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Abstract

Ethnic Formation in plantation sector

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Even though the relationship between Sinhalese and Tamil communities is predominantly conflictual it is not possible to fully explain inter-ethnic relations between the two communities on the basis of conflict alone. There are situations of ethnic co-operation and integration between these two communities. One example of this is plantation settlements with ethnically mixed work force in the mid country. In many of these plantation settlements Sinhala Tamil inter-ethnic integration is developing. This study examines inter ethnic relations in a plantation settlement called the Dotel Oya Estate in Aranayake which is a Sinhala area. The study was carried out using Social Anthropological methodologies and relied mainly on observation, case study method and indepth interviews to collect data.

Ethnic relations among the Sinhalese and Tamil communities in Dotel Oya Estate are organized on the basis of different social situations and are limited by the existence of some important social divisions. For example, in the economic transactions there is a high level of co-operation between the two communities. In the cultural context the two communities participate in each other's festivals and many social gatherings take place without any reference to communal differences. Labourers always get together as labourers when they come into conflict with the administration forgetting their ethnicity and communal feelings do not determine personal disputes. Inter ethnic communication often takes place in a mixed language. Sharing of meals is also common among workers though there are individuals, especially the day workers who come from villages, show reluctance to treat Tamil workers as equal.