

## CHAPTER IV

### VALLANGIRIYA VILLAGE IN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COLOMBO DISTRICT

#### 4.1 Colombo as an Administration and Industrial Center of Country

Agriculture had been the main economy in Sri Lanka for a long time, however in recent decades the country has rapidly industrialized and modernized, although these developments have largely occurred in the Colombo Metropolitan Region (CMR). CMR (Western Province) encompasses three districts; Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara. More developed and highly urbanized, this region has emerged as the center of gravity in the national economy and had a population of over 5.3 million in the 2001 census, which is concentrated in 5.0 percent of the land area. Colombo District is located in the western part of Sri Lanka, surrounded by the sea in the west, Kalaney River to the north, Kalutara district to the south and Ratnapura and Kegalle districts in east. According to the census, in 2001 the population was 2,234,000 people. Colombo is also connected to the interior of the country by road and railway. The city thus became the chief port as well as the commercial, industrial, financial and administrative center of the country. The city's administrative area is relatively small (37.32 sq. km) and therefore a large number of working population reside in and around its suburbs and travel to the city daily (Sevanatha, 2002).

Sri Lanka has experienced relatively low rates of urbanization. In the early 1980s, the urban growth rate of major cities, including Colombo, was below 1 percent. Yet since the mid 1980s, Colombo has experienced a rapid growth of its wider suburban areas, with the Colombo district experiencing a population growth of 31 per cent between 1981 and 2002 and the urban population rising to over 60 per cent. Colombo district is the most urbanized of the country, with 96 per cent of the population living in what is classified as "urban." As the suburban sprawl around the

city of Colombo expands, it brings into doubt the relevance of the current definition of 'urban', which is based on the administrative boundaries rather than on built environment and socio-economic criteria (Gunetilleke, and Cader, 2004).

#### **4.2 Development Process in Colombo**

Colombo is the biggest city in Sri Lanka. "Kolamba" (Anglicized "Colombo") is a Sinhalese word; meaning port, ferry, harbor or haven. In the early years of human settlements, the site of the present city of Colombo was not one of the most important on the island. The most important centre is the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa in North Central Province (De Silva, 1981 cited in Wickremasinghe, 2004).

Although Chinese, Arab and Persian traders were active in the vicinity of Colombo as early as the fifth century AD, between the sixth and ninth centuries the area had a predominantly Muslim population of pure or mixed Arab decent – called Moros by the Portuguese or Moors by the British. Colombo was originally a small seaport used by Moor, Arab, Persian and Chinese sailing vessels (Hulugalle, 1965).

Colombo was built by the colonial rulers of the island, who included the Portuguese from 1505 to 1656, and the Dutch from 1656 to 1796. However, following war between England and the Dutch at the end of the eighteenth century, all the settlements in Ceylon controlled by the Dutch East Indian Company were passed to the British East Indian Company in 1797. Following the conquest of Kandy in 1815, the island came under a single administration for the first time thereby abolishing the system that had existed under the Portuguese and Dutch (De Silva, 1981).

The British established a legal and regulatory system, which provided the foundation for the governance of Colombo and Ceylon into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Perera (1998) Colombo had become more than just the capital of Ceylon. Given that it was well located on major international shipping routes, Colombo grew into an international financial center during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the establishment of foreign banks, government building and hotels during this period, Colombo established its primacy in the country's urban hierarchy. The

introduction of railways in the 1860s, and the British development of Colombo as the primary port in the country in 1880, further reinforced this growth rapidly.

The era of western domination ended peacefully in 1948, when Ceylon gained independence from Britain. However, foreign occupation had a tremendous impact on the city's inhabitants and the country at large. Changes in laws and customs, clothing styles, religions and proper names were a significant result of the colonial era, followed by the strengthening of the island's economy. An entirely new culture took root. Even today, the influence of the Portuguese, Dutch and British is clearly visible in Colombo's architecture, names, clothing, food, language and attitudes. The city and its people show an interesting mix of European fashion and lifestyles together with local customs. The city is by far more modern than most others in neighboring countries and continues to be one of the blossoming metropolises of the East. Its growth and prosperity has been hampered only by the effects of the protracted conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and Tamil rebels in the northeast, which has produced economic effects throughout the island.

