve social well-being, social citizenship and access to governance structures. This may be possible through institutional reforms and institutional revolution.

Key words: Public service delivery, quality of government, institutional trust, public institutions, Plantation sector

மலையகத் தமிழர்களின் காணி உரிமைகள் மற்றும் சூழலியல் பிரச்சினைகள்

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இலங்கையில் பிரித்தானிய ஆட்சியின்போது அழைத்துவரப்பட்ட மக்கள் பெருந்தோட்ட பயிர்ச்செய்கையில் ஈடுபடுத்தப்பட்டதன் விளைவாக இலங்கையின் தேசிய வருமானத்தில் மிகப் பிரதான பங்களிப்பை இன்றும் செய்து வருகின்றனர். இன்றுவரை அடிப்படை வசதிகளைக்கூட நுகர முடியாமல் இருக்கும் தோட்ட தொழிலாளர்கள் போராட்டங்கள், எதிர்ப்புக்கள், இழப்புக்கள் மற்றும் உரிமை மீறல்கள் போன்றவற்றிற்கு மத்தியில் தங்களை “மலையகத் தமிழர்கள்” என்ற பொதுவான வகைப்பாட்டிற்குள் அடையாளப்படுத்தியுள்ளனர். குறிப்பாக இம்மக்கள் எதிர்நோக்கும் காணி உரிமை மற்றும் சூழலியல் பிரச்சினைகளை ஆராயும் நோக்கில் செய்யப்பட்ட ஆய்வு பற்றியே இச்சுருக்கக் கட்டுரை விளக்கமளித்துள்ளது.

காணி உரிமையானது அடிப்படை உரிமைகளில் ஒன்று. இலங்கையின் தேசிய வருமானத்தில் 17 வீத பங்களிப்பைச் செலுத்திவரும் மலையக மக்கள் இருநூறு வருடகாலமாக காணி உரிமை மறுக்கப்பட்டுள்ள நிலையில் வாழ்ந்து வருகின்றனர். இவ் ஆய்வானது, அரசாங்கத்தால் கைவிடப்பட்ட, காணிச் சீர்திருத்த ஆணைக்குழுவிடமிருந்து உரித்தான மொனறாகலை மாவட்டம், மொனறாகலே மற்றும் அலியாவத்தை தோட்ட மக்களின் காணி உரிமைகள் பற்றியதாக காணப்படுகின்றது. இயற்கை நீருற்றுக்குப் பாதிப்பை ஏற்படுத்துவதாகக் கூறி இப்பிரதேசங்களில் பல தலைமுறைகளாக வாழ்ந்துவரும் மக்களை அங்கிருந்து வெளியேற்றுவதற்கான நடவடிக்கைகள் வனப்பாதுகாப்பு திணைக்களம் மற்றும் உள்ளூராட்சி மன்றங்கள், மாவட்ட செயலகம் போன்றவற்றால் மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்டு வருகின்றன.

இம்மக்களின் காணிகள் அபகரிக்கப்படுவதற்கான நடவடிக்கைகளை தீவிரமாக இடம்பெற்றுக் கொண்டிருக்க மறுபக்கம் மொனறாகலை மாவட்டத்தில் காணிச் சீர்திருத்த ஆணைக்குழுவிடமிருந்து சொந்தமான காணிகள் பெரும்பான்மையின மக்களுக்கு வழங்கப்பட்டுள்ளது வழங்கப்படும் வருகின்றது. நீண்டகாலமாக மொனறாகலே மற்றும் அலியாவத்த தோட்ட மக்கள் பாதை, மின்சாரம், குடிநீர் மற்றும் அடிப்படை தேவைகளை பெற்றுக்கொள்ள முடியாமல் பல்வேறு அசௌகரியங்களுக்கு முகங்கொடுக்கின்றனர்.

பல தலைமுறைகளாக வாழ்ந்துவரும் காணிகளில் அவர்களுக்குள்ள உரிமைகள் மீறப்படுவதால் பயிர்ச்செய்கையில் ஈடுபடுவதில் பின்வாங்குகின்றனர். அத்துடன், தாங்கள் வாழும் வீட்டை விஸ்தரிப்பதிலும் கூட நெருக்கடிகளை எதிர்நோக்குகின்றனர்.

