

## CHANGING PATTERNS OF PATRON-CLIENT BONDS IN RURAL SRI LANKA

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(This study is a result of fieldwork carried out in two villages—Menikgama and Kurundugama (pseudonyms) for about eleven months, from October 1977 to August 1978. The names of the villagers are fictitious.)

### Introduction

The present study analyses the nature of patron-client relationships in two villages in the Wet Zone of Sri Lanka. For this purpose it is absolutely necessary to consider the relation between the village and the wider social system of which it forms a part.

The penetration of the outside world takes two main forms. Firstly, there are governmental structures through which the villages are integrated with the outside world - development and welfare schemes and administration.

Secondly, the village is subjected to urban influence because of its proximity to urban areas.

These changes of integration with the outside world, are seen as affecting patron-client bonds in several ways. Easier access to towns, higher educational levels with aspiration and job opportunities change the degree of dependency on village landlords for tenancies and work opportunities.

Diverse economic activities create opportunities to acquire wealth in non-traditional ways and forms. This sort of social mobility weakens mere tradition as a criterion of status and power.

Intensified bureaucratic penetration has expanded governmental administration. More officers work at the village level with specific functions to perform. They are not necessarily locally born, but recruited according to educational qualifications.

Above all, Sri Lankan Society is a society of scarcity of potentially needed goods and services, and of jobs. These benefits, but above all public sector jobs, are channelled through systems of patronage which breed new kinds of

dependency on the politically powerful, which can provide new dimensions for traditional patron-client networks.

Therefore, I would like to analyse the patron-client networks evident in the rural areas and see how far they are taking new forms as a result of the penetration of Central Government and party politics.

### **The Setting**

Menikgama is situated in the Western province in the district of Kalutara. Both Western and Southern provinces are part of what is commonly called the low country or the maritime provinces.

Menikgama is about six miles from Kalutara, half way between Kalutara and Horana and about 28 miles from Colombo.

Menikgama has 643 households, and a population of 3,322 (Householder's List 1971). The villagers are exclusively Sinhalese Buddhist. The majority belong to *Goyigama* caste. *Badahala* is the other distinct caste group (see Table No. 1). Menikgama is neither a nucleated nor a dispersed village. One can see clusters of houses within hamlets, but hamlets are interspersed with large areas of rubber and paddy. The village consists of 12 hamlets each with a distinct name. These hamlets are not equally populated. Also certain caste groups are concentrated in certain hamlets (see Table No. 1).

Kurundugama is situated in the adjoining district of Galle in the Southern province. Ambalangoda is the main town close to the village and is about 12 miles away. Menikgama is closer to a town, but Kurundugama villagers have better access to towns because of better communications. There are several buses plying via the centre of the village towards different towns.

Like Menikgama, Kurundugama is a combination of 11 hamlets. It has a population of 1,759 and 379 households (Householder's List 1971), and all are Sinhalese Buddhist. But there is a population of Indian Tamillabourers who live in the state owned estate, who are Hindu by religion. Although they have been living in the estate for many years, they are not integrated with village life. They do not figure in the Householder's List and they do not belong to any local organization or to any society. Therefore I have excluded this group from my study.

The majority of Kurundugama villagers are of the *Karāva* caste. The other main caste groups are *Goyigama* and *Vahumpura* (see Table No. 2).

### **Economic Stratification**

Menikgama is predominantly an agricultural society where majority of the villagers are employed in agricultural activities. The two main crops cultivated are rubber and paddy. The land in Menikgama is unequally distributed-

a few own a large amount of inherited land, the majority are landless (see Table No. 3 and 4). The existence of these few traditional paternalistic landlords is an important aspect of Menikgama economy. A number of villagers are employed by these landowners as tenant cultivators, or as regular or casual labourers. In some cases the employer-employee relationships run over generations. These workers stay loyal and are deferential toward their masters. In return the landlords help them in emergencies and give them economic and non economic benefits.

Today, young people are attracted towards finding jobs in the public sector. A few villagers are employed in government departments and some as 'White Collar Workers'.