The development of city activities in the past had been mainly concentrated in the port area but the current development pattern of the city is influenced by the Colombo Regional Development Strategy adopted by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) under its Colombo Metropolitan Structural Plan. The most recent city plan was the Colombo Metropolitan Regional Structure Plan (CMRSP) prepared in 1998 by the Urban Development Authority, whose overall objective was to prepare action programs for the development of the region with a view of meeting the aspirations of the citizens and improving the quality of life of the people of the Western Province and the people of Sri Lanka.

However, during the post-1977 period, economic and social development plans have focused on industrialization and open market policies. As a result nearly 88 percent of the manufacturing jobs and 80 percent of industries are concentrated in the Colombo and Gampaha districts. With increasing investment from both local and foreign investors, these industries have been developed and expanded into the suburban area and also developed infrastructure. By the end of 1995, 74 percent of all foreign investment was located in the Colombo Metropolitan Region, most of

which was located in the Biyagama and Katunayake Investment Promotion Zones, on the periphery of the city (UDA, 1998). This development has brought positive changes such as economic diversification, new employment opportunities and better infrastructure facilities as well as negative outcomes such as environmental pollution and congestion.

#### **4.3 Characteristics of Urban Poor**

Sri Lanka is often characterized as a country with a relatively low urbanization rate. As is evident from data in the early 80's, urban growth of major cities, including Colombo was below one percent. Colombo district is the most urbanized in the western province, with 96 percent of the population living in areas classified as 'urban.' However, in other districts, the urban population is below 15 percent. These numbers could be higher when we take into consideration that Sri Lanka does not have any proper definition of urban areas. However, since the mid 80's, Colombo experienced a rapid growth of its population, particularly in larger suburban areas (Gunetilleke and Cader, 2004).

Even though there is no substantial empirical research conducted on the dimensions and characteristics of urban poverty in suburban areas in Colombo, available data shows that nearly 20% of Colombo's population are poor and a majority of them live in slum and shanty settlements officially known as low-income settlements.

In the urban area a large number of families suffering from lack of basic services and low incomes are scattered throughout the city. Most of them are living in low-income areas called slums or shanties, and such households generally get excluded from the urban poor improvement programs of the city. People who are unemployed, single-headed households, women, the disabled, elderly and sick people are also considered poor.

The urban poor of Colombo mainly consists of those engaged in informal sector activities and the blue collar workers of the city's main establishments such as the port, the industries, the railway, the city markets, the municipality and hundreds of other formal and informal establishments. They have been mainly concentrated in

areas known as slums<sup>6</sup>, shanties<sup>6</sup> and low cost flats (labor quarters). It was estimated that around 1,506 urban poor settlements were located within the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) area as of 1998. In the local language this type of settlement arrangement is called *mudukku*. They usually call these houses 'row houses' (*peli gewal*). People who live in these types of houses do not like to call their houses by the official name or the popular local term.

The low income population of Colombo has been identified under different categories in a city-wide survey carried out in 1997/1998. The 2001 survey carried out by the CMC and Sevanatha has identified a total of 77,612 families living in 1,614 low-income settlements in the urban area. It was estimated by many people and organizations that the total population of these settlements was nearly half of the urban population (Sevanatha, 2002). Therefore, it was difficult to categorize all the identified low-income settlements as being slums. According to the Colombo Municipality along with NGOs was classification of the low-income settlements in the city.

They are settlements which were not classified as slums or shanties but were classified into four types of settlement based on the poverty indicators. These are poor settlements, unserviced settlements, upgraded settlements and fully upgraded settlements (Sevanatha, 2000). The character of Colombo changed in keeping with the new economic demands for warehousing, workers accommodation and the road network improvement. The city core became more congested and the city's elite moved out into more spacious residential areas in the suburbs. The most common slums in Colombo are the inner city slums<sup>6</sup> and the shanties<sup>7</sup>. Slums are located on highlands in the old parts of the inner city areas. Shanties are mostly located in the periphery of the city on roads and canal reservation lands that are mostly low-lying

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<sup>6</sup> The slums are generally known as old, deteriorated permanent housing units with over crowded living conditions and use shared amenities.

<sup>7</sup> The shanties are those squatter settlements made up of improvised material with hardly any facilities are located mainly public marginal land.

areas liable to frequent floods. Other types of slums are scattered throughout the city (Horen, 2002).

Many shanty settlements along the canal banks and road reservations were regularized under the Million Houses Programs and Colombo Canal Improvement projects from 1984 to 1995. The following were the perceptions shown by the public based on their interaction with the slum communities (Sevanatha, 2001). There are a large number of families suffering from lack of basic services and low incomes scattered throughout the city. As they are not living in the designated low-income areas called slums or shanties, such households generally get excluded from the urban poor improvement programs of the city. People who are unemployed, single-headed households, especially women, disabled, elderly and sick people are also considered poor.

