

## **MYTH OF VILLAGE: ITS ANARCHY AND ANOMIE**

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The concept of 'village' was defined by early sociological and anthropological studies as 'Pul Eliya', 'Under the Bo Tree', 'Medagama', Sinhalese Social Organization, etc. Academics, policy-makers and development actors used the term 'village' having in mind the traditional village prescribed in those early studies carried out several decades ago. This 'village' has changed drastically now. Though some academics have discussed the disintegrating 'village', a detailed conceptual examination is yet to be done.

The current concept of 'village' can be considered a 'myth' in the light of the characteristics of the traditional village. If current social behavior is studied by conceptualizing rural community as a 'village' it would lead to incorrect predictions, incorrect definitions of the 'village' and, finally, incorrect policy decisions. Development actors and practitioners may not be able to successfully launch development programs that address the issues of the rural community of Sri Lanka if they characterize the rural community as a 'village'.

Hence the author negates the use of the concept of 'village' from a traditional perception and examines the contributory factors to the disintegration of the traditional village. The author has selected two rural communities, 'Pul Eliya' and 'Sabaragama' to study the nature of the current rural community (village) and to study differences between the current and the traditional 'village'. 'Pul Eliya' is restudied because E.R. Leach carried out an early anthropological study in this village about five decades ago. The 'village' Pul Eliya of Leach's era, therefore, is selected as an 'ideal type' to compare with the current Pul Eliya and to make generalizations about rural communities of Sri Lanka. The analysis reveals that the characteristics of the traditional 'village' has now completely changed due to several factors such as economic disintegration, political polarization, breakdown of social organizations, poor or lack of proper community leadership, etc.

The author observes that the 'village' community has evolved into a state of anarchy. In anarchy new norms and traditions have not evolved and people question the validity of the old norms and traditions. Author sees this situation as an absence of a commonly accepted central value system. Though the central value system of the 'village' is eroded, a legal system to construct a civil society has not evolved as a better alternative. This is described as an anomic situation where people develop a sense of isolation, frustration and depression leading to social disorder and social deviation.