Kurundugama is also an agricultural society, but here the emphasis is laid on the plantation economy where the state land plays a significant role. The estate covers large areas of rubber, tea and paddy. Many Kurundugama villagers are employed in this estate. These workers maintain a more impersonal contractual and specific relationship with their employers. Kurundugama economy is also more diversified because of alternative ways of earning an income. The main crops are rubber, tea, paddy and cinnamon. Handloom weaving and brick-making are popular non-agricultural activities. In this village, most of the land is concentrated in the hands of the public and absentee landowners. Only two villagers own more than five acres of highland and not a single resident owns more than five acres of paddy land (see Table No. 5 and No. 6). Also compared to Menikgama the percentage of households having a secure family income is higher.

### Patterns of Dependency

In the previous section, I have described the economic structure of the two villages. In Menikgama, we find 46% of the heads of households (294) depending on village landowners for all or part of their income, while in Kurundugama the figure is 22% (87).

Besides the owner cultivators, the others earn their bread by any of the two kinds of what one might call patronage—the patronage of village landowners and patronage of politicians—that is to say, by being given jobs or tenancies which are in the gift of landowners or politicians. The extent to which the job giver is, able to exercise discretionary 'benevolence' varies. It is very great for a politician who can control regular jobs, less great in the case of a farmer seeking to hire supplementary labour at harvest time.

By dependency I mean that an individual receives (in return for various kinds of payments) a continuing flow of benefits of somekind from another individual which can be cut off at the latter's discretion. Four different patterns of dependency can be identified.

- (i) Dependency via tenancy ;
- (ii) Dependency via regular labour ;
- (iii) Dependency via casual labour ;
- (iv) Dependency via secure employment.

Although in all these four categories the employee is dependent on the employer, their relationships may differ, which make a difference in the degree of dependency.

The most common type of dependency pattern discussed by Anthropologist and Sociologist is that between landlords and tenants. We notice a difference in the two villages regarding the landlord-tenant relationships. Firstly, the figure of tenancy in Menikgama is higher than in Kurundugama. Menikgama has 182 heads of household (28%) earning an income through share cropping while in Kurundugama it is 62 heads of households (16%).

Secondly, many of the Menikgama tenants work for village landowners, while Kurundugama tenants cultivate land which is either owned by the state or by absentee landowners. Kurundugama landowners, generally cultivate their lands with hired labour. Therefore, Kurundugama tenants have a more impersonal relationship with their employers.

By contrast, the relationship between the village landlord in Menikgama and his tenant is not just an economic one, but an extended and a diffused relationship. Therefore Menikgama tenants have a different kind of relationship with their landlords and they are more powerless and in a subordinate position. In the following section I would like to discuss the status of the Menikgama tenants.

According to national statistics there is a decline in tenancy because of large-scale eviction. The total number of complaints of eviction received from all districts from the inception of the Paddy Lands Act to 1969, is 40,069.<sup>1</sup> But probably a much greater number of evictions have simply gone unrecorded. However, in Menikgama, tenancy is still important and there was only one case of eviction.

Any discussion of the extent to which the tenant is dependent on the landlord should start with an analysis of the bargaining position of the tenant. There are two stages of this process-

- (i) of entering into the relationship and
- (ii) of continuing the relationship.

1. Administrative Report of the Commissioner of Agrarian Services for the year 1969-1970, (Govt. of Ceylon Press, Colombo, 1973 September).

In an agrarian economy, especially when the population is increasing we naturally see a keen competition for tenancy. The Man Land Ratio figures in Menikgama-4.7 persons per acre will make this clear. With the increase in population, the land hunger in the village grows more and more intense which gives the landlord a better position. It was an ancient custom for the tenant to make a token gift generally, of betel leaves and fruits to the landlord to get his formal consent to cultivate the land. Today in some parts of the country, this ancient custom of the token presentation known as *madaran* has changed to a cash payment which is no longer merely a token.

However, neither Menikgama nor Kurundugama ever had this custom of offering *madaran*. Therefore in these villages, the factors of kinship, caste efficiency and intimacy all play important parts, in determining who gets tenancy rights, but, the occasion for allocating tenancies does not often arise, as many arrangements are very long standing. Therefore the cultivator feels more obligated to the landlord than if he had paid for the tenancy rights.

Even after entering into the relationship, the tenant cultivator has to be careful to maintain a cordial relationship with the landlord as he depends on him for his income and for other benefits. I would like to expand this point with reference to the following example.

