

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Self-harm and self-inflicted death amongst Sinhalese
Buddhists in Sri Lanka: An ethnographic study*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology
of the London School of Economics for the degree of
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Abstract

Suicidal behaviour has long been observed to occur at unusually high rates in Sri Lanka. In this thesis, the results of twenty-one months' ethnographic, clinical, and archival research into the social-structural, interpersonal, and psychopathological contexts of self-harm and self-inflicted death are presented. The thesis argues that acts of self-harm and self-inflicted death amongst Sinhalese Buddhists in the Madampe Division, northwest Sri Lanka, reflect the kinship structure. In turn, the kinship structure can be understood as a reflection of several hundred years' political economic change. Within this, suicidal behaviour can be viewed as a manifestation of three key issues: (1) the question of the 'inevitability' of kinship; (2) the ability of individuals to respond to their problems through other means; and (3) the political economic status of individuals within the social structure that defines that ability as well as psychological experience and response. I argue that when moral codes of kinship are brought into question and the individual finds him- or her-self accused of shameful behaviour, suicidal behaviour becomes more likely. In this context, suicidal behaviour stands as a denial of sociality, as a means by which the fundamental premise of shame can be rejected. Comparing two communities in the Madampe Division, I demonstrate how wider economic and social changes over the past couple hundred years have today manifested different structures and ideologies of caste, class, marriage, kinship, personhood, and religion in each. Given the highly localised specificity of such structures and ideologies, as well as their attendant psychological states, I am concerned to explain how Division-wide epidemiologies of self-harm and self-inflicted death mask various underlying problems and pathways to self-harm and suicide amongst groups of demographically similar people. In this way, I argue that suicidal behaviour reflect material relations and their idealisations.

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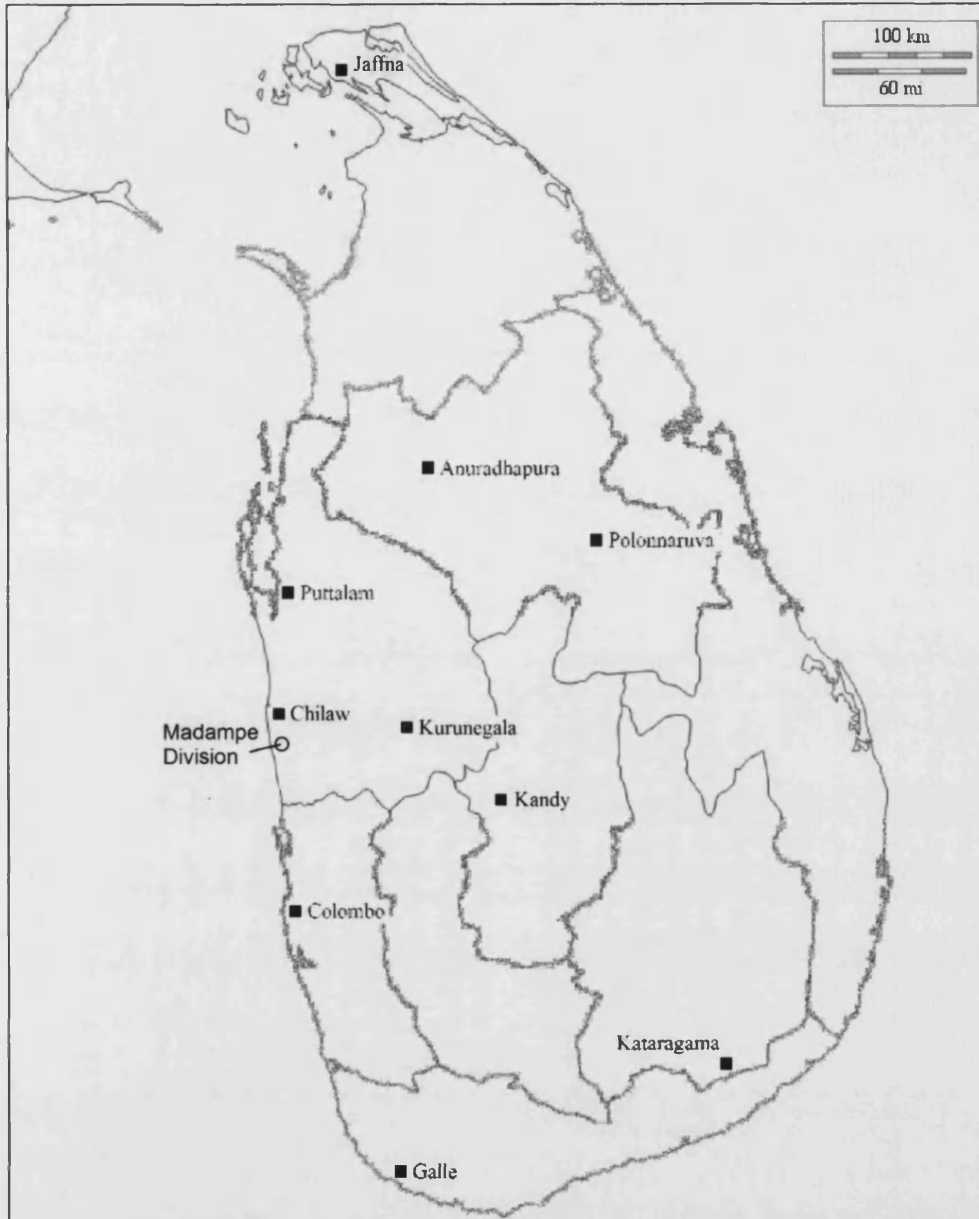
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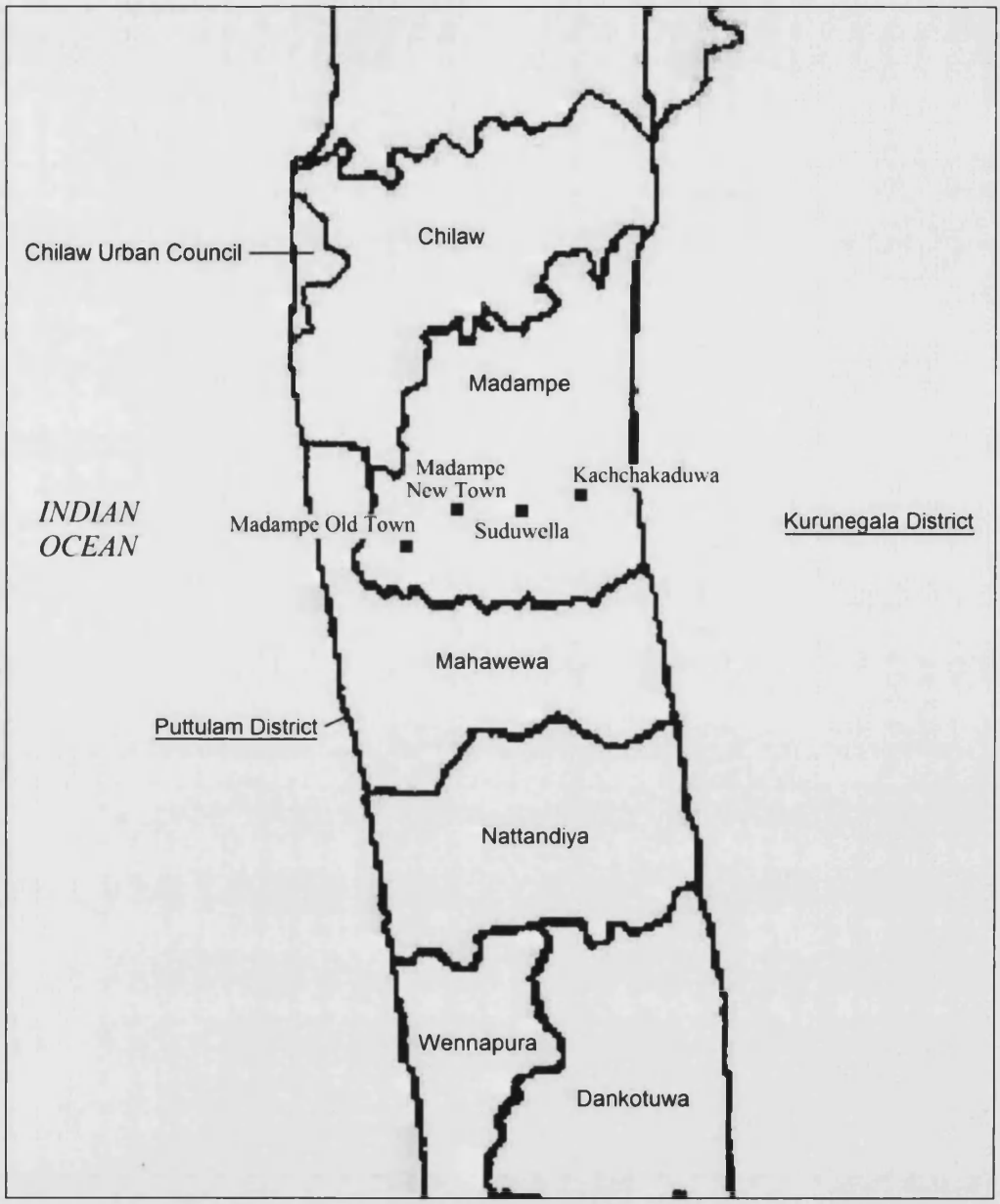
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Map 1: Sri Lanka.



Map 2: Southern portion of the Puttalam District showing Madampe Division and principle locations in field site: Madampe Old and New Towns, Suduwella, and Kachchakaduwa.

1.

Introduction: understanding suicidal behaviour in social context

Ramesh, 16, was an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist male.¹ In 2001 Ramesh's mother migrated overseas to work, partly in order to earn money but also because her relationship with her husband, Ramesh's father, was breaking down. Ramesh's father subsequently began a relationship with another woman, who soon came to live with them. Ramesh did not have a good relationship with his step-mother, and the two quarrelled frequently. As a result he began to perform badly at school, get into fights, and play truant. These problems led to a violent dispute between Ramesh and his father. Following this, Ramesh lodged with an unrelated, unmarried, man in the same village. In 2004 Ramesh's mother returned to Sri Lanka. She began to hear stories about the man Ramesh was living with, and came to suspect that her son was being sexually abused. The police were called, Ramesh's host was taken in for questioning, and Ramesh himself was encouraged to return home. After the police had left, Ramesh drank from a bottle of petrol.

Nayomi, 15, was an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist female. Since the age of 13, Nayomi had been involved in a romantic relationship with a boy in her class at school. Recently a third girl had tried to come between the couple, leading Nayomi to become withdrawn

¹ All personal and family names and other identifying features of cases involving suicidal behaviour and other sensitive issues have been changed throughout this thesis in order to preserve anonymity. Personal and family names have been used when discussing genealogies, as have those of officials and other professionals speaking 'on the record' or appearing in published sources. Place names have not been changed.

and suffer from on-going feelings of sadness (*dukkha*). One day Nayomi saw the other girl talking to her boyfriend, and in response admonished her. The girl's aunt learnt about this and admonished Nayomi in return. Finally, Nayomi's father, drunk at the time, heard about what had been taking place, and slapped her. Nayomi picked up a bottle of weed-killer and drank from it.

Janaka, 30, was a married Sinhalese Buddhist male. At the age of 25 Janaka had married a woman of whom his parents had not approved, and was subsequently disowned by his family. After the birth of their first child, Janaka's wife migrated abroad to work. Following his wife's departure Janaka began an affair with a neighbour, whose husband was also abroad. After three years Janaka's wife returned to Sri Lanka. The couple experienced severe marital difficulties as a result of the reunion, with each struggling to adjust again to married life. Following an argument, Janaka took an overdose of medication. Several months later, Janaka's wife learnt about the affair, which was still on-going. The husband also found out, and threatened Janaka with violence. Using money earned abroad, Janaka's wife rented a second home and sought to end her marriage. Upon receiving divorce papers, Janaka swallowed several *kānēru* (yellow oleander) seeds.

Deepthika, 34, was a married Sinhalese Buddhist female. In 2000 Deepthika's husband began an affair with her sister, and subsequently set up home with her. Following this, Deepthika drank cleaning fluid, which caused her to lose her eyesight. After four years Deepthika's husband demanded that she move out of her house, which still belonged to him. Homeless, Deepthika complained that she lacked support from her family, and was

experiencing severe financial difficulties. As a result Deepthika developed feelings of hopelessness (*asahānaya*) and helplessness (*asaraṇa*), couldn't sleep, and lost her appetite. Deepthika took an overdose of medication.

Following their suicide attempts, Ramesh, Nayomi, Janaka, and Deepthika were admitted to the Chilaw hospital in western Sri Lanka. After a few days spent recovering on the ward, they were referred to the Chilaw Mental Health Clinic for a psychological risk assessment, before being discharged. Clinicians' collected detailed case histories relating to events leading up to the suicide attempt, on which basis they determined precipitating causes of the act and planned a course of treatment based around counselling or medication. Thus, each case history ends with the act of suicidal behaviour itself; nothing is mentioned about what happened afterwards, except to say that each patient survived. As with most records accessible to suicide researchers, the act is depicted as an attempt to end social relations through self-inflicted death, rather than a moment within on-going social relationships in its own right. The same may be said of records relating to self-inflicted deaths. Suicide rates are most often read as relatively unproblematic indicators of a societal 'death wish' while case materials, for example those kept by coroners, similarly end with the individual's demise:

Jayasiri, 54, a Sinhalese Buddhist male, had been married for 42 years. According to Jayasiri's wife, he had a drink problem and spent a large portion of the household finances on alcohol. Jayasiri's eldest son, a soldier, came home on leave and admonished him about his drinking. The two had a quarrel, during which the son struck

the father. Jayasiri went into the kitchen and drank some poison (*vasa*). He was taken to hospital but died from his injuries. A neighbour commented that until the son had returned home, the family was very peaceful.

1.1. Outline of the problem

Of course, such rendering of suicide events simply reflects clinicians' and coroners' professional interests. Yet suicide can also be viewed as a socially powerful act, with ramifications that spiral much further than survival or death. Through the accomplishment of fatal self-harm, individuals voluntarily remove themselves from a world of significant others and in so doing question the sociality that binds them together: sociality that for most of the time is taken for granted. Non-fatal suicide attempts and suicide threats are powerful for the same reason. Although death is avoided and in some cases never stands as a serious threat, the association of the behaviour with permanent separation from others is still very much part of the event. It could be said that all kinds of suicidal behaviour – both lethal and non-lethal – function to put the idea of death into people's minds as a fundamental part of a broader communicative strategy. In this thesis I will argue that through such messaging suicidal behaviour stands for a denial of sociality in which the inevitability of social relations is called into question.

How does such behaviour come about? Why do some people deliberately try to kill or harm themselves for social ends? What does it mean for relationships when they do? This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions through the examination of particularistic ethnographic and clinical case studies of suicidal behaviour, using the lens

of social and psychological theory. Between October 2004 and June 2006 I conducted research into the causes, consequences, and broader social contexts of, including possible alternatives to, suicide events in a small peri-urban locality in western Sri Lanka called Madampe Division. I have known the Madampe Division since 2001, when I was stationed there while working with the international development organisation Voluntary Services Overseas and the Sri Lankan government organisation National Youth Services Council. During that time I worked in the office of the Assistant Government Agent (AGA), the local social welfare and services delivery point for Madampe residents. It was then that I first came to hear about the particularly high rate of suicide in Sri Lanka (see below, 1.2), and decided eventually to return at a later date to find out more about it.

After completing postgraduate training in anthropology, I returned to Madampe to begin my research. This took a two-pronged approach, with the first involving ethnographies, surveys, and interviews in and of a local hospital, the Divisional police station, coroners' court, mental health clinic, two schools, and the AGA. The second involved ethnographic, survey, and interview research in two communities, called Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. Suduwella, as in 2001, was my home throughout the twenty-one month fieldwork period. As before, I lodged with a middle-class Sinhalese Buddhist family, the head of which was a retired bank manager, his wife, and their three grown-up children. With unsurpassed generosity, the family let me into their home and their lives and treated as one of their own, calling me *Tom putā* (Tom son), or *Tom ayiyā* (Tom brother). They proved to be invaluable sources of information and provided a range of introductions that helped to get my work started. Combined with the local knowledge I had gained during my 2001 visit, I was able to begin research as soon as I arrived.

In addition, I spent around one month at the Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA) in Colombo, collecting secondary data. In the main, I reviewed British and Ceylonese *Administration Reports* (ARs) dating from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s. ARs contained annual reports by the District Government Agents (GAs) and AGAs on issues of local economic and social development, as well as national overviews by heads of departments including law enforcement and legal institutions, medical institutions, land registries, and the like. I also reviewed selected copies of national (English language) newspapers from the mid-1800s to the late 1900s. The dairies of local GAs and AGAs were available for the same period, but sadly their ink had faded to a state of illegibility.

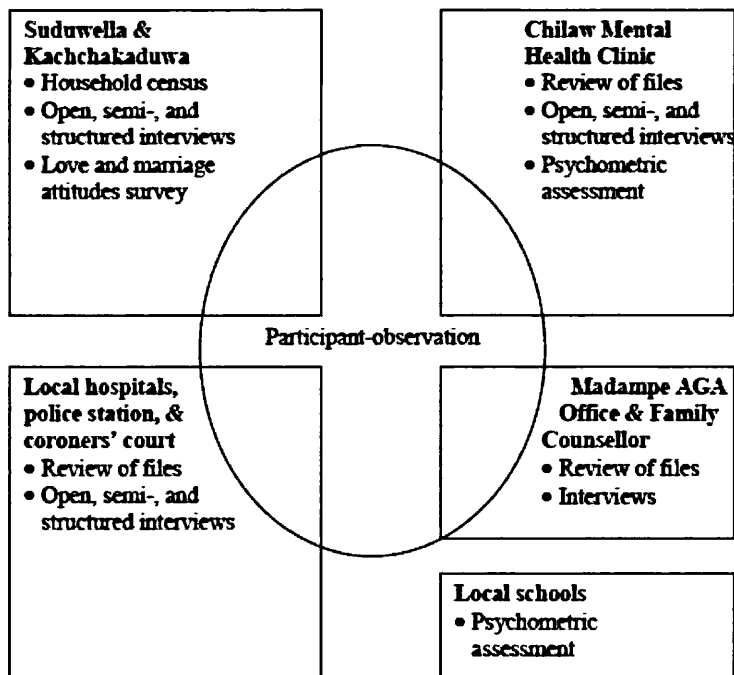


Figure 1.1: Focus of research and methodology conducted in the Madampe Division and local area, October 2004 to June 2006.

1.2. The Sri Lankan suicide rate

Throughout the twentieth century, Sri Lanka was witness to one of the world's fastest-growing and highest suicide rates.² Increasing year on year from at least the end of the nineteenth century, between 1983 and 1993 more than 90,000 people were known to have committed suicide. Within this decade alone, more people died by their own hand than have been killed by the island's thirty-year ethnic conflict.³ Reflecting the scale of the problem, members of the Oxford Centre for Suicide Research proclaimed a 'suicide epidemic' (Eddleston *et al* 1998: 134) in Sri Lanka. However, in the late 1990s something strange appeared to happen. For the first time in a century, the suicide rate began to fall. This it did substantially, and by 2001 it was at its lowest in almost thirty years.

The history of the Sri Lankan suicide rate can thus be divided into four phases: pre take-off, take-off, epidemic, and fall. The pre take-off phase dates to before 1962, and was defined by a very low rate of suicide. The take-off phase lasted from c. 1962 until c. 1978, and was characterised by a shallow increase in the suicide rate. The epidemic third phase lasted from c. 1978 until 1995. During this time, the suicide rate more than doubled. Suicide rates for the years 1987 to 1989 are unavailable, although it is very likely that the rate surpassed the peak of 1986. The fourth and current stage has been characterised by a considerable drop in the suicide rate.

² Suicide rates are usually measured as number of cases per 100,000 people in the population. A suicide rate of 25.0 per 100,000 means twenty-five cases of suicide for every 100,000 people. Using this measure suicide rates between populations of different sizes can be compared without bias.

³ This statement was certainly true until Spring 2009, when the final defeat of the Tamil Tigers by government forces pushed the causality rate upwards, into unknown figures.

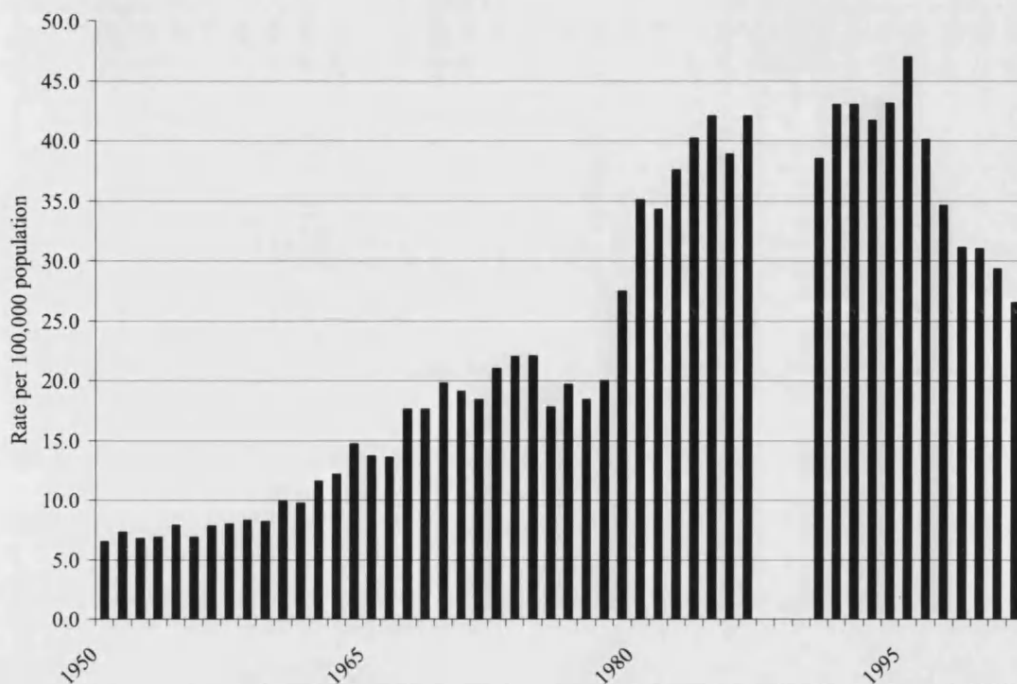


Figure 1.2: Suicide in Sri Lanka, 1950-2001.
 (Source: GOSL [Government of Sri Lanka], with thanks to Jeanne Marecek)

The most recent national data relate to 2007. This data has been published by the Sri Lanka Police Service (2009), and represents the aggregation of statistics collected at local level. As suggested in Chapter 3.1, this data is likely to be highly under-representative of certain kinds of suicide, for example that by drowning. Socio-demographic data is also likely to be misrepresentative, as no systematic method exists across the island for collecting such information. Nevertheless, the data gives a glimpse of what kinds of factors may be significant, at a broad level. In 2007, 4,225 suicides were recorded. This translates to a suicide rate of around 21.0 per 100,000 population (IRIN 2009). Of these, 3,281 were male and 944 were female. Although males of all ages committed suicide, females aged between their late teens and mid thirties were perhaps more likely to do so than older women.

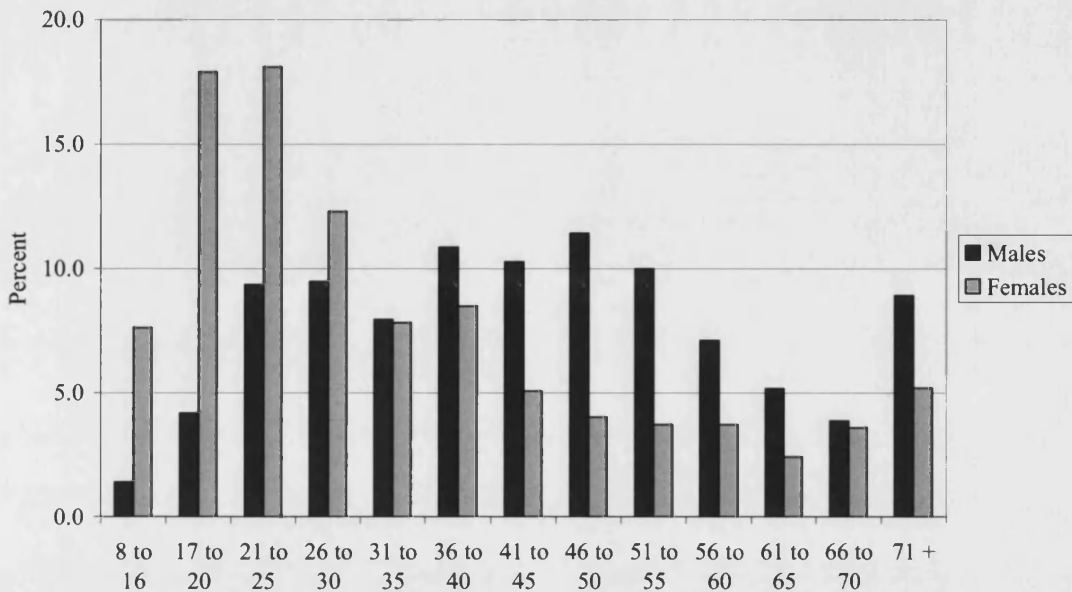


Figure 1.3: Age and sex of suicides, Sri Lanka 2007.
(Source: Sri Lanka Police Service 2009)

Due to the civil war, suicide statistics are not collected from many parts of the north and east of Sri Lanka. It is in these areas that most Sri Lankan Tamils live, and a large number of Muslims. As such, the suicide data is likely to under-represent cases in Tamil and Muslim communities. In the national population in 2001 (Department of Census and Statistics 2003), Sinhalese constituted 82.0 percent, Sri Lankan Tamils 4.3 percent, Indian Tamils 5.1 percent, Sri Lankan and Indian Muslims 7.9 percent, and others 0.7 percent. In the suicide statistics (Figure 1.4), Sinhalese are represented at around 80 percent, Sri Lankan Tamils at about 15 percent, and Indian Tamils and Muslims at less than 5 percent. It would appear from this data, then, that Sri Lankan Tamils are over-represented but Muslims do not commit suicide at the rate that might be expected from their overall presence in the population.

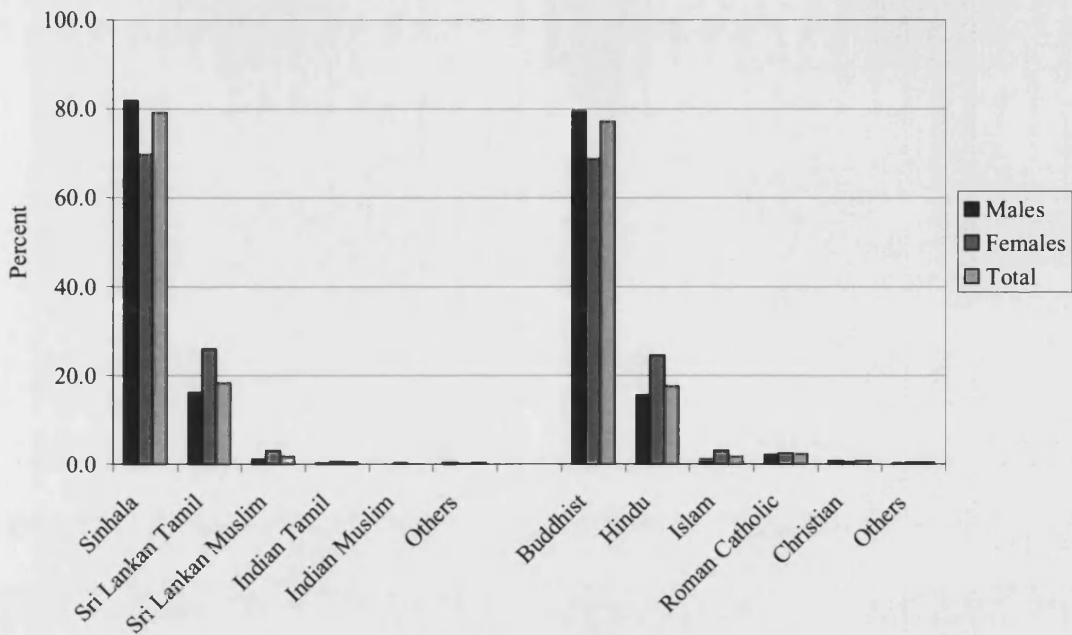


Figure 1.4: Ethnicity and religion of suicides, Sri Lanka 2007
(Source: Sri Lanka Police Service 2009)

Without comparable national-level data relating to population marriage patterns, it is difficult to say what effect marital status has on suicide. However, unmarried males may commit suicide less than unmarried females, and married males more than married females. Similarly, it is difficult to estimate the relationship between education and suicide. It would appear, though, that while males with only up to seven years' worth of schooling (grade one to seven) commit suicide more than their similarly-educated female counterparts, women who have passed GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels commit suicide more than their male counterparts.



