

# **Modernization and Transformation of the Ancient Village (Based on *Pul Eliya* village in the Anuradhapura District)**

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## **Introduction**

The Sinhala rural society occupies a distinctly unique position vis-à-vis the Asian rural societies. This view is substantiated by the fact that Sinhala rural communities represent 80% of the total population of the country while quantitatively; over 20,000 villages had been identified as rural areas. The studies conducted by both local and foreign Sociologist and Anthropologists (Peris: 1953, Ryan: 1953, Leach: 1961, Yalman: 1967, Obeyesekere: 1967, Hettige:1984, Spencer:1990, Roberts:1995, Silva: 1997) have been of great help in identifying the structure and the organization of the conventional Sinhaleserural society.

According to these sources, several characteristics can be identified in the traditional Sinhalese village such as self-sufficient economy, traditional caste system, close kinship patterns, ancient irrigation and land tenure system, and traditional leadership. However, it is clearly evident that the traditional Sinhala village has undergone critical changes during recent times. Especially, public sector has been playing a vital role in the development of the rural areas. They have intervened in number of ways to enhance the quality of life of the rural community. The main objective of the study is to identify the impact of the state intervention to change the rural community in Sri Lanka.

A village in the Anuradhapura District in the North Central Province was selected as the research area. This particular village was previously studied by E. R. Leach, a prominent Anthropologist, was a fact which supports to the selection of this village to conduct the study considering its typical rural characteristic and its anthropological significance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is aimed at achieving several basic objectives. They are, identification of the nature of the structure and the organization of the rural society, the linkage existing between the village and the city, identification of the government programmes implemented in the village, assess the impact of those programmes in the village and the village social life, to identify the nature and the pattern of transformation that had taken place in the village.

### **Methodology**

Three basic methods were adopted to conduct the study. First, a historical analysis is used to ascertain the historical background and assess the progression of the

village. Second, a comparative method was adopted to compare the past and the present conventions, traditions, and practices pertaining to community life. Third, statistical method was used to collect and analyze the data. In addition, participant observation method and interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Especially, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key-informant Interviews (KIIs) are the techniques used for qualitative data collection.

### **Results and Discussion**

This study has revealed that the rural village has undergone extensive changes in modern times when compared to the conventional village that existed in the past. Various policies and programmes implemented by the government during the last few years of the colonial rule and after gaining independence, particularly land policy, social welfare programmes effected, open economy concept, politylization of the rural society, green revolution, and extensive diffusion of government activities into the village are the distinctive factors that have contributed to the modernization of the conventional

rural village. It can be clearly seen that the present Sinhaleserural village is closely connected with the urban society and intensively linked the National Administrative set up, as never witnessed before.

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