Many people in cannot afford the services provided by the formal sector. The informal sector, which is predominantly owned and run by the people in the low-income areas, provides the necessary services and goods needed by the majority of the city in parallel with the formal sector. Most skilled and unskilled labor needed for the city comes from the informal sector. Slums are the urban housing providers at cheap rent for those who come to the city not only for seeking employment, but also for many other purposes.

As some slum dwellers are migrants from the rural areas, they socially and culturally maintain their local values. Politically, urban poor dwellers are important because they can elect and select members of the local government as well as the higher political authorities as they hold the majority of votes in the city. Generally, low-income people have close relationships with the elected representatives at all political levels in the area. When these people are aware of the policies and programs being implemented by the government, they have been able to influence it in favor of poor through their contacts with the elected representatives.

The key indicators relating to slums presented in the Poverty Assessment Survey in Colombo conducted by the CMC and Sevanatha (2002) found that only 23 percent of families have ownership rights to their land. A majority (46 percent) live on government owned land (including the National Housing Development

Authority, Commissioner of National Housing, Urban Development Authority, Ports Authority, Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation, Sri Lanka Railway Department etc). Lack of land ownership for more than 70 percent of the urban poor families is therefore a critical issue in improving their livelihoods. As such, about half of the urban poor families have no security of tenure of their occupancy. Thirty percent of families have difficult access to drinking water while only 44 percent have individual house connection. 24-hour availability of piped water covers only 56 percent of the urban poor families in the suburb. This shows that provision of improved water supplies to a majority of urban poor is a critical issue in Colombo. About 10 percent of the families receive less than 10 hours of water per day (Sevanatha, 2002)

Furthermore, a significant proportion of people are engaged in legal as well as illegal income earning activities, popularly known as informal sector employment. By reviewing the housing policy of the past five decades especially for the urban poor, it is clear that the housing problem of this segment of the population has not been adequately addressed, although there were several relocating, upgrading and self-help projects since independence, in particular over the last two decades.

#### **4.4 Historical Context of the Vallangiriya Village**

##### **4.4.1 Previous Settlement**

About thirty years ago, some poor families resettled at the Narahenpita slum area, which call "Paspatiya." The first people who settled here were the laborers and poor people in the city, and some of them migrated from both rural and urban areas. The land belonged to the government but people lived here illegally for a long time. Most of the poor moved to Paspatiya, because the area was a place for the urban poor who wanted to live close to their workplace. As they cleared empty land and built their own house more and more people came to Paspatiya. Soon more population moved in and it became over-crowded.

At that time, Paspatiya was one of the poorest areas, and most of the houses were temporary huts which did not have a water supply, electricity supply or

drainage system. They always used a common water tap near the main road. Some of them have had their own wells but anyone can use these wells. Most of them used a common toilet but it was a big problem for women and children.

These people are living in unsanitary conditions because people in Colombo neglect slums. Also, people in Paspatiya were not educated, and as a result they were suffering from a lot of problems related to livelihoods. This may be one reason for illegal activities in this village such as drug sales, illegal alcohol, robbery groups, and so on. According to one old settler in the Paspatiya village, most of the villagers are the troublemakers of the area. They always engage in quarrels with each other, have bad habits, and it is difficult to protect the residents own belongings because sometime people from the slum area rob or remove others' property.

This situation has affected a defence for the area. This is because Narahenpita police headquarters and many other government offices are very close to the Paspatiya village. Within this situation most of the government and urban council planned to move to this village. However, the 5<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Summit in 1976, in the BMICH, the government decided to give clearance to Paspatiya community before the summit, because they wanted to beautify the city. The government announced that within 90 days people had to move to new places. Nearly 700 families were relocated to different villages, 330 families in Kaduwella Vallangiriya village, and others families in Homagama, Khatuduwa village and few families in Mattakuliya area.

#### **4.4.2 After Resettled in Vallangiriya Village**

My research is focused on Kaduwella Vallangiriya village. Until 1980, Kaduwella was a rural area in which most of the land supported rubber or coconut trees and relatively few infrastructure facilities. The Vallangiriya village is located in the southern part of Kaduwella regional area in Colombo. The site was called Vallangiriya Watta (garden, state). Historically, "Vallangiriya" means one of the traditional medicine plants name, and this medicine was available at that time the area, presently, we cannot find it.