Figure 1.5: Marital status of suicides, Sri Lanka 2007.
(Source: Sri Lanka Police Service 2009)

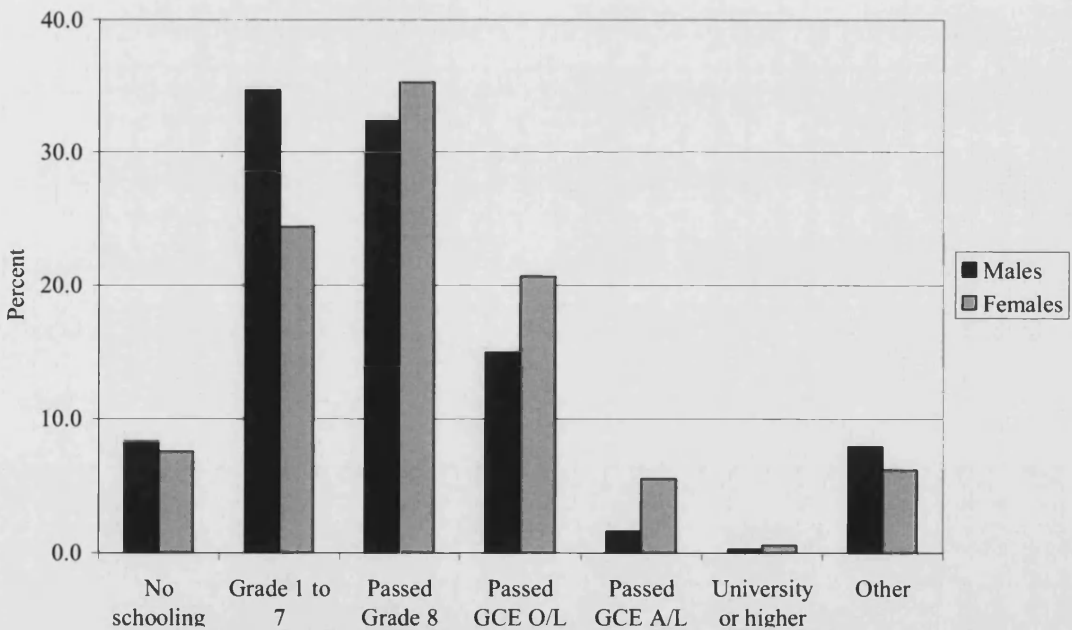


Figure 1.6: Educational attainment of suicides, Sri Lanka 2007
(Source: Sri Lanka Police Service 2009)

1.3. Reading the suicide rate: three approaches

There are several ways to read a suicide rate. The first is to take it as a relatively unproblematic reflection of the number of suicides occurring in a population; the second as the combined result of a number of factors, only one of which includes some reflection of suicidal intent. First, any statistical data relating to suicidal behaviour is prone to bias. From the problematic diagnosis of a lethal injury as being self-inflicted to the final classification of the cause of death, medics and law enforcement officers may unwittingly or wittingly posit homicide to be suicide, suicide to be homicide, accident to be suicide, and so on. After this, data relating to suicide held by local, regional, or national public institutions may be lost or stored inappropriately, or otherwise misreported to the department responsible for collating national suicide statistics. There are, as such, many opportunities for error to occur between an act of suicide taking place and its final incorporation as datum in the suicide rate. Fluctuations in the rate may then reflect changes in recording bias (for an ethnographic analysis of this process, see: Dabagh 2005).

In addition to – and perhaps more fundamental than – this problem, is the interpretation of the suicide rate as an artefact created by what Durkheim (1951 [1897]: 210) called the ‘suicidogenic current.’ That is: the conditions in society that compel individuals to end their own lives. Durkheim posited that the suicidogenic current fluctuated according to degrees of social integration and social regulation within society. With one or both too strong or too weak, the suicide rate rose or fell depending upon conditions and experiences of what he termed egoism, anomy, altruism, and fatalism.

Briefly, egoistical suicide referred to acts of self-inflicted death that were committed in the context of weak social integration, which exposed individuals to suicide because they lacked adequate levels of social support for dealing with their problems. Durkheim argued that egoistical suicide, along with anomic suicide, was the most common form within industrialised societies characterised by complex divisions of labour.

Anomic suicide, then, was similar to egoistical suicide in the sense that it was a form characteristic of individualistic societies. However, anomy was produced not by individualism *per se*, but rather processes of social change that led people to lose their moorings in the social world, and thus their sense of belonging to a social group. For example, societies undergoing transition from tradition to modernity might witness an increased level of anomic suicide as individuals grappled with their changing social experiences in the face of increasing specialisation and division of labour (Durkheim 1933 [1893]). While egoism was a state associated with the professional, urban-dwelling classes, anomy was possible across all classes. Experiences of sudden wealth or sudden poverty could equally produce anomy, as people found themselves in new status positions within society while affectively (in terms of expectation and aspiration) belonging to another.

Altruistic and fatalistic forms of suicide were produced by strong integration and regulation respectively. Because of this, Durkheim associated them with traditional, small scale societies characterised by a simple division of labour and cohesive moral rule. Altruistic suicide referred to cases compelled not by some individual problem but rather a sense of commitment to the group: the practice of *sati* in India, in which a wife throws herself upon the funeral pyre of her husband, is a classic example. Fatalistic suicide,

meanwhile, referred to individuals who were so constrained by their social position they could envisage no other life, or no other means of escape from the problems that it caused. Fatalism was almost totally neglected by Durkheim, as he supposed it to be a condition experienced only by the slave, or the recently-married young man struggling to suppress his bachelor ways and adjust to a new way of life. In fact, psychiatrists such as Williams (1997) have presented cognitive theories of suicide that strongly resemble Durkheim's fatalistic theory.

Over the years there have been many criticisms, defences, and elaborations of Durkheim's theory (for a review of some of these and a valuable criticism of Durkheim's data see: Pope 1976). However, to my mind the theory is useful only so long as Durkheim's restricted definition of suicide – as 'all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result' (Durkheim *ibid*: 44) – is retained. That is: so long as suicide is regarded as the end of behaviour rather than the means by which some other outcome is to be achieved. While Durkheim's four kinds of suicidal behaviour are often empirically demonstrable in some way or another, no simple link between social conditions and the suicidal response *as a means to self-inflicted death* can be found. In what follows, I will examine discussions of the Sri Lankan suicide rate from three different angles: the first following Durkheim, the second which complicates the relationship between method and outcome, and the third which highlights the moral nature of the suicidal act.

1. *The suicide rate is a more-or-less accurate picture of the number of people in a population choosing to end their own lives. Fluctuations in the suicide rate are the result*

of fluctuations in social conditions that typically give rise to suicidal behaviour.

This is the 'social change' reading of the suicide rate, and has long defined both academic and lay understandings of Sri Lanka's suicide problem. At base, this reading understands suicide to be a response to anomy in the classic sense that Durkheim proposed. While much evidence will be presented in this thesis to suggest that the anomic model is certainly not wrong, there are many reasons to suggest it is too simplistic.

The earliest studies that read the Sri Lankan suicide rate in this way were published during the 1950s and 1960s. As such, they were based on data collected before what I have called the take-off phase of the suicide rate, although in the context of a steadily growing number of cases. Straus and Straus (1953) and Wood (1961) argued that the rising number of suicides could be attributed to the effects of social change, particularly westernisation and modernisation, upon traditional caste and kinship structures. They attributed the apparent clustering of suicides in the rural Kandyan provinces to disputes between parents and children over changing marriage practices. Western ideals of romantic love were said to be coming into conflict with traditional practices of arranged marriage and caste endogamy, which were still dominant in those areas. Constrained by customs of kinship, disappointed youth had no other recourse to express their frustration but through suicide. As will be seen throughout the thesis, the fundamental premises of this theory have proved enduringly popular in academia thought and are also expressed by large swaths of people in Madampe today.

During the middle of the epidemic phase, an examination of the take-off phase was provided by Kearney and Miller (1985, 1987, 1988). These sociologists analysed

what they described as the 'spiral of suicide' (1985: 81) between the years 1950 and 1978. Given the fact that suicide rates as a whole had increased across the island regardless of sex, age, and geographical region, Kearney and Miller (ibid: 85) suggested country-wide 'fundamental forces' to be at work. They cited four common experiences of: (1) rapid population growth; (2) expansion of education opportunities; (3) growing unemployment; and (4) internal migration, as probable causal factors. These experiences combined to produce suicide in response to: (1) failure in examinations and/or gaining worthwhile employment; (2) in the context of economic uncertainty prolonged time to marriage and disputes with parents over the choice of marriage partners; and (3) poverty and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness amongst migrants to settler colonies in the irrigation zones of north central and east Sri Lanka (Silva & Pushpakumara 1996).

Kearney and Miller's argument was well supported with secondary data relating to the macro socioeconomic factors they identified. Yet the apparent substantial decline in the suicide rate since 1996 poses problems for their thesis. The 'fundamental forces' Kearney and Miller identified do not appear to have diminished since 1995, and in some cases may have actually gotten more serious. In particular, the mismatch between educational and career aspirations and economic realities has shown no sign of reducing,⁴ and internal migration has been replaced by massive levels of external labour migration to the Middle East and other host countries.

Moreover, no account was taken of possible relationships between the Sri Lankan civil war and the suicide rate. The ethnic conflict between the Sri Lankan government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) escalated during the 1980s and 1990s,

⁴ The subject was tackled at a major international conference in Colombo in October 2004.

coinciding with the suicide rates rise to 'epidemic' proportions. To be fair to Kearney and Miller, the data they analysed related to a period before the civil war truly began, although communal violence had been occurring since 1956. On the other hand, in 1971 a 'Maoist' insurgency amongst 'educated unemployed' Sinhalese youth against the state led to more than 1,000 deaths across the south of the island (Kearney 1975; Obeyesekere 1975a). A second and much more deadly insurgency took place between 1987 and 1989, during which more than 60,000 lost their lives or disappeared (Moore 1993).

Both Tamil and Sinhalese youth insurgencies have occurred against a backdrop, and in response to, processes of social change identified by Kearney and Miller in relation to suicide. Indeed, both Tamil and Sinhalese conflicts have had much to do with a lack of educational and employment opportunities (Moore 1993, Kearney 1975, Obeyesekere 1975a). At the same time, Tamil and Sinhalese cadres have been overwhelmingly young men, while data relating to suicidal behaviour presented above and in Chapter 3.2 indicates a heavy presence of older men and young women. Furthermore, as Durkheim (*ibid*: 352) famously argued, suicide rates tend to go down during times of war, as people become more integrated into society as a result of growing nationalism and feelings of belonging. Although little research has been carried out upon the Tamil variety, Sinhalese (Buddhist) nationalism is an all-pervasive and incredibly strong force in Sri Lanka, and, as will be seen in this thesis, shades many areas of life (see Spencer 1990d for a broad review). If Durkheim's thesis were correct, the Sri Lankan suicide rate should have reduced during the 1980s and 1990s. On the other hand, social, economic, and political costs of the civil may have created conditions of uncertainty that 'counter-acted' the possible 'cohesive consequences' of war (Pradhan

2001).

In sum, no simple correlation can be drawn between processes of social change, civil war, and increases seen in the suicide rate (Gunnell *et al* 2007). It is not clear why the proposed sense of social disruption experienced prior to 1996 abruptly stopped driving people to suicide after that date. Clearly, other factors must be at work.

2. The suicide rate is not just constituted by cases of intentional suicide but also cases of deliberate self-harm. Fluctuations in the suicide rate reflect the number of cases of deliberate self-harm that accidentally result in death. The accidental death rate may fluctuate due to the spread of new methods of self-harm that display greater lethality than traditional methods, the control of existing methods, improvements in or access to medical treatments, and so on.

This is the 'behaviour change' reading of the suicide rate. The link between intent and outcome (cause and effect) is broken. Simply, we do not know how many people who kill themselves 'really' mean to die. The suicide rate contains a number of cases that 'in reality,' were it not for the similarities between methods of suicide and methods of self-harm, would perhaps better defined as accidental death following a case of self-harm. Any rise or fall in the suicide rate may then be due to changing methods of self-harm that temporarily increase or decrease the suicide rate.

Eddleston and Phillips (2004) have argued that many apparently self-inflicted deaths in Sri Lanka may in fact be the unintended outcome of intended acts of non-fatal self-harm. They suggest that the increase in the suicide rate since the 1960s was almost

entirely due to an increase in pesticide and fertiliser poisonings. Pesticides and fertilisers became widespread in Sri Lanka following the Green Revolution and the introduction of agri-chemicals into farming. It is possible that a switch from less lethal (or more treatable) forms of self-harm to highly toxic chemicals took place, thus increasing the death rate from self-harm.

In a second study, Eddleston *et al* (1999) reported on the growth in popularity of *kānēru* poisoning. Although the *kānēru* plant is native to Sri Lanka, its use in self-harm and suicidal behaviour had been traditionally rare. Then, in 1980, two Jaffna schoolgirls committed suicide by swallowing *kānēru* seeds, and the story was reported widely in the media. Following this further cases of *kānēru* poisoning began to appear. In 1981, the Jaffna City Hospital admitted twenty-three cases of *kānēru* poisoning, followed by forty-six in 1982, and 103 in 1983 (Saravanapavanathan & Ganeshamoorthy 1988, cited in Eddleston *et al* 1999). By the end of the decade, thousands of cases were being admitted to hospital island-wide.

In support of these arguments, the Green Revolution and apparent growth in the use of *kānēru* correspond in time with the take-off and epidemic phases of the suicide rate respectively. Correspondingly, decreases in the suicide rate occurred around the time that practical measures were taken to reduce the sale of the more toxic pesticides (Roberts *et al* 2003). According to Gunnell *et al* (2007), restrictions placed on the import and sale of WHO Class 1 toxicity⁵ pesticides in 1995 and endosulfan in 1998 coincided with reductions in suicide in both men and women of all ages. Marecek (personal communication, 2004) suggests that since a government review of suicide in 1996, first

⁵ See http://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/pesticides_hazard/en/ for further information

aid treatments for pesticide and *kānēru* poisoning at hospitals has been improved, and the representation of suicidal behaviour in the media has been banned, possibly reducing the 'copy-cat effect' (Centre for Policy Alternatives & Press Wise Trust 2003). In addition, the Sri Lankan suicide prevention charity Sumatrayo has cited improved infrastructure, communications, and increased accessibility to private transport as combining to bring first aid centres within reach of even the most isolated rural communities (Lakshmi Rathnayake, personal communication, 2006). When these findings are taken together, the increase in the suicide rate may be related to changing toxicity of methods of suicidal behaviour and the decrease since 1996 is certainly partly due to practical preventative and treatment measures rather than any reduction in suicidal behaviour or improvement in the social conditions that cause them.

3. The suicide rate is constituted by cases of intentional suicide and also cases of deliberate self-harm that accidentally result in death. Fluctuations in the suicide rate not only reflect social and behaviour change but also changes in the way that individuals within a population may legitimately respond to their problems. Fluctuations may reflect the 'contraction' or 'expansion' of possible responses other than self-harm and suicide.

This is the 'moral change' reading of the suicide rate. Social change may increase or decrease the extent to which people feel the need to, and legitimately can, respond to problems through the use of self-harm. Fluctuations in the suicide rate may then be the result of the statistical likelihood that with more or less acts of self-harm taking place, the number of accidental deaths is likely to increase or decrease accordingly. Fluctuations

and demographic patterns in the suicide rate may in turn reflect the moral topography of society, in which only certain kinds of people may legitimately or be expected to utilise self-harm or self-inflicted death in response to problems. It is within this reading that most work on suicidal behaviour by anthropologists has been carried out, not just within Sri Lanka but also more generally.

1.4. Anthropological approaches to suicidal behaviour

Of all human behaviours, it is perhaps strange that one so significant and prevalent across societies as suicide has received so little attention from anthropologists. Despite the fact mention of it arose during the early years of British social anthropology, and despite the fact American cultural anthropologists have also looked at it, no systematic account or theory has ever been proposed by either tradition. The earliest dedicated argument made by an anthropologist that I have found appeared in 1894. In a short article in *American Anthropologist*, Steinmetz (1894) argued against the sociologists such as Durkheim who proposed that suicide was positively correlated with the increasing ‘civilisation’ of a society, and also commented upon the lack of attention ethnographers were paying to it. ‘It is a matter of regret,’ Steinmetz suggested, ‘that in so rich and suggestive a publication as the “Notes and Queries on Anthropology,”...there are so few questions in reference to suicide’ (ibid: 60).

Despite Steinmetz’s call for more work on suicide, anthropologists did not greatly increase their interest in why some people attempt to kill themselves. This was – and is – despite the fact that suicide was – and remains – more prevalent in the ‘non-western’

world than the 'western' world (WHO 2008), where anthropologists have usually worked. However, *ad hoc* studies did appear, including a collection of essays that explored suicide and homicide in Africa (Bohannan 1960). More recently, the high number of suicides recorded in the South Asia region has led to a number of anthropologists looking at the problem in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. At the 'Ethnographies of Suicide' Conference held at Brunel University in July 2008, papers discussing suicidal behaviour in those countries comprised the majority of those presented.

Although no self-conscious 'anthropology of suicide' has developed, most studies of suicidal behaviour do seem to share similar central interests. These usually concern what different kinds of suicidal behaviour mean for social relationships when people threaten, attempt, or commit suicide, and from there how suicidal behaviour might be said to obtain a social 'function.' This line of inquiry can be traced back to the British school of social anthropology. Malinowski (1949 [1926]) explained suicide in the Trobriand Islands as a form of redress by powerless individuals, and as a legitimate social institution. Malinowski reported the suicide of a 16-year-old Trobriand man called Kima'i, who threw himself out of a coconut tree. Kima'i had been in a love affair with a parallel cousin, his MZD. Within the Trobriand kinship system, this affair constituted an act of incest. Although the affair had been publicly known about, the couple had been discreet and in such a situation kinsmen were unlikely to make a fuss. However, in an attempt to end the affair and win the girl for himself, a rival male publicly accused Kima'i of incest. Following his accusation, which brought public attention to the relationship and meant that it could no longer be over-looked, Malinowski (*ibid*: 78-79) argued:

...there was only one remedy; only one means of escape remained to the unfortunate youth. Next morning he put on his festive attire and ornamentation, climbed a coconut palm and addressed the community, speaking from among the palm leaves and bidding them farewell. He explained the reasons for his desperate deed and also launched forth a veiled accusation against the man who had driven him to his death, upon which it became the duty of his clansmen to avenge him. Then he wailed aloud, as is the custom, jumped from the palm some sixty feet high and was killed on the spot. There followed a fight within the village in which the rival was wounded; and the quarrel was repeated during the funeral.

By showing how the suicide was a response to public shame, Malinowski placed self-inflicted death at the heart of social institutions as a relationship in itself. In this sense suicide in the Trobriand Islands actually had a legal aspect to it: it arose in situations when other forms of redress were unavailable. The suicide expiated *Kima'i* of the shame of incest and directed public attention upon the man who drove *Kima'i* to his death. Not only did that man suffer shame as a result, but he was physically attacked as well. Malinowski thus distinguished between suicidal behaviour that was supposed to result in death, and that supposed to achieve some other outcome. While both fatal and non-fatal forms acted in this way, non-fatal forms always arose when the intent was to bring some third party to suffer negative affect or public disrepute (ibid: 97):

The person publicly accused admits his or her guilt, takes all the consequences, carries out the punishment upon his own person, but at the same time declares that he

has been badly treated, appeals to the sentiment of those who have driven him to the extreme if they are his friends or relations, or if they are his enemies appeals to the solidarity of his kinsmen, asking them to carry on the vendetta

Firth (1951, 2000 [1961]) extended Malinowski's argument by asking what it was that suicidal individuals were doing *socially*, when committing self-harm and self-inflicted death. Firth (2000: 319) recorded three types of suicide on Tikopia, each mainly used by people of certain age and sex. These were *noa ua* (hanging), chosen by middle-aged and elderly people; *kau ki moana* (swimming out to sea), common amongst young women; and *forau* (sailing out to sea in a canoe), found only in younger men. Hanging and swimming out to sea were usually fatal, and for this reason Firth was content to classify them as suicide attempts that were probably meant to result in death. On the other hand, if swimmers remained within the reef or if canoeists made a show of setting off alone, Firth suggested Tikopia read these acts not as suicide attempts, but instead as acts of social protest. Drawing from the symbolism of Tikopian 'suicide attempts,' Firth argued that rather than acts *caused* by social detachment (as in Durkheim's model), suicidal behaviour was in fact a *form of* social detachment (ibid: 329, 334).

Nadel (1947), working amongst the Nuba tribes of Sudan, explained the suicides he recorded in terms of the social structure of which the suicidal individual was a part. For Nadel the interest lay not so much in how suicide functioned as a social institution, but rather how it arose in different ways as a function of society more generally. Comparing a number of Nuba communities, Nadel argued that suicides of different character emerged according to the rigidity or looseness of the regulative system peculiar

to each. Nadel called suicides amongst the Otoro 'conscious escapes...from a rigid social system...and a prolonged state of depression or fear.' Amongst the Heiban, on the other hand, suicide seemed to have a more impulsive nature about them, and arose in response to minor grievances.

To explain this difference, Nadel turned to his analysis of the social structure of the two communities. Although sharing a fundamentally similar kinship and clan structure, Nadel identified three important distinctions that had 'far-reaching' consequences for the lives of the two groups' members: the complete and incomplete adoption of the wife into the husbands' clan in Otoro and Heiban respectively, the existence of age-grades in Otoro and their absence in Heiban, and the emergence of a tribal chieftainship in Otoro but not Heiban (ibid: 171):

Thus Otoro society appears more purposefully orientated, and individual life more concentrated upon a conscious plan; while in Heiban this plan of life is more erratic and its values uncertain. (ibid: 171-172)

Both types of society could equally give rise to suicide, Nadel (ibid: 174) argued; the 'harmony and purpose' of Otoro just as much as the 'violence and discord' of Heiban:

In [Otoro], because the balance of society exacts from the individual the greater restraint and the more rigorous conformity; in...[Heiban], because...the individual has been habituated to violent impulses and reactions. The stress from which suicide may spring is thus differently placed—between the individual and a society intolerant

of deviations and failures, and within the habitual attitude of the individual. Otoro presents the former, Heiban the latter picture. (ibid.)

Nadel's theory is interesting, and is perhaps best understood as a version of Durkheim's theory of social integration and social regulation. But as with that theory, Nadel's discussion of suicide provides only a glimpse of how social structure may give rise to suicide. The relationship is, first, at least a matter of subjective positioning: two individuals, or the same individual at different stages in his or her life, or who finds him or herself in different situations within the same stage, may sometimes find society rigid while at other times find it loose. Furthermore, it is an arbitrary line that separates a society in which rigidity or looseness does not encourage suicide and one that does.

Working in a village of Sinhalese Buddhists in central Sri Lanka, Spencer (1990a, 1990b) posited that suicide was one of three possible responses to problem experiences. Spencer noted that in certain situations suicide had a distinctly 'aggressive' element to it. The person deemed responsible for causing the death was deeply implicated by the manner of its enactment, and made to suffer as a result:

The [typical suicide] victim is young, late teens or early twenties, male or female. The suicide usually follows a minor domestic dispute—the father or mother refuses to give a son or daughter the money to go to the cinema, a husband complains to his young wife about his meal. The victim goes out and buys weed killer, drinks it, and then presents the family with the consequences; the poison used in almost all of these cases is well known for its slow and agonising effects—effects which the mother,

father, or husband then has to watch in horror (Spencer 1990a: 612-613).

Spencer developed the suicide-as-aggression theory by relating it to other retributive phenomena including homicide and sorcery (c.f. Straus & Straus 1953; Wood 1961). At the base of his theory was the assumption that the social structure inhibits how people can legitimately express or release their complaints about, or frustrations towards, others (Spencer 1990b). Borrowing from Obeyesekere (1975b), Spencer suggested that degrees of relatedness between significant others regulated the choice between suicide, homicide, or sorcery. Obeyesekere's argument was that sorcery functioned as an alternative to homicide: indeed, as a culturally specific way of pacifying the desire to murder. Spencer suggested that suicide also functioned in this way, and argued that suicide, homicide, and sorcery radiated from the individual as responses to injury according to degrees of kinship between the individual and those they were in dispute.

Vertical relationships with close kin were characterised by high levels of subordination on the part of inferiors, for example the submission and respect shown by wives to husbands, children to parents, sisters to brothers, and the young to their elders. Horizontal relationships and relationships with unrelated individuals were essentially of an equal nature, with no special deference shown. When superiors caused injury to inferiors, the response of inferiors tended to remain within the bounds of social respectability that usually defined their relationship. Inferiors were unable to strike out at superiors, because such a response was socially unimaginable. Instead, they inflicted violence upon the self. However, Spencer suggested, such acts of suicide rarely went uncommented upon by third parties, and in this way the 'inwardly directed' act of suicide

became an act of retribution visited upon the external other in the form of public disapproval: that is, they were blamed for causing the person to commit suicide:

It is characteristic for the suicide to present himself or herself to the person left to be in the wrong in the initial dispute as it is for the relationship between them—to be one in which the overt expression of anger is quite simply unthinkable. (1990b: 186)

But when inferiors did cause some injury to superiors, the social relationship between them actually encouraged superiors to respond with direct violence. Unconstrained by the strict moral code ‘inferiors don’t answer back,’ superiors were free to lash out in vengeance. In this situation, homicide would tend to result. Finally, when injuries arose between distant individuals the effect of spatial separation tended to temper any violent response altogether. In this case, the damaged party might use sorcery as a kind of ‘remote strike’ against the injuring party.

Spencer’s model is useful because it highlights the extent to which suicide is a ‘determined choice’ between other possible responses to injury. On the other hand, in Spencer’s model the expansion and contraction of other possible responses over time and space is not considered. Moreover, Spencer assumes that social status remains constant across all situations. However, sorcery is not considered a legitimate or useful response by all Sinhalese, and its perceived efficacy depends upon the social status of individuals and communities and their ‘affinity’ (Weber 1991 [1922]) with particular kinds of religious belief and practice (Stirrat 1992; also see Chapter 3.7). As such, the functional use or choice of suicidal behaviour depends upon more than just the status differentials

between disputing individuals, but also their social status situation ascribed by their location within wider structures of political economy and power, and how those change over time.

I could follow these themes through a range of anthropological studies of suicidal behaviour (for example: Brown 1986; Counts 1980; Giddens 1964, 1971; Johnson, 1981; Littlewood 2002). However, the important point to be found in all of them is that self-harm and self-inflicted death are recognised as being different kinds of behaviour, often varying in terms of method, intended outcome, and social function, but also often ambiguously related too. As ideal categories they exist at either side of a spectrum, with the vast majority of cases ranged in between. But there does too seem to be a general sense in which those who go to some effort to commit 'intentionally non-fatal' self-harm often have in mind some specific social outcome (most often a form of redress), and those who die may more often simply be trying to escape from or reject society and its problems (Giddens 1964, 1971; Spandler 1996; Spandler & Batsleer 2000; Williams 1997). While it is not the job of researchers (other than those, perhaps, engaged in prevention work) to try and differentiate between kinds and thus what really is or is not suicide, a general recognition of the conceptual difference and its implications for how we might try to explain suicidal behaviour is crucial nevertheless.

1.5. Psychological approaches: separation and loss

Although a full discussion of the psychology of suicidal behaviour is not possible here, a brief review of a central theme and its implications for understanding the functional

model in anthropology is interesting. I began this Introduction with a statement to the effect that suicidal behaviour is socially potent because it symbolises purposeful detachment from the world significant others. Like Durkheim's sociology, most psychology has too been concerned with suicidal behaviour as a reaction to separation, rather than a form of separation in its own right. Although Freud's writings on suicide itself were sparse (Alvarez 2002 [1972]), his interest in loss and psychopathology has been crucial for many subsequent theorisations, including Bowlby's work on separation (Holmes 1993).