Charles Singho, 60 years old, cultivates 1.25 acres of paddy as a tenant cultivator under K.P. Peter. His father and grandfather both worked for the same family.

Charles Singho does not receive any farm equipment, seed paddy or fertilizers from the landlord. He pays the legal rent of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the share. But on several occasions Charles Singho took loans from the landlord to buy fertilizers which he always returned at the harvest. He does not keep the landlord informed of the different stages of the cultivation process, though that used to be the practice during his father's time.

Charles Singho says his father had a close relationship with the landlord. He feels that his father was more deferential and respectful since he did not have the legal tenancy rights. Today he is conscious of his rights.

But, however, Charles Singho's relationship with the landlord is not just a specific economic relationship. His services are not limited simply to agricultural work. When the landlord's son and daughter got married Charles Singho and his family were obliged to work for him. Also whenever there was a function such as an almsgiving his services were rendered. He is not paid on these occasions, but he had approached the master several times for loans between Rs. 10 and Rs. 100. Unlike professional money lenders, the landlord does not charge any interest or specify a time limit for return of

the loan. There is no primary economic motive behind giving loans, but it helps to cultivate a clientele.

Charles Singho, never addresses his master by name, but as *Mahattaya*. In front of the master he never sits on a high comfortable chair, but on a long bench where all other clients sit.

The above case shows us that still the landlords enjoy a certain kind of control over the tenants. It is true that the landlord did not supply farm equipment or fertilizers which would have given him less chances of interference. But in practice the tenants have to ask the help of the landlord to get the necessary items for cultivation which make them obliged to listen to him.

The extent to which the tenants services are extended to non-agricultural work therefore depends mainly on two things.

- (a) The more the tenant is dependent on the landowner, the more he is led to perform other services-i.e. a major factor is strength of bargaining positions.
- (b) Being socialized to pay deference to traditional superiors also affects behaviour. Charles Singho's family had served the landlord for generations, he is more obliged to perform extra services to the landlord. It is the same with paying deference and loyalty.

At this stage, it is interesting to see how far state legislation is successful in protecting the tenants and reducing their dependency on landlords. One would imagine that the tenants would be safeguarded by the two Agricultural Acts-The Paddy Lands Act of 1958 and the Land Reform Law of 1972. According to the Acts, the name of the tenant cultivator should be registered and he should have the right to name his successor which may be naturally expected to give a sense of security. But, however, the right to a tenancy still depends on a personal trust: It is not in fact guaranteed either by his bargaining strength or by the law. The landlords invariably have ways of manipulating the law in their favour. The landlords, generally are powerful figures in the village and have direct links with the officers who maintain land registers. In Menikgama, one landlord even went to the extent of registering his son's name as his tenant cultivator. Therefore one can ask the question whether these laws can really protect the tenants. The best way of protecting one self is by being loyal to the landlord and acknowledging one's subordinate position.

Although these Acts had provided safeguards against eviction, nevertheless there was one case of eviction in Menikgama It is worth discussing this case to illustrate the extent to which the tenants are still dependent on the landlords.

Simon Perera is 42 years old and cultivated 1.50 acres of paddy as a tenant cultivator for 8 years under K. D. E. Silva who evicted him. The landlord was never satisfied with his yield and had been complaining for a long period. The landlord gradually took over the land, section by section. At the last stage Simon Perera had to sell his buffaloes to maintain his family.

Given Simon Perera's economic conditions, it is not surprising that he did not seek the protection of the law. He lives in a small hut in the landlord's land and also works in his rubber lands. Very often he receives food from the landlord. Thus, Simon Perera is dependent on the landlord for extra benefits. Therefore, if he opposed the landlord, he would have jeopardised the chances of getting other benefits. It was not that Simon Perera did not know his rights, but he was not in a position to fight for them. He had to rationalise his compliance by saying that it was his duty to give the land when the master needs it. Even if Simon Perera had wanted it to be taken in the courts, he needed money and support of other villagers. It was very unlikely that other villagers even though suffering under similar conditions, would come to Simon Perera's help as it would endanger their cordial relationships with their landlords.