During the field survey, an elders and village leaders remembered that in the past, when they resettled in 1976, there was no water or electricity and government transport services were only active a few times per day. This location is twenty km. away from the city. The whole area of the Vallangiriya is 76 acres, 58 of which are residential land.

The government provided 10 perches land for the each resettlement dwellers and one thousand Rupees for them to build their houses. Since the beginning of the resettlement, housing has been a big problem for people. Because, people cannot build their house within a few days and most of them build temporary huts on empty land using plastic, cardboard, coconut leaves, and so on. The placement of roads had no clear boundaries, and mud in some places, disrupted the use of buses. Some people said at that time there were a lot of mosquitos and many kinds of snakes in the village. Some children became sick and died, because of malnutrition, dirty water and insecure housing, lack of proper drainage, inadequate water and sanitary facilities, and environmental pollution. When they were staying in the slum in the city, their housing and infrastructure facilities situation was no different from the Vallangiriya village. But when they resettled in this village, people don't have money because there are less income sources in rural villages, and some men worked in the city, where they have to go so far by using public bus service. If they cannot catch the bus in the morning they cannot go to work.

After resettlement this village lost their income source which is one reason for the poverty and increased illegal activities which is the same in Paspatiya village. Their status, however, is lower than surrounding village people and also culture, society, living conditions and livelihood strategies. The traditional villagers discriminated against this new settlement. They said beggars came to the village. As a consequence, conflict arose between new and traditional villagers. Within these contexts, people are suffering from the most vulnerable, marginalized situation in the development process as well as in the social structure in the area. Some relocated people do not want to stay here because of many difficulties and inconvenience in earning their living. Furthermore, children and women suffer more than men. Some people have again moved to live in another slum area.

The majority of residents do not have any alternatives, so they continued their lives in the new village. According to a government development officer, a few years after relocation, Cristhuraja Christian Church came to help the people in the village under the auspices of the German NGO "German Deshwash Institute". Village people were organized by the small organization, namely "Singhapura Development Organization." Both institutes together operated development activities in the village. These institutes helped to build 222 households in the village. Though according to elder villagers the houses are very small, they were convenient for them at that time. Some people built their house by themselves. Later people didn't like to use the village name. If they use the name of Vallangiriya for everyday life, it may be a disadvantage for them. Administratively the village name is Vallangiriya but people have changed the name to "Singhapura." "Sinha" means Lion and "Pura" means Garden or Area, combined together, Singhapura means the Lions Garden.

After a few years, the increase in population in the village forced many residents to live without land, and so, after marriage their children began living with their parents. When they found there was insufficient space in which to expand, and did not have enough money to buy new land, they needed more space to build a house for the family. When I interviewed villagers, one man in the village namely Mahathun said

*"My experience, all dwellers have own dreams of a decent family life. But, it is very difficult to achieve this dream, because the others in the area neglect poor people in our village. Many poor people who live in low-income settlements do not own the land. The price of the land and housing rent in the area are very high so that they cannot afford them. Hence the alternative that they have is to encroach on the marginal or rent out a small room available in the informal settlement in the area."*

However, near the village there are many empty lands belonging to the government. Some people built their houses on the government land using their experience from the slums like 'Mahathun.' Nonetheless, using political association, these lands were divided legally among 92 families by the government. The size of

the land was 52 perches. This second settlement in the village they call "Samagipura". However, in recent years due to increased population in the village, especially by young couples, they cleared the government land nearby the village and built temporary housing. This land has also been divided into 168 family plots. The size of the land is 6 perches, but today more than 190 families live in this area, commonly called "Punchi Vallangiriya."

This settlement was not planned so suddenly people moved from urban to rural areas. The people moving into these new settlements encounter new problems in their new habitat. Nevertheless, in the village, increased housing densities have grown beyond manageable levels with slum conditions becoming prevalent in them. In fact, there can be many disadvantages of living in a relocated settlement. Cost of living usually increases when the urban poor move into rural areas because they have to travel a long way to their workplaces (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Distance to Work Place from the Village

Distant to Work Place	Number of Person	%
In the village	20	36
Within 2 km	5	13
5 km from village	10	18
10 km "	3	3.7
15 km "	8	12.8
20 km "	7	12.8
25 km "	2	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

When they were living in slum settlements in urban areas, it was easy to find income sources and also very close to their workplace, however, now they do not have regular or adequate income and it is often difficult to raise the necessary funds to meet their financial obligations.

