Social Stratification, Modernization and Restructuring of Sri Lankan Society

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Abstract:
The paper primarily examines causes led for the transformation of stratification structure and social class in contemporary Sri Lanka. The proposed research is quite broad in its scope therefore, employed a number of different methods in order to analyze this topic. The methodology guided by a 'Social transformation approaches and theory. The study reviews and critiques the current literature; to obtain official records and statistics on pre and post independence era to access data for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The prior to British colonialism, Kandyan Kingdom organized a feudal social order accompanying political system, ritual order, land tenure and professions around the institution based on caste. The jury introduced in 1811 with wide-ranging reforms by British colonialism. Caste base professions were abolished in 1844 which was foundation to change caste strata. However, it shaws significant developments in independent era. The rural community entered mainstream politics and there was an expansion of educational facilities throughout the country. Those further down the caste hierarchy of the day increasingly with modernization characteristics refused to accept traditional inhibition and restriction looked for and found new employment in the developing economy. Since, abolished caste base profession progressively declined importance and transferring power to westernized fragment of the educated national Bourgeoisie was accelerated. Further economic liberalization tremendously followed transforming into social classes structure. Nevertheless it's argued that still remains caste functions in some social institution.

Keywords: Stratification, Modernization, Social structure and Social transformation

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is known as Perl of the Indian Ocean which has 2,500 year documentary history. It is proven by modern archeological survey and historical books like Mahayana, Deepawansa and Chulawansa. Until the European colonialism in early 15th century, it was prevailed monarchy. Sri Lanka was colonized by Portuguese, Dutch and British in respectively. The monarchy system was entirely collapsed in 1815 with British colonialism. The British colonized Sri Lanka till 1948 and afterward established indigenous ruling system with democratic until contemporary. Colonial rule led to the prosperity of some dynamic social elements drawn from **Karawa, Salagama** and **Durawa** caste groups concentrated in the western coastal belt. However, post independence in 1948 saw significant developments in Sri Lankan society. The rural community entered mainstream politics and there was an expansion of educational facilities throughout the country. Those further down the caste hierarchy of the day increasingly with modernization characteristics refused to accept traditional inhibition and restriction looked for and found new employment in the developing economy. Contemporary social class structure evolved side by side with the social, economic, and political changes which took place during the colonial and post colonial periods with diffusion of the western cultural traits.

The decolonization and the establishment of a democratic political process which started in the 1930s witnessed the gradual disappearance of the class of European ruling elite and a transfer of power to more westernized segment of the national Bourgeoisie. In 1944 introduced free education system influenced it to expand rural community into proportional. In 1956 there was a further transition of power from the British ruling elite to Sinhala Buddhist segment of the population sometimes referred to as rural middle classes. The political shift in 1977 and the era of economic liberalization that followed led to a further restructuring of the social classes structure of Sri Lanka. It is argued that the entire factor mentioned above caused to transform caste system into class system of Sri Lanka society. Sri Lankan society of past ten decades thoroughly has been changed from Caste Stratification (Prestige) to Class Stratification due to impact of internal and external factors such as Colonialism, Modernization, Westernization and Internal ruling provisions. But still remains caste functions in some social institution likewise marriages, religious rituals. Eventually this study argues that the social changing in Sri Lanka in the mid twentieth century is similar to those which "suddenly" produced social issues due to modernization and industrialization a century ago in Europe.

Any society of the world is structured with fundamental elements in order to survive and that functions performs the specific structure. Basically there are four structures can be understood functions in its (Paolo Urio, 2013).

    1. Socio-biological structure 2. The structure of norms (formal and informal)
    3. Economic Structure   4. The informational structure

With the time being, structure of particular societal functions could be changed or transformed. To understand these social transforms, Researcher explores of this paper with two sociological theories which are modernization and conflict.

In abstract, Modernization means the appearance of 'modes of social life or organization which originated in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence' (Giddens, 1991). Modernization theories explain the changing ways of communication and media use in traditional and modern societies.

When explore the modernization theory can be found the three steps with its evolution in last five decades.

The first step theory appeared in the 1950s and 1960s. One made the attempt to explain the diffusion of Western lifestyles, technological innovations and individualist types of communication as the superiority of secular, materialist, Western, individualist culture and of individual motivation and achievement (Schramm, 1964).

This first step of theory produced three variants (McQuail, 2000) which are them very important to explore that how extend impact on particular society.