The basis of Freud's psychoanalysis was his assumption that humans deal with their unbearable problems through symbolic transformation and repression (Bateman & Holmes 1995). In essence, Freud argued that humans coped with problems by turning them into some other form, and suppressing that form in the subconscious where they festered and sometimes later emerged in the consciousness as some type of psychopathology. Freud (2005 [1917]) assumed that most psychopathology was caused by maladaptive experiences of separation and loss, and that the processes by which human infants' learnt to deal healthily with experiences of separation and loss was through a symbolic control over them. For example, in very young males an object of desire included the mother, for whom male infants harboured undeveloped sexual wants. But from fear of the father, infant males learnt to suppress this desire through symbolism that granted him a form of control that he lacked in reality.

Freud (ibid) claimed to find an example of this process in a game played by a young German boy that he observed. Although the boy was much attached his mother, he did not cry when she left the room, as Freud claimed might be expected. Instead, the boy

dealt with the disappointment at her separation and the rejection that it stood for through a symbolic display of control over her. This symbolic control was played out through what Freud called the '*fort/da* game' (ibid). According to Freud, the boy had a peculiar habit of throwing away objects and crying 'o-o-o' as he did so. Both Freud and the boy's mother thought this cry was in fact an attempt at saying '*fort*,' or 'gone.' The boy also had a wooden spoon tied to a piece of string, which he threw away while crying 'o-o-o.' Having done so, the boy would subsequently pull the reel back into view, and joyously cry '*da*,' or 'there.'

Freud (ibid) suggested that the disposal of things in the 'o-o-o' game represented the departure of his mother. But in the retraction of the wooden spoon, Freud suggested the boy had gone a step further. Whereas before the boy had only symbolised his mother's separation, the introduction of string meant he had mastered the ability to retract the spoon, and thus an ability to control the rejection of his mother. The boy did not cry at the literal departure of his mother because he had devised a way, by pulling back the spoon, of symbolically making her stay. Often, however, children failed to master the experience of separation and loss, especially when the object lost was deeply loved. The consequence of losing a deeply loved object, according to Freud, led to an intense and pathological form of mourning he called melancholia (depression). For Freud, suicide was the symbolic transformation of melancholia, or depression, into anger and retributive aggression. The ideal target of such aggression was the loved object but because of its absence, aggression was inflicted upon the self.

During the twentieth century, the developmental psychologist John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 2005 [1989]) elaborated upon Freud's theory and gave it an evolutionary

grounding (Holmes 2003). While separation and loss remained central concerns, Freud's interest in sexual longing was replaced with an instinctual emotional need for attachment and love (Holmes *ibid*). According to Bowlby, an interest amongst young infants for attachment to the primary caregiver,⁶ the inevitability of separation from that caregiver, and the infants' subsequent reactions to loss, all resulted in the development of 'internal working models' through which subsequent affective relationships were understood. Healthy emotional development thus depended upon not only an ability to form meaningful attachments with other human beings, but also an ability to deal with loss when those relationships failed.

Bowlby argued that infantile experiences of attachment and separation set the framework for emotions particularly related to romantic attachment and patterns of mourning following death and loss. For example, when adults encountered death their bereavement response was fundamentally similar to a child's response when separated from the caregiver. Both were characterised by a general sequence of protest, despair, and detachment. However, Bowlby did not mean to imply that children and adults viewed separation as being death-like, as children experienced problems following separation long before they developed a conceptual understanding of death. Rather, Bowlby argued, children and adults both viewed death as another example of a more general dilemma: separation and abandonment. As such, death, like any type of separation or loss, manifested the same basic emotional and social responses.

⁶ In most of the literature on separation, the term 'mother' is used in place of 'primary care-giver' or 'care-giver.' Bowlby was insistent, however, that the term 'mother' was used only for its associations with 'mothering,' the crucial aspect of care giving to which infants of many species, including humans, direct their attachment behaviour. It was not intended to imply that only women could or should be caregivers.

Similarly, the pain of another's suicide was not so much a consequence of experiencing death but rather separation and loss. Threatened or attempted suicide was a symbolic form of separation that elicited in close attached individuals and dependents more general separation anxieties. For example, Bowlby viewed the child's response to the suicide threat or self-inflicted death of a caregiver as being a special form of separation and abandonment anxiety (Bowlby 1973). As Bowlby (ibid: 226-227) suggests:

Threats by parents that, if a child is not good, they will not love him any more have, of course, frequently been referred to as playing a part in the genesis of anxiety... Yet, although a threat of loss of love is far from being of negligible importance, the threat actually to abandon a child plainly carries immensely greater weight... A threat to abandon a child can be made in a variety of ways... [P]robably of great importance, is an impulsive angry threat to desert the family, made usually by a parent in a state of despair and coupled often with a threat to commit suicide.

Although Bowlby was writing about parent-infant relationships in this instance, the principle can be applied to any significant affective relationship that would for the individual bring about tragedy if it failed.

It is in this reaction that I submit the potency of suicidal behaviour as a denial of sociality, as Firth has described it, can be found. If healthy emotional and social life is premised on overcoming separation anxiety, then the potency of suicide – a voluntary, often targeted, act of separation – is clear. So too is the potency of suicide-like behaviours

such as deliberate self-harm. Both sets of behaviour elicit separation anxieties in those who feel responsible for driving an individual towards enforcing or risking a permanent separation. This is the case whether the move was in *actuality* through suicide or *symbolically* through deliberate self-harm. Suicide and deliberate self-harm can be understood, I argue, as an elaboration of the *fort/da* game: an elaboration that seeks to wrestle control of a situation from the hands of others through a very potent questioning of social relationships and their perceived inevitability.⁷

1.6. Definitions of suicidal behaviour

The preceding discussion suggests the need for at least a working definition of suicidal behaviour that focuses on the functional elements in which I am interested. In Madampe, as in spoken Sinhalese, no direct translation of ‘suicide’ exists. The phrase *siya diivināsā ganimā*, which translates best as ‘to take one’s own life,’ is sometimes used. But in Madampe this phrase is not very popular, and instead people much more frequently talk about suicidal behaviour in terms of its most common method: self-poisoning. Reflecting this, the phrase *wāha bonnāva* (drinking poison) is used when people talk about suicidal behaviour in others – and also, importantly, when people make suicide threats of their

⁷ Although impossible to explore here, there are interesting and compelling reasons to think that this might also be an evolved disposition. Primate studies have indicated a functional use of self-harm in much the same way as described in this thesis (as a means of social protest and challenge to low status), and wider theoretical arguments in evolutionary biology suggest that suicide could be an evolutionary stable strategy. For example see: Allyn *et al* 1976; Anderson & Chamove 1985; Bering & Bjorklund 2007; Brown *et al* 1999; Cross & Harlow 1965; De Cantanzaro 1986, 1987, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Hagen 2003; Jones & Daniels 1996; Lester & Goldney 1997; Solman & Price 1987; Zuckerman 1932.

own. The allusion to poison is crucial. Beyond reflecting the preferred method of suicidal behaviour, it highlights an inherent ambiguity between intention, action, and outcome. This is an ambiguity that people in Madampe perfectly recognise, and is always implied when they talk about *wāha bonnāva*. The phrase implies a metaphorical separation of self from the group, and thus the denial of sociality.

For the purposes of this thesis, then, I will define suicidal behaviour in the broadest terms as: *any behaviour through which an individual consciously seeks to challenge or escape a problem-situation by threatening or actually inflicting possibly fatal wounds upon the self, and thus symbolise or actualise their own separation from significant others*. Within this, and at the conceptual level, the definition encompasses such behaviours as suicide threats (verbal or behavioural threats to harm or kill the self), deliberate self-harm ('deliberately non-fatal' acts of self-harm with a high risk of death), suicide attempts ('deliberately fatal' acts of self-harm), and self-inflicted deaths.

I will admit at the outset that the distinction between self-harm and suicide attempt is almost impossible to judge at the level of practice. Although for convenience I will refer to all non-fatal acts of suicidal behaviour as 'self-harm,' it should be understood that I in fact mean 'self-harm or suicide attempt.' Similarly, for convenience I will speak of 'self-inflicted death,' but always recognise that death may not have always been the intent. The definition also blurs the boundary between suicidal behaviours and forms of religious devotionalism that involve social withdrawal or the self-infliction of wounds with the aim of escaping problems with the help of deities. Although religious devotionalism may in fact stand as an alternative response to problems other than suicidal behaviour and in this sense shares a functional equivalence, in Madampe the two

behaviours were conceptually and practically distinct.

First, informants simply did not equate the social withdrawal and rejection of material attachments practiced by the *Sangha* (monkhood) as being 'like' suicidal behaviour. Amongst other reasons, the former, of course, was pious; the latter, impious. Nor did people equate the wounds inflicted through suicidal behaviour with those sustained through religious practice. Secondly, suicidal behaviours that had social aims were concerned with eliciting attention from human agents; withdrawal was aimed at acquiring merit (*pin*), and devotionism with eliciting attention from supernatural agents. Third, suicidal behaviours were enacted as part of a communicative strategy, at the centre of which laid the denial of sociality through self-inflicted death (although to the extent that withdrawal and rejection of the world by *Sangha* and estatics represents a kind of 'social death' blurs the boundary a little here). Finally, sufficiently devoted *Sangha* and devotees do not expect to feel any pain, a consequence that self-harmers do not at all expect to avoid.

1.7. Plan of the thesis

This thesis takes an 'ever decreasing circles' approach to the problem of suicidal behaviour. In Chapter 2 I introduce the research setting, Madampe Division, and two communities in which I conducted in-depth ethnographic study of social life: Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. In Chapter 3 I present an epidemiology of self-harm and self-inflicted death local to the Madampe Division and its wider area. In Chapter 4, and by way of further introduction to the research setting, I discuss key social structural

characteristics of Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa: caste, occupational class, marriage, kinship, moral personhood, and religion. The chapter also engages with the popular social change reading of the suicide rate and challenges the notion that suicidal behaviour can be usefully understood in terms of social disintegration.

Chapters 5 to 8 deal with individual aspects of suicidal behaviour in the Madampe Division. In Chapter 5 I look at how different functional kinds of suicide threat, self-harm, and self-inflicted death come to play a role within on-going social disputes. In Chapters 6 and 7 I investigate suicidal behaviour and romantic relationships and marriage respectively. In Chapter 8 I look at the relationship between suicidal behaviour and 'psychopathology.' Within each chapter I examine how suicidal behaviour comes to be viewed in terms of broader moral discourses and meanings. In Chapter 6 this is in relation to the concept of '*ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari*' ('one life, one love') popular amongst Madampe youth; in Chapter 7 'Middle East Syndrome' and the perceived relationship between female labour migration and misfortune; in Chapter 8 local concepts of *kopēya* (anger), *asahānaya* (frustration), *dukkha* (suffering), the clinical diagnosis of depression, and the contemporary medicalisation of suicidal behaviour.

By way of Conclusion I consider how the processual nature of the suicide event comes to define discourses of suicidal behaviour for those involved as well as for the anthropologist. In fact, I locate the activities of anthropologists and other observers within a central role that helps individuals to come to terms with and understand suicidal behaviour.

2.

The research setting

2.1. Orientation

Madampe Division is located on the far western side of Sri Lanka, around five kilometres from the ocean and some ninety kilometres north of the capital Colombo. It is a southern sub-division of the wider Puttalam District, which together with the neighbouring Kurunegala District makes up the Northwest Province or 'Wayamba' of Sri Lanka. The entire area is part the Sri Lankan 'Low Country,' a distinctive strip of land within the climatic Wet Zone, sandwiched between the ocean and the Kandyan 'Up Country.'

Ethnicity	Population	Percent
Sinhalese	39,662	91.4
Sri Lankan Tamil	1,106	2.6
Indian Tamil	226	0.52
Muslim	2,359	5.4
Burgher	19	0.04
Others	39	0.09
Total	43,411	100.0

Table 2 1: Ethnic constitution of the Madampe Division in 2001
(Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2003: 7)

Today the Madampe Division has a population of around 43,500, of whom 91.4 percent are Sinhalese. The Division is also home to a relatively large Muslim community and a much smaller Tamil community. Sinhalese Buddhists and Roman Catholics constitute 74.1 percent and 17.2 percent of the population respectively. Although I made a few attempts to study suicidal behaviour in the Muslim community (of interest not least

because rates of suicide were near-absent in that population), the focus of this thesis is on the Sinhalese Buddhist community of the Madampe Division.

Religion	Population	Percent
Buddhism	32,159	74.1
Hinduism	697	1.6
Islam	2,383	5.5
Roman Catholic	7,452	17.2
Protestant Christian	708	1.6
Other	12	0.03
Total	43,411	100.0

Table 2 2: Religious constitution of Madampe Division in 2001
(Source: GOSL Department of Census and Statistics, 2003: 7)

Economic activity

Across the whole of the Puttalam District in 2001, around one-third of the working population was employed in each of the three main economic sectors: primary (estate agriculture), secondary (light manufacturing), and tertiary (public and private sector services). Unfortunately, no official data was available for employment patterns in the Madampe Division itself. Based on what I know of the area, I would expect to find a slightly different distribution to the District pattern, with a greater emphasis towards employment within the secondary and tertiary sectors.

Agricultural production in the southern half of the Puttalam District is dominated by the coconut, the cultivation of which began on an industrial scale during the early nineteenth century. In Madampe Division, 79.5 percent of agricultural land use is given over to this crop, with only 3.7 percent for other fruits and vegetables. A further 16.8 percent is given over to paddy cultivation. The majority of the industrial labour force

works in factories processing and manufacturing coconut-derivatives, privately owned garment factories, a steel plant, a carbon factory, a cement factory, and a state-owned mattress factory.

District	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Puttalam	29.8	32.6	37.7
Colombo	32.2	26.6	41.2
Gampaha	1.9	29.9	68.3
Kurunegala	32.4	31.4	36.2
Anuradhapura	58.6	14.2	27.2
Kegalle	27.4	30.3	42.3

Table 2 3: Employment by sector in Puttalam and five neighbouring Districts
(Source: GOSL Department of Census and Statistics, 2003: 24)

Activity	Acres (km ²)	Percent
Coconut estates	92.3	79.5
Banana estates	2.10	1.80
Pineapple estates	1.10	1.00
Cashew nut estates	0.10	0.08
Other fruit estates	1.00	0.82
Vegetable market gardens	0.05	0.04
Paddy (river fed)	8.20	7.00
Paddy (tank fed)	8.30	7.20
Paddy (rain fed)	3.00	2.60
Total	116.15	100.0

Table 2 4: Agricultural land-use in the Madampe Division in 2001
(Source: Madampe AGA Office, 2004, unpublished)

2.2. Economic and social history of the Madampe Division

During the early to middle of the nineteenth century, Madampe was the name of a settlement that sat at the junction of the Colombo-Kurunegala-Puttalam roads. Today

called the Madampe 'Old Town,' it then had a small population, was underdeveloped, and served mainly as a stopping place for travellers passing through to other places. From the middle of the century, the cultivation of coconut and the manufacture of its various products began to dominate the regional economy. Growth in the coconut economy started in the early 1800s, when the market for coconut produce soared in Europe and in Sri Lanka plantations expanded to meet the demand. Madampe Old Town, at the geographical centre of the boom, was one of several settlements in the area that saw unprecedented growth and development as a result.

Consequences of the coconut economy

Three principal effects of the coconut economy are worth considering, for they have greatly affected economic and social lives in the Madampe Division. First, and as de Silva (2005: 366) also notes, both small-scale paddy landowners and tenant farmers abandoned their established livelihoods for participation in the coconut economy. Landowners drained their fields and planted trees, while tenant farmers worked as day labour on the estates, or more often in one of the many manufacturing industries that had sprung up across the area. The result was a reduction in the monetary returns of farming and the financial and social value of the land upon which it took place. According to Puttalam GA Lushington (AR-1884: S1, 95A), in the rest of the island landowners, cultivators, seed-providers, and buffalo-herdsman all received one-fourth of the yearly rice crop as payment. But in the Chilaw District landowners were forced to accept just one-tenth of what they were due in order to compete with higher wages offered on the

plantations.

With the returns of paddy diminished, the value of the land was driven down. By Lushington's figures, an acre of good paddy land in other Districts was worth LKR 80.0, but in the Chilaw District an acre of similar land was worth just LKR 25.0.⁸ Consequently, the status of the paddy landowner suffered. 'Whereas in other districts a man's value is assessed by the extent of paddy lands owed to him,' Lushington wrote, 'in Chilaw his estate is valued almost entirely on his coconut...property' (ibid.).



Figure 2.1: Tilling the ground for the new paddy season using a buffalo-pulled plough. Nowadays this scene is very uncommon in Madampe, not least because of mechanisation.
(Photo: Tom Widger)

Secondly, the demand for labour on plantations and in subsidiary industries could not be met by local supply. The plantation economy drew labour from across the south of the island, causing mass inward migration to the area. In 1821, the total population of the

⁸ Price conversions to pound sterling will not be given for historical data; value in Sri Lankan rupees meant for comparison only.

Puttalam and Chilaw District was 24,700, but sixty years later in 1881 it had risen to 780,200 (Department of Census and Statistics n.d.). The large part of this influx was settling in the southern portion of the District, between Wennapura and Chilaw, and around Madampe.

Population expansion placed increased pressure on existing villages, already hemmed-in by the expanding coconut estates, to house and feed the newcomers. With local rice production in descent, by 1884 the District was producing just one month's requirement per year: the remainder had to be imported from India (AR-1884: S1, 95A). In response, the government implemented a number of population relocation programmes aimed at relieving pressure from the over-crowded villages and boosting local food production (Amarasinghe AR-1947: S1, P7).

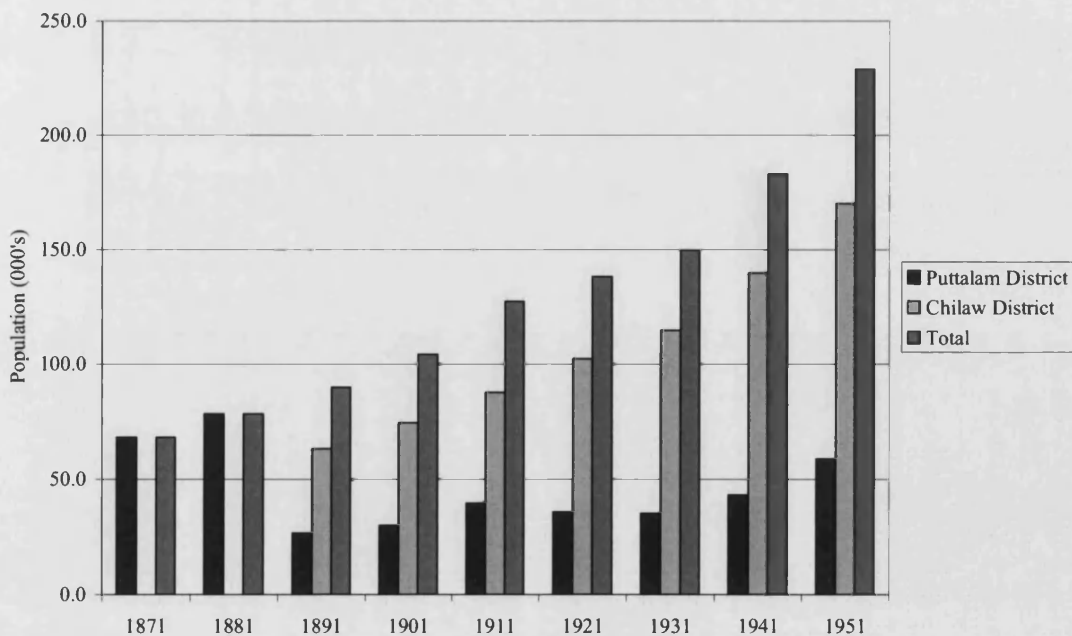


Figure 2.2: Population in the Puttalam and Chilaw Districts, 1871 to 1951. In 1871 and 1881 the Chilaw District did not exist. Following 1891, the population of Chilaw was counted separately, and it grew considerably faster than that of Puttalam. (Source: Department of Census and Statistics n.d.)

Thirdly, the District became one of the wealthiest on the island. Economic development encouraged a strong sense of optimism in GAs, whose reports at that time frequently trumpeted the success of their administrations. Although no doubt writing to an audience in Colombo with hopes for advancement, it is likely that the improvements Lushington (AR-1887: S1, 185A) witnessed did have some material base:

When I first came to the North West Province ten years ago, the condition of these [villages] was most deplorable. The tanks [reservoirs] were out of repair, the villages dirty and neglected and quite inaccessible for want of roads, the people starving and miserable and sunk into such a state of fever, that it seemed impossible to do anything to raise them from the 'Slough of Despond'...

Visitors to the District in the present day find it hard to believe what was the condition of the people a few years ago...Now it is hard to find the parangi⁹-stricken, half-starved villages. Passing along the road one sees healthy, sleek, and well-fed men going to their labour, and holding up their heads with cheerful looks as they see their thriving crops.

In the southern part of the District the substantial brick and tile houses, which are everyday springing up to replace the old mud and cajun houses, tells of the increasing wealth and prosperity of the villages.

The coconut brought untold prosperity to the Chilaw District, and this transformed the

⁹ Yaws, *frambesia tropica*; a chronic infection caused by bacteria affecting skin, bones, and joints. See http://www.healthline.com/adamcontent/yaws?utm_term=yaws&utm_medium=mw&utm_campaign=articl

aspirations of the people. This coincided with a drive to expand the Native Department of the civil service, and also improve the public institutions of law, health, and education. Free education was extended to half the school-age population between 1920 and 1930, in one of two mediums: English or Sinhalese (de Silva 2005: 511). So great was the demand for white-collar labour that either route provided a good chance of employment, with the best positions and prospects reserved for those educated in English. But even as early as 1877, P.A. Templer (AR-1877: S1, 27), GA for the Puttalam District, commented upon the huge level of interest in education that had grown up, and its impact upon the local population. Significantly, the labouring classes began to aspire for better work in government or private business, and rejected manual occupations:

Whether the spread of education – that is English education – which natives insist so much upon having, is an unmixed benefit or not, there can be no doubt that one of its results is to create a large and daily increasing class of men who reject all means of livelihood which savour at all of manual labour.

The expansion of the plantation economy led to continued public and private investment in the area culminating in the creation of the Madampe New Town. In 1912, at what was soon to turn out as the peak of the boom, John Scott (AR-1912/13: S1, F13), GA for Puttalam, commented on the importance of Madampe in the region. He also predicted that the town would further rise in prominence with the arrival of a railway station in the area. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the colonial administration identified a need for a rail link between Colombo and Chilaw. The aim was to increase the speed and

volume of exports from the region, including 'salt from Puttalam and copperah [coconut fibre] from Madampe' (ibid). Through making the land more accessible, it was also hoped to attract more capital into the area (AR-1884: S1, 105A).

Survey for the line began in 1895 and a spot two kilometres inland from Madampe was among the first allocated a station (AR-1895: S1, G25). Building work was completed in 1916, and the line was opened on 1 May of the same year (AR-1916: S1, F11). In 1918, the limits of Madampe were extended eastwards to encompass the new station (AR-1917: S1, F11). At the same time, a local landowner, Mr C.P. de Silva, allocated land around the station to put up buildings for markets, shops, and boutiques (AR-1920: S1, F10). Thus Madampe 'New Town,' also known as 'Silva Town,' was born.

The New Town has since become the economic and political hub of the Division, surpassing the Old Town in terms of development. The local AGA Office is situated there, and also the Pradeshiya Sabha for the whole Chilaw District. Probably one reason for this difference is the ethnic constitution of each town, with the Old Town today populated predominantly by Muslims and the New Town by Sinhalese Buddhists and Roman Catholics.

Recession in the coconut economy

Yet there was, of course, something ephemeral about the coconut. The entire economy was based on export to Europe, and that was unsteady even during the best of times. The price of the staple, rice, too, was tied to production in India, from where it was imported. In 1898 the Indian rice market crashed and prices rose in Sri Lanka. This led to riots at

Nattandiya and the threat of riots at Madampe (AR-1898: S1, G14).

With the outbreak of World War I, shipping lanes were disrupted and European demand for coconut products shrank. The result was both a drop in local labour demand, and an increase in the cost of essential items, many of which were imported. In 1914, H.L. Dowbiggin (AR-1914: S3, B4), Inspector-General of Police, noted that crime rates rose across the island following the outbreak of conflict in August. In the Chilaw District crime had risen during September to November as the plantations laid-off labour, but had decreased in early December as the market settled down and labour was re-engaged.

By 1917 the impact of war had begun to seriously take effect. Reflecting this, Puttalam GA W.E. Wait (AR-1917: S1, F9) submitted a bleak report. Economic depression in the District had worsened due to an exacerbated exchange problem and lack of facilities for export. Quoting figures provided by the Chilaw Planter's Association, Wait suggested that prices had been falling since 1916 and throughout the whole of 1917. At the beginning of 1917 one load of copperah cost about LKR 47.0, but by August the price had dropped to LKR 32.0. In November the cost stood at just LKR 25.5.

During past economic downturns plantation owners had managed to stave-off the effects of recession, but during the 1917 crisis they were not. Alongside the laying-off of daily wage labour, the owners of plantations were also hard-hit. Many had borrowed in order to expand their lands and increase production, and now the money-lenders were beginning to foreclose. A brief respite followed the cessation of war in 1919, when the price of coconut rose again. However GA for Puttalam W. K. H. Campbell (AR-1920: S1, F10) noted that this only meant prosperity for the owners and not the workers, for whom the continuing high price of rice persisted and led to food insecurity. He also noted 'a

considerable increase' (ibid.) in all classes of crime except burglary, and especially assault and robbery.

These problems were not unique to Puttalam alone, and across the whole of the island economic depression coupled with population expansion and food insecurity to threaten civil order. To tackle the problem the government started a programme of land redistribution aimed at boosting local economies and raising living standards. From 1914 Crown Lands and wastelands within existing villages had been alienated to landless and land-poor families on an application basis (AR-1947: S1, P7; AR-1951: S1, JJ3). With the help of a small loan the colonists (as they were known) of these lands held responsibility to clear the land, build a house, and begin cultivation of coconut and some market crops. By 1927, however, it was found that the take-up of land was too low to be of any real benefit. It was also found that colonists had often failed to clear their land or build a house. Furthermore, recovery of the loan was usually impossible. In response a Land Commission was appointed to investigate the problem and in 1929 made its recommendations.

The result of the Land Commission's investigations was the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) of 1935. The LDO initiated a programme of mass state-aided colonisation of wasteland alongside an energetic village expansion programme. At its base was the premise that while colonists could not be expected to build their settlements from scratch, they did hold responsibility to ensure their upkeep and development. The administration cleared land and demarcated the plots within them. It also provided a small grant from which the colonist would be expected to erect a house, dig a well, and begin cultivation. These requirements were to be met by the end of twelve months from

date of settlement, or the land could be forfeit.

In the Puttalam District, new colonies were established on coconut estates and were therefore aimed at re-ordering the coconut economy. By placing coconut lands directly in the hands of private individuals, it was hoped that they would take on the responsibility to sell their coconuts to local entrepreneurs who would establish fibre mills and other derivative industries. To some extent this did seem to happen, and today every LDO colony has its own fibre mill run by a local family. On the other hand, the LDO encouraged greater inward migration to the area. With its extensive coconut plantations and industries, the land south of the Deduru Oya was particularly suited for colonisation. I estimate that at least fifteen (29 percent) of the fifty-two villages within the Madampe Division are LDO colonies established after 1935. I also suspect that almost all fifty-two villages – including Kachchakaduwa, see Chapter 4.1 – contain some number of families that have moved to the area under the LDO programme.

As a consequence of this influx, colonists often found it hard to gain employment. Navarathnatayad (AR-1956: A228), Puttalam GA, noted how the influx of migrants to the Madampe Division had placed increasing pressure on the local job market. Pallekale, south of Kachchakaduwa, was the first coconut estate to be fully settled by that time. Although it provided housing for two hundred families, the only employment for them was in one of the few fibre mills at Kudirippuwa, hard to its north. These mills were already operating at full capacity before colonisation and had employed all the workers they required from the local population. As a result, colonists were left unemployed and fifty or so families made representations to Navarathnatayad requesting the government take their plots and provide them with five acres of cultivatable land anywhere on the

island (ibid).