If landlords are not faced with difficulties in evicting tenants then we are left with the question why eviction is not on a large scale. One reason, perhaps is the desire of the landlord to maintain a good reputation in the village which exposes him to moral sanctions. This becomes important at a time of election. One landlord said he prefers self cultivation to giving out land to tenants as the former is financially advantageous. Even then he has no intention of taking his lands from his existing tenants. In Newby's words the landlord extends his employer-employee relationship beyond a mere cash nexus.<sup>2</sup>

If we compare the present situation with the past, we can say that the tenants are less dependent on their landlords. They are also more critical of their subservient positions. This becomes clear, if we refer to the description that Leach offers, about Pul Eliya tenants. Pul Eliya tenants thought about their relationship as one in which they worked on behalf of the owner, and the crop was referred to as the owner's crop<sup>3</sup>.

There are several reasons for this change of ideology. Firstly, the tenants today are conscious of their legal rights. Even though they cannot do much, the consciousness of their legal rights atleast give them more confidence than they used to have.

Secondly, the economic status of the tenant becomes significant. More than in the past, today we find tenants deriving supplementary income from

2. H. Newby, *The Deferential Worker*, (Penguin Books Ltd., 1977), p. 374.

3. E.R., Leach, *Pul Eliya*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961) P. 267.

other sources. This is due to higher levels of education and more income opportunities. 38% of the tenant cultivators receive a secure income from a family member. Their dependency is less absolute. There can be some shift in the general conception of a legitimate landlord - tenant relationship from dependency towards one of greater contractual reciprocity, but not a complete shift.

Once again dependency via regular labour with private employers becomes significant only in Menikgama. Although, we find many regular labourers in Kurundugama, the majority of them work in the state owned land. Their jobs are more secure and they are entitled to other benefits such as Provident Fund etc. However, Menikgama labourers are less secure and their fate lies more in the hands of landlords. Therefore these labourers are loyal to the landlords and their relationships are deferential.

The conditions faced by these labourers are different from those faced by the tenant cultivators. Unlike the tenants, many of them are landless. Their jobs are not secure. For any injustice they can appeal to the labour tribunals, but would always think it safer not to stir up trouble. Further more, they have no access to credit facilities which are channelled only for agricultural purposes. Therefore, these labourers have no other alternative than to be indebted to the landlords. This perpetual indebtedness makes them more dependent on landowners, which enable the landlords to maintain an entourage of dependents.

Then there are many villagers employed as casual labourers in both villages. In the case of casual labourers, they do not have a particular employer for whom they work. The big landlords in Menikgama in addition employ contractor cum labourers for their cultivation work who are responsible for finding fellow labourers. However, in Kurundugama, the landowners do not employ such contractors because their landholdings are small and labour requirements are not great. They personally inform the labourers when their services are needed.

The fourth kind of economic dependency is dependency via secure jobs. By secure job, I mean employment in a government department or in a state owned land. A number of Kurundugama villagers come under this category as evident from 46 heads of households being employed in the government estate and another 45 employed in the public sector. Today political patronage is becoming more and more important for getting such jobs.

### **Dependency and Clientage**

In the above section, I have identified different patterns and degrees of economic dependence. But all such situations of dependence do not lead to clientage. Therefore it is necessary to analyse the circumstances which lead to a patron-client relationship.



*Patronage is a concept which has been frequently used in Anthropological analysis in studying peasant societies. Scott defines patron-client relationship as—*

“The patron-client relationship - an exchange relationship between roles - may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two persons) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits or both for a person of low status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates services, to the patron”.<sup>4</sup>

There are two main types of patronage—

- (a) traditional patronage evident among landlords and his tenants/labourers,
- (b) political patronage—between politicians and benefit receivers.

### **Traditional Patronage**

Traditional patronage which Scott refers to as the “prototype of patron-client ties”,<sup>5</sup> is apparent between landlord and his tenant or labourer.

The key element in a patron-client relationship is reciprocity and it is asymmetrical. The degree of imbalance in the exchange relationship which Pitt Rivers calls a “lop-sided friendship”<sup>6</sup> is a crucial element in the clientage relationship. It expresses the differential control of patron and clients over resources. The landowners in Menikgama have control over both internal and external resources which help them to put other villagers under obligation and thus manoeuvre into a relationship of dependence.