1. *Economic development*: (mass media promote the global diffusion of many technical and social innovations that are essential to modernization).
2. *Literacy and cultural development*: (mass media can teach literacy and other essential skills and techniques).
3. *National identity development*: (mass media could support national identities in new nations (colonies) and support attention to democratic policies elections).

The second phase of modernization theory that was popular in the 1970s and 1980s is a part of the critical theory. But criticize the influence of western modernization. The western cultural and economic imperialism or domination (Schiller, 1976) is held to be the case. The third phase of modernization theory rising in the 1990s is the theory of late, high or post modernity. It tries to be more neutral, being not in favor or against Western modernization. Rather it tries to ascertain the contradictions in the modernization process and to explain the consequences of modernity for individuals in contemporary society (Giddens, 1991). Giddens pointed out that modern society is characterized by time and space instantiation mechanisms. Traditional society is based on direct interaction between people living close to each other. Modern societies stretch further and further across space and time using mass media and interactive media.

Conflict theory suggests that human behavior in social contexts results from conflicts between competing groups. Conflict theory originated with the work of Karl Marx in the mid-1800s. Marx understood human society in terms of conflict between social classes, notably the conflict in capitalist societies between those who owned the means of economic production and those who did not the workers. Subsequent thinkers have described different versions of conflict theory; a common theme is that different social groups have unequal power, though all groups struggle for the same limited resources. Conflict theory has been used to explain diverse human behavior, such as educational practices that either sustain or challenge the *status quo*, cultural customs regarding the elderly, and criminal behavior.

Exploring Sri Lankan Society with above theories, I hypothesize that Sri Lankan society of past ten decades thoroughly has been changed from Caste Stratification (Prestige) to Class Stratification due to impact of internal and external factors such as Colonialism, Modernization, Westernization and Internal ruling provisions.

2. Objectives of Studies
The main objective of this study was to understand causes for restructuring of Sri Lankan society (changes cast hierarchy into social class in Sri Lankan society) and addition to that identify specific social classes existing in contemporary Sri Lanka, understand which factors led to the emergence of new social classes? And examine the nature of social mobility and trends there were three auxiliary objectives.

3. Research Methodology

Explore the relevant literature and analyze them in qualitative and quantitative way. The proposed research is quite broad in its scope therefore Researchers employed a number of different methods in order to analyze this topic. The methodology   also guided by a 'Social transformation approaches to research. The methods and theories intend to employ will be discussed in depth above, and theories are; ***conflict theory and Modernization theory.*** Review and critique the current literature; to obtain official records and statistics on pre and post independence era to access data for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

4. Introduction to Sri Lanka History: Caste base Social structure

The Sinhalese and Tamil[1] caste systems in Sri Lanka have developed distinct features during the course of their evolution from ancient times. It is now significantly different from the Indian system although these two systems were introduced from India under the direct influence of the Indian caste system. These have changed from being dominant modes of social stratification to being flexible system. There are number of reasons why these two caste systems did not develop as rigid and strong social stratification system as in the case of India. However, some aspects of the traditional caste systems such as caste endogamy and hereditary occupations and associated ritual activities continue particularly in the rural sector. Sociologists have also argued that while occupational and behavioral differences among caste groups are disappearing there is some degree of continuity with traditional caste system. One important features of the caste system is caste endogamy. The family does not allow its members to marry outside their caste.

The caste system in its original form was introduced to Sri Lanka from India many hundreds years ago. It is to a large extent influenced by the Hindu caste system. The rules of the purity have been a major feature of the Hindu caste system as written in the "*Dharmashastra".* These rules specify the basic guidelines for social conduct for Hindus (Chumki, P, 2003). The formal ranking of castes also clearly defined in the Hindu philosophy. Although the caste system was introduced from India and was under the direct influence of the Indian caste system, both the Sinhalese and Hindu caste systems in Sri Lanka have developed distinctive characters during their course of evolution. Among the Sinhalese population caste became a key principle of political and social organization during the Kandyan Kingdom (1500-1815)[2]. It also was the dominant mode of social stratification amongst Sinhalese and Tamils until the advent of colonialism. The ruling elite including the king and Kandyan aristocracy received legitimating to rule, command, respect and services (in Sinhalese, Rajakariya) for the peasantry through the caste system. According to the Anthropologist who Ralf Pieris (1956) the various administrative and revenue arms of the Kandyan state were organized according to the principles of caste system. Therefore service obligations were assigned to various caste and land holdings vested in these groups in recognition of the respective caste services. These became features of what E.R Leach (1959) characterized as *Caste Feudalism*.