However, in the recent past (not more than five years) there has been some development of infrastructure facilities in Vallangiriya village such as roads, water

supply, electricity, telephone, and so on. Because of the many elections in the last few years such as the presidential election, provincial and local government elections, more politicians have come to the village and they allocated decentralization monetary funds. They also expected that these facilities would provide solutions to the poverty. This means that now villagers have to pay for water and electricity, which has increased their cost of living and some poor cannot access these facilities. In my understanding of consumption poverty is lowest in this resettlement village, but the poor are more vulnerable to certain psycho-social strains. They are more prone towards marital instability, crime, domestic violence and alcoholism. People have their own land but only for user rights. It is a strong barrier to improving their livelihoods.

#### **4.5 Community Settings**

The Vallangiriya village is located in the Kaduwella regional area in Colombo district. This area is one of the borders of the eastern part in Colombo district. Kaduwella is the next region from Colombo City and the Western limit to the capital city, namely Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte. In 2001 the official population of Kaduwella was 209,251 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001). During the post-1977 period, the restructuring and "modernization" of Colombo involved the shifting of public center functions in Kotte and also many government offices located in Kaduwella. The area developed infrastructure facilities rapidly and also changed socio-economic conditions as well. Kaduwella Divisional area includes 57 small administrative villages which are called Grama Niladari Vasams (see appendix G). Vallangiriya is one administration area that borders the southern part of Kaduwella. Two main entrances to the village come from the eastern side and face to the main road and another is a western part at the back side in village.

The new situation is improved. It includes a newly constructed road with tar and water supply and electricity. Population density is high (62 people per acre) with more than 781 families living in 660 households. According to settlement level the village is divided three small parts, namely 'Singhapura' (previously called Maha Vallangiriya), 'Samagipura,' and 'Punchi Vallangiriya.' Singhapura is relatively

better than the other parts. It is the first settlement area. A Community hall is located in the middle of Singhapura. This hall is very important for them, because most of the community activities center on this hall, such as community meetings, Montessori, medical clinic and so on. Along the main road there are four mini markets including a cooperative shop and other houses. The Buddhist temple is located in the southwest side, namely Vijayananda Dharmayathanaya.

Houses in the community are mainly made of cement block and wood. However, the poor people's houses are very narrow, not more than two rooms. Some new couples build their house behind their parents' house. Some houses are already too old to live in safely. These houses are usually built by the residents themselves, but sometimes political leaders or NGO, poverty alleviation programs have helped them. Some of them are sharing their parents or neighbors toilets.

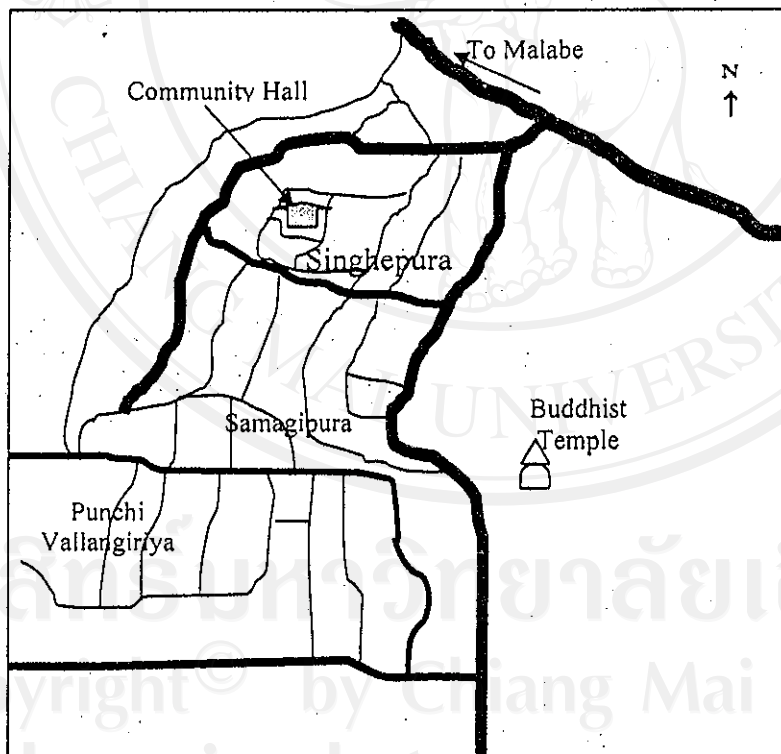


Figure 3.1 Map of Vallangiriya Village

- (a) Singhapura: First resettlement area. (c) Punchi Vallangiriya: Third Settlement.  
 (b) Samagipura: Second settlement area.