In Kurundugama, the relationship is not so lop-sided. There are no big landowners. A lot of land resources are in public, not in private hands. The village economy is more diversified as there are more alternative ways of getting income such as weaving, brick making, cinnamon peeling etc.. Also compared to Menikgama, more Kurundugama villagers receive income through secure jobs. Therefore there is less chance of one party being in a much better economic position than the others, which means dependency on landowners becomes less significant.

However, the Menikgama tenants and labourers are dependent on the landlords. They accept their relationship as legitimate, but do not really endorse

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- 4. J.C. Scott, “Patron-client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia” in S.W. Schmidt, J.C. Scott, C. Lande, L. Guasti (eds.) *Friends, Followers and Factions*, (California, University of California, 1977), p. 125.
  - 5. J.C., Scott, “Patron-client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia”, in S.W. Schmidt, J. C. Scott, C. Lande, L. Guasti (eds.), *Friends, Followers and Factions*, (California, University of California, 1977), p. 125.
  - 6. P. Rivers, *The People of Sierra*, (New York, Criterion Book, 1954), p. 40.

their social subordination, merely, recognise their powerlessness. Therefore they pay deference and are loyal to the master. The degree of deference and loyalty is partly a function of the degree of imbalance in the bargaining strength. If the client is more dependent on the patron for his services, he becomes more deferential. This was so, in the case of Charlies Singho.

At this point, it may be relevant to bring in Newby's analysis of deference. He sees two opposing elements in a deferential interaction-differentiation and identification. Differentiation is the hierarchical relationship. The identification, he explains, is not just a simple interaction or even interdependence, but a positive affective one. Because of this element, he says, deferential interaction is not simply calculative nor is it perceived as being subordinate, but as an 'organic' partnership in a cooperative enterprise.

Newby then goes on to say, that because of these two opposing elements of differentiation and identification there is tension, which threatens the destruction of the relationship. But, he says, the inherent tension in the deferential dialectics are capable of being managed by elite individuals and the continuation of deference implies success in tension management.<sup>7</sup>

However, in neither village does behaviour in a patron - client relationship always turn out to be affective as well as calculative. The labourer pays deference to his landlord in order to receive continuous work. He is not satisfied with the income he receives. Nevertheless, he does not show discontent because he has to be in good terms with the landlord to survive. To be closer to the master, he shows respect. This in fact is a calculative behaviour.

Similarly, patrons' act of generosity prompt faithfulness and gratitude from clients. This is important for the patron if he wishes to translate his economic power into political power. Therefore it is the very nature of this calculative behaviour from both parties that makes the relationship harmonious. If one party fails to receive benefits from the other, the relationship ceases to exist.

The hereditary landowners need the services of clients not only for political votes, but also to maintain their social status. Breman analysing patron-client relationships in South Gujarat, India, correctly says, the number of clients that a landlord has becomes an indicator of his esteem and power in the village.<sup>8</sup> In addition landlords need clients for other extra services. Because of their family histories, their values are such that they have to refrain from manual work. Therefore they need the services of others for finding labourers

7. H. Newby, "The Deferential Dialectic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (April 1975), pp. 149—150.

8. J. Breman, *Patronage and Exploitation: Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India*, (California, University of California Press, 1974), PP. 18—19.

for domestic activities such as sweeping, cutting fire-wood, marketing, carrying fertilizers, drawing water from the well etc., Therefore the landlord needs clients to maintain his style of life.

Therefore, the need to create an image of benevolent figure by distributing gifts and making donations, becomes important for the patron to maintain a clientele. The importance of gifts has been often discussed in Anthropological studies of primitive societies.<sup>9</sup> At a theoretical level the significance of various institutionalised forms of gift relationships has been summarized by Simmel<sup>10</sup> and Levi-Straus<sup>11</sup>.

Mauss wrote these acts of generosity

“are not free from self interest.....Between Vassals and chiefs, between vassals and thier henchmen, the heirarchy is established by means of these gifts. To give is to show one's superiority, to show that one is something more and higher, that one is magister. To accept without returning or repaying more is to face subordination, to become a client and subservient, to become minister.”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore through acts of generosity the landlord is successful in the “tension management”. It is then only, he can refrain from threats to his social position and maintain stability.