One final and significant clause of the LDO was to limit the succession of an allocated plot. The Land Commission had recognised that the bilateral system of inheritance was placing huge pressure on landowners to distribute even the smallest holdings between sons and daughters (see Chapter 4.4). Lands had been broken up to such an amount that their viability in cultivation or as residence had been destroyed. The LDO therefore contained two options for inheritance, one of which was to be agreed upon prior to settlement. The first was based on the *prima genitor*, which limited the entire plot to the oldest male child in successive generations. The second allowed division amongst a stated number of children following first generation. To subdivide at all, or to subdivide beyond the agreed fraction, could break the contract and forfeit the land.

2.3. Contemporary trends: industrialisation and labour migration

Industrial activity began relatively early in the Madampe Division and Chilaw District, no doubt in part due to its close proximity with, and good transport links to, Colombo. In 1950, A. Arulpiragasam (AR-1950: A121), AGA for Chilaw, commented on the success of a state-owned Glass Factory at Nattandiya, Acetic Acid factory at Madampe, and Paper Mill at Kakkapaliya, which 'continue to employ thousands of labourers and technicians and pay satisfactory wages' (ibid). By 1952, however, they had closed their doors (De Fonseka AR-1952: A156). Today, the largest employers of industrial labour in the Madampe Division are private garment factories, a steel plant, a carbon factory, and other state-owned enterprises. All but the garment factories began operations during the 1970s

and 1980s; the garment factories themselves began operations during the 1990s.

The majority of those working in the white-collar sector are employed in one of the many state institutions across the Division. These include at least a dozen primary and secondary-level schools, two field hospitals (Peripheral Units), the police station, the AGA, and the Pradeshiya Sabha to name the most significant. Finally, very large numbers of Madampe people run their own businesses (the majority micro enterprises including shops and cottage industries not normally employing help). Significant minorities commute to Colombo, or migrate overseas to work as industrial or domestic labour in the Middle East and South East Asia. I will say much more about migration in Chapter 7.

2.4. Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa

To give context and meaning to my studies of suicidal behaviour, I selected two communities for in-depth ethnographic study (associated survey forms and interview checklists are reproduced in Appendix 2). Each community reflected in a different way the economic and social history I described above. The first, Suduwella, was settled from the 1950s under the LDO. The second, Kachchakaduwa, is a village of some antiquity. In Chapter 4 I will describe how their contemporary characters, including practices and idealisations of caste, class, marriage, kinship, morality, and religion, have been shaped by those diverse origins.

Suduwella has a population of 792 and Kachchakaduwa of 606 (Source: Madampe AGA Office, 2004, unpublished). At Suduwella, these individuals form 121 households while at Kachchakaduwa they form seventy-four (Source: author's household

survey, 2004-05). Both communities are in the vast majority Sinhalese: 98.7 percent and 99.8 respectively. The only ethnic minorities are Sri Lankan Tamils who have married Sinhalese men and women and, at Suduwella, migrant families seeking work.

Ethnicity	Suduwella	Kachchakaduwa
Sinhalese	98.7	99.8
Sri Lankan Tamil	1.3	0.2
Others	-	-
Total	100	100
	(N=792)	(N=606)

Table 2 5: Ethnic constitutions of Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella in 2001
(Source: Madampe AGA Office, 2004, unpublished)

Suduwella lies around half a mile from Madampe New Town, off the Madampe-Kurunegala road. Although a stretch of coconut estate and a new private housing estate lie between Madampe and Suduwella, the colony is probably best thought of as a suburb of the New Town. Hard to the north of Suduwella lies the steel plant where many residents find employment, and also, within the boundaries of the suburb, the mattress factory. To the east lies a paddy system and on its nearside bank the cement factory. To the south lies an ancient (*purana*) village of Mugunawatuwana, its bounds now greatly increased in size by an LDO colony of the same name. To the west lies another colony called Pellawatta, and beyond that a private housing estate¹⁰ called Silva Gate. Pellawatta itself is also expanding through the development of a private estate within its borders.

¹⁰ In the contemporary period coconut estates that have not already been populated through the LDO are being purchased by private companies, 'blocked' into half- and one-acre plots, and sold off to private individuals.



Figure 2.3: A simple timber and *cadjun* dwelling at Suduwella. Just one house at Kachchakaduwa was constructed in this way; at Suduwella, the figure exceeded more than one dozen. This particular house is relatively large, and contained several rooms. Others in the colony contained just one or two.
(Photo: Tom Widger)

Reflecting its 'lowly' beginnings, Suduwella is less developed than other settlements in the area. There is only a government primary-level school to serve it, and children from the area must travel to the New Town for their secondary-level education. Two small boutiques sell simple household items and the only recreational land for sports and other community activities is found at Jayabema, a colony some distance to the north-east.

Communications, too, are simple. One metalled road runs north to south through the suburb, and connects the main Madampe-Kurunegala highway (which defines Suduwella's northern border) with the land around Mugunawatuwana. The natural ground is constituted of a fine, white sand, from which the colony takes its names ('Suduwella' means 'white sand'). Impassable by motor vehicle and slow by foot, all public roads and pathways around the suburb are built of mud imported for the purpose. The upkeep of these roads, the responsibility of local government, is often overlooked. Many houses are not made from brick and tile but timber or *cadjun* (coconut leaf). Several lack electricity,

although all have access to their own well.

Kachchakaduwa lies about two miles to the east of Suduwella, on the far eastern side of the Madampe Division where the Puttalam District meets the Kurunegala District and the lowlands turn into the Kandyan highlands. Lying on the southeast face of a small hill, the village is bordered on its northern, eastern, and southern sides by paddy fields, and on its western side by the LDO estates of Kudirippuwa and Heen Agara.

Kachchakaduwa is by local account a *purāṇa* (ancient) village. Residents of *purāṇa* villages assume themselves to have deep historical ties to the land, to be of the same caste, and to all be related (Hettige 1984: 99). Kachchakaduwa people (Kachchakaduwa *minissu*), especially members and affines of the locally-powerful Herath Mudiyansele patrilineage, like to boast about this status. The popular story told by members of this family is that the Herath Mudiyansele had once been in service to King Parākramabāhu II, who had ruled the Polonnaruwa kingdom from 1236 until 1270. He had bestowed their patronymic (*vāsagama*), and granted extensive lands in and around Kachchakaduwa. Although such claims are common amongst *goyigama* (Robinson 1968), two members of the H.M. family have unearthed a text at the SLNA apparently dated to the late thirteenth century that appears to support their claims (see Appendix 4).



Figure 2.4: A typical single-storey dwelling at Kachchakaduwa. This house has been decorated for a funeral following the death of its head, H.M. Piyathilaka.
(Photo: Tom Widger)

Kachchakaduwa is relatively developed when compared with like settlements in the Madampe Division. This development has been the consequence of decades of investment by wealthy residents as well as their control of local government resources. The pinnacle of philanthropic activity at Kachchakaduwa was obtained in c. 1960, when a secondary-level school, the Herath Gunarathna Vidyalaya, was built to serve the community and villages in the area. In addition, there is a public library, several shops selling a range of household and dried foodstuffs, and a sports field upon which local boys every evening compete at cricket, *elē* (a local game similar to baseball), and football, and the villagers use for their New Year (*Alut Aruduru*) celebrations.



Figure 2.5: The Herath Gunarathna Vidyalaya and sports ground at Kachchakaduwa. Local youth are playing *ele* in a memorial match for a friend who died a few months previously.
(Photo: Tom Widger)

Communications within Kachchakaduwa remain, however, rudimentary. Just one metalled road runs south to north through the village, with all other tracks and pathways leading off it characterised by the red earth that is particular to this area. During heavy rain, the roads can become impassable and on the steeper slopes deep gullies make passage along them difficult even when dry. It is at the end of these dirt paths that one finds the majority of Kachchakaduwa households. These are spaced higgledy-piggledy across the hillside, their position dictated by the limitations of space as generations of residents have sought to build homes on parcels of land granted to them by parents or other relatives. Indicating the relative wealth of Kachchakaduwa people are the building materials of these dwellings. All are made from brick and tile, and none from *cadjun*. They also have electricity, and a few have running water pumped from their well.

2.4. Summary

In this chapter I have been concerned to present a brief introduction to the Madampe Division, partly in order to orientate the reader but also to highlight some important issues for later chapters. In particular, I have taken some time to explain the importance of the coconut for the local economy, and how a period of huge economic growth during the nineteenth century transformed social life in the region. One of the most important effects of this from the standpoint of this thesis has been the creation of a mixed economy based upon wage labour, and a population living within self-consciously 'ancient' and 'modern' communities respectively. I will pick up these issues again in Chapter 4, but now turn my attention to a presentation and discussion of the epidemiology of suicidal behaviour in the Madampe Division.

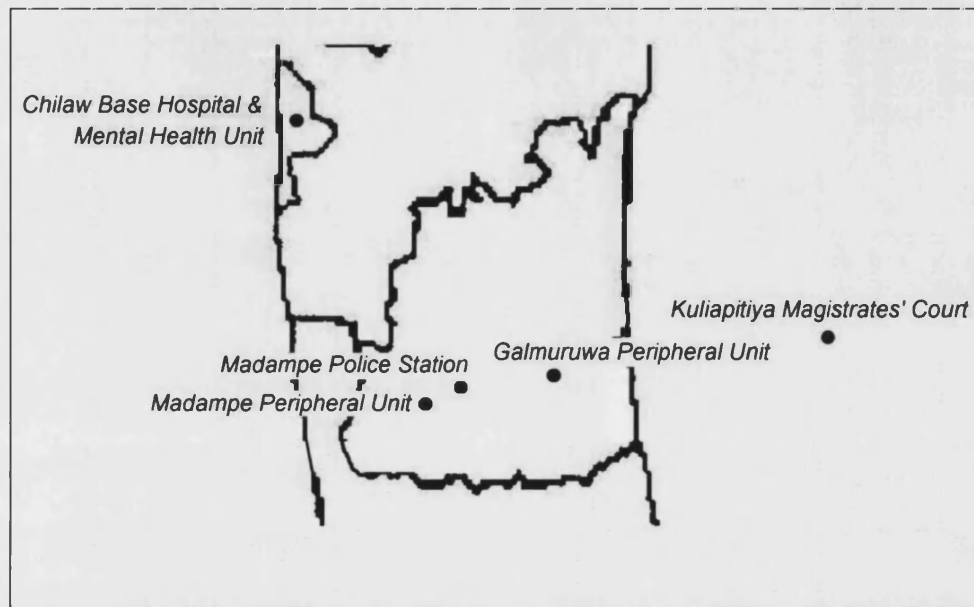
3.

Epidemiology of suicidal behaviour in the Madampe Division

In this chapter I will present an epidemiology of suicidal behaviour local to the Madampe Division. I first examine demographic and social characteristics of self-harm patients and suicide deaths, and then look at reported and elicited causes. Finally, I examine methods used, the public or private context of self-inflicted death, and clinicians' own assessment of suicide risk amongst self-harm patients.

3.1. Sources and statistics

Raw data on acts of self-harm and self-inflicted death was obtained from four sources across the Madampe Division and the wider area. All four sources dealt with cases from the Division, two of them exclusively. Sources dealing exclusively with the Division were the Galmuruwa Peripheral Unit (GPU), one of two community first aid medical centres that treated self-harm patients, and Madampe Police Station (MPS), which investigated all unnatural and suspicious deaths. The two other sources, Chilaw Mental Health Clinic (CMHC) and Kuliapitiya Magistrates' Court (KMC), dealt with residents of the Madampe Division and the wider Puttalam and Kurunegala Districts. CMHC counselled self-harm patients admitted to the Chilaw Base Hospital (CBH) as a 'voluntary condition' of discharge, while coroners attached to KMC gave verdict on suicides investigated by the police.



Map 3: Locations of research populations in Madampe Division and surrounding area

Galmuruwa Peripheral Unit

Several options exist for the medical treatment of self-harm patients in the Madampe Division. However, as no emergency service is available to take individuals to hospital, the choice of treatment tends to depend as much upon the reputation of the service as it does upon its accessibility. The closest option for emergency medical treatment for most Madampe residents are one of two Peripheral Units (PUs), located on the far western side of the Division at Madampe New Town and the far eastern side at Galmuruwa. Because the PU at Madampe had something of a bad reputation, individuals sometimes elected to travel to the PU at Galmuruwa instead. Alternatively, they travelled to Base Hospitals at Marawila or Chilaw.

Perhaps reflecting the allegedly poor quality of treatment at Madampe PU, I found that staff there did not keep admission records. In response I began my own system of record keeping but ultimately failed to interest staff, and so had to abandon any hopes

of conducting quantitative research there. However, I did have the opportunity to interview some patients. By contrast, record keeping at GPU was excellent, and a comprehensive set of admissions books was made available for review. The GPU data spans the period between July 2001 and June 2006, and includes systematic information on sex, age, and method of self-harm. Whenever possible, I interviewed attending medical staff to ascertain the cause self-harm, and, if allowed, the patient him or herself. As no systematic effort was made in the records to keep information on causes, such data has not been included in the statistical analysis. I have also excluded any cases that seemed ambiguous over whether the patient presented following self-harm, accident, or violence.

Evaluation and treatment process at GPU

Upon arrival at GPU, patients suspected of committing self-harm were given a medical check to ascertain the cause of injury and proper course of treatment. If the patient was uncooperative or unconscious, relevant third parties were interviewed to discover the circumstances under which the act took place, determine the method used, and establish the time lapse between the act and submission to hospital. Depending upon the patient's health, the attending medical officer either decided to keep the individual on the ward for treatment or recommended transfer to another hospital, most often CBH.

Between July 2000 and June 2006, 270 individuals were submitted to GPU following an act of suspected self-harm. Of these, 35.2 percent were kept on the ward and discharged later, 30.4 percent were transferred to another hospital, and 20.0 percent discharged themselves 'against medical advice.' Information on the remaining 14.4

percent was not recorded.

Comparing GPU records and MPS records, I have found only one matching entry. This suggests that the fatality rate amongst self-harm patients treated exclusively at GPU was very low: just 1.05 percent! On the other hand, I do not have data relating to the case fatality of transferred patients or patients who left against medical advice, and it is possible that some of these also died from their injuries.

During the time of my research, patients suspected of committing acts of self-harm received no psychological or social assessment or aftercare from GPU. Although some patients were referred to CMCH for assessment and counselling, there were no established means for doing so. As such, the vast majority of patients returned home without any psychosocial support in place. Despite this, very few patients seemed to commit self-harm again. I have found only one repeat admission in the records (by a 56 year-old man); nor have I found any evidence of completed suicide at a later stage in the MPS records. It appears from a general review of the data that most cases of self-harm were isolated acts.

Chilaw Mental Health Clinic

Until very recently mental health services in Sri Lanka were undeveloped and survivors of self-harm had no recourse for social or psychological support (see Chapter 8.3). Since c. 2000, and especially following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, international and local NGO and government support for mental health services significantly increased. New training programmes in psychiatry have been provided for general doctors alongside

training programmes in social and psychological counselling for hundreds of university graduates. CMHC has benefited from both of these schemes, receiving a Consultant Psychiatrist in 2005 and a general doctor following training in psychiatry in 2006. Furthermore, tsunami aid money helped pay for a trainee social worker in the clinic, working under the supervision of the Consultant Psychiatrist.¹¹ Due to these expansions, by 2006 CMHC was receiving patients from across the Puttalam District. It also ran a small number of social support counselling services and alcohol and drug addiction meetings.

Although the Clinic opened its doors in late 1999, it was not until January 2005, with the arrival of the Consultant Psychiatrist, that detailed records on self-harm started to be recorded. The Consultant Psychiatrist was undertaking her own research into the problem, and had directed clinicians and other staff to ensure that all cases received proper consultation and documentation. For this reason, I had access to detailed files dating between January 2005 to June 2006 that included information on sex, age, marital status, cause, level of suicidal intent, and history of suicidal behaviour.

For survivors of self-harm, CMHC offered a range of psychological and social counselling and support. Patients were referred from emergency wards at CBH and/or received as continuing outpatients for first or follow-up appointments. Patients who were referred internally were either admitted to those wards directly or else transferred from PUs across the District, including GPU. Unfortunately, I did not have time to collect data on these admissions alongside my research within the Clinic. Outpatients included all

¹¹ This is despite the fact that the area around Chilaw was spared any destruction. An informant in the hospital proudly told me how aid organisations, apparently due to their lack of local knowledge, had been tricked into giving them money nevertheless!

those who were receiving continuing support from an earlier act of self-harm, or admitted under other circumstances during which evidence of self-harm was discovered.

The service that CMHC offered was a 'voluntary condition' of discharge for referred patients or free service for outpatients. The records thus omit all patients who reject the offer of support. Due to the heavy demand on resources that self-harm cases represented, at the time of research patients were referred to the Clinic on Mondays and Wednesdays only. Outpatients were also recommended to make appointments on those days, although at times they visited on other days. Of the 330 patients receiving support from CMHC whose files I reviewed, 32.0 percent were classified as outpatients and 68.0 percent as internal referrals. As such, few patients appear to seek support under their own initiative, or are referred from PUs. As many outpatients are internal referrals at an earlier stage in their clinical history, it may be that a very large majority fall within this category.

Evaluation and treatment process at GPU

Two medical officers (general doctors), one undergoing training in psychiatry, received all patients in the first instance to make an initial diagnosis. At the time of my research these clinicians, both male, worked at separate desks in the same small room that offered patients little by way of privacy. Recognising this was a serious problem in the quality of the service, in late 2006 the clinic received funds to move to new premises that were supposed to provide individual consultation rooms.

To meet with clinicians, all but the most ill patients queued in the hot, dark corridor outside the consultation room, alongside patients waiting for other consultations ranging from general medical complaints to measurements for prosthetics. Internal

referrals that were still heavily under the influence of treatment drugs such as atropine were chaperoned by ward orderlies direct into the consultation room, where they were usually seen immediately. Once in consultation, clinicians spoke to patients for a few minutes. Making a 'spot diagnosis,' the clinician asked the patient about the circumstances leading up to their act of self-harm and tried to ascertain the level of suicidal intent that lay behind it. If the clinician was uncertain about the diagnosis or some other complications arose, the patient was referred to the Consultant Psychiatrist whose office was in a separate room further along the corridor. The Consultant Psychiatrist usually agreed with the clinicians' diagnosis, but in some cases added information to the file and/or recommended additional or alternative treatments. All patients were then recommended to return after fourteen days for a follow-up assessment, which almost all failed to do.

Madampe Police Station and Kuliapitiya Magistrates' Court

Madampe Police Station investigated all unnatural deaths within the Division, and in conjunction with the coroner decided upon one of four general verdicts: 'accident,' 'homicide,' 'suicide,' or 'open.' Police files were available from January 2001 to June 2006, and included systematic information on sex, age, marital status, religion, cause, and method used. Coroners investigated the cause of death through interviews with friends and family of the deceased, the investigating police officer, and, where relevant, the attending medical officer. Based on their reports, the coroner submitted a case file to the local Magistrates' Court, where it was subsequently archived.

All coroner files relating to suicides within the Madampe Division were held at the Chilaw Magistrates' Court. Despite several attempts to obtain research permission there, none was forthcoming. I instead sought permission to review files held at Kuliapitiya Magistrates' Court, which was granted. Due to the kindness of staff, I was allowed to visit on Saturdays, when the office was closed and desk space available. With two research assistants I translated the files into English. Although this means I do not have detailed information relating to cases investigated by MPS that I had hoped to obtain, I do at least have detailed information relating to suicides investigated by coroners reporting to KMC.

At MPS and KMC, drowning was never recorded as a method of suicide. This was despite the fact that I learnt independently of several cases of suspected suicide by drowning in the Madampe area, and knew personally of a tragic case of what many suspected was 'intentional' drowning. (In this case, too, the official verdict of death was by was accidental drowning.) One MPS officer told me that the method used in suicide greatly affected the final verdict. When the method was something 'obvious' like hanging, standing in front of an on-coming vehicle, jumping from a high spot, or poisoning, a verdict of suicide was recorded. However, when the method was something more 'ambiguous' like drowning, suicide was very rarely if ever recorded.

In most cases, coroners reporting to KMC interviewed friends or family of the deceased only. Few of these reports were substantial, often no longer than a few lines. File keeping was in such a poor state that I could not review all files between a certain period and instead asked to see the first one hundred that came to hand. These dated from between 2002 and 2005. Opening the files, it turned out that the handwriting of the

coroner was often so bad that neither my assistants nor I could decipher what had been written. As such, I managed to obtain the data for only sixty eight cases.

Population	Period under review	Self-harm	Self-inflicted death
GPU	July 2001 – June 2006	270	-
CMHC	Jan. 2005 – June 2006	330	-
MPS	Jan. 2001 – June 2006	-	61
KMC	2003 – 05, incomplete	-	68
Total		600	129

Table 3. 1: Time period under review and total number of cases recorded at GPU, CMHC, MPS, and KMC.

Variable	GPU	CMHC	MPS	KMC
Sex and age	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marital status	X	✓	X	x
Religion	X	X	✓	x
Motive and cause	X	✓	✓	✓
Methods used	✓	X	✓	x
Place of suicide	X	X	X	✓
Level of suicidal intent	X	✓	X	x

Table 3. 2: Summary of data obtained from GPU, CMHC, MPS, and KMC.

Limitations of the data

Data obtained from all four sources constitute four different populations that cannot validly be compared in statistical analysis. As self-contained populations, the data also range widely in terms of quality, from ‘good’ at GPU, CMHC, and MPS to ‘poor’ at

KMC. Even when the quality was 'good,' problems and biases in reporting mean that many individuals (for example self-harm and suicide by drowning) are likely to be under-reported. In some cases, too few cases fall into each category variable thus reducing validity or omitting the possibility of statistical correlations. I will point out when this happens to be the case. With these drawbacks in mind, I argue the data are suitable for simple statistical analysis (see Appendix 1 for a brief guide to the statistical methods used in this thesis). They offer a unique chance to consider patterns of suicidal behaviour in Madampe and its wider area through the cross-tabulation of a few important variables, including: sex, age, marital status, religious belief, causes, method used, and whether the act was conducted in public or private (see Appendix 3 for full tables and measures of significance and association). All findings are significant at $p = <0.10$.

3.2. Demographic and social factors

Sex and age

Data relating to sex and age was available for all four populations. The data suggests that, in Madampe and the Puttalam District anyway, males and females engage in self-harm at the same rate, but commit self-inflicted death at different rates (Figure 3.1). The male: female ratio for self-harm was 0.97: 1 at GPU and 1.1: 1 at CMHC: that is, equivalence. However, the ratio for self-inflicted deaths was 3.7: 1 at MPS and 4.7: 1 at KMC: a strong over-representation of males. The data suggests that while self-harming behaviour is committed by males and females at equal rates, self-inflicted deaths are in the majority

committed by males. Males are either more likely to die as a result of their acts of self-harm, and/or more likely to commit self-inflicted death.

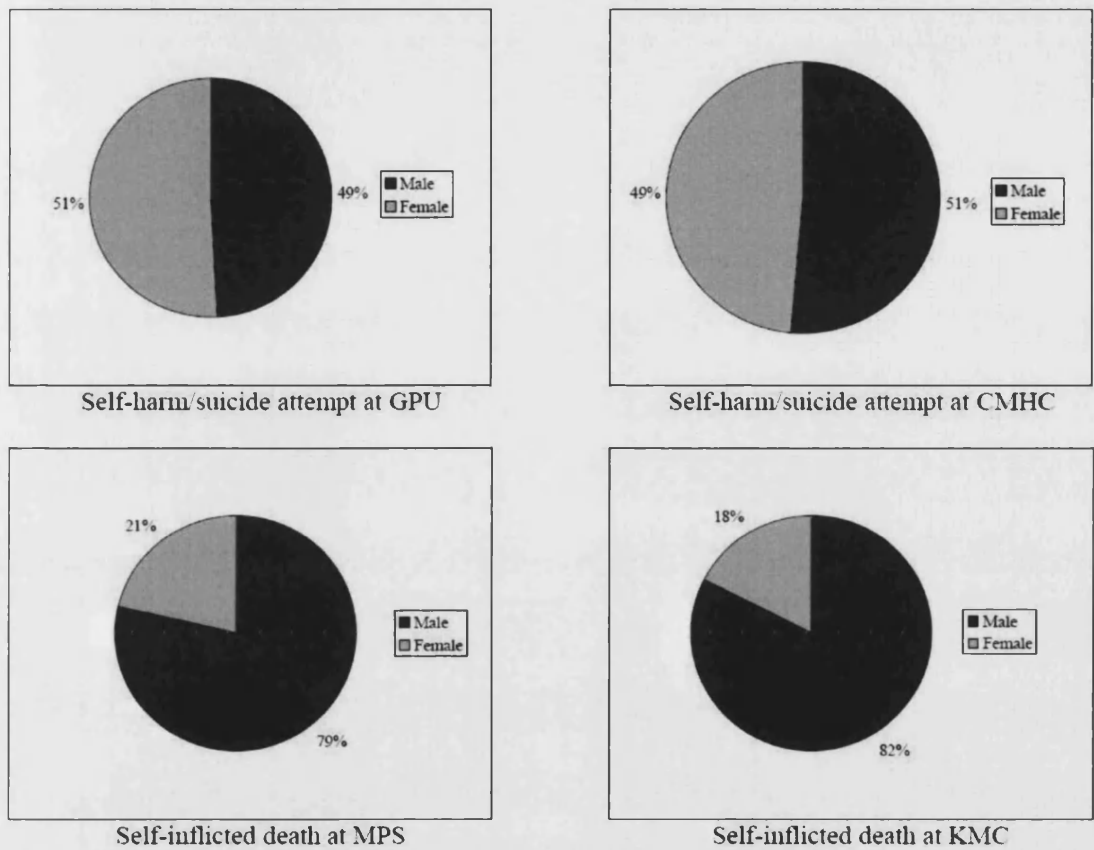


Figure 3.1: Sex of populations at GPU, CMHC, MPS, and KMC.

The average age of self-harm patients at GPU was 30.4 years amongst males (range: 7¹² – 67) and 23.4 years amongst females (range: 7¹³ – 83). At CMHC, the average age was

¹² This patient was exceptionally young for a self-harmer (refs) but careful review of the case and interviews with attending medical staff suggests the strong likelihood that the girl did indeed consume painkillers with intent. In total, six male patients were aged 14 years or younger (5 percent of total).

¹³ Again, this patient, who consumed kerosene, was exceptionally young. In total, four female patients were aged 14 years or younger (3 percent of total).

30.8 years amongst males (range: 11¹⁴ – 83) and 25.7 years amongst females (range: 12¹⁵ – 73). Therefore, female self-harm patients were significantly younger than males.

On the other hand, the average age of self-inflicted deaths recorded at MPS was 47.5 years amongst males (range: 18 – 80) and 33.6 years amongst females (range: 12¹⁶ – 75). At KMC, it was 48.0 years amongst males (range: 18 – 85) and 43.5 years amongst females (range: 20 – 83). As such, suicide victims amongst both males and females were on average older than self-harm patients.

Moreover, while young children were found to commit self-harm, suicide deaths did not appear (females at MPS excepted) until late teens (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). However, the low number of female suicide cases recorded in the data means that all findings relating to the sex and age of self-inflicted death should be read with caution.

¹⁴ Two patients were 14 years or younger (1 percent of total).

¹⁵ Five patients were 14 years or younger (3 percent of total).

¹⁶ Two suicides were 14 years or younger.

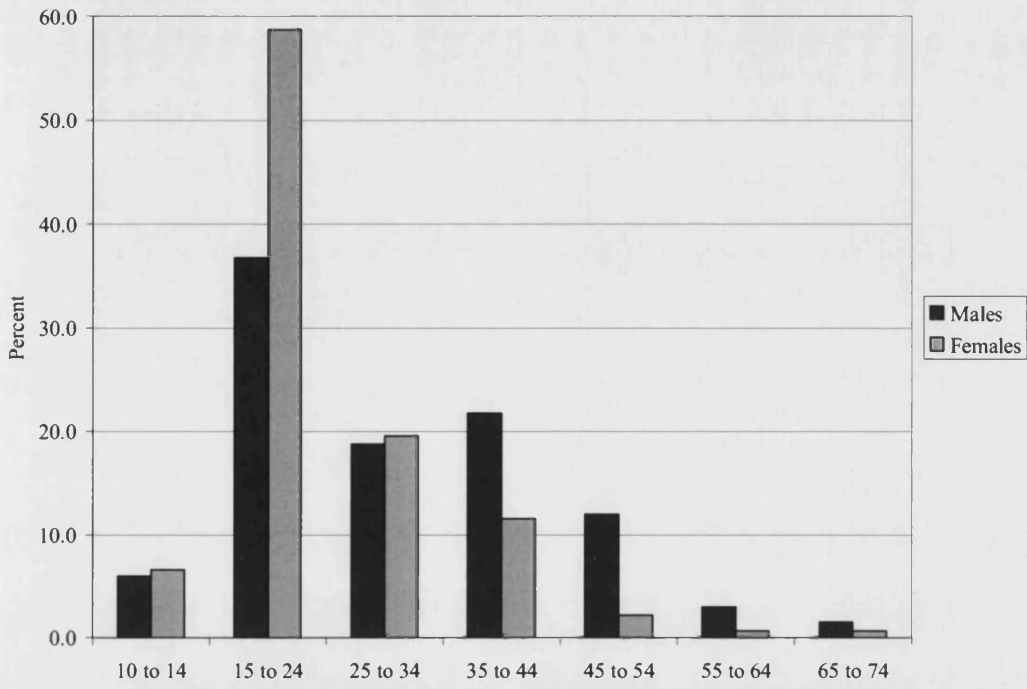


Figure 3.2: GPU – Gender and age of self-harm/suicide attempt patients.