Some survey showed that the community has a proper drainage system. But for most of them the dirty water and waste just go out of the house onto the garden or road. Today the village drainage system is better than in the past, but it is poorly managed. The villagers complained that although the Pradeshiya Saba (Local Government) collects garbage every two weeks, it is not enough because bad odors are emitted from the garbage. There are three shops that sell groceries including daily necessities, but many small shops are also within the community. The small shops are run by poor people in the village. They sell some cooked foods and dry foods, vegetables, cool drinks, fruits, stationery, and other goods. Their shops are located in the houses. Some goods and other items are sold using windows, while others build temporary huts near the road to sell their products. Their main customers are neighbors in the village. Although they sell many goods and things, the profit is less, because of limited customers. Their profit is not enough to re-invest. However, in the past these kinds of small shops were famous for drugs and alcohol business but today cannot do it, because there are always policemen patrolling the village. They also know that these people are doing illegal activities. But some persons are sell alcohol and drugs illegally.

The community has been neglected for a long time, and consequently more than half of families struggle against poverty. Some young peoples told me that their fathers are alcohol and drug addicted, and that are absent from school. Nowadays, they are uneducated, and unskilled, so it is difficult to find income sources. Unemployment is a big problem in the village.

#### **4.6 Demographic Profiles**

In this section, I try to describe the situation of residents of Vallangiriya village through statistical data. This data was collected from March to April 2005 and March to May 2006. I collected basic information on 65 of the 781 household in the village. I also have other data from NGOs, the Samurdhi society, the Divisional Secretary Office and the government development officer. The population of the village in 2001 was 3,653 people, of which 1801 are male and 1851 are female. In regard to religion, 3,225 people were Buddhists 89 were Hindu, 24 were muslim, 92

Christian, and 223 were Roman Catholic (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001). Also 1126 people in the village were below 18 years old, which means that 1/3 of the people were dependent-age.

The population for my survey sample of 65 households was 277 people, of which 132 are male and 145 are female. The largest population is in the 20-29 age group, and 34 percent of the population constitutes children less than 18 years of age (see Table 4.2). Such a population is considered youthful.

Table 4.2 Population by Age Level

Age	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
0—9	27	20.5	26	18.0	53	19.1
10—19	22	16.6	19	13.0	41	14.8
20—29	37	28.0	43	29.0	80	28.9
30—39	28	21.2	30	20.7	58	20.9
40—49	11	8.5	14	9.7	25	9.0
50—59	3	2.2	4	2.8	7	2.5
More Than 60	4	3.0	9	6.2	13	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>100</b>

The female population is higher than the male population, because some families were female-headed. Some young males died early or were separated from their wives.

Table 4.3 shows that, considering that the young generation is quite a big group, it is probable that there are many students in school at present. The number of students who are Pre-school is 71 people in total or 28.7 percent. However, nearly 23.9 percent of household members have completed their primary school and less people were completed their Advance Level School (high school). Also university selections are very few and significant percentage of people had no education (8.5 percent) especially elders. There is a tendency for many men and women to stop their education at the ordinary level. They are unable to attend high school or any other education, because of financial difficulties in the family.

Table 4.3 Education Level

Level of Education	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Pre-school	37	31.6	32	24.6	71	28.7
Grade 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> (Primary School)	18	15.4	28	21.5	42	17.0
Grade 6 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup> (Secondary School)	20	17.1	25	19.2	47	19.0
Grade 10 <sup>th</sup> (Ordinary Level)	32	27.4	27	20.8	59	23.9
Grade 11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> (Advance Level)	3	2.5	3	2.3	6	2.4
University	0	0	1	.8	1	.4
Professional	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Education	7	6.6	14	10.8	21	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100</b>

According to Table 4.4, most of the people are low income earners. Most of the households in the village do not reveal their real income. Therefore, it is difficult to measure or evaluate the poor. In referring to households by income level, I describe using four categories: the poorest are households above the poverty line (less than US\$ 1 per day income), middle poor are households below the poverty line (less than US\$ 2 per day income), upper poor (moderate poor) and non poor households in more than Rs. 10,000 households income per month. The majority of people have an income range from 1000 to 6000 Sri Lanka Rupees (Rs.). There are a few families that can earn more than Rs. 10,000. Most people are daily laborers (daily worker receive Rs. 300 to 500 per day), but they can only work limited days, and no more than 15 days a month. Some of the women play a significant role their in family's income but most of them are unemployed.