Thus so far, I have discussed the traditional type of patronage evident among landlord and his tenants or labourers. This kind of patronage is still evident in Menikgama where we find a few paternalistic landlords. But Kurundugma's economy is dominated by the government owned estate. Therefore the land owner-labourer relationship is viewed more through the prism of an egalitarian ideology, condemning subordination. However, Kurundugama villagers are dependent on the Politically powerful and therefore a new kind of patronage (brokerage) emerges.

### Political Patronage

In analysing this new kind of patronage evident in both villages, it is necessary to discuss the penetration of the Central Government and party politics into the village.

9. See B., Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, (London, Routledge, 1922).
10. G., Simmel, “Exchange and the Poor”, in D. N. Levine (eds.) *George Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971).
11. C. Levi-Straus, “The principle of Reciprocity”, in L. Coser and B. Rosenterg, (eds.), *Sociological Theory*, (New York, Macmillan, 1965).
12. M., Mauss, *The Gift*, (London, Cohen and West, 1970), p. 72.

The penetration from the centre into the village is clearly evident in two main forms—

(a) in routine administration and

(b) in development and welfare schemes.

Before 1963 the village was under the administration of a Headman. Village Headmen were appointed by ascriptive criteria, e.g. caste, wealth, lineage etc., Since the Headman system was an important link of both the hierarchical administrative structure and the field administration of colonial times, it came under the constant attack with the growth of nationalistic and democratic sentiments. As a result the Village Headman system was abolished in 1963 and instead *Grāma Sēvakas* were appointed. *Grāma Sēvakas* are part of the bureaucracy and are appointed on universalistic principles. This was one of the major steps in the process of democratising the administration.

The switch to the *Grāma Sēvaka* system has been accompanied by a big expansion of the administration, and a large increase in the division of labour and in the density of administration. There are many Government Officers such as Agricultural Extension Officer, Agricultural Instructor, Rural Development Officer, Midwife, School Teacher, Sub-Post Master, Branch Manager, Bank of Ceylon, Public Health Inspector, Cultivation Officer working in the villages.

The penetration of Central Government can be further seen in the local level organizations. Many rural organizations such as Village Council (VC), Rural Development Society (RDS), Cultivation Committee (CC), Agricultural Productivity Committee (APC), Community Centre have been started with the intension of acceleratating village development.

These organisations have introduced a new aspect of political patronage and brokerage into village politics, especially through village party organizations. One of the things which intensifies the politicization of the administration, is the fact that parallel to the administrative organization of the state, there are also party organizations which ramify down to the village level.

Party politics is deeply rooted in the village. In both villages the most active parties are the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Many villagers identify themselves with these two parties and they openly show their feelings. Very often they hang photographs of political leaders in their houses.

These party organizations are responsible for the deep penetration of party politics into the village. This penetration is further revealed in rural institutions, specially in the VC, where elections for membership were fought on party

lines. Therefore party competition is not just a national phenomenon, but also a village phenomenon. Even in other organizations, supporters of the governing party are elected. At the time of my fieldwork, new RDSs were formed and new officers were elected. In these elections political affiliations played a main role as mainly UNP supporters were elected. In certain organizations like APC and CC, politicization was directly enforced where members were nominated by the Minister in consultation with the Member of Parliament (MP) of the area. The very fact that these organizations change from time to time with a change of government clearly reveals the extent of politicization. Through this set up the system of brokerage a new kind of political patronage has emerged. This is clearly evident in both villages.

Beteille in his study says that—

“The creation of new political opportunities and new bases of power has provided congenial conditions for the development of elaborate networks of patronage”<sup>13</sup>

Beteille's arguments can be applied to the Sri Lankan case. Perhaps what is most significant in the Sinhalese villages is the role played by the political parties in the functioning of patron-client networks.

The villagers support a certain party with the hope of getting benefits from its leaders. These leaders are able to provide two kinds of benefits—

- (a) overtly universalistic benefits and.
- (b) predominantly particularistic benefits.

Universalistic benefits (most of which are widely shared by the whole or part of the community) can be argued and claimed, for the public benefit on universalistic criteria; even though the final decision may be taken by officials whose use of discretionary powers, may be affected by particularistic criteria.

The leaders who are able to provide these benefits to the villagers are the local patrons. At this stage, the local patrons become brokers as they in turn act as clients to the national politicians and bureaucrats.