இயற்கை நீருற்றுப் பகுதிகளில் இவர்கள் வாழ்வதாலும், மலசலக்கூட வசதி இல்லாததாலும் நீர்வளம் பாதிக்கப்படுவதாக மாவட்ட செயலாளர்களால் குற்றம் கூறப்பட்டு காணிகள் பறிக்கப்படுவதற்கான நடவடிக்கை மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்டு வருகின்றது. இருப்பினும், நீருற்று பகுதியில் இருந்து 3, 4 கிலோமீற்றர் தூரத்திலேயே தாங்கள் குடியிருப்பதாகவும் தாமும் அந்நீரையே குடிப்பதாகவும் இங்கு வாழும் மக்கள் குறிப்பிடுகின்றனர். அத்தோடு, பல தலைமுறைகளாக இக்காணிகளை பயன்படுத்தி வருகின்றமைக்கான சான்றாதாரங்கள் இருக்கின்றன என குறிப்பிடும் மக்கள், தங்களை திட்டமிட்டே இங்கிருந்து வெளியேற்றுவதற்கான நடவடிக்கைகளை ஒரு சிலர் மேற்கொள்வதாகவும் குறை கூறுகின்றனர்.

மேலும், மலையகத்தைப் பொறுத்தவரையில் நீர் மாசடைதல் மட்டுமன்றி இன்று சுற்றுலாத்துறை விருத்தியினால் நகராக்கம் இடம்பெற்று சூழலியல் பிரச்சினைகள் ஏற்பட்டுள்ளன. இதன் காரணமாக மண்சரிவு, அதிகமான திண்மக் கழிவு வெளியேற்றம், மண்ணரிப்பு, தேயிலைச் செய்கையின் அழிப்பு, தொற்று நோய்கள் போன்றவற்றாலும் மலையக மக்கள் பாதிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளனர். காடழிப்பு, உயிர்ப்பல்வகைமை மற்றும் இயற்கை பாதிப்படைதல் போன்றனவும் இங்கு அதிகரித்துள்ளது. இந்நாட்டின் பொருளாதாரம் மற்றும் நிலையான அபிவிருத்திக்கு குறிப்பிடத்தக்களவு பங்களிப்பு செய்யும்

மலையக மக்களின் பிரச்சினைகள் இதுவரையில் அதிகரித்துள்ளதே தவிர குறைவடையவில்லை. அவர்களுக்கான உரிமைகள் தொடர்ந்தும் மீறப்படுகின்றன.

மொனறாகெலே மற்றும் அலியாவத்தை தோட்ட மக்களின் காணி உரிமைகள் பல வருடங்களாக வெளிக்கொண்டு வரப்படாமல் ஏனைய சமூகங்களுக்கு தெரியாத ஒன்றாகவே காணப்பட்டது. முக்கியமாக இம்மக்களின் வாழ்வுரிமை மற்றும் காணியுரிமை பற்றிய பிரச்சினைகளையும் சூழலியல் பிரச்சினைகளையும் இலங்கையின் ஏனைய சமூகங்களுக்கும் தெரியப்படுத்தி அவர்களின் உரிமையை பெற்றுக்கொடுப்பதே இவ்வாய்வின் பிரதான நோக்கமாக காணப்பட்டது. மேலும் இம்மக்கள் நாளுக்கு நாள் அனுபவித்துவரும் சூழலியல் பிரச்சினைகளை தீர்ப்பதற்கான ஒரு முறைமையை பரிந்துரை செய்வதும் இதன் உப நோக்கமாக காணப்படுகின்றது.

இந்த ஆய்வில் அளவுசார் முறையும் (ரூயவெவையவளைந) பண்புசார் முறையும் (ரூயடவையவளைந) பயன்படுத்தப்பட்டு தரவுகள் திரட்டப்பட்டன. மொனறாகெலே மற்றும் அலியாவத்தை ஆகிய இரு பிரதேசங்களிலும் குறிப்பிட்ட சில குடும்பங்கள் மற்றும் அப்பிரதேச கிராமசேகவர், பிரதேச செயலாளர் போன்றோருடன் நேர்காணல்கள் இடம்பெற்றன. மேலும் அப்பிரதேசங்களிலுள்ள குடும்பங்களில் உள்ள ஆண் பெண்களை தெரிவு செய்து அவர்களிடம் கலந்துரையாடி தகவல்கள் பெறப்பட்டன. இதன்போது அவர்கள் தமது பிரச்சினைகள் பற்றிய கதைகளையும் தெரிவித்தனர். மேலும் அப்பிரதேசங்களுக்கு விஜயம் செய்தபோது அவதானத்தின் மூலமும் தகவல்கள் பெறப்பட்டன.

இரண்டாம் நிலைத்தரவின் மூலமும் தகவல்கள் திரட்டப்பட்டன. அதாவது காணி உரிமை தொடர்பான விடயங்கள், காணிச்சீர்திருத்த ஆணைக்குழு அறிக்கைகள், வனப்பாதுகாப்பு திணைக்கள ஆவணங்கள், சூழலியல் திணைக்கள ஆவணங்கள் மற்றும் அப்பிரதேச மக்களின் காணி உரிமை பற்றிய ஆவணங்களினூடாக (ஆதாரங்கள்) பல விடயங்கள் பெற்றுக்கொள்ளப்பட்டன.