The close interdependence between caste, state, land tenure system and services organization of the feudal system, however began to disintegrate with the advent of colonial rule. Following the abolition of the service tenure (*Rajakariya*) system in 1830s, the state became progressively dissociated with caste even though some aspects of the old social order continued is in rural areas under the headman system that survived until after independence in 1948. According to some researchers (Jiggins, 1979), caste acquired a new lease of

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[1] Sinhalese and Tamil are two ethnic groups who speak different languages and respectively they follow the religion of Buddhism and Hinduism.

[2] There were several kingdom ruled by different kings in the history and The Kandyan Kingdom was the last monarchy of Sri Lanka, ruled by king Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe when it colonized by British.

life as a means of mobilizing political support for a electoral purposes as well as in youth revolts in the post independences era, but from the angle of social stratification it frequently represented a challenges to the status quo rather than a confirmation as argued that conflict theorist.

5. **Identification of Caste groups and its features**

The parameters of the Sinhalese and Hindu caste system are given in Tables one and two. Each caste system listed the relative standing, names, traditional occupations and population estimates for major caste groups widely present in 1950s in Sri Lankan society. It's important to note here entire spectrum of caste listed here is unlikely to be present in any given area and also certain numerically small caste groups not listed here may be present in some researchers (Ryan, 1953).

Table 5.1: Sinhalese Caste System

Rank	Caste Name		Occupation and place In feudal order	Population % of Sinhalese
1	Govigama			
	1.1	Radala	Ruling elites	0.001
	1.2	Govigama	Free peasants	49.0
	1.3	Patti	Cattle service	0.01
2	Karawa		Fishermen	5.0
3	Salagama		Cinnamon peelers	3.0
4	Durawa		Toddy tappers	1.0
5	Galladu		Smiths	0.5
6	Batgama		Servants	18.0
7	Vahumpura		Sweet makers	12.5
8	Kubal		Potters	2.4
9	Hena		Washers	2.2
10	Nakati		Drummers	3.0
11	Kinnara		Mat weavers	0.2
12	Ahiguntika		Snakes charmers	0.3
13	Rodee		Beggars	3.0

Source: Adopted from Jiggins(1978) and Ryan (1953).

According to Table 1, there are three broad layers in the Sinhalese caste hierarchy. They are the ***Radala*** ruling elites or aristocracy, the Govigamma peasantry and the service castes. The service castes may be subdivided into three broad categories, **Patti** caste in the central districts of the former Kandyan Kingdom and the ***Karawa, Salagama and Durawa*** groups in the coastal areas. Even though these groups had caste services traditionally assigned to them, they were not considered to belong to the service castes in the sense of being a part of a retinue at the service of particular feudal lords. The castes ranging from ***Nawandanna*** to ***Nakati*** (positions 5 to 10 in table 1) on the other hand, regularly held specific service obligations vis- a -vis those superior to them in the caste hierarchy. The three caste groups that constituted the bottom layer of the Sinhalese caste pecking order, namely the ***Kinnara, Ahikuntika*** and ***Rodee***, are in some ways parallel to the untouchables in the Hindu caste hierarchy in India, even though they can't be strictly compared with latter in terms of their numbers or degree of being socially rejected (Ryan 1953). Table 2 provides the broad parameters of the Hindu caste system in Jaffna Peninsula and amongst the Tamil community in general.

Table 5.2: Hindu caste system in Jaffna

Rank	Caste Name	Traditional occupation	Population % of Hindus
1	Brahmin	Temple priests	0.7
2	Saiva Kurukkal	Temple priests For non Brahmin Shrines	0.2
3	Vellalar	Farmers	50.0
4	Pantaram	Garland makers	1.0
5	Cirpacari	Temple sculptor	0.5
6	Koviyar	Servants	7.0
7	Tattar	Goldsmith	0.6
8	Karaiyar	Fisherman	10.0
9	Tallar	Carpenter	2.0
10	Kollar	Blacksmith	0.4
11	Vannar	Dhoby	1.5
12	Ampttar	Barber	0.9
13	Pallar	Labourer	9.0
14	Nalavar	Labourer	9.0
15	Paraiyur	Drummer	2.7

Sources: Adapted from K.David (1947) and Banks (1957).