Wolf defines broker in the following way :

“they stand guard over the critical juncture and synopses of relationship which connect the local system to the larger whole. Their basic function is to relate community oriented individuals who want to stabilise or improve their life chances, but who lack economic security and political connections, with nation-oriented individuals who operate primarily in terms of complex

13. A. Beteille, *Caste Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, (California, University of California Press, 1965), p. 184.

cultural forms standardized as national institutions, but whose success in these operation depends on the size and strength of their personal following"-<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the traditional patrons, they are not in a position to give direct benefits, but have to depend on their own patrons. Therefore, the broker's success lies on how close he is to his patron.

In Kurundugama, the villagers who received government land formed a new welfare society during the time of my study. This society sprang from their initiative and was not part of a formal imposed structure. Their first priority was to get proper road access to their hamlet. They invited the President of the UNP Branch Society for their inaugural meeting and through him approached the bureaucrats. An interview with the Assistant Government Agent (AGA) was granted and the road scheme was given high priority.

Similarly in Menikgama, the brokers were approached for universalistic benefits such as getting a post office, improving the roads and the bus service, etc.,

In the other category benefits are claimed by individuals privately, and official discretion is based on particularistic criteria. This seems to be overwhelmingly important. Today, providing public - sector jobs has become a crucial method of maintaining a clientele. Certain state activities have also given more powers to these brokers. Therefore they are in a position to use these state resources to exert new forms of control and manipulation over their clients. The formation of the Employment Data Bank Scheme or "Job Bank Scheme" as it is popularly called, is a clear example of how the state has given considerable power to the local politicians.

In exchange of their favours, these patrons receive votes, respect and better treatment from clients. For the national level politicians these brokers are important to mobilize village votes. As Baiely says—

"The politicians cannot reach his electorate, the voters cannot communicate with their politicians and their administrators ; the gap is bridged by the political brokers and their networks"<sup>15</sup>

Many Anthropologists have discussed the role of the patron as a mediator linking the village community with the larger society (see Silverman<sup>16</sup> and

14. E. Wolf, "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society: Mexico", in the D. Heath and R. Adams, (eds.), *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*, (New York, Random House, 1965), p. 97.
15. F. G., Baiely, "Politics and Society in Contemporary Orissa", in C. E. Philips (ed.) *Politics and Society in India*, (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963), p. 111.
16. S. F. Silverman, "Patronage and Community National Relationships in Central Italy", *Ethnology*, Vol. iv No. 2, (April 1965).

Wolf<sup>17</sup>). It is true the mediators help the peasants to get in touch with the outside world but, at the same time they are careful not to allow peasants to make direct contacts with the bureaucrats and national level politicians. This is crucial for the local patron if he need to sustain his powers.

Therefore, the brokers, rather than closing the gap between the village and the outer world, polarize the two by seeing that they command the road across the gap. In both villages the brokers gave less chances for the clients to make acquaintances with outsiders. This was evident at Menikgama, at the time of the visit of the MP and the Officials of the Department of Education who came to inaugurate the new school building. This was the MP's first visit to the village and it was a great day for the villagers, who worked hard to make the occasion a success. But when the MP and Officers arrived the local patrons took command over the situation. The Vice-President of the UNP Society treated all the visitors for lunch and the MP for evening tea; although refreshments for the visitors were prepared by the villagers.

In Kurundugama too, when ever the MP or AGA and other bureaucrats visit the village they are entertained by the local politicians and they compete to show deference. For the prize giving ceremony of the *Daham Pāsala* (sunday school in the temple) the MP and other officers were invited. The organisers took advantage of this situation to make contacts with the outsiders. It was evident from their behaviour, that their main objective was to treat the visitors rather than to attend to the activities in the programme. At the time when the visitors left, the proceedings came to a standstill, as all the organisers went to see them off. Their objectives were successful. Later two of the organisers received government jobs.

The above events illustrate two things—

- (a) patrons give no chance for other villagers to get acquainted with outsiders.
- (b) they make use of the situation to show hospitality in order to get personal benefits and also benefits which later they distribute among their clients.