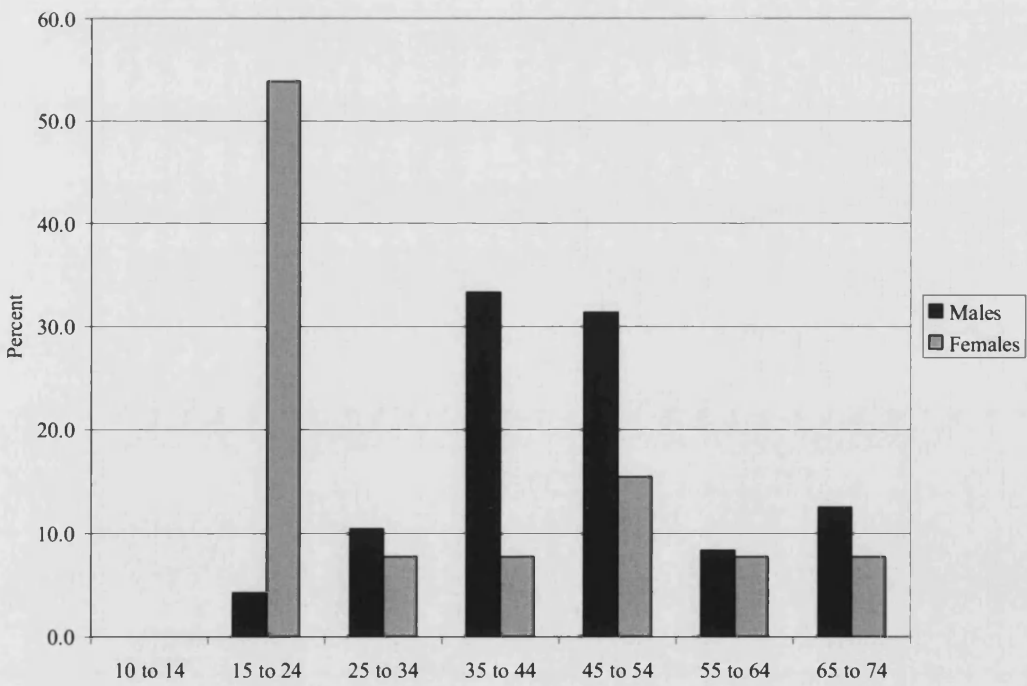


Figure 3.3: MPS – Gender and age of self-inflicted deaths.

Sex and marital status

The relationship between sex, age, and suicidal behaviour is likely to be based on bio-social developmental stages within life-course. The impact of puberty, changed hormonal state, continuing cognitive development, new experiences of health and illness (including the conceptualisation and understanding of death, and the fact that one can commit one's own self-inflicted death),¹⁷ alongside the adoption of new social roles coterminous with childhood, youthhood, adulthood, singledom, married life, parenthood, employment, retirement, and so on, are likely to be factors increasing or decreasing suicide 'risk' at various ages.

In Madampe, the most important rite of passage that marks the transition from childhood and youthhood to adulthood is that of marriage (see Chapters 4, 6, and 7). Data on sex and marital status was available from CMHC, MPS, and KMC, but not GPU. However, only data obtained from CMHC was suitable for comparison with District-level marriage patterns. It was found that while young unmarried females are more likely to commit self-harm than their male counterparts, separated and divorced males are more likely to commit self-inflicted death (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

¹⁷ It strikes me that amongst other factors mentioned, the development of a cognitively sophisticated concept of death and the principle that one can commit one's own self-inflicted death, including developing an understanding of what self-inflicted death entails, sits at the very heart of why children do not commit suicidal behaviour. A very interesting line of enquiry might be to explore at what age the development of such concepts and understandings takes place and how this correlates with the age that suicidal behaviours typically begin to appear. For examples, see: Chandler *et al* 2003; Lazar and Torney-Purta 1991; Speece and Brent 1984.

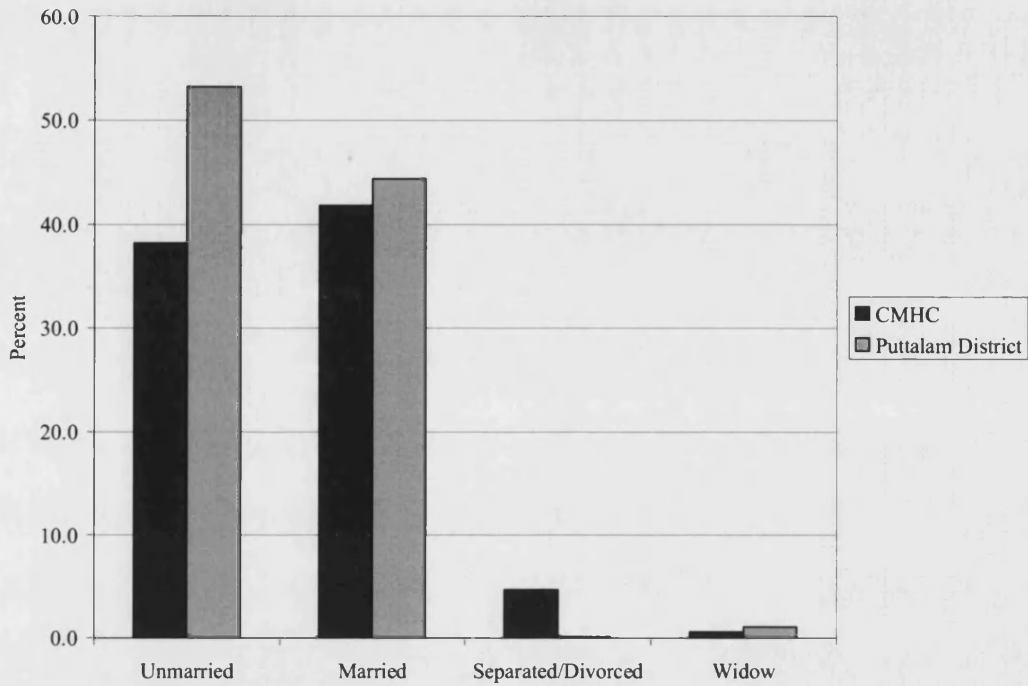


Figure 3.4: *CMHC males* – Sex and marital status.

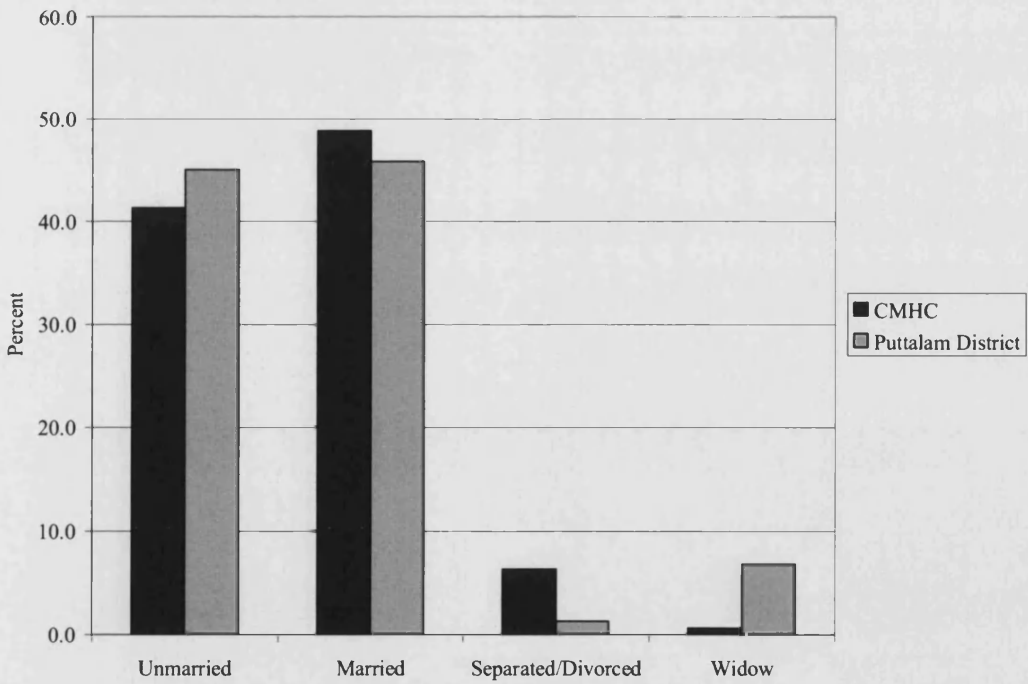


Figure 3.5: *CMHC females* – Sex and marital status.

Religious belief

Data on religious belief was available at MPS only. As with marital data, it was compared against broader population data: in this case, religious belief in the Madampe Division. Buddhists were found to be over-represented and Roman Catholics represented at the rate expected. Protestant Christians, Hindus, and Muslims were near- or completely absent (Figure 3.6).

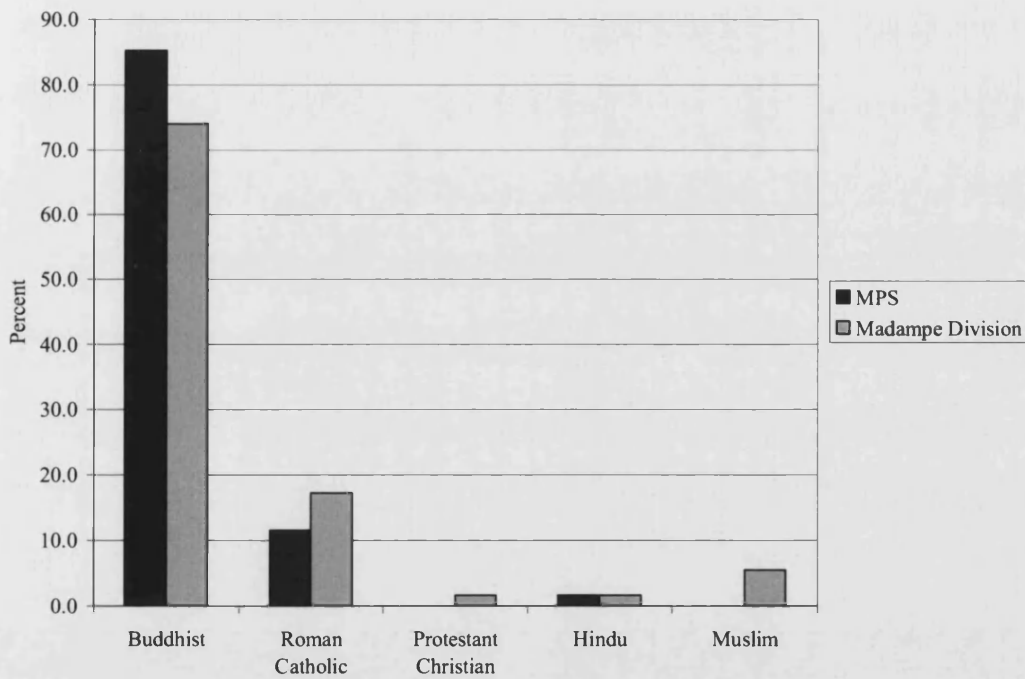


Figure 3.6: *MPS* – Religious belief of self-inflicted deaths.

3.3. Reported causes of suicidal behaviour

Information on the causes of suicidal behaviour was available at CMHC, MPS, and KMC but not at GPU. However, only data obtained from CMHC was suitable for statistical

analysis. At CMHC causes of self-harm were recorded in medical language. Although this tells us little about Sinhalese-language conceptualisations of what leads to suicidal behaviour, clinical reports provide detailed evidence on the social and psychological contexts within which self-harm arose. Because clinicians did not work from a pre-structured question template, any information elicited represents what clinicians asked of patients, what patients were prepared to report, and what patients may have voluntarily offered.

Reports were scanned for key phrases and/or problem areas associated with self-harm, clinicians' spot diagnoses, clinicians' assessment of suicidal intent, and other relevant information. I then grouped elicited/reported causes into twelve social and psychological categories. Table A3.9 (Appendix 3) presents the relationship between sex and causes of self-harm in two ways. In the first, depicted in the centre of cells, the frequency of each cause has been calculated as a proportion of all elicited/reported causes. It is to this score that significance tests relate. In the second, depicted in the bottom right hand corner of cells, the frequency of each cause has been worked out as a proportion of all patients (Figure 3.7, below).

Males reported on average 1.9 causes, and females 2.7 causes. The most commonly recorded cause amongst males was depression (for a definition see Chapter 8.3), followed by disputes with wives, disputes with other household members, and 'occupational' problems (educational, employment, financial, or legal problems). The most common cause amongst females was disputes with husbands, followed by disputes with other household members, depression, and domestic violence.

In one sense, these causes fall into clearly 'masculine' and 'feminine' camps.

Males were significantly more likely than females to report 'occupational' problems, while females themselves were significantly more likely to report 'domestic' problems. However, the largest single cause reported by or for males was also found to be disputes with the wife. Thus, occupational problems tended to lead to self-harm not by themselves, but instead because of the arguments over money and other associated factors impacting upon the household.

Sexual abuse was reported in a very small minority of cases, amounting to less than 5 percent in both males and females. Within this very small sample, females were twice as likely as males to be subject to such abuse. Given the likely under-reporting of the crime, I would assume sexual abuse to be a greater contributory factor to suicide than the available data makes it appear (Goonesekere 2004).

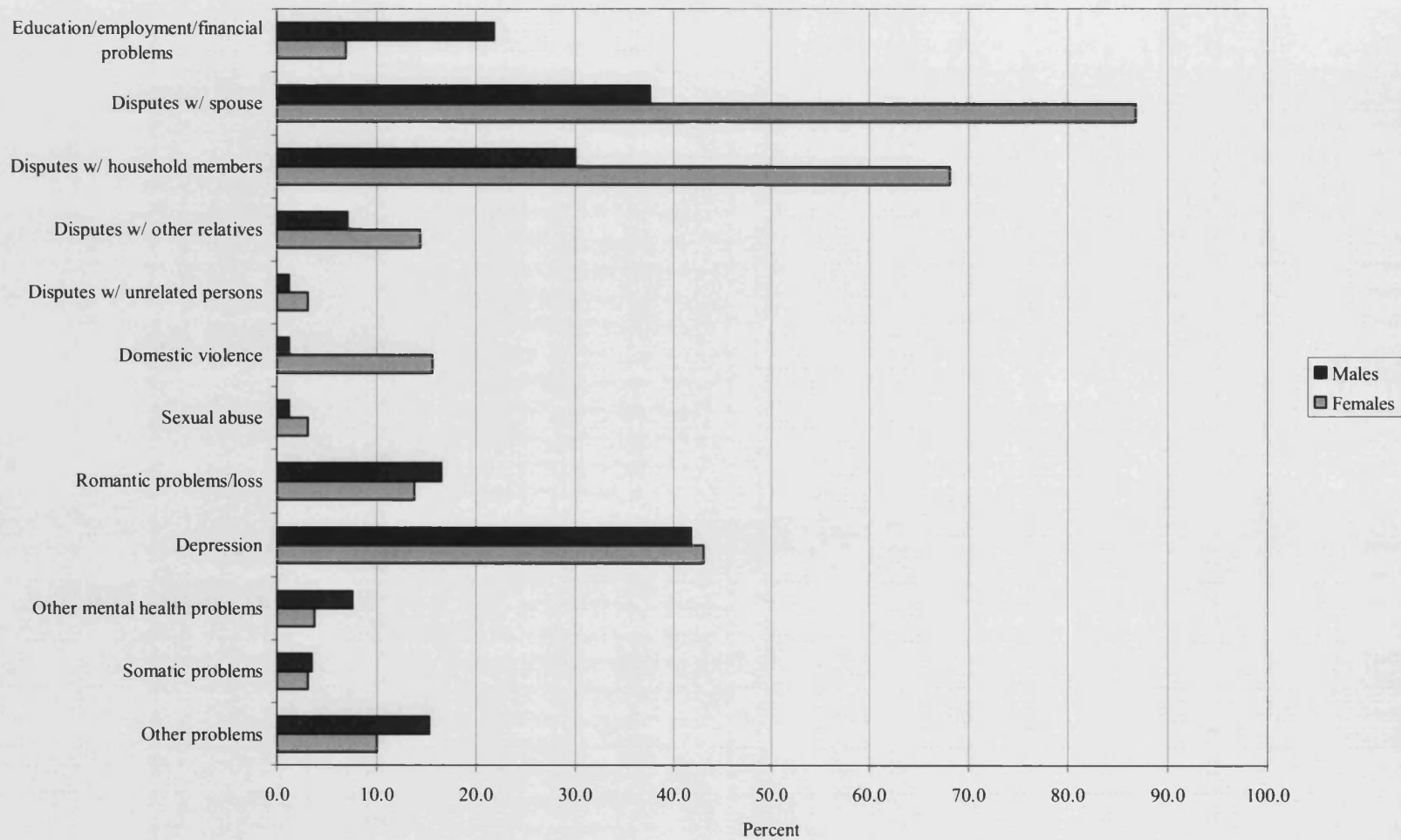


Figure 3.7: *CMHC* – Twelve grouped reported and elicited ‘causes’ in self-harm (depicted as percentage of patients).

Marital status and causes of self-harm/suicide attempt

The data obtained from CMHC was complete enough to consider causes of self-harm in relation to the marital status of the patients reporting them. For the purposes of analysis, patients were grouped into three marital classifications, including unmarried, married, and separated/divorced/spouse abroad/widowed (referred to here as 'separated').

Males

On average, unmarried males reported 1.6 causes, married males 1.8 causes, and separated males 2.3 causes. Amongst unmarried males, the largest recorded cause of self-harm included romantic problems/romantic loss, followed by disputes with other household members, depression, and occupational problems. Amongst married males, causes included disputes with his wife, depression, occupational problems, and disputes with other relatives. Amongst separated males, causes included disputes with his wife (as the precursor to separation, including migration), depression, disputes with other relatives (usually the ex-wife's family), and disputes with household members (usually children).

Females

On average, unmarried females reported 1.7 causes, married females reported 2.0 causes, and separated females reported 2.6 causes. The most commonly reported cause amongst unmarried females was disputes with household members. This was followed by romantic problems/loss, depression, and domestic violence. Amongst married females, the most common cause was disputes with her husband, depression, domestic violence,

and disputes with other relatives. Amongst separated females, the most common cause was dispute with her husband (usually as a precursor to separation: all females reported it), followed by depression, disputes with other household members (in these cases children), and disputes with other relatives (usually the ex-husbands family).

As such, the data suggest that unmarried males and females are most likely to commit self-harm following romantic problems/loss and disputes with parents or siblings. Married males and females are most likely to commit self-harm following disputes with the spouse. Separated, divorced, or individuals whose spouse was abroad are most likely to commit self-harm following disputes with their partner, where the dispute acted as the precursor to the separation itself. A further review of these patterns can be found in Chapter 5.1

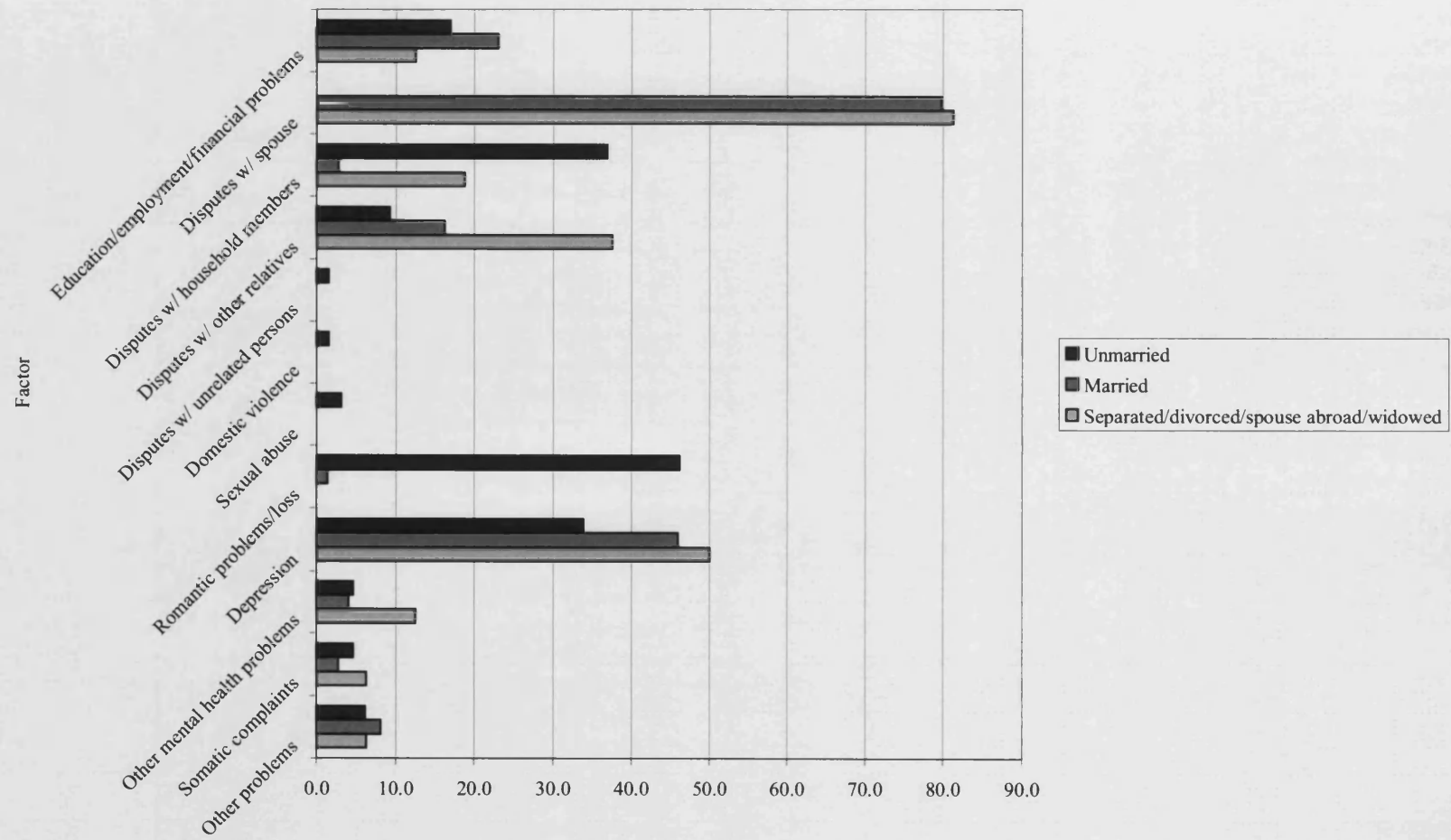


Figure 3.8: *CMHC males* – Causes of self-harm and marital status (depicted as percentage of patients).

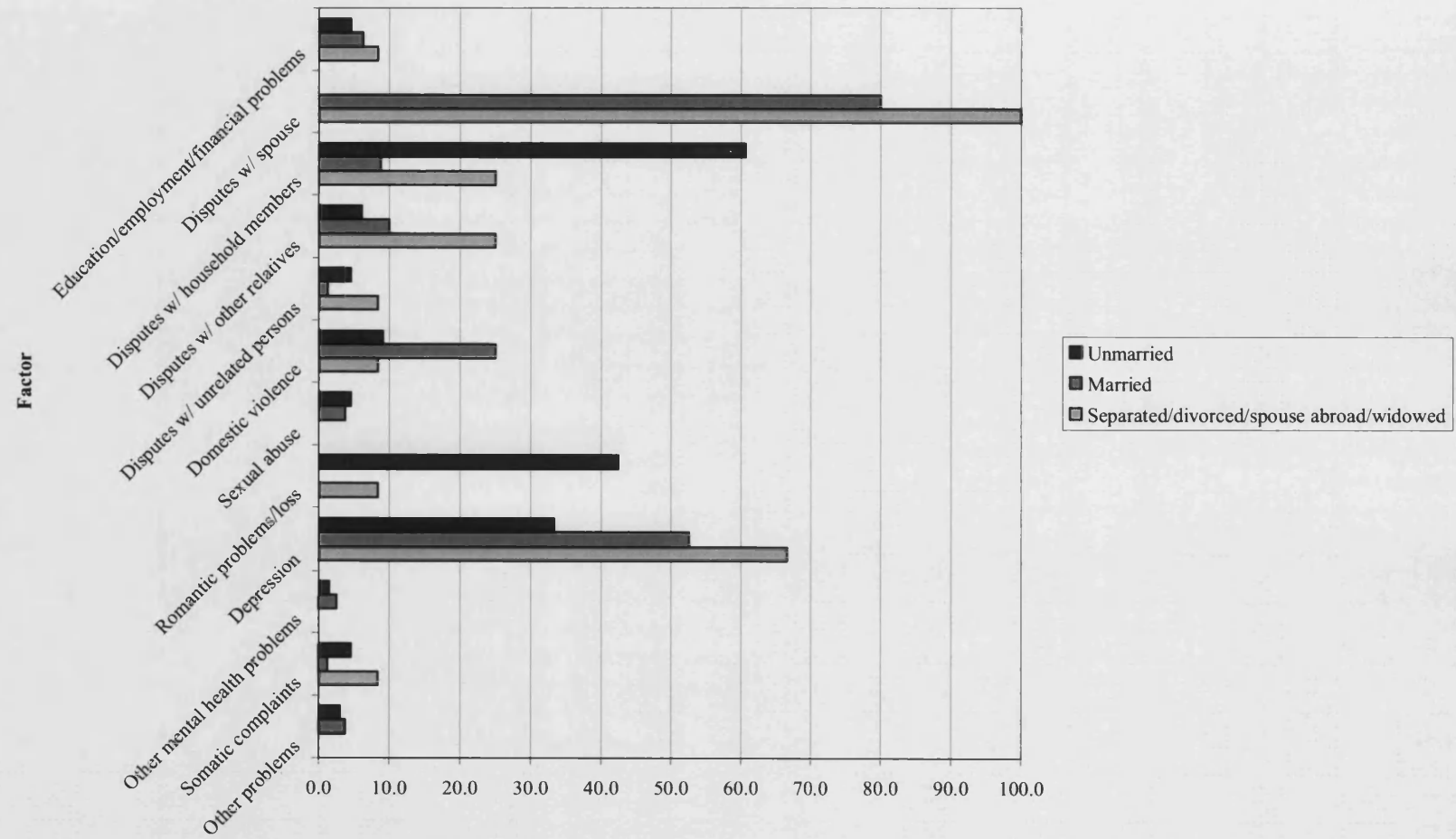


Figure 3.9: CMHC females – Causes of self-harm and marital status (depicted as percentage of patients).

Causes recorded by Madampe Police Station

At MPS and KMC, data on causes was too incomplete to justify statistical analysis. However, unlike at CMHC, police officers and coroners recorded problems using vernacular terminologies. A review of these identified eight categories of problems that led to suicidal behaviour.