The two broad layers in the Tamil caste hierarchy are touchable caste and untouchable castes. In the Jaffna kingdom, the *Vellalar* played an important role as chieftains and about 50% of the total population belongs to this caste. The During Portuguese and Dutch rule in Sri Lanka the status of the untouchable, for instance the last four positions in the hierarchy, did not change very much. *Vellalar* considers themselves superior to all other castes except to the Brahmins. The patter of social organization in Jaffna indicates the dominant of the non Brahmin caste. The *Vellalar* caste dominates both in numerically and socially. According to a study done by Banks in 1957 there are also few professional castes such as potters, masons, and barbers the notions underlining the *Kutimai* category is that families of some caste must perform traditional occupation to higher caste.

6. Social Structure of Caste Society

One of the key features of the Sinhalese and Hindu caste systems in the Sri Lankan society is that while the "responsible" free peasant caste groups, the *Govigama* and the *Vellalar* from the majority. The individual service caste are often distributed amongst the general population with large numbers belonging to a given services castes. These may be concentrated in certain specific localities and together the various caste groups may comprise a significant proportion of the total population. This minority status of individual low castes perhaps is an important factor that limits their capacity to resists the system and redefine relation vis-a vis other groups in the respective localities.

In respect of the hereditary or traditional caste occupations, Leach (1960) argued that the exclusive rights guaranteed to each service caste under the caste system to practice a certain necessary vocations served to compensate for the demining status often attributed to such occupations. Only a handful of caste occupations, however have served into the modern era. Among the rural economic activities that have retained some degree of continuity with traditional caste occupation are handicrafts, mat weaving, Kandyan dance, pottery work, laundry work, iron work, brass work and jewelry making. Even where such occupations have survived they have typically becomes commercial enterprises serving all clients irrespective of caste. This is due to the modernization attributes of the country. With introducing of the open economy policy in 1977, it gradually caused for preventing the people from traditional occupations and joined the commercial demand business. McQuail (2000) who argues that economic development is major characteristics of the modern society. Then mass media promotes the global diffusion of many technical and social innovations that are essential to modernization. As a result of that many technical types of equipment imported by Western countries and establishing huge industries were changed of people mind of traditional occupation that prevailed in earlier based on caste system.

Caste occupations have continued to play a role in ritual activities. For a instances, many of the rituals associated with the temple of the tooth relic (Dalada Maligawa) in Kandy, including the famous Esala Perahera involves performances by caste functionaries. Similarly at weddings, funeral, Pirith ceremonies and puberty ceremonies, some specific caste functionaries are employed for specific customary ritual tasks. On the whole, however, caste occupations are of decreasing importance as a manifestation of a traditional caste hierarchy with the western cultural diffusions.

Caste endogamy

One important aspects of the caste hierarchy, has remained relatively intact. This refers to the principles of caste endogamy. For the most part marriage still occurs within one's own caste groups even though love marriages where the partner independently decide to get married appear to be on the increase relative to arranged marriages. This apparent conservatism at marriage may be due to a number of factors including parental pressures, localized peer selections, continuing caste consciousness and consideration about continuity of family line. However, the net effect of the propensity to marry within one's own caste is the continuation of caste differences in the society.

7. Importance of caste systems

Some argue that caste is no longer important in contemporary Sri Lankan society, it appears to be disappearing. However, there two principles of the system which still some extend continue: caste endogamy and rituals status. Ritual status refers to behavioral characteristics. There are traditional forms of inter-caste relations including caste specific social seating arrangements, rules concerning commensality, from of address, place names, names of individual, regulations of address etc. where any of these hierarchical relations continue there is a degree of uneasiness of even resentment towards these practices particularly among educated youth and it follows as tendency. In traditional society of Sri Lanka, education was limited for high caste people (elite) who represent top places in the caste hierarchy. With the introducing of free education policy in 1944, education system impacted to change rapidly the caste hierarchy in Sri Lankan society. Due to the transformation of the economy, contemporary relationships have also changed. There is increased availability of caste free employment opportunities and a relatively high degree of migration into urban areas which are largely not regulated by the more traditional social practices found in the rural areas. The traditional economic system has broken down and some low caste

groups have became rich through participating in new employment opportunities. In other words, the role of caste in the economy has undergone rapid changed. Many economy arrangements now bear little relationship to names, food habits, housing and language patters, caste differences are not given the recognition of earlier times. For example, in the Kandyan Kingdom, traditionally each low caste had distinct personal names and these names reflected caste rank. Such differences are not very important in contemporary society.