IV. Session 3: Rights and Development

Use and Abuse of Labour Rights in the Colonial Plantation System: A comparative study of Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaya

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Sri Lankan historiography relating to immigrant plantation worker community under colonialism in the 19th century has so far failed to examine the inner complexity of strategies of labour management. This historiography tends to emphasize institutional developments in the plantation sector as and overall process of modernization where the colonial state and the British planters combined to provide better social, health and sanitation facilities for the welfare of the immigrant workers.

In 19th century colonial plantation system in the Asian region labour management and control has to be examined at three levels. First, legal level where government Ordinances legally guaranteed the rights of the workers and even envisaged bargaining with employers on wages and working conditions. Second, labour management and control strategies informally employed by planters collectively. Third, methods of regimentation and exploitation practiced by individual planters. The important of this research entirely a new approach to management and control of Indian Plantation labourers under colonial regime in broadly and this is the first attempt at a comparative study with countries such as Burma, Malaya and Sri Lanka. The main objective of this research therefore to open a new academic dialog on this specific subject. This research will argue with reference to Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaya that labour management and exploitation under British colonial rule in Asia in many respects did not deviate from the system of the slavery in the American continent.

Several historians, Michael Roberts in particular, have assumed that on the whole formal legal regulations were accepted and implemented by the planters. This research will present the hypothesis fact labour ordinances was used and abused with the connivance of the British bureaucracy and entirely new terms and restrictions were imposed, informal, collectively and individually by planters.

This research hopes to follow the scientific method of identification and analysis of historical sources. Materials using in the conduct of this research have been collected mostly from labour commission reports, Labour Acts, Sessional reports, Administration reports etc. This researcher expect to conduct extensive field research in selected plantation locations to supplement evidence from official and non-official sources to strengthen the argument.

Keywords; Indian Immigrant Laborers, Rules and Regulations, Labour Rights, Colonialism

Between Factory and Estate

Zainab Ibrahim (Independent Researcher) and Buddhima Padmasiri (Senior Lecturer- Open University Sri Lanka)

Plantation workers have traditionally been identified as tea estate labour, trapped within the existing vulnerabilities of estate work such as low pay, and physical hardship of the work, which is used to the advantage of regional plantation companies - the owners of capital. In a context where the plantation industry itself is considered economically unsustainable but there is little consensus on how to move forward, workers themselves are trying to find a way out: migrating to garment factory employment, as domestic workers both locally and overseas, and as day labourers. However, workers continue to be exploited in these new forms of employment, as this paper will show, using garment factories in the Uva, Sabaragamuwa and Central Provinces as an example. Established apparel companies have been moving to the estate sector to further drive down costs and are engaged in a race to the bottom. While providing alternative employment, several workers continue to find themselves trapped in unequal power dynamics: medium and larger scale manufacturers competing on tight margins on the one hand and limited bargaining power and organisation for workers on the other. There was also evidence of consistent manipulation of worker entitlements and rights, in relation to benefits, working hours, language, and use of intimidation to further control workers and maximize on factories' profitability. Despite a context of unionizing around worker rights in the plantations – albeit with mixed results - this does not appear to translate into protections for workers in the hill country in factory settings, making a way out of exploitative employment conditions, difficult. This abstract looks specifically at labour migration between the plantation and garment industries, and argues that irrespective of the industry, labour in the hill country is exploited by capital to ensure profit margins.

Keywords: Labour Migration and Labour Exploitation

Themes: Economics of plantation agriculture; Migration, Urbanisation and Paid Domestic Helpers

Right to Development: Income and Livelihood Opportunities of Workers in Tea Smallholdings

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Tea plantation sector, and specifically tea small holdings (TSHs), continue as an important contributory factor in the economic and social development of Sri Lanka. However, the income opportunities and livelihood of the workers in the sector concerned are rife with a multitude of problems. Income and livelihood related problems heavily impact on the standard of living and human development of the workers and their community, and intensify and sustain their poverty.

The focus of this study is to examine the income opportunities and livelihood of the workers in the TSHs and how these factors persuade the living standard and human development of them based on Sustainable livelihood Framework (SLF) approach. Most of the studies have concentrated attention either on the issues of “Up-Country Tamil Plantation Workers”, or social, economic, and marketing factors of the tea small holders. Studies on Up-Country Tamil /Plantation Workers too have shown gap in analyze the issues of “Low-Country Plantation Worker’s specifically plantation workers in TSHs in Southern part of Sri Lanka. Generally, a notable gap is visible in studies relating to livelihood of workers of TSHs. This gap has created the need for a new study. The study will be concentrating a combination of secondary evidence on the income and livelihood sources and pattern of the workers engaged in the TSHs, complemented by micro level primary data collection from the TSHs in the Galle district of Sri Lanka. This study is part of a growing body of my PhD research. I hope this research project will contribute towards to future studies on the subject and policy reform.