1. *Mānasika asahānaya* (mental frustration). Also *mānasika prashna* (mental problem) and *mānasika awapidanaya*, which MPS officers translated as depression (also *kalakirīma*). *Mānasika asahānaya* is one of two forms of frustration commonly referred to by Sinhalese; the second form is *lingika asahānaya* (sexual frustration). I discuss these terms at length in Chapter 8.2. *Mānasika asahānaya* was recorded in relation to a range of suicide deaths but perhaps most often those committed by middle-aged males.
2. *Ardari prashna* (love problem). Corresponds with ‘romantic problems’ and ‘romantic loss’ recorded at CMHC. As at CMHC, love problems were associated with the suicides of unmarried teenagers.
3. *Pavula prashna*. In Sinhalese *pavula* can refer to the wife, nuclear household, or a select kin group (Leach 1961). In Madampe the term usually corresponds to the nuclear family unit and in this context to a man’s problems with his wife, and as such is similar to ‘arguments between spouses’ recorded by CMHC.
4. *Gedara prashna*. In Madampe *gedara* can refer to the homestead (as in the physical structure), the household (as in the domestic unit – although *gē* is more

often used) and, amongst the unmarried, one's parents. When recorded in relation to married suicides, *gedara prashna* refers to disputes within the *gē* and can be used interchangeably with *pavula prashna*. The term may also relate to problems between parents and children. When used in relation to the unmarried the term corresponds to problems with parents or sibling rivalries.

5. *Arthika prashna* (economic problems). Almost universally attributed to suicides in middle-aged males, this term covers a range of what I have glossed as 'occupational' causes at CMHC.
6. *Bebaḍa* (drunkard). *Bebaḍa* is probably a Sinhalese corruption of the Portuguese term *beberrão*, which also means drunkard. In Madampe, some people have further corrupted the term to an English-Sinhalese term *beer-baḍa* (beer-stomach) in reference to the distended guts of heavy drinkers. *Bebaḍa* was attributed exclusively to middle-aged males, although women and children presenting at CMHC were often identified as the victims of violent drunks.

The category *bebaḍa* has various implications. First, it implies that men were drunk at the time of their act of self-harm or suicide. Self-harmers under the influence of alcohol are known to use more lethal methods and take 'less care to survive' (Murphy 2000). Drunken acts of self-harm thus have a higher 'accidental death' rate. Secondly, the presence of alcoholism suggests that men were suffering from the health, social, and economic effects of heavy drinking, including the pressures such problems place on men's relationships with family members (Gamburd 2008b; Murphy *ibid*; Williams 1997). Thirdly, the effects of alcohol distort perception and interpretation to the extent that a non-problem can become

a significant one (Lang *et al* 1999).

7. *Asanipaya* (somatic illness). This term was used in relation to both males and females who were thought to have committed suicide in the context of on-going health problems. These ranged from heart problems and cancer to colds and sore throats. The inclusion of ‘minor’ ailments suggests that in some cases the term was used to imply somatic manifestations of underlying psychological problems such as *mānasika asahānaya* (c.f. Kanton *et al* 1982a & 1982b; Kleinman 1982, 1987).
8. *Maḷa dukkhayi* (upset at death). *Dukkha* (suffering) is a general term that has religious (Buddhist), social, and psychological overtones. Used in its most general sense, *dukkha* refers simply to sorrow or sadness following everyday misfortunes; used in a specific sense, it can imply the hopelessness of desire (*āśāva*) or the hopelessness of ones life. I discuss the term more in Chapter 8.3. In this case, *maḷa dukkhayi* referred to grief and suicide following the death of a spouse, child, relative, or friend, and as such may be closer to depression.

3.4. Medical diagnoses and treatments

In addition to causes, clinicians recorded their own ‘spot diagnosis’: a preliminary diagnosis of patients’ symptoms based upon an initial observation and interview. They also recorded the advised programme of treatment. Because this information was not recorded systematically, I will only present frequencies for the former. In some cases, clinicians’ summarised a case with a single word – for example ‘depression,’ ‘adjustment

reaction,’¹⁸ ‘impulsive act’ – or they combined a few – ‘depression with alcoholism,’ ‘social problems leading to an impulsive act of DSH [deliberate self-harm].’ The full range of diagnoses include: ‘depression’; ‘adjustment reaction’; a range of psychotic disorders I have glossed as ‘other psychological problems’; amongst males ‘alcoholic’ and amongst women and children ‘abused by alcoholic’ (typically husband or father); the clinicians’ gloss of the issues I have discussed above ‘social problems’; and finally ‘impulsivity’: self-harm carried out without prior ideation or planning, and usually in response to some minor problem (*tikak prashna*) and in the context of anger (*kopēya*). The largest single diagnostic category to be recorded was ‘social problems’ (Figure 3.10).

Usually clinicians advised a programme of counselling, sometimes combined with a course of anti-depressants. Counselling opportunities included therapies for both patients and their relatives. For patients, courses included problem-solving and anger management strategies. Reflecting the diagnosis of impulsivity it was not unusual, for example, for a victim of domestic violence to be referred to an anger management class as well as, or even instead of, a problem solving class. Meanwhile, the abusive husband would be asked to attend an alcohol awareness class, although unsurprisingly take up was usually very low.

¹⁸ ‘Adjustment reaction’ (or ‘adjustment disorder’) is a psychiatric term referring to an individual’s psychological response to an experience of status change and/or conflict, for example: employment, separation, bankruptcy, and various forms of loss although not bereavement. The reaction is associated with a response that is in excess to what might be expected given the nature of the stressor, and seriously debilitates an individual’s ability to function normally across social situations including family life and at work. Symptoms of adjustment reaction last for up to six months following cessation of the stressor (Source: NHS Evidence – Mental Health. *Introduction to adjustment disorder*. Available at: <http://www.library.nhs.uk/MENTALHEALTH/ViewResource.aspx?resID=79020> accessed 2 June 2009).

Clinicians seemed to be caught in a quandary when prescribing drugs. First, they suggested that patients tended to stop taking medication as soon as they started to feel better, and so were likely to suffer a relapse of mental illness. Secondly, they knew that many patients could not afford to buy medication, but in some cases got around this problem by giving out free samples they had acquired from pharmaceutical companies. Third, pharmaceutical company 'reps' hung out in the hospital car park waiting to hand clinicians free samples and, importantly, free gifts (including watches, expensive foreign-brand alcohol, and air conditioning units), in an effort to increase their sales. The extent to which this 'encouraged' clinicians to prescribe drugs when there was no need is an open question.

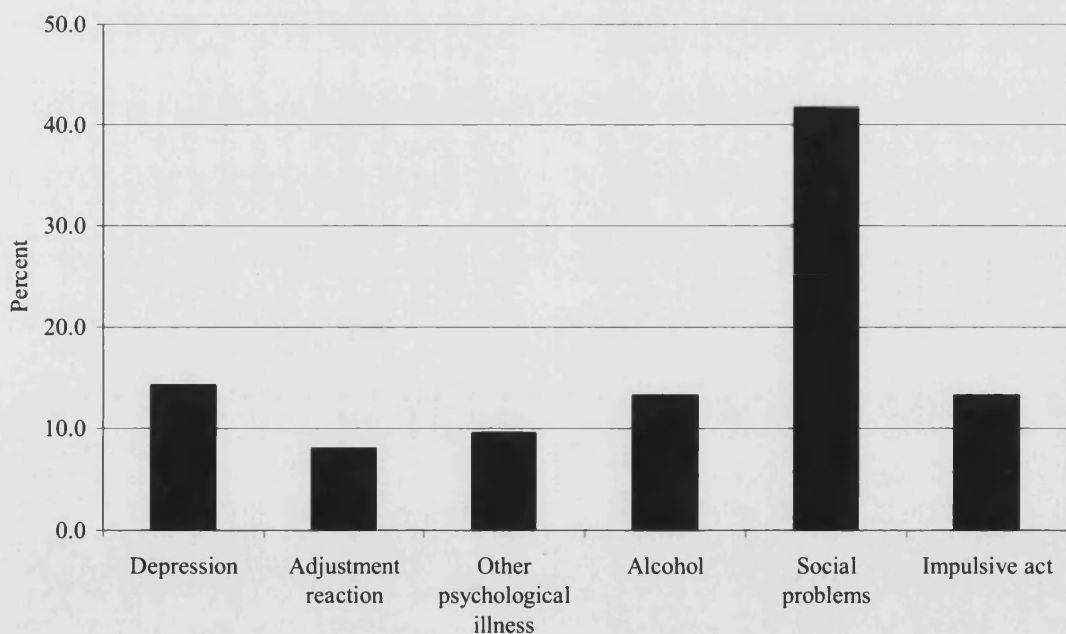


Figure 3.10: *CMHC* – Clinicians' spot diagnosis of self-harm patients.

3.5. Methods, place of suicide, and risk assessments

Sex and methods of suicidal behaviour

Methods of suicidal behaviour are interesting because they shed light onto the intent (broadly, non-fatal self-harm or fatal suicide attempt) that may have lain behind an act (Williams 1997). A 'soft' method like self-poisoning is probably the most practical method when the intent is not to die: it can be quickly found, easily administered, and swallowed in public. Furthermore, poisons usually leave good time to receive medical attention before death. Conversely, a 'hard' method such as hanging, shooting, or stepping in front of an on-coming train is probably the most practical when death 'really' is the intent. Unlike poisoning, these methods are usually harder to come by in 'everyday' life and difficult to administer in the presence of others (ibid).

Data on methods was available at GPU and MPS. At GPU, the relationship between sex and soft methods such as poisoning and hard methods such as hanging was found to be significant (Figure 3.11). Amongst male patients, less than one-quarter used hard methods such as hanging and cutting, compared with no females. However, the relationship between sex and the kind of poison used was found to be significant. While the majority of males committed self-harm by swallowing poisonous plants or household chemicals, the majority of females swallowed household chemicals. It would seem that these choices of poison reflect the occupations and geographical mobility of males and females, with males venturing beyond the house and garden to work in fields and plantations where poisons plants grow wildly, and females remaining at home in the

company of cleaning fluids, kerosene, pest control substances etc. The small number of either sex swallowing agricultural poisons is testament to the urban nature of the Madampe Division.

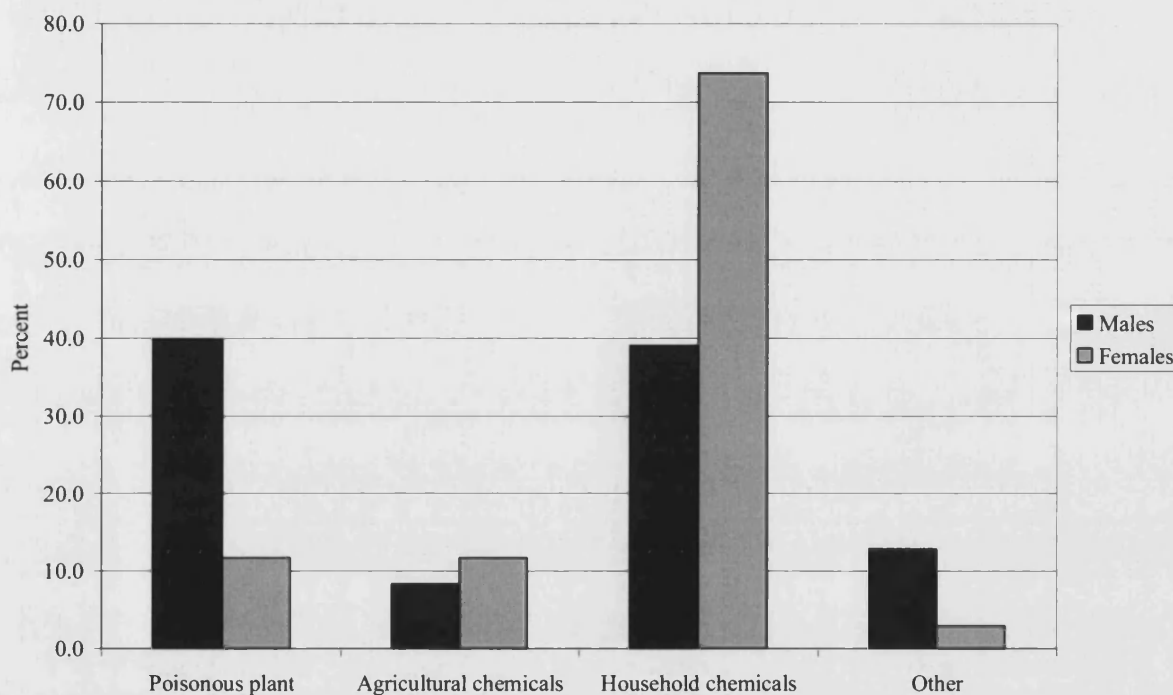


Figure 3.11: GPU – Sex and methods of self-harm.

At MPS, the relationship between sex and methods was not found to be significant (Figure 3.12). Although hanging was uncommon as a method of self-harm, it accounted for around half of male and female suicides. Given that males and females committed suicide using poison or hanging in about equal measure, the data provides no support for the popular theory that men are more likely to use ‘hard’ methods than women (Williams 1997).

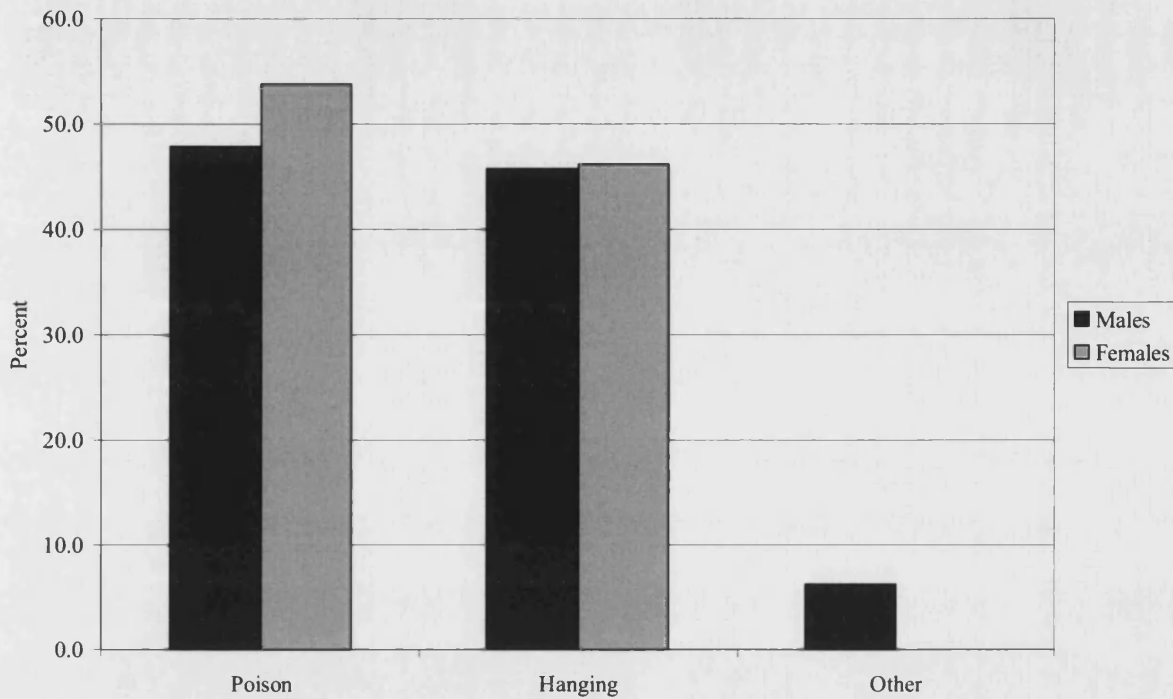


Figure 3.12: MPS – Sex and methods of self-inflicted death

Place of suicide: the presence or absence of third parties

A second indicator about intent is whether an act of suicidal behaviour was carried out in the presence of a third party. If death was the intent, would-be suicides are unlikely to swallow poisons or hang themselves when others are around to rescue them, unless they especially wish to cause some third party serious psychological or social damage (see Chapter 5.2). From a review of coroners' reports, it was possible to judge whether or not a suicide had been carried out in the presence of a third party (public) or alone (private). Based on the cases available, I found no relationship between sex and place of suicide (Figure 3.13). Around one-quarter of males and females committed suicide in public, and three-quarters in private. However, without equal data relating to the number of cases that committed self-harm in the presence or absence of third parties, or indeed how often self-

harmers and suicides foreshadow their behaviour with warnings, it is difficult to estimate the proportion of cases that do arise in public.

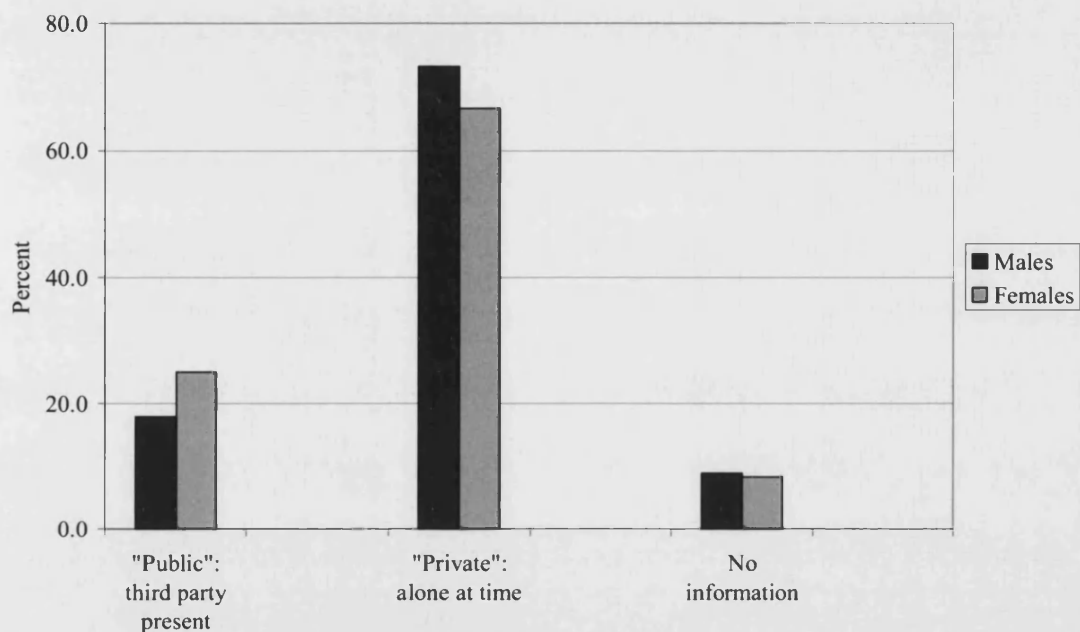


Figure 3.13: KMC – Place of suicide (public or private).

CMHC risk assessments

Clinicians at CMHC were also interested in the level of suicidal intent that lay behind an act. As such, medical records often contained an assessment of suicidal risk, with 'none' indicating no intent to die and 'high' indicating strong intent to die. Clinicians established the level of suicidal intent based upon the presence of a combination of subjective factors, including the method used, the public or private nature of the act, the presence and duration of suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts) prior to and following the act, evidence of previous acts of self-harm, and indications that the patient regretted that he or she did not die (for arguments for and against the construction of suicidal intent scales

see: Beck *et al* 1974; Beck & Steer 1989; Lester *et al* 1978; Pierce 1981; Williams 1997). Of the 330 records reviewed, 164 contained such an assessment. Of these, 53.6 percent related to male patients and 46.3 percent related to female patients. The relationship between sex and level of suicidal intent was not found to be significant (Figure 3.14). Less than 10 percent of males and females were found to have committed self-harm with no intent to die, around 30 percent with low to medium intent, and between 30 to 40 percent with high intent to die. These data would suggest that intentionally non-lethal acts of self-harm may have accounted for only very few cases presented at CMHC, while intentionally lethal acts may have accounted for as many as one-third. On the other hand, given that around 60 percent of cases presented following an act of self-harm committed with significant ambiguity – low to medium intent to die – suggests, as I pointed out in Chapter 1.6, any certain classification of intent is near impossible to come by.

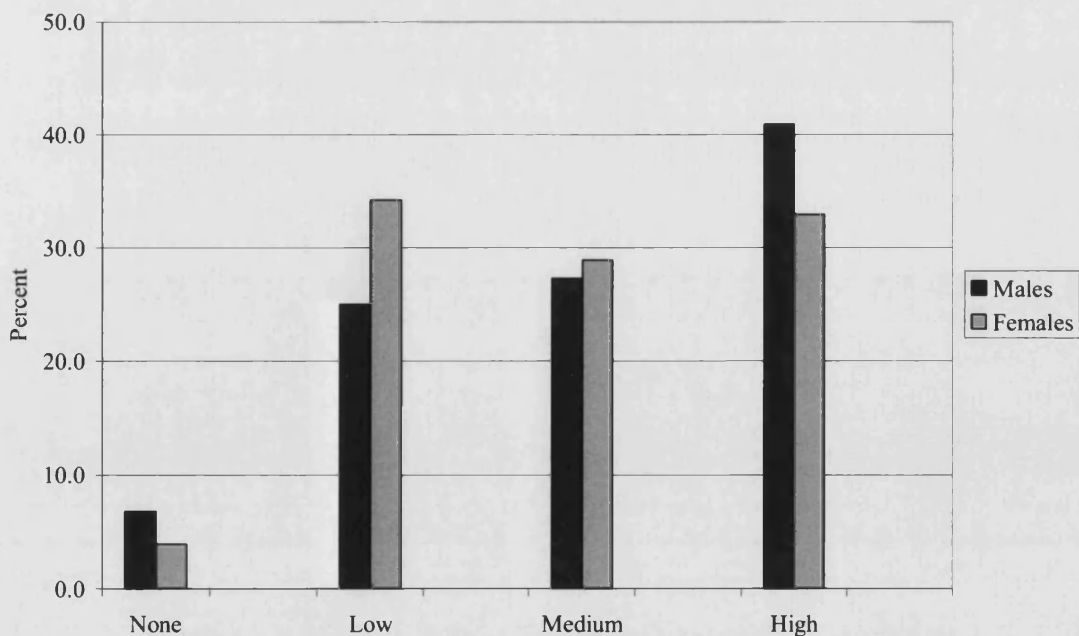


Figure 3.14: CMHC – Risk assessments of self-harm/suicide attempt patients.

3.6. Summary

Reviews of the available records yielded a varied picture of suicidal behaviour taking place within and around Madampe Division. Cases of self-harm were most frequent amongst males and females aged 16 to 24, and lowest amongst middle-aged men and women. Cases of self-inflicted death, meanwhile, were most frequent amongst middle-aged men and lowest amongst middle-aged women. Sinhalese Buddhists were most likely to commit suicide or attempted suicide; Roman Catholics, Hindus, and Muslims least likely. Finally, marital status appeared to be correlated with suicidal behaviour. Unmarried females were more likely to commit suicide attempt than unmarried males; separated and divorced males more likely to commit suicide than their married male and female counterparts.

Hospital staff, police officers, and coroners kept records of causes of suicide and attempted suicide. Such records are interesting because they shed light on the circumstances that led to acts of suicidal behaviour and also how people in Madampe conceptualise such causes. They reveal, then, both practice and discourse. Clinicians at CMHC recorded patients' histories in terms of social and psychological factors. They wrote in English and generally used 'medic-speak' to describe the circumstances leading to suicide attempts. Conversely, police officers at MPS wrote in Sinhalese and used terms and phrases common in the local vernacular. Both sets of language tended to focus on the same set of core social issues. These included: romantic problems and loss; disputes between spouses, parents and children, and other family members; failure at school, work, or other 'occupational' problems; legal problems; somatic complaints; grievous

loss; physical and sexual abuse; and the effects of alcohol or alcoholism. On the other hand, psychological issues were referred to differently. Clinicians' wrote about depression (diagnosing it in at least 40 per cent of cases) and other problems such as adjustment disorder. Police officers and coroners wrote about *mānasika asahānaya* (mental frustration) and only very infrequently about *mānasika awapidanaya*.

Thus, suicidal behaviour in and around the Madampe Division most often arises following disputes between family members, and then certain specific kinds of others, including romantic partners. But in order to understand what these patterns mean in terms of the social relationships they reflect and create, the data needs to be read in relation to these relationships' systems of social structure and social status. In the next chapter, I return to issues introduced in Chapters 1 and 2: namely, the social change theory of suicidal behaviour and the political economic history of the Madampe Division.

4.

Social change and social status: the political economy of suicidal behaviour

The social change theory of suicide (presented in Chapter 1.3) rests on the assumption that Sri Lankan society, or at least certain strata within it, have been transformed by processes of modernisation, urbanisation, and globalisation. This theory is itself very popular amongst ordinary Sinhalese, who argue that society, community, and family are breaking down under the pressures of modern life. For example, when I asked people in Madampe how they might explain the high rate of suicidal behaviour within the Sinhalese Buddhist community and apparently low rate in the Roman Catholic and Muslim communities, some pointed to what they consider to be the integrative strength of Christian and Muslim worship compared with the 'lackadaisical' approach of the Buddhists. In this way, the high suicide rate within the Sinhalese Buddhist community was associated with nationalistic concerns that 'Sinhalese Buddhist culture' (*sanskritiya*) is being destroyed. Several academic writers too have referred to the 'disappearing village' of traditional, rural Sri Lanka, and the creation of a disenfranchised, atomised, anomic, and suicidal population in its stead (for examples see: Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 67-69; Morrison, Moore & Ishak Lebbe 1979; Sarkar & Tambiah 1979; and Spencer 1990b, 1992 for a criticism and further citations).

In this chapter, I introduce the main structural principles that order and are ordered by the political economy local to the Madampe Division. In Chapter 2.2 I discussed how economic change led to the creation of a landless wage-labour class and changing relations amongst the land-wealthy. Through a broad examination of caste,

class, marriage, kinship, moral personhood, and religion, I will argue that forms of social life in the contemporary period represent highly particularistic responses to local and national histories within which any overarching distinction between the 'modern' and the 'traditional,' 'disintegrative' and 'cohesive,' is rendered meaningless. While this kind of critique is hardly new in anthropology, it does have important implications for how we can understand the patterning of suicidal behaviour, and its supposed relation to 'social change.'

The chapter has three aims. The first is to explore what might be understood by social change in Madampe Division, and consider to what extent it may be a useful concept for modelling suicidal behaviour in the contemporary period. The second is to examine how normative rules of social life are imagined and established, and how these relate to processes of social change. Even in a population as small (or as large) as Madampe Division, different rules may be expected to apply according to, broadly, the social status of individuals, groups, and communities in question. Thirdly, the chapter will prepare the ground for the following four chapters that deal with particular examples of issues addressed in this and the previous chapter. As such, the chapter engages with issues that by rights could be the subject of an entire thesis. The arguments presented about caste, class, and religion especially are meant to provide the minimal level of understanding required for the broader argument about social change and suicide, and not fully formed critiques. Most arguments made in this chapter receive further ethnographic illumination in subsequent chapters.

Throughout the chapter I will make frequent reference to the work of R. L. Stirrat (1977, 1982, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1992), who has studied Sinhalese Catholics very

close to the Madampe Division. The bulk of Stirrat's work has been focused upon a fishing village, Ambakandawila, located just five or so kilometres from Madampe.¹⁹ Additional studies by Stirrat have been conducted in the peri-urban community of Pallansena, around twenty kilometres to the south. Stirrat's discussions of caste, marriage, kinship, and religion have special relevance to my Madampe ethnography, not only in relation to the Roman Catholics but also the Buddhists. Social life in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa in many ways reflects that in Ambakandawila and Pallansena, and when the similarities disappear the reasons for it are equally illuminating.

4.1. Caste and its social effects

Caste has been extensively studied and theorised in South Asia, although the vast bulk of the work has been conducted in India. It remains an open question the degree to which comparisons between the Hindu and Sinhalese systems can be made. Nissan (1987) commented that the Sinhalese caste system had been taken for granted by anthropologists, who have largely assumed it to be similar to the Hindu model. This is a mistake I will at least try to avoid.

¹⁹ Although most Madampe people appeared to have very little to do with Ambakandawila people, some bought fish directly from sellers there, while most purchased fish from cycle-mounted fishmongers who peddled inland every day with that morning's catch. Furthermore, some Madampe Roman Catholic families, including one at Suduwella, had descended from, or had affinal links with, Ambakandawila Catholics. My own connection with Ambakandawila was very vague, and amounted to one conversation with a man who in fact turned out to be a refugee from the tsunami-battered south, and another with an old-timer who had a drink with a friend and I. Ambakandawila's beach was the closest accessible shoreline to Madampe, and for some men it provided a perfect drinking spot. I visited Ambakandawila beach several times with Madampe friends in order to have a drink while watching the sun go down.

Caste as a system of hierarchy

The importance of caste (in Madampe termed *kuliya*) as a system of social ranking was not taken for granted by my informants. While many Madampe people of 'high' and 'low' caste status suggested that as a principle of regulation caste had largely disappeared, others argued that it still mattered. I met no-one who thought caste affected interpersonal behaviour such as the sharing of food and water, or seating arrangements. Nor did anyone subscribe to caste-based styles of dress or interlocution. The situation was very similar to that recorded by Stirrat (1982) in Ambakandawila, where caste was similarly viewed as an out-dated institution with no relevance for most areas of modern life.