Table 4.4 Income Level

Income Categories	Monthly Income	Male	%	Female	%
<b>The poorest</b> Income Less Than US\$ 1 Per Day	Less than 999	0	0	3	11.1
	1,000- 1,999	2	3.2	-	-
	2,000- 2,999	2	3.2	4	14.8
<b>Middle Poor</b> (Income Less Than US\$ 2 Per Day)	3,000- 3,999	6	9.7	5	18.5
	4,000- 4,999	8	12.9	2	7.5
	5,000- 5,999	16	25.8	7	25.9
<b>Upper Poor</b> (Moderate Poor)	6,000- 6,999	10	16.0	5	18.5
	7,000- 7,999	5	8.1	1	3.7
	8,000- 8,999	4	6.5	-	-
	9,000- 9,999	4	6.5	-	-
<b>Non-poor</b>	More than 10,000	5	8.1	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

The poorest categories are usually jobless, unskilled, without capital, and are some single mothers. In this category, some young people get their income from illegal sector such as robbery, drugs and alcohol sales while others (old people) depend on their neighbors or their children. Middle poor are the majority; they can manage their own business or income source such as petty trade, and work in the service sector performing unskilled labor. Also some of them work in the informal sector to earn a day wage. In some cases, the middle poor, when they become ill, lose their income source or have other emergencies since will be fall into the poorest category.

The upper poor have money to invest in their own business, and have more skills than middle poor. Because of this, they have accumulated some money for their every day needs, and also have multiple sources of income. Hence, multiple sources of unstable income reduce vulnerability of the household, but do not succeed in moving them up the scale of well-being.

A few numbers of families are non-poor households. They have stable jobs in the informal sector and some family members are employed abroad. Non-poor households had in the past depended on lower pay and irregular sources of livelihoods such as wage labor. Nevertheless, members of the non-poor households, for instance when their daughter or wife went to the Middle East, they were able to move away this dependence. However, all families were beneficiaries in the poverty alleviation program in the past.

There are many occupations that people in the village are engaged in as shown in Table 4.5. This data show that large numbers of people (both men and women) work as laborers and others are self-employed. However, this is quite unreliable work because people usually receive short term jobs.

Table 4.5 Male and Female Occupation of the Vallangiriya Village

Occupation	Male	%	Female	%
<b>Wage worker</b>				
Laborer	35	41.6	9	12.50
Factory workers	10	11.9	11	15.28
Industrial sector	8	9.61	2	2.77
Mason	4	4.76	1	1.38
Foods seller	3	3.57	3	4.20
Government officer	1	1.19	-	-
Cleaning Service	2	2.38	2	2.77
Three-wheelers driver	3	3.57	-	-
Housemaid		-	5	6.94
<b>Self-employed</b>				
Dressmaker	-	-	5	6.94
Seller	2	2.38	6	8.33
Spicy seller	1	1.19	4	5.56
Garbage collector	3	3.57	1	1.38
Service	4	4.76	1	1.38
Shop owner -1	2	2.38	2	2.77
Shop owner -2	1	1.19		-
Handicraft	1	1.19	2	2.77
Tailor	-	-	6	8.33
Foreign Employed	-	-	3	4.20
Unpaid Job	4	4.76	9	12.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>

They are never sure that there will be another job when they finish their current one. Moreover, most of the villagers are unable to get a formal sector job. Only one person in my selection group worked in the government sector. He also works twenty kilometers from the village.

The small scale shops have their own stalls that occupy the spaces in front of the house for business. Women in the village, who do work to supplement the household income, often work in the garment factory, help out in the family enterprise such as a small shop or dressmaking and produce other homemade products.

Many women in the village households were housewives. The common picture regarding employment is that most people who engage in casual labor on an intermittent basis are unemployed. This was in contrast to those that were said to be engaging in wage labor, where they actively sought employment on a daily basis.

#### **4.7 Relationship with Neighboring Village**

Around the Vallangiriya village, live traditional people but some dwellers are new inhabitants because, some rubber lands have been used for new housing schemes. However, after resettlement in this village, the local people built their friendship with the neighboring village but this is limited in some aspects. Villagers and their status are lower level than the other village. For example some young girls and boys in Vallangiriya village said that they cannot marry anyone from the neighboring village.