### Conclusions

This study has tried to analyse the types of patron-client bonds evident in two villages in Sri Lanka. Since Independence in 1948, Sri Lankan villages have undergone several changes, especially in the penetration of Central Government and party politics into the village. When there is extensive penetration of the centre into the periphery, one would expect a decline in clientalism. This is because, when needed goods and services become numerous, less dependent the client becomes, of any particular network. But conversely Sri Lankan society is characterized by scarcity which gives scope for new dimensions (political patronage) in the patron-client networks.

17. E. Wolf "Kinsnip, Friendship and Patron-client Relations in Complex Societies", in M. Banton, (ed.), *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, (London. Tavistock Publication, 1966).

TABLE No. 1

## Distribution of Households by Caste in Memhigama

Hamlet	CASTE GROUPS								Total	%
	Goyigama (cultivators) Households No.	%	Badahala (Potters) Households No.	%	Hena (Washmen) Households No.	%	Beravalya (Tom-Tom Beaters) Households No.	%		
I	105	96	—	—	04	04	—	—	109	100
II	40	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	100
III	—	—	17	100	—	—	—	—	17	100
IV	06	15	33	85	—	—	—	—	39	100
V	27	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	27	100
VI	28	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	28	100
VII	31	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	31	100
VIII	31	97	—	—	01	03	—	—	32	100
IX	68	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	68	100
X	107	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	107	100
XI	14	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	100
XII	129	98	—	—	01	01	01	01	131	100
Total	586	91.0	50	8.0	06	0.9	01	0.1	643	100



TABLE No. 2

Distribution of Households by Caste in Kurudugama

Hamlet	CASTE GROUPS											Total	%			
	Kariva (Fishermen) Household No.	%	Goyigama (Cultivators) Household No.	%	Valumpura (Jaggery makers) No.	%	Navandana (Artisan) Household No.	%	Hena (Washermen) Household No.	%	Saliyagama (Cinnamon Peelers-) No.			%	Badahala (Porters) Household No.	%
I	63	92	04	06	—	—	01	01	01	—	—	—	—	—	69	100
II	04	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	04	100
III	28	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28	100
IV	08	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	08	100
V	20	26	—	—	56	73	—	—	—	—	—	—	01	01	77	100
VI	33	94	01	03	—	—	—	01	03	—	—	—	—	—	35	100
VII	41	93	02	05	—	—	—	01	02	—	—	—	—	—	44	100
VIII	01	07	14	93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	100
IX	—	—	09	90	—	—	—	—	—	01	10	—	—	—	10	100
X	31	58	20	38	—	—	01	02	—	01	02	—	—	—	53	100
XI	33	92	02	05	—	—	01	03	—	—	—	—	—	—	36	100
Total	262	69	52	14	56	15	03	0.5	03	0.5	02	0.5	01	0.5	379	100

TABLE No. 3

The Size of Holdings of the Paddy Lands in Menikgama

Extent Acres	Households	No.	%
19.00 >	..	01	..
10.00—18.99	..	01	..
5.00— 9.99	..	08	..
2.00— 4.99	..	26	..
0.50— 1.99	..	131	..
0.50 <	..	29	..
tenants	..	182	..
landless	..	265	..
<b>Total</b>	..	<b>643</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE No. 4

The Size of Holdings of Highland in Menikgama

Extent Acres	Households	No.	%
19.00 >	..	03	..
10.00—8.99	..	03	..
5.00—9.99	..	08	..
2.00—4.99	..	42	..
0.50—1.99	..	246	..
0.50 <	..	175	..
Landless	..	166	..
<b>Total</b>	..	<b>643</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE No. 5

The Size of Holdings of Paddy Land in Kurundugama

Extent Acres	Households	No.	%
19.00 >	..	—	—
10.00—18.99	..	—	—
5.00— 9.99	..	01	01
2.00— 4.99	..	12	03
0.50— 1.99	..	50	13
0.50 < ..	..	20	05
Tenants ..	..	62	16
Landless ..	..	234	62
Total ..	..	379	100

TABLE No. 6

The Size of Holdings of Highland in Kurundugama

Extent Acres	Households	No.	%
19.00 >	..	—	—
10.00—18.99	..	03	01
5.00— 9.99	..	05	01
2.00— 4.99	..	49	12
0.50— 1.99	..	142	38
0.50 < ..	..	142	38
Landless ..	..	38	10
Total ..	..	379	100