8. Transformation of Social Structure into Class Stratification

The social and economic inequalities that exist can be explicated in term of measurable criteria such as living standards, wealth, power, and prestige. Frequently, people subjectively recognize a kind of social ladder in which they play themselves in comparison with each others. While caste system continue to play a role in social stratification in Sri Lanka affecting notions of hereditary social rank and to some extend one's identity, a class system based on objective differences on wealth, living conditions has gradually become the more significant parameter of social stratification in Sri Lanka. Inequalities based on gender and ethnicity operate both within the outside the caste and class systems. It is important to stress the multidimensional nature of social stratification in Sri Lanka. Providing enhance opportunities for upward social mobility for those from the lower rungs of the social stratification systems is an important challenge for social policy in contemporary Sri Lanka. A uni-dimensional attack on poverty along is unlikely to address the lager issue of social inequality of the country.

9. Origin and evolution of social class structure in Sri Lanka

In the Kandyan period, the caste hierarchy ran more or less parallel to a feudal style social class structure consisting of an aristocracy (Radala caste), free peasants (Govigama) and those who provided hereditary or traditional caste services of one kind or another.

Colonial rule led to the prosperity of some dynamic social elements drawn from Karawa, Salagama and Durawa caste groups concentrated in the western coastal belt. However after independence in 1948, saw significant developments in Sri Lankan society. The rural community entered mainstream politics and there was an expansion of educational facilities throughout the country. Those further down the caste hierarchy of the day increasingly refused to accept traditional inhibition and restriction looked for and found new employment in the developing economy. Contemporary social class structure evolved side by side with the social, economic, and political changes which took place during the colonial and post colonial periods.

The decolonization and the establishment of a democratic political process which started in the 1930s witnessed the gradual disappearance of the class of ruling elite and a transfer of power to more westernized segment of the national Bourgeoisie. In 1948 there was a further transition of power from the British ruling elite to Sinhala Buddhist segment of the population sometimes referred to as rural middle classes. The political shift in 1977 and the era of economic liberalization that followed led to a further restructuring of the social classes structure of Sri Lanka.

Expansion of plantation sector and other services

The formation of social classes under the impact of a plantation economy has been discussed by many political scientists. The evolution of social classes was significantly controlled by colonizers through controlling access of the local population to economic resources. For instance the Portuguese, Dutch and British rule restricted trading opportunities available to local people. During this period, planters, tax collectors and shippers were foreigners. Later, the growth of the plantation economy, tea and rubber cultivation, created conditions for a class of local merchants, arrack renters and the plantation owners as well

as plantation workers. Those who got licenses to sell liquor were able to make huge profits and then invested their profits in coffee and rubber plantation, graphite mining and other lucrative business opportunities. Children of those groups were educated in English and a new professional class emerged. Towards the latter part of colonial rule, in the Kandyan areas and the Jaffna Peninsula the Sinhala and Tamil land owners including local plantation owners traditionally belonged to the **Govigama** and **Vellalar** castes. A new class of merchants, professionals etc. came from the **Karawa** caste. The next social class in the hierarchy was a more heterogeneous group comprising small land owners, teachers and rural based traders. Two major factors which led to the emergence of this class was the expansion of the public sector and of the market economy. The working class consisted of plantation workers, agricultural workers and small scale farmers. During the period 1956 to 1977 a Sinhalese Buddhist segment of the population become economically and politically powerful due to the government policies.

Economic liberalization:
The political shift in 1977 and era of economic liberalization led to further changes in the structure of social classes. The open economic policies pursued by the government from 1977 led to the creation not only of social differentiation but also an increase in social mobility. The commercial investments and tasks in the imports and export trade ensured the prosperity of a relatively small but well connected entrepreneurial class. Their visible signs of influence and changing life style are manifested in the emergence of supermarket to cater to their cosmopolitan lifestyles, luxury motor cars, and international school for their children, private nursing homes, the development of exclusive upper class neighborhoods and increased international travel for pleasure and business. The disparities between the traditional villages and the newly established villages expansion schemes and colonies, irrigated and non irrigated agricultural zones, commercial farmers and landless farm workers indicated a growing social class differentiation even within the rural populations too. These disparities were made conflict against to ruling party. Subsequent conflict theorists have described different versions of conflict theory; a common theme is that different social groups have unequal power, though all groups struggle for the same limited resources. Conflict theory has been used to explain diverse human behavior, such as educational practices that either sustains. While expansion of social class disparities educated youth's unrest blasted against the government in 1980s and it grew insurrection in southern part of the country and but government controlled it by using military effort. Meanwhile same decade Tamil youths in Northern Province led conflict against to Buddhist elite ruling party due to consequences of discrimination from the main stream. The conflict which is started in 1983 adversely impacted on entire country during past thirty years and created a war culture.