On the other hand, in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa a good deal of disagreement existed over just how much influence caste had on central concerns such as marriage and employment. I recall a discussion with a group of unmarried Kachchakaduwa males of different caste backgrounds, which became very heated. Some argued that people in Madampe did not take caste into consideration when choosing marriage partners; others vehemently denied this, pointing out how cross-caste romantic love could never blossom precisely because of this problem. Similarly, some informants claimed that caste background did not halt their progression at work, while others suggested that employers discriminated against them on the basis of their low caste status.

Generally, however, my informants' practical knowledge about caste was very low. As with matters of kinship, I was through my reading and research regarded as

something of an authority on the matter. Reflecting this, my investigations took a focus on how people dealt with their lack of knowledge about an institution they assumed to have been important in the past, and perhaps was not so important today, but did have some relevance in two very significant areas of their lives. For example, more than one case of self-harm and suicide committed in the context of romantic problems stemmed from parental objections to the lower caste status of their child's partner.

The picture that I – much like Stirrat (ibid) – uncovered was a very ambiguous one in which caste was assumed to be a quality of persons stemming from some mythic occupation or status their ancestors once held in the pre-colonial civilisations of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. When people spoke about the caste of some third party they did not do so in relation to a specific caste group, which they hardly ever knew, but rather some very general essential quality of high (*uda*) or low (*pahata*), good (*hondayi*) or bad (*naraka*). Within this simple polarisation a few features did emerge. Everyone I spoke to knew, and to some extent accepted, that the *goyigama* (village cultivators) were the highest caste. For some, this position was ascribed to their importance in the pre-colonial civilisations that were built upon irrigation and paddy farming. But the image of the paddy farmer has also been a staple of Sinhalese nationalism for many decades, and no doubt this modern rendering has helped the *goyigama* retain or even gain a sense of superiority over other castes. *Goyigama* consider themselves to be *uda kuliya*, and all other castes, save for a few possible exceptions, *pahata kuliya*.

But the *goyigama* are also the most numerous at national and often local level. Being *goyigama* is not, as such, much of a special privilege in its own right. Furthermore, the other castes are generally found in specific locations only, and in some cases

outnumber the *goyigama* at local level. In Madampe, the most numerous caste is the *goyigama*. Close in numbers are the *karāva* (fisher folk), *salāgama* (cinnamon peelers), and *durāva* (coconut toddy tappers). The status of these castes vis-à-vis the *goyigama* is somewhat complicated, with many of my *goyigama* informants somewhat reluctantly conceding they were *uda kuliya* (high caste) However, older accounts of caste in Sri Lanka placed these castes at various lower levels of the hierarchy (Ryan 2004 [1953]), and so this apparent transformation is interesting and helps shed light on the qualities that define *uda* and *pahata* respectively.

Roberts (1995; c.f. Jayawardena 2000) has provided a convincing argument of the processes by which the *karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva* rose in stature. Their ascendancy began with Portuguese colonisation of the Maritime Provinces during the fourteenth century and the economic reordering and growth it heralded. The *karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva* were chiefly resident in the colonised areas, and due to the nature of their caste occupations were most active in the new economy. Reflecting this, they adopted Portuguese (and later Dutch and British) names, and converted to Roman Catholicism (although rejected British attempts at Protestantism). With shared economic interests and a shared religion, the differences within and between the *karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva* began to disappear. By the 1980s members of the *karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva* were over-represented in leading positions of business and government (Table 4.1), and many *goyigama* accepted status parity with them. Today few people other than members of the *karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva* themselves can distinguish between the three based on their *vāsagama* (family name akin to the Euro-American surname). Roberts has argued that on this basis the three castes can be taken as forming one meta-caste

grouping, which he identifies using the acronym 'KSD' (*karāva*, *salāgama*, and *durāva*). I recognise the efficacy of using this acronym as my own research suggested that members of the three castes very often viewed themselves as and were treated as one group.

Caste	% representation			
	% in total population	Among 50 'most wealthy' businessmen	Among all Members of Parliament	Among all Cabinet Ministers
<i>Goyigama</i>	37.0	26.0	60.0	55.0
KSD	7.0	28.0	12.0	20.0
Others	30.0	8.0	9.0	6.0
Non-Sinhalese	26.0	28.0	19.0	18.0
Totals²⁰	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4. 1: Representation of main Sinhalese caste groups at top level of business and politics, 1980s. (Source: Moore 1998: 68; further citations in source text)

In Madampe, it seems that the high status of KSD has led to interesting configurations of *vāsagama* which denote both *goyigama* and KSD heritage. The bearers of these names could not tell me their origin, but it is likely that they came about either through *goyigama*-KSD marriages or even as strategic name-changing designed to convey membership to both status groups. (Of course, the latter possibility is in direct contradiction to the principle of caste as an ascribed essence of persons.) Some examples include:

1. Raja Pakse Mudiyansele = Raja Pakse is *salāgama*; Mudiyansele is

²⁰ Totals do not sum to 100 in original.

goyigama;

2. Suwawewa Arachchilage Fernando = Suwawewa Arachchilage is *goyigama*; Fernando is *salāgama* (adopted from Portuguese);
3. Tillesinghe Arachchilage Perera = Tillesinghe Arachchilage is *goyigama*; Perera is *karāva* (adopted from Portuguese).

Caste and sub-caste

Given the rather general nature of caste status, it is interesting to consider to what extent, if any, internal variations can be identified. Older accounts of Sinhalese caste reported on a system of sub-caste groups called *variga* (Leach 1961; Tambiah 1965; Yalman 1967). The identification (although not formation) of such groups was based on variations within the patrilineal *vāsagama* which at once communicates *kuliya* and sub-*kuliya* – *variga* – status. But in Madampe I did not encounter a single person that recognised the terms *variga* in the manner defined, or indeed any similar institutional groupings in practice.

Moreover, while people were aware of the multi-layered caste nature of their *vāsagama*, they did not necessarily associate with other individuals holding the same sub-caste name. For example, the *vāsagama* of the Kachchakaduwa ‘Herath Mudiyansele’ (H.M.) denotes a *goyigama* sub-caste of *mudali* (leaders of the people), but in no way could residents at Kachchakaduwa with the H.M. *vāsagama* be considered a caste group, not least because deep divisions exist between different patrilineages, let alone with others called Mudiyansele. It seems, then, that the Madampe *kuliya* are broad and amorphous labels that have very little formal internal structure. The closest possible unit

of extended kinship ties to that of sub-caste was the patrilineal *paramparā*, similar in some respects to Obeyesekere's (1967) *pelāntiya*, which I shall discuss below.

In sum, the caste system in Madampe is a complex creature riddled with contradictions and confusions. The *goyigama*, KSD, and those with *vāsagama* that display *goyigama* and KSD elements are considered *uda kuliya*, which is to say people regard them as *hondayi kuliya*. The *radā*, *berāva*, and other lower caste groups are considered *pahata* or *naraka kuliya*. However, in the contemporary period these distinguishing labels exist only at the level of discourse and in practice it is difficult to find even those of low caste complain that such positioning *routinely* holds them back in life. Thus, most of my informants recognised just three general 'levels' of caste: (1) *goyigama*, (2) equal but separate to the *goyigama* the KSD, and (3) all other castes. In my following analysis of caste in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa this is a convention I will also follow.

Caste in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa

Reflecting local economic history, Suduwella is today populated in the main by those who were involved in or dislocated by the coconut and its subsidiary industries: landless and incoming *goyigama* and members of the KSD. Since the 1950s, three generations of male household head and his wife has presided over Suduwella plots. These include the colonists themselves, their second-generation children, and in some cases third-generation grandchildren. In Table 4.2, the caste of these men and women is presented. The frequency of the castes in each generation has stayed much the same, with two-thirds

goyigama and around 20 percent KSD. The over-representation of *goyigama* and KSD when compared with the national rates given in Table 4.1, even with the nature of the local colonial economy taken into account, suggests that LDO plots were perhaps reserved for the higher castes, with the lower castes missing out.

Caste	Settler generation	Second generation	Third generation
<i>Goyigama</i>	75.8	71.4	72.5
“KSD”	17.4	20.6	20.4
Other (low) castes	4.7	4.9	3.9
Mixed-caste <i>vāsagama</i>	2.1	3.1	1.8
Tamil	0.0	0.0	1.4
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=190)	(N=287)	(N=284)

Table 4. 2: *Suduwella* – Number of castes by male household head and wife, settler generation to third generation.

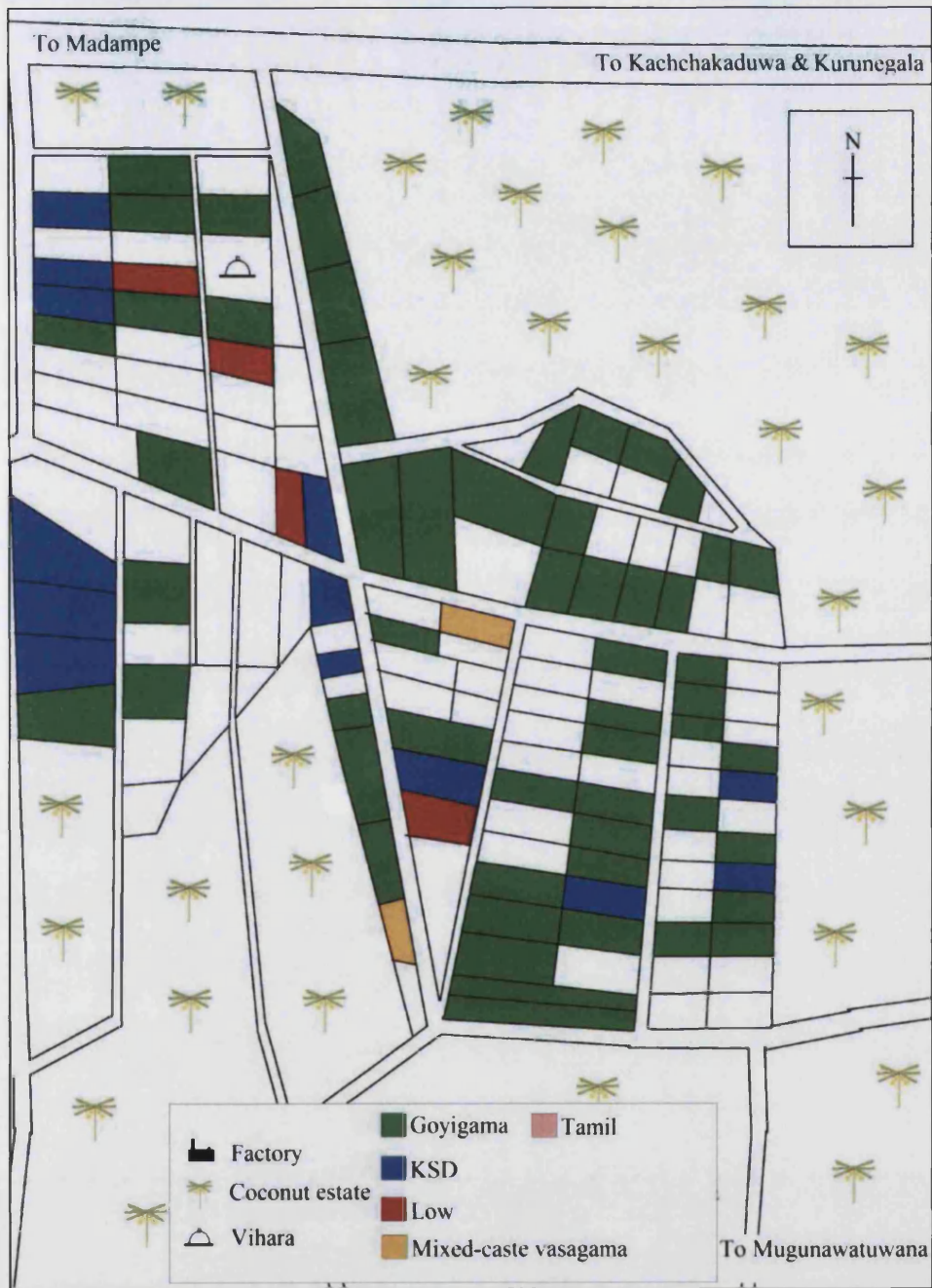
(Source: Author’s household survey)

But it also appears that the spatial distribution of LDO plots was not primarily organised according to caste, with *goyigama* and KSD allocated distinct sections of the colony. This could be the consequence of disinterest in caste amongst the urban planners, or perhaps even amongst the settlers themselves. Maps 4 to 6 depict the caste of male household head, from the 1940s until today. Amongst settlers (Map 4), fifty-three households (74.6 percent) were headed by *goyigama*, twelve (16.9 percent) by KSD, four (5.6 percent) by members of the low castes, and two (2.8 percent) with mixed-caste *vāsagama*. The north-west, south-west, and south-east quadrants of the colony all contain plots settled by members of different castes.

Between the late 1950s and mid 1970s more plots were allocated (Map 5). Amongst second generation residents, *goyigama* were head on sixty-six plots (73.3

percent), the KSD on seventeen plots (18.9 percent), low castes on three plots (3.3 percent), and those with mixed-caste *vāsagama* on four plots (4.4 percent). Although the population of Suduwella increased, no overall change in the caste constitution occurred. However, the practice of inter-caste marriage led to seven plots – A7, A21, A34, C6, C21, D50, D54 – containing households headed by males of different caste to that of their affines.

From the 1980s several other plots were allocated (Map 6). This resulted in a slightly clearer trend in caste distribution with KSD, low castes, and Tamils all resident in the north-west of the colony and *goyigama* in the north- and south-east. However, third generation KSD and low caste settlers did not originate from outside Suduwella but were the sons and daughters of existing residents who settled on empty plots adjacent to their parents' plots. Thus, the emerging pattern of caste residency is not necessarily indicative of caste consciousness but pragmatic issues of land availability. Overall, residency rates were *goyigama* on seventy-seven plots (64.2 percent), KSD on eighteen plots (15.0 percent), low castes on two plots (1.7 percent), those with mixed-caste *vāsagama* on three plots (2.5 percent), and incoming Tamil's on two plots (1.7 percent). The number of plots with household heads of different caste increased to eighteen (14.9 percent).



Map 4: Caste settlement patterns in the first generation of Suduwella colonisation.
 White spaces denote unallocated plots.
 (Source: Author's household survey)



Map 5: Caste settlement patterns in the second generation of Suduwella colonisation. Multi-coloured plots denote household heads of different caste sharing the same land.
 (Source: Author's household survey)



Map 6: Caste settlement patterns in the third generation of Suduwella colonisation.
 (Source: Author's household survey)

At Kachchakaduwa things are very different. Two hamlets form the village: Kachchakaduwa itself and Dankale, a small hamlet to the south west. Sixty-three households constitute the hamlet Kachchakaduwa, and eleven households constitute Dankale (Table 4.3). Of the sixty-three households at Kachchakaduwa, 90.2 percent are headed by *goyigama*, just 1.1 percent by the KSD, and 7.9 percent by the *radā*. The hamlet Dankale, on the other hand, is two-thirds *radā*. Members of that caste head 63.6 percent of households, with the remaining 36.4 percent headed by *goyigama*. All *goyigama* residents at Dankale are related to the *radā* through marriage, with whom they have contracted hypogamous unions.

Caste	Kachchakaduwa	Dankale
<i>Goyigama</i>	90.2	36.4
KSD	1.1	0.0
<i>Radā</i>	7.9	63.6
Mixed-caste <i>vāsagama</i>	0.8	0.0
Totals	100.0	100.0
	(N=63)	(N=11)

Table 4. 3: Distribution of castes in Kachchakaduwa by household head in 2004/05.
(Source: Author's household survey)

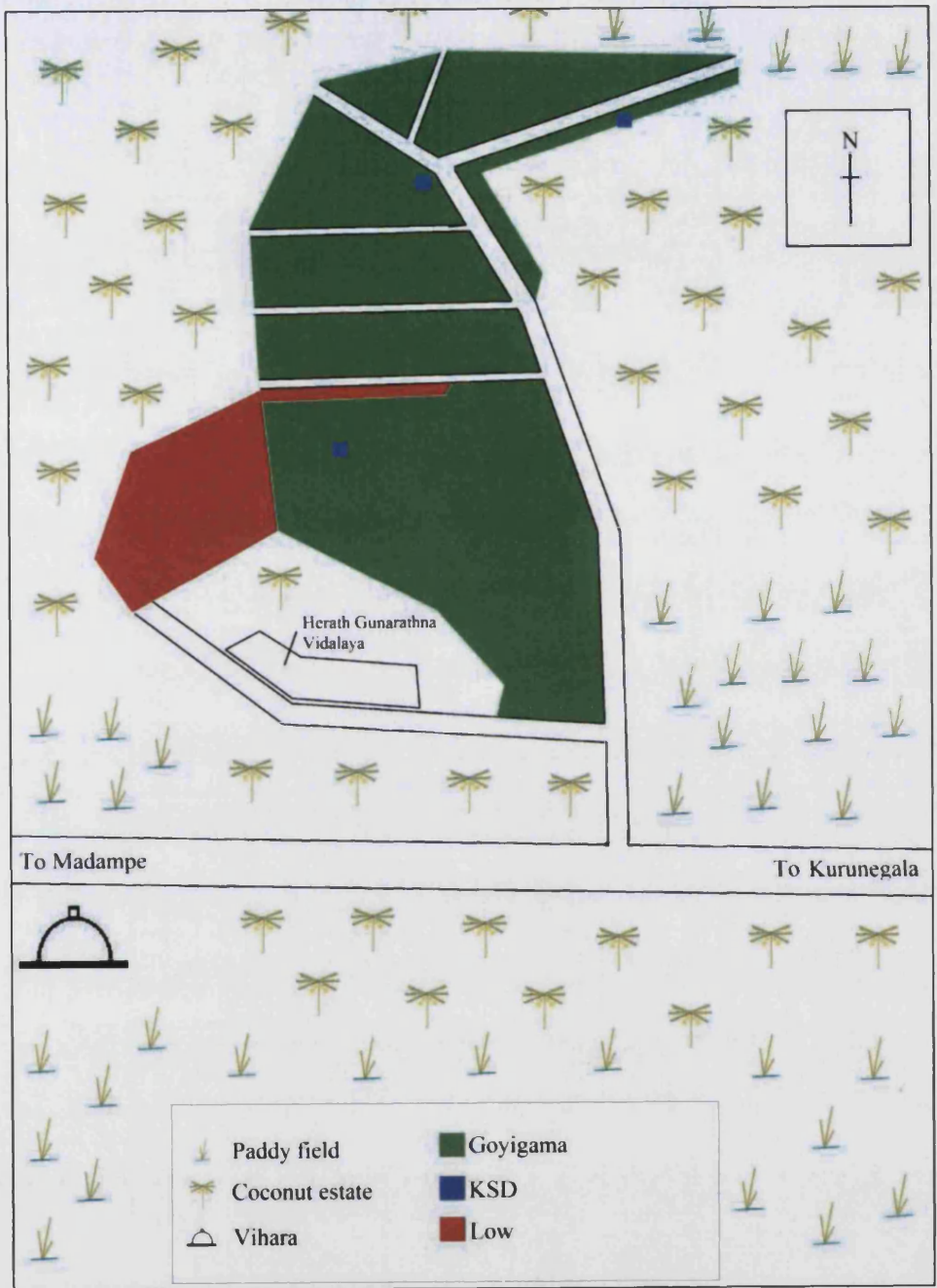
The spatial layout of Kachchakaduwa (Map 7), comprising of a *goyigama* hamlet flanked by a *radā* hamlet, reflects the 'traditional' pattern, as *radā* were as a caste once washers to the *goyigama* (Ryan 2004 [1953]) On the other hand, marriages between *goyigama* and *radā* are certainly not traditional. For many Kachchakaduwa *goyigama*, these families were in clear breach of caste marriage rules and viewed as degraded as a result. However, in the absence of any village caste court such as the Pul Eliya 'variga court' discussed by Leach (1961), these transgressions have to my knowledge never led to any formal

sanctions. *Radā* families in the hamlet Kachchakaduwa do not live throughout the village, but along one road in the south-east corner, next to the border with Dankale. Interestingly, several of these families have in recent decades changed their *vāsagama* to ‘Rajapakse,’ a *salāgama* title, apparently in an effort to raise their standing. The change was recent enough for most Kachchakaduwa people to remember their original name, and thus still consider them to be *radā* rather than KSD. The families themselves, on the other hand, have cut all ties with their *radā* neighbours, preferring to assume themselves to be completely unrelated.

Genealogical knowledge was not as deep amongst Kachchakaduwa people as it was amongst Suduwella people, perhaps because issues of land inheritance were of greater interest for the former than the latter. In any case, information was only available for the caste of the current head and his wife and the generation that preceded them (Table 4.4). Although the difference is very small, the change of generation witnessed a slight increase in the number of KSD households and appearance of mixed-caste *vāsagama*. This was due to the allocation of LDO plots within Kachchakaduwa itself, as part of the on-going village expansion scheme (see Chapter 2.2). KSD resident in the previous generation had also come to Kachchakaduwa via the LDO, and were not native.

Caste	Current generation	Previous generation
<i>Goyigama</i>	75.9	81.4
KSD	6.8	2.1
<i>Radā</i>	16.5	16.5
Mixed-caste <i>vāsagama</i>	0.8	0.0
Totals	100.0	100.0
	(N=133)	(N=97)

Table 4. 4: *Kachchakaduwa* – Number of castes by male household head and wife, current generation, and previous generation.



Map 7: Distribution of castes in Kachchakaduwa. Shaded areas show location of castes.
 (Source: Author's household survey)

In relation to spatial arrangements, then, caste seems to hold different kinds of sociological significance according to the history of land relations within communities. As will be seen in relation to occupational class and marriage, Suduwella social structure appears less in debt to caste than Kachchakaduwa.

4.2. Occupational class

If questions about the relevance of caste for Madampe people produced a variety of different answers, the importance of occupational class – and the nature of its internal structure – was more agreed upon. In Chapter 2.2 I mentioned how interest in white-collar employment led to fierce competition in examinations during the colonial period. Such competition only increased throughout the twentieth century, as children from all backgrounds sought to win the very few university places that were on offer each year. In Madampe, the value of a ‘good job’ was located in more than just the professional knowledge it required, the size of the salary, opportunities for a pension, or long-term stability, even if these things were certainly primary concerns. The occupational class structure also reflected a moral evaluation based upon social prestige and historical value. Occupations that provide the job-holder with access to social and political capital and in some way reflects, protects, or sustains the ‘culture’ (*sanskritiya*) of Sinhalese Buddhism (Moore 1998), are accorded a higher occupational class status than those that do not.

Based on this sometimes-contradictory schema, people in Madampe tended to think of the world of occupational class in terms of three general statuses: a ‘middle’ professional and white-collar class, a ‘lower-middle’ skilled and blue-collar class, and a

'working' unskilled labouring class.²¹ Included within the professional/white-collar class were doctors, lawyers, teachers, higher-ranking local government servants, higher-ranking police and army personnel, private sector management, and successful business people (i.e. owner-managers of small to medium-sized enterprises). Skilled and blue-collar occupations included nurses, lower-ranking local government servants, lower-ranking army and police personnel, private sector sales and office staff, artisans, taxi-van drivers, industrial technicians of various kinds, and farmers who owned their own land, chicken broiler, and so on. Unskilled labouring occupations included factory-floor workers, three-wheel drivers, daily-waged labourers, agricultural and estate labourers, menial workers of various kinds in public and private sectors, and tenant farmers.

In addition to these three levels, individuals in post-compulsory (+14 years) and higher education were generally viewed as belonging to, or destined for, the upper two classes. Meanwhile, women who remained at home were viewed in terms of their own unique and positive moral category that lay outside of class. Finally, migrant labour was considered financially beneficial for all who participated in it, but only morally justifiable for men. For this reason, men who worked abroad tended to be viewed as belonging to the lower-middle class, while migrant women were viewed as belonging to the lower working-class (see Chapter 7.3). This was the case even when men worked as labourers overseas. The fact that they were employed in a foreign country and so earned a foreign (higher) wage, to some extent erased the menial status of their work.

²¹ Today no 'upper class' exists in either Suduwella of Kachchakaduwa and so has been omitted from this analysis. Here I am using formal sociological terminology: no systematic Sinhalese version of them exists although they would be easily recognised by most people.



Figure 4.1: Machine workers in a coconut fibre mill, Madampe. These men are generally recognised as belonging to an unskilled working class group.
(Photo: Alan Widger)

Occupational class in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa

Men of working age (+14 years) in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa engaged in a wide variety of occupations. Each community was also mixed in terms of occupational class, with all three represented to some extent. However, and reflecting the economic and social histories of the two communities, Kachchakaduwa was home to more professional and white-collar workers than Suduwella, while Suduwella people were more likely to work in skilled/blue-collar employment (Table 4.5).

Regarding females, the majority of legal working age (+14 years) in both communities was classified as housewives. Roughly equal numbers of women were employed in the professional and white-collar, blue-collar, agricultural, and unskilled sectors. Equal numbers also remained in education beyond 14 years, or were unemployed (Table 4.6). Although the class difference between the two communities in relation to

women's occupations was therefore less pronounced than it was in relation to men's occupations, Kachchakaduwa again appears to be of higher social class than Suduwella.

Occupation	Suduwella	Kachchakaduwa
Professional/white-collar	6.5	17.1
Skilled/blue-collar	47.2	30.9
Unskilled labourer	34.3	27.6
Overseas migrant	1.6	0.8
In education after 14 years	5.2	8.1
Unemployed	5.2	15.4
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=248)	(N=123)

Table 4. 5: Employment amongst males of working age at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa.
 $P = <0.05$; $\chi^2 = 27.071$; $V = 0.27$
 (Source: Author's household survey)

Occupation	Suduwella	Kachchakaduwa
Professional/white-collar	4.7	5.0
Blue-collar/semi-skilled	7.8	14.3
Unskilled labourer	6.0	4.2
Overseas migrant	16.4	6.7
In education (14+)	8.6	6.7
Housewife	52.2	56.3
Unemployed	4.3	6.7
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=232)	(N=119)

Table 4. 6: Employment amongst females of working age at Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella.
 $\chi^2 =$ not significant
 (Source: Author's household survey)

Finally, unemployment was much lower at Suduwella than Kachchakaduwa. The reason for this can be related to the higher caste and class status of Kachchakaduwa compared with Suduwella. At Kachchakaduwa, the overall higher status of the population has given rise to a greater number of aspirational men who will not accept just any form of

employment, and in fact prefer unemployment to what they consider under-employment (Hettige 2002; Lakshman 2002; Rama 2003). My unemployed friends at Kachchakaduwa often expressed the opinion that certain occupations were beneath them. When a garment factory opened in late 2005, only those from working class backgrounds sought to work there.

Caste and occupational class

One of the problems with which I began this discussion was the impact of caste on employment opportunities. Some informants argued that low-caste status was an inhibitor, while others did not. Statistical data relating to caste and occupational class at Suduwella appears to suggest that no correlation exists between them (Table 4.7). That is to say, men obtained jobs in each of the occupational status groups that I have identified, enrolled in post-compulsory education, or were unemployed, regardless of their caste status.

Occupation	Goyigama	KSD	Low
Professional/white-collar	7.0	2.6	8.2
Skilled/blue-collar	49.4	41.0	43.2
Unskilled labourer	32.4	46.2	32.4
Overseas migrant	1.8	0.0	2.7
In education after 14 years	5.9	5.1	2.7
Unemployed	3.5	5.1	10.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=170)	(N=39)	(N=37)

Table 4. 7: *Suduwella* – Caste and occupational class amongst males of working age.

χ^2 = insignificant

(Source: Author's household survey)

If the history and settlement pattern of Suduwella is indeed indicative of a loosening of caste as a principle of social differentiation and stratification, then this finding adds further colour to the emerging picture. Suduwella is a skilled and semi-skilled working population, with many men and women employed in the factories that surround it. Reflecting this, the colony has a strong sense of its material base and, perhaps, an emerging class consciousness too. Party affiliates of the leftist government of Mahinda Rajapakse were active in the community, as were members of the Maoist 'Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna' (JVP: 'People's Liberation Front') that forms a member of Rajapakse's 'Sri Lanka Freedom Party' (SLFP) coalition. Although a safe win for Rajapakse, before the 2006 national elections Suduwella SLFP and JVP activists canvassed the colony for votes, organised rallies, and picketed the gates of the steel plant. On Election Day itself the local campaign reached an alcohol-fuelled crescendo that spilt over into violence, thus voiding the ballot (in this Suduwella holds the distinction of being only one of three constituencies in Sinhalese areas of the island that had its votes thrown out due to violence or voting irregularities). It is possible, given the socioeconomic history of the colony, to imagine a further levelling of caste in this environment of worker – working class – solidarity (Jayawardena 2004).