*"Girls in our village couldn't find boy friend with a good background from normal society; because they do not girl living in like our community. Therefore, most of the girls have boyfriend in the same community or similar ones."*

This story shows the class structure and socio-economic differentiation of people in a slum community. Other young girls who live in the village think that she is living in a community that many people outside her community see as socially backward area where residents are not well behaved. Outside her community she

does not like to say her communities real name in public because of the perception of others about her community. She never invites her school friends to her house.

Some people in the neighboring village think that Vallangiriya villagers create problems such as robbery, selling drug. However, the urban poor have significantly close relationships with their neighbors. Employment also plays an important role for their social networks. The poor mostly maintain their relationships with relatives, friends and village fellows who are living in the same community.

Most of the people only been connected to the neighboring village for funeral ceremonies or religious ceremonies. When they have a wedding ceremony, funeral and religious ceremony or other event, people in Vallangiriya village invite people from the neighboring village. But no one has been married anyone in the neighboring village. But nowadays most of the village inhabitants have already changed their life to be similar to the other neighboring traditional families, but social discrimination exists from the other villages. The poor households who are living in the village for a long period of time have a wider social network. These long-tem households maintain more relationships outside their communities. The relatives, friends and neighbors help the poor to mitigate their economic and social crisis for example, the poor provide/receive financial help from their kin, neighbors and another provide/receive non-financial support from these relatives and friends.

In the village people know each other well and invite each other to social occasions, but many people come from outside and make friends with people in Vallangiriya (most of them are from the city) and an engage in illegal activities, not only on special occasions, but also in their daily lives.

#### **4.3 The Poor's Perception of Their Own Poverty**

Poverty is defined by villagers in different ways than traditionally, what people mean by the "poor" and "rich" in the respective villagers. When I interviewed villagers and asked what they do mean by the word "poor" they generally said "it means those who are feeble and who need support (*neti beri minissu*). Some people, describe the "rich" as "those who are powerful" (*yamak Kamak tiyena balawat minissu*). Some people said that those who have nothing to

eat and wear are poor. Some people said that those who are without a dwelling (*inda geyak neti*) are poor.

So, for the poor people, poverty is defined using their own poverty line, or described as “those who do not have a meal (per day) *“eda vela kanda neti minissu.”* It means that they are the poorest. The term “poor” in Sinhalese is *“duppath”* and means those who are recipients of suffering or those who suffer. They are suffering in their life, because they are feeble or powerless. They suffer because they do not have the means or resources and because they are feeble or powerless. Many of the people, (especially Buddhist people) believe in the law of “Karma”: you reap as you sow. Someone who has become rich because they have equitably shared those resources with others in the past. Some people are poor, because, they have never allowed others to share their resources. The Karmic law understandably gave rise to the principle of sharing and this made the rich share their resources with others.

Nevertheless, the positive outcome of the theory is the belief that resources should be equitably distributed. But unfortunately the law has its negative side too. In the village, people accepted (especially old and uneducated people) the law declaring that their poverty was due to hard or evil action in the past and there is nothing that they can do about it now. They cannot change it. However, this may be understood differently among young people in the village. They also believe in Karma, but they also believe that Karma can be changed, because most of them know their every day bad habits also affects their poverty, not only Karma.

However, the poor view their poverty as much more than income. Low-income people feel that they are poor, because they are socially excluded by the formal sector institutions. Hence, they have no access to the city's services, such as piped water, sanitation, drains and waste collection. They have no access to the formal banking system; hence they depend on the moneylenders in the area. Their children cannot be enrolled in the good schools of the area. Their organizations are not genuinely recognized for the planning and development process. People think that the government does not want to develop these settlements. The poor think that they are poor because they do not have land tenure. The poor recognize their land as being the single most important asset of their whole livelihood pattern; hence lack of

freehold rights to their land has been a major cause of their poverty. Some people responded that they always lived with eviction threats. The poor also think that they are poor, because of a lack of secure sources of income.

#### **4.9 Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the situation of the Vallangiriya village and Colombo development processes, and also some socio-economic aspects of the urban context. This shows an unplanned resettlement community and how they respond to government development policy and how they were becoming poor in the development process. Although they have not received government services and facilities for a long time, when they received these facilities, it did not effectively reduce their poverty. This is because, not only economic and physical, but social and cultural characteristics also affect their problems of poverty.