The factors which were led for the transformation of Sri Lankan society can be summarized as below.
 1. Colonialism 1505-1948
 2. Abolish caste service system by British rulers (on track to modernization)
 3. Establish British culture 1815-1948/ introduced modern technology
 4. Expansion of plantation sector and other services in Colonial period
 5. Policy of free education system in 1944
 6. Independence in 1948
 7. Established indigenous Buddhist elite government in 1956
 8. Open economic system in 1977- free trade Zone, liberal market system, foreign employment opportunities etc…
 9. JVP (left youth revolt) struggle in Southern and LTTE rebels 1980s Northern provinces (Conflict).
 10. Ethnic conflict (LTTE) 1983-2009 created war culture

11. Westernization and Globalization process

Sri Lankan society of past ten decades thoroughly has been changed from Caste Stratification (Prestige) to Class Stratification due to impact of internal and external factors such as Colonialism, Modernization, Westernization and Internal ruling provisions. But still remains caste functions in marriages, religious rituals of the country.

10. Social mobility of modern society

Social class differences have become increasingly evident and significant in term of living conditions, identity, and social relations. It's hard to identify the specific social classes with exist in contemporary Sri Lanka and where one social class ends and another begins. The conventional three fold division of the population into upper, middle and lower classes may not be adequate for understanding the structure of social classes of changing Sri Lankan society. Increased social class differentiation may not necessarily lead to a corresponding increase in class consciousness likewise mention above.

Social class difference can be measured by objective criteria such as income, wealth etc. and such differences can also be understood in terms of certain contrasting manifestations in speech, dress, employment, type of education, housing, neighborhood, characteristics and mode of travel. These characteristics absorbed by people through the modernization and Westernization process. Sometimes, people themselves recognize that they belong to a particular social class. Some important features useful to identify social classes are presented in the following table.

Table 10.1: Manifestations of social class differences in Sri Lanka.

Class	Speech	Dress	Mode of travel	Education	Employment	Living area
High	English	European	Luxury Vehicles	Elite school	Executive Professions	Exclusive Suburbs
Middle	English/ Mother Language	Shirts Trousers Cloths & Jacket	Cars, Van Three-wheelers Motorbikes	Government National School	Non executive Professions, Small scale business	Small towns Villages
low	Mother Language	Sarong Cloths& jacket	Bicycle Walking public transport	Rural school	labour	Colony Village shanty

Sources: Literature base of class functions

These features are broad tendencies indicating life styles differences related to class rather than real determinants of social class differences. However, certain features clustering together in the same social categories indicate the class nature of these characterizations. English speech, European dress, education in elite schools, residence in exclusive suburban areas, reputed occupations and travel in Luxury motor vehicles are manifestations of upper social class futures. In contrast, the lower classes in Sri Lanka speak

the mother languages; wear the familiar traditional cloths and jacket or sarong. Their children go to rural schools, live in colonies, or settlements, villages or shanty areas. They mostly do manual work, travel on foot, bicycle or using public transport. In fact the middle class is one of the mixes of the both lower and high classes. There is of course a range of variations between these three extremes characterization making it difficult to conceive of society in terms of distant social classes.

The movement of people, families and other social groups from one level to another within the scheme of social stratification, class system in particular, is known as social mobility. Any such movement from low status to high status is called upward social mobility. The backward social mobility involves a movement from higher to a lower position. Sri Lanka society has been characterized by higher degree of social mobility throughout past century. Education and commerce have been the two important paths of upward social mobility in Sri Lanka. Since the late 1970s access to employment opportunities in West Asia has become an important avenue for upward mobility for men and women of Sri Lankan society.

Sri Lankan society of past ten decades thoroughly has been changed from Caste Stratification (Prestige) to Class Stratification due to impact of internal and external factors such as Colonialism, Modernization, Westernization and Internal ruling provisions. But still remains caste functions in some social institution likewise marriages, religious rituals. All in all of this study I argue that the social changing in Sri Lanka in the mid twentieth century are similar to those which "suddenly" produced social issues a century ago in Europe.

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