Key Words: Tea Small Holding, Plantation Sector, Workers, Income & Livelihood.

V. Session 4: Art and Representation

“No one should be dependent on another”¹: Representation of Marginalization and Resistance in Imaginative Texts of the Sri Lankan Plantation Tamil Community.

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“I was not a refugee. So why should I register myself at the Police station?” (Unnamed character in the short story *My Motherland* by S. Paneerselvam)

The term ‘plantation worker’ inevitably evokes notions of marginalization, discrimination or slavery, and scholarly studies largely agree with such perceptions. For instance, Chandrabose and Sivapragasam (2011) argue that the plantation workers have been denied “political, social and cultural rights along with the right to development” (Chandrabose & Sivapragasam, 2011); Jayawardena and Kurian (2015) discuss both the modalities of manipulation used by authorities to ‘control’ plantation workers and the acts of resistance by those workers against such conditions. This consecutive narrative of slavery-resistance attributed to the plantation community, this paper assumes, could also be located in literary texts created by/around that community. Gnanasekaran’s poignant novel *Kurumalai* (translated into Sinhala as *Thelema Yakada* by Saminadan Wimal) could be cited as an example where the main protagonist *Veeraiya* ferments a powerful agitation campaign against the nationalization of plantations. The present study focuses on a collection of short stories attributed to the plantation community, titled *Dreamboats*, for traces of marginalization and resistance. *Dreamboats* is a collection of 19 short stories whose thematics range from identity politics to gender biases to social inequality. Speech of a book, according to Macherey, has a “shadow” (Macherey 2006) around it that informs us of the “conditions for the appearance of an utterance” (Macherey 2006) and thus its limits. The present study attempts to locate those ‘shadows’ constructed around the notion of marginalization as well as resistance to such discriminations within the texts in order to understand how marginalization was possibly experienced by the plantation sector workers and how they attempted to defy such inequity.

¹ Uttered by Rasamma, the main protagonist of the short story *Rasamma’s Pension* by S. Kogilavarthani. This story appears in *Dreamboats*, a collection of short stories from the Sri Lankan Plantations

Analysis of visual storytelling on natural disasters in Sri Lanka (Up country): An ethical approach

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This paper identifies relatively unaddressed area of journalistic ethics on natural disaster. A picture is worth thousands of words. The role of photo journalism is a unique and powerful form of visual storytelling and a humanitarian intervention. It reaches audiences through newspaper, magazine and internet. Photo journalism respects the cultural principals of individuals and human ethics and morality.

The research attempts to find out the realities of photo journalism on natural disasters in up country, Sri Lanka. Most of the journalists are covering the visual images on natural disaster in an unethical way in local Medias. It affects the dignity of up country people. Code of ethics in photo journalism is doubt and debate today. Compare and contrast how media publish visual images of people in vulnerable positions and how photo journalism ethics adhere to cover unspeakable stories in an ethical way.

The main question is: How photo Journalism portrays the natural disasters in up country. The research focuses the landslide in Aranayake, Kegalle district, landslide in Koslanda, flood in wellampitiya, and Mud slide in Methoddumulla. Visual images of these natural disaster portrays negatively in the Medias and psychologically effects the grassroots people of up country. The qualitative research method is followed to carry this research.

The researcher used content analysis and semiological method. Content analysis looks directly at communication via texts or transcripts and hence gets at the central aspect of social interaction. The data will be collected through the selected Newspapers, Magazines and websites. While secondary data collected through books, website, researches and documentations. Moreover, the researcher will try to exemplify the situation of photo journalism ethics cover on natural disasters.

Key words: Ethics, Media, Photo journalism, Visual storytelling, Portraits, Natural disasters

Toward a cinema of conversation: the making of *Ingirunthu* (Here and Now)

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In the making of my recent film *Ingirunthu* (Here and Now), I turn toward the upcountry Tamils, leaving behind the war time stories of the north and east that I had been used to narrating. *Ingirunthu* was born out of a long-felt desire to give voice to the tea plantation community of Sri Lanka. The problems faced by many an ethnographic filmmaker face me too. I am an outsider to this community that has faced and is facing disenfranchisement again and again and in different forms; a community whose minority status was dwarfed and sidelined by the dominant ethnic war, focussed on the North and the East. The question of who I was and am dogged me throughout, not through a very conscious line, but in all my interactions, even within the everyday. I sought a recognition of people, the persons I worked with and myself in all the fragmented and multiple subjectivities that are a part of our world—a recognition that the film is about “us”. What constitutes that “us” might be open to debate, but that very debate would be a part of the practice. And such a practice takes us always back to our different subjectivities and the different interpellations. Is *Ingirunthu* about the state and its subjects? In the crafting of an idiom for a people’s film, I call for a practice of collaborative film making, and a counter intuitive visual aesthetic: a cinema of conversation.