At Kachchakaduwa, I also found no relationship between caste and occupational class (Table 4.8). However, the available sample at Kachchakaduwa was very small. Due to their low representation, KSD have been excluded from the analysis altogether. (The occupations of KSD males of working age were: manager of a cooperative, manager in baggage handling at Bandaranaike International Airport, and three in post-compulsory education.) In relation to the analysable data, although rates of *goyigama* and *radā* are

about equal in professional/white collar posts, *goyigama* are possibly over-represented in skilled/blue-collar posts and *radā* in unskilled labouring jobs. The large difference between individuals in post-compulsory education may just be a consequence of a younger population in Dankale.

Occupation	<i>Goyigama</i>	<i>Radā</i>
Professional/white-collar	19.1	15.8
Skilled/blue-collar	35.1	26.3
Unskilled labourer	30.9	26.3
Overseas migrant	1.1	0.0
In education after 14 years	5.3	26.3
Unemployed	8.5	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=94)	(N=19)

Table 4. 8: *Kachchakaduwa* – Caste and occupational class amongst males of working age.
 χ^2 = not significant
 (Source: Author's household survey)

But whatever the reality, the *Kachchakaduwa goyigama* certainly feel that their position at the top of the caste/class status ladder is under threat. This opinion was voiced most clearly by Weerasinghe George Edward, a *goyigama* Buddhist and affine of the locally powerful *goyigama* Herath Mudiyansele family (see 4.4, below). When I visited his house during my village census, George responded to my questions about family history with a diatribe on the decline of old or ancient (*purāṇa*) agrarian modes of life and the impact of class mobility and consumerism. George particularly lamented the passing of what he called the 'calm and quiet' (*sahānaya*) society, and its replacement by one that has lost respect for the naturalness of caste hierarchy, is witnessing the breakdown of family life and extended kinship bonds, and is characterised by the hedonistic pursuit of

material things. Reflecting a broader social narrative, George suggested that these changes were producing discontent, hopeless, and frustration (*asahānaya*) in the village (see Chapter 8.2).

‘In the past,’ George told me, ‘people were calm and quiet; but today they always want more. They are not happy with their place in life.’ Echoing popular folk ideas about economic change and social decline (c.f. Spencer’s discussion of the Sinhalese ‘rural idyll’: 1990b, 1990c, 1992), George blamed ‘1977,’ the year that the government turned the country from its path of state socialism and embraced the open market. The date was one with which negative associations were made by practically every informant I spoke to, in Madampe and across the island. But while the most vocal critics were those on the nationalist left and right, even the liberal socialists and free-marketeers were not happy with what they also saw as its influence on Sinhalese *sanskritiya*.

George, a committed member of the rightist United National Party (UNP) which was in power in 1977, was no exception. Although creating the economic conditions that he claims to have benefited from, George also blamed consumerist ethics as the cause of social levelling in Kachchakaduwa. George said that people in the modern period ‘run after’ material goods, and that material wellbeing was no longer the marker of ascribed social status that it once was. George fondly remembered a time when he was the only man in the village who owned a television set. He claimed that people would travel ‘from miles around’ to watch it through his open window. ‘But today everybody has a TV,’ he complained. Pressing the point home, George argued: ‘Young men and women go abroad so they can buy washing machines. Now I have to buy a washing machine to show my level!’ (social standing; *tattvaya*).

When I asked George to describe ‘the past,’ he talked about the administrative and agricultural system under the British. According to George, that system was a reflection of pre-colonial society and ordered economic and social life on the principles of caste and sub-caste. For example, George suggested that when the *rājakāriya*, a system of caste-based service to the king derived from feudal times, was implemented by the British to improve the countryside, people were subsequently ruled according to the principles of ascribed status (c.f. Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1984: 68; Peebles 1995). George also mentioned the close connection between the native colonial administrators and the communities they served. Under the British, ‘village headmen’ were recruited from a locally influential high-caste family, under whose authority people ‘naturally’ fell.

George identified the ‘last great village headman’ of Kachchakaduwa as being a man called Herath Mudiyansele Julius, an affinal ancestor, who died sometime during the 1960s. The local significance of Julius was known to most Kachchakaduwa people, especially members of the Herath Mudiyansele family, and I heard his story from several informants. Julius was the headman of Kachchakaduwa and surrounding area during the 1940s and 1950s, and through his services to the colonial and post-colonial governments, was granted a title by Queen Elizabeth II. Upon receipt of that accolade, Julius changed his *vasagama* to ‘Herath Gunarathna,’ thus signalling a break from his wider kin group (for the significance of this, see 4.4, below). Already from a wealthy family, the bestowed title enabled Julius to increase his participation in economic ventures of the day. It was Julius who built the Herath Gunarathna Vidyalaya, and sponsored other development in the village. Today, only one son of Julius remains living at Kachchakaduwa, staying alone with some hired help in the grand house that his father

had built.

Nowadays, George complained, the system of village headmen had been bureaucratized and populated by faceless individuals with no legitimate (caste) authority. The distinctions between people had blurred, and the traditional order lost. For him and other Kachchakaduwa *goyigama*, colonies like Suduwella with their apparent disregard for caste were a threat. This view spilled over into the regulation of the final social institution I will examine in this chapter: that of marriage.

4.3. Marriage, separation, and divorce: emergence of the bourgeois family

In this section, I will discuss the structural determinants and patterns of marriage, separation, and divorce in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. Detailed discussions of the pathways to and affective experience of married life will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. The focus of the section is placed on changing marriage practices that suggest an embourgeoisement of the family, alongside a growing preference, although not outright social acceptance of, romantic love marriage.

Types of marriage

Research into marriage was never a straightforward matter. Two general types of marriage can be said to exist in the Sinhalese system: proposal (arranged) marriage (*katarkarani kasādaya*), and love marriage (*ardari kasādaya*). But whenever I asked people which type of marriage they had contracted, I always received embarrassed

laughter before I received a reply. To bring up the issue of love marriage was often considered unusual, if not rude, as it implied that I was also asking a host of highly controversial questions. By asking somebody what class of marriage they had was also to ask if they had clashed with their parents and eloped.

In Madampe, proposal marriage included all those that were arranged by parents, relatives, family friends, or, to a much lesser extent, a professional matchmaker or newspaper advertisement. Ideally considered to have been arranged with the 'best interests' of both the couple and their families in mind, proposal marriages were said to be morally unimpeachable and married life free from crisis and dispute. By contrast, love marriage included all those that were contracted by the couple themselves, only after which parental permission might have been sought. They were seen to be morally ambiguous at best, flawed at worst, and were often blamed for causing problems within families and between lovers alike. Even if the couple obtained the blessing of both parents, the stigma of irresponsibility usually remained attached.

In practice, however, proposal marriages and love marriages are better seen as ideal positions between full parental dictate and child submission at one end, to secret love affair and elopement at the other (De Munck 1996; Fuller & Narasimhan 2008). Despite terminological clarity, the distinction between proposal marriage and love marriage was not always clear-cut for my informants either, and in my notes I have cases where parents' described their child's marriage as a proposal marriage, but the child, when interviewed, claimed that it was a love marriage. It is likely that in such cases either the parent had tried to hide the fact their child had contracted a love marriage or the child had preferred to suggest they had contracted a love marriage, which is the more

'fashionable' type amongst the young. In more cases, however, marriages began as romantic relationships but with time became formal proposals. The same can also be said of proposals, with love blossoming following a suggested match between hitherto strangers. These problems of classification undoubtedly created biases in informants' reports that have affected the reliability of the data I collected relating to marriage patterns. Given this, the following discussion should be read with caution. Findings that apparently suggest striking changes in marriage practices may also represent informants' preferred definitions of kinds of marriage.

Marriage patterns at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa

During my household surveys, household heads were asked to state whether they, their parents, or their married children had contracted a proposal marriage (*katarkarani bāñda*; literally 'spoken tie') or a love marriage (*ardari bāñda*; 'love tie'). Given the wide age-range of informants spoken to, it has been possible to establish reported marriage patterns from the early twentieth century through to the contemporary period. Data for the years 1900 to 1924 was sparse, and is only included here for reference: the differences between rates of proposal and love marriage between those years cannot be taken as significant. Data for the years 1925 to 2005 was analysable, and the differences observed are significant. At both communities, there appears to have been a dramatic shift throughout the twentieth century from proposal marriage to love marriage as the dominant type (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

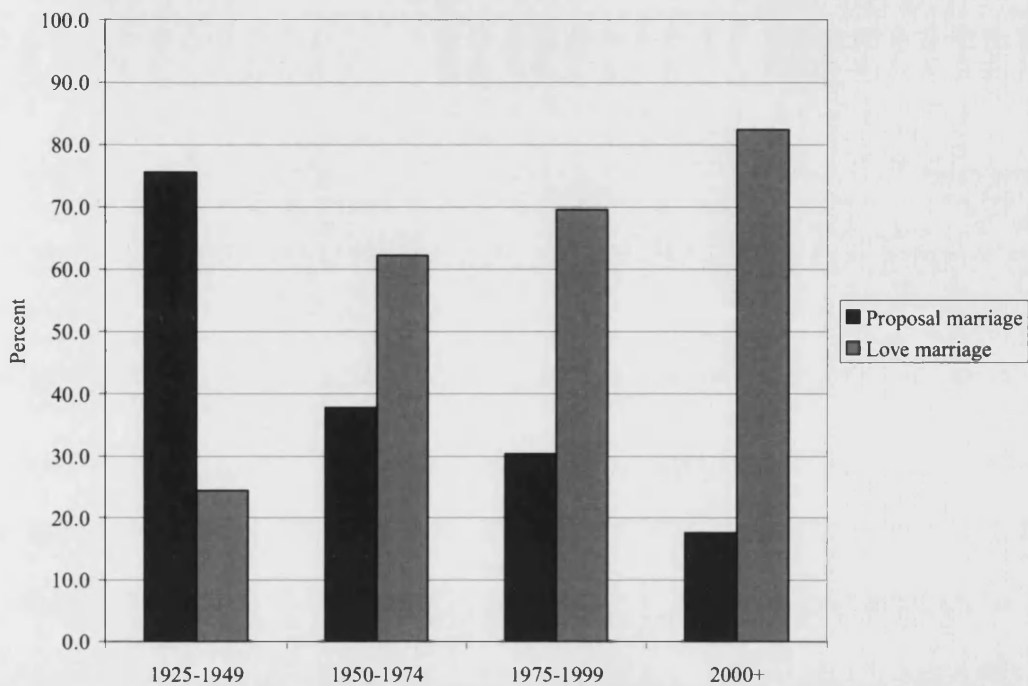


Figure 4.2: *Suduwella* – Rates of proposal and love marriage between 1900 and 2005.
(Source: Author's household survey)

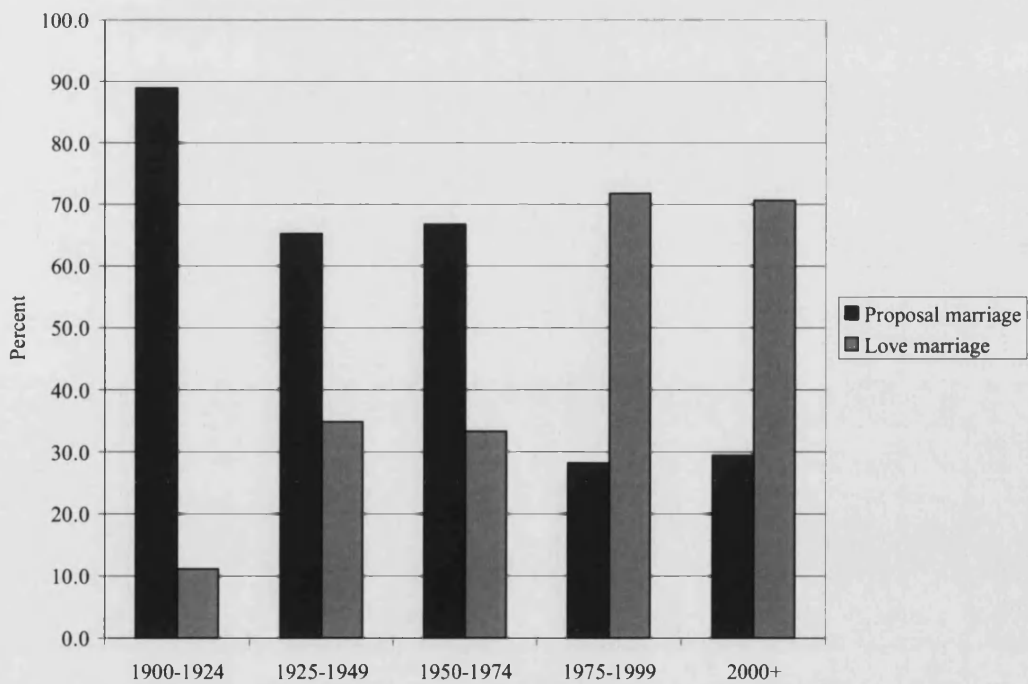


Figure 4.3: *Kachchakaduwa* – Rates of proposal and love marriage between 1900 and 2005.
(Source: Author's household survey)

The over-all picture is one in which marriage practices, and/or preferred kinds of marriage classification (for example, love matches 'formalised' as proposals before or after marriage), shift from proposal marriage to love marriage. Sociologically, the difference between proposal marriage and love marriage in Madampe is highlighted by the material implications of the two. Proposal marriages typically involve dowry (*dāvādda*), and act as a vehicle by which the wife's family might gain social status. Moreover, wives' brothers and sisters' husbands (*massinā*) are customarily assumed to owe each other an obligation of duty and support, and share an informal joking relationship (Leach 1961) (see 4.4, below, and Chapter 5.3). For this reason, the parents and brothers of a marriageable woman have a great deal of interest in what kind of man she marries. But with love marriage, such considerations almost by definition are much harder to adhere to, at least on the part of family members. While there is in fact evidence to suggest that children do tend to fall in love with the kinds of people of whom their family would approve (see below and Chapter 6.2), the fact that arranged marriages have not been insisted upon suggests that parents are less concerned with material issues.

This hypothesis has implications for how contemporary marriage patterns might be understood in relation to older marriage patterns recorded elsewhere on the island. There is evidence to suggest that the contemporary preference for love marriage is something of a return to an 'older' form. Leach (1961: 89-93) discussed the nature of marriage in Pul Eliya, where he noted three kinds. The first was said to exist when a woman cooked for a man, and the two ate together. In this case, the sharing of food was symbolic of sexual intercourse, and in fact men and women could be so married many times throughout their life, as well as produce off-spring from each. The second kind

constituted formal arranged marriages complete with ceremonies and village feasts. Although a statistical rarity, Leach (ibid) suggested that these were sociologically the most significant, for the material reasons to which I have already alluded. The third and very rare form of marriage – but since 1860 the only legal kind – was based upon a contract witnessed by an official registrar.

When I mentioned all of this to my Madampe informants, a look of disgust usually passed over their faces. They attributed the ‘decadent’ nature of the first kind to the rural and no doubt ‘backward’ ways of the Pul Eliya villagers, pointing out how absolute monogamy – ‘one life, one love’ (see Chapter 6.1) – was the only true Sinhalese approach to marriage, be it proposal or love. The serial monogamy and multiple fathering of children found at Pul Eliya were considered to be morally indefensible, and, together with the non-registration of marriage, taken as the work of the lowest classes. In contrast, they suggested that marriages in Madampe had always constituted proposals, until recently. But in fact, there are two reasons to question this assumption. First, according to C.A. Lushington (AR-1886: S1, 56A), Puttalam AGA, the ‘non-registration’ of marriage was an issue of social importance in the Chilaw District during the late nineteenth century, as it often led to serious disputes over inheritance claims. It may be that the kind of informal marriage practiced Pul Eliya was rather more common in Madampe than people today know, or care to know.

Secondly, then, the *rise and subsequent fall* in the popularity of formal proposal marriage may have occurred in line with changing land relations and routes to economic, social, and political capital. Moral objections aside, the apparent increasing preference for love marriage shadows in time the decline of land as a means to social status, and advent

of meritocratic ideologies of occupational success. In this sense, marriage patterns at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa can be read in terms of political economic change outlined in Chapter 2.

Marriage and caste

Marriage, caste, and generational change

Despite the apparent shift to romantic love marriage, concern with caste status still seems to influence the choice of marriage partners in the majority of cases. At Suduwella (Table 4.9), mixed-caste marriages have been a feature of life for many decades, and of course account for the existence of plots headed by males of different castes. But even though in that colony caste seems less significant for many people, the vast majority of marriages have remained within the same caste. Importantly, though, marriages between 1950 and 1974 were half within caste, half without. It may be that during this period the experience of settlement and starting afresh in a new place suspended caste consciousness to a large degree. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, the ‘shake up’ caused by colonisation had settled down, and marriages once again became caste conscious.

Marriage type	1900-1924	1925-1949	1950-1974	1975-1999	2000-2005
Same caste	100.0	83.1	52.3	89.0	85.2
Mixed caste	0.0	16.9	47.7	11.0	14.8
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=2)	(N=83)	(N=155)	(N=164)	(N=54)

Table 4. 9: *Suduwella* – Marriage, caste, and generational change, 1900 to 2005.
(Source: Author’s household survey)

At Kachchakaduwa (Table 4.10), and as might be expected in a village conscious of its caste heritage, marriages were strictly within-caste until the last quarter of the twentieth century. If these data are indicative of any kind of trend, it is for an increase in the number of such marriages taking place. Of course, the fact that caste endogamy remains stubbornly popular at Suduwella suggests the likelihood of any great transformation is unlikely.

Marriage type	1900-1924	1925-1949	1950-1974	1975-1999	2000-2005
Same caste	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.6	76.9
Mixed caste	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4	23.1
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=3)	(N=20)	(N=38)	(N=53)	(N=13)

Table 4. 10: *Kachchakaduwa* – Marriage, caste, and generational change, 1900 to 2005.
(Source: Author’s household survey)

Proposal marriage, love marriage, and caste

If mixed-caste marriages are taking place, it would more normally be expected to occur in the case of love marriage, and elopements especially. Significantly, at Suduwella (Table 4.11) both proposal marriages and love marriages are associated with mixed-caste marriages. Indeed, the general pattern appears to have been the *opposite* of what might be expected: in the first half of the twentieth century, mixed-caste marriages were contracted following formal proposals, but in the latter half following love marriage. Parents seem to have been willing to contract mixed caste marriages for their children.

Marriage type	1900-1924	1925-1949	1950-1974	1975-1999	2000-2005
Proposal – same caste	0.0	56.6	46.9	24.4	14.8
Love – same caste	100.0	26.5	44.4	65.2	70.4
Proposal – mixed caste	0.0	14.5	3.7	3.0	1.9
Love – mixed caste	0.0	2.4	4.9	7.3	13.0
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=2)	(N=83)	(N=155)	(N=164)	(N=54)

Table 4. 11: *Suduwella* – Proposal marriage, love marriage, and caste, 1900 to 2005.
(Source: Author’s household survey)

At Kachchakaduwa (Table 4.12), mixed-caste marriages have only taken place in the context of love marriage, suggesting that parents had little or no input into the decision over partners in such marriages. This provides further evidence for the idea that *Suduwella* is more relaxed about caste, and Kachchakaduwa more serious.

Marriage type	1900-1924	1925-1949	1950-1974	1975-1999	2000-2005
Proposal – same caste	66.7	75.0	73.7	26.4	30.8
Love – same caste	33.3	25.0	26.3	64.2	46.2
Proposal – mixed caste	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Love – mixed caste	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4	23.1
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=3)	(N=20)	(N=38)	(N=53)	(N=13)

Table 4. 12: *Kachchakaduwa* – Proposal marriage, love marriage, and caste, 1900 to 2005.
(Source: Author’s household survey)

Separation and divorce

Problems in marriage that lead to separation and divorce form a large part of my discussion in later chapters, so here I will only look at general patterns. First, it must be said that if asking about kinds of marriage that people had was difficult, trying to establish if individuals had been previously married was impossible. Just one woman

volunteered such information, claiming to have been remarried following a divorce from her drunk and violent first husband. Through third parties I learnt about a handful of other cases, most of which occurred in the context of the death of a first spouse. A superficial reading of my household data would, then, lead to the conclusion that separation and divorce were very rare. In support of this, data presented for marriage patterns in the Puttalam District in Chapter 3.2 suggests very low rates of separation and divorce, although alongside very high rates of self-harm/suicide attempt amongst separated or divorced individuals. Thus, separation and divorce appears to be both controversial and highly problematic.

At Pul Eliya, and perhaps in Madampe in the not-so-distant past, marriages were often or largely informal, with separation amounting to the cessation of the sharing of food between a man and a woman (Leach 1961). Today, however, all marriages are registered and all but elopements include highly publicised and expensive wedding parties (see Chapter 7.2). It follows that separation is not only more difficult in practical terms, but in social terms also. Expected and usually compelled whatever the circumstances to remain together, the routes out of a marriage for men or women are very few. It is perhaps easier for a man to leave home and set up elsewhere because he usually has an independent income, although some do not wish to give up their house (if it is theirs), nor custody of the children (even though women are considered natural caregivers and generally keep the children). Women find it very difficult to leave home due to a lack of financial independence and the struggle to balance child-care and employment duties respectively. Given the shame associated with separation, few parents are prepared to accept daughters back home. They are, however, more likely to take in grandchildren.

The number of marriages that end in formal divorce is very low. Separated men and women may cohabit with another partner, but it is unlikely they will hold any kind of marriage ceremony to mark their union. As such, many separations take place through other means. International labour migration and suicide are perhaps one of the most popular. I will return to this in Chapter 7.4.

4.4. Kinship and the household (*gē*)

In this section I will introduce the primary locus of social interaction in which I am interested, and, as it will be shown, the central concern in people's lives. There is no doubt that despite processes of modernisation, industrialisation, and globalisation, kinship remains the principle means by which Madampe people create and value their selves and the economic and social relationships that shape them and exist around them. This is even though – and perhaps because of the fact that – very few people live in communities wherein the majority of residents consider themselves to be relatives (*nādayō*). Beyond the immediate nuclear unit (*gē*), the majority of significant relationships between people take the form of platonic friendships, romantic relationships, and economic relationships. That being said, all of these relationships demonstrate significant ideological characteristics that are directly 'borrowed' from, or at least strongly reminiscent of, *gē* and kin (*nāyō*) relationships. This is especially so in relation to the kinds of moral regulation that such relationships, like 'true' kin relationships, are supposed to endow.

Morality of kinship

The morality of kinship has been variously defined in terms such as 'prescriptive altruism' (Fortes 1969, 1978, 1983) and 'generalised reciprocity' (Sahlins 1965). Kin relationships, unlike other kinds of relationship, are supposed to be characterised by a fundamental morality of "sharing" without "reckoning" (Fortes 1969: 238 cited by Bloch 1973: 76). Although there can be no question that many kin relationships 'fail' in this regard, the fact that psychologists since Freud have routinely focused upon problematic familial relationships as the root of psychopathology signals the importance of such relationships to people's wellbeing (Gilbert 1992: 74; Holmes 1993).

In Madampe too, kinship is spoken about as an enduring and indeed seemingly inevitable relationship that is definable in moral terms. Moreover, the separation of kin and the failure of kinship to 'live up to' its own moral standard is routinely associated with social and psychological problems (see Chapter 7.4-7.6). Expectations of kinship are also extended to non-kin relationships, which are idealised as being 'like kinship.' Close friends are expressly referred to using terms of siblingship or kinship; for example, males refer to their good friends as *machang*, the informal term for *massinā* (brother-in-law/cross-cousin). Such labelling is meant to convey kinds of moral obligation associated with the *massinā* kin relationship (see Chapter 5.3). Romantic relationships are built upon joking relationships and an 'expectation' to marry very similar to those between cross-cousins. As such, young men refer to women they might fancy as *nāna* (female cross-cousin), a relative with whom they customarily have a right to marry. Economic relationships are preferred when they are contracted through kinship or on the grounds of

friendship, and so are mediated by the 'generalised reciprocity' implied by kinship.

Yet despite the reputed moral equivalence of kinship and other interpersonal relationships, only certain kinds of relationship are truly regulated by kin morality and assumed to be inevitable. Bloch (1973) has suggested that the level of inequality – or apparent absence of reciprocity – within a relationship acts as a barometer for how 'moral' a relationship actually is. Relationships that are characterised by a high degree of 'take' by one party may be assumed to be based upon morality, while relationships defined by immediate reciprocity may be assumed to be lacking morality. In Madampe, relationships that constitute the *gē* are regarded as highly moral as are, under certain conditions, some extended consanguineal and affinal links. On the other hand, even close friendships and long term business relationships are recognised as being un-inevitable and thus reciprocally 'short-term.' The exception are romantic relationships, which amongst Madampe youth are viewed in terms of a belief in *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari* (one life, one love) and thus explicitly considered to be inevitable. Indeed, a declaration of love is tantamount to a marriage proposal and in this sense stands as the first step towards a formal recognition of the spousal relationship (see Chapter 6.1).

Sinhalese kinship as a tradition and a practice

The Sinhalese kinship system is related to the Dravidian type of South India. Within Sri Lanka, the 'Kandyan' kinship system is considered by most authorities as the best example of it, because the Kandyan region of the island was colonised for the least number of years. Nevertheless, a good deal of variation exists even within that system, to

the extent that village studies conducted a few miles apart exposed differences of practice and opinion between them (Robinson 1968; Stirrat 1977). Similarly, kinship structures and terminologies vary across the island. At Ambakandawila, Stirrat (1977) found a distinctly non-Dravidian type that the villagers themselves thought was 'wrong,' when compared with the 'normative' (Kandyan) type. In Madampe, however, and certainly Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, the kinship system is recognisably Dravidian. On the other hand, divergences from the normative type can be identified both between and within different communities.

Yalman (1967: 279) made a rough sketch of what he called the 'Low Country kinship system,' of which the Madampe system is also an example:

In Sinhalese kinship [in the Kandyan region], we may observe the most general theme of South Indian kinship systems stripped of all structural embellishments: in the ordinary system of the commoners we are dealing mainly with a system of abstract 'categories' which order social relations in the most general sense. Descent concepts are not stressed; the choice of locality is theoretically open; inheritance is equally divided among sons and daughters; authority depends on the head of the household and can be exercised by the [mother's brother] or even the [father-in-law]; dowry is not emphasized, but bride-wealth is disapproved. What stands out is the insistence on cross-cousin marriage and on a small circle of endogamy—that is, micro-castes in the form of *pavula* or *variga*.

This pattern, which I call the general structure, can be contrasted to that of the Low Country, where...we are not in the presence of unilineal property holding kin

groups but where there is a definite formulation of patrilineal ideals. There is a lively concept of 'family honour' which appears mainly linked to groups whose unity is expressed by their attachment to the patronymic. This is still a far cry from the patrilineal corporations...[of] South India...but we can regard it—for purposes of system building—as a stage between the patrilineal systems and the ordinary Sinhalese system...

In the Kandyan system, kin relationships were defined within a strictly endogamous sub-caste group, the *variga*, according to relationships between groupings of *gē*, the *pavula* (Leach 1961; Tambiah 1965; Yalman 1967). *Pavula* themselves were created through any manner of bilateral relationships that shifted and changed according to the utilitarian needs of *gē*. Within this, relationships between *massinā* (male cross-cousins, wives' brothers, sisters' husbands) were considered to be the most important, and relationships between brothers the least important. According to Leach (ibid) this was because relationships between brothers were regulated by a strict code of age seniority, and were also troubled by disputes over land inheritance. By contrast, relationships between *massinā* were egalitarian in nature and untroubled by inheritance issues.

Grounds of cooperation between kin

The specific kin with whom ego relates is determined by whether states of economic contest or worthwhile association exist between them (Leach 1961). Individuals are interested in whether they will be in competition with one another, whether one party is likely to beg for favours from the other, and ultimately if both parties are likely to gain

from a relationship. Brothers that stand to inherit land and wealth often find themselves in dispute and as a result do not associate in any area of life. When inheritance between brothers is enough to suit their needs, however, disputes will not arise and they might actually associate in further economic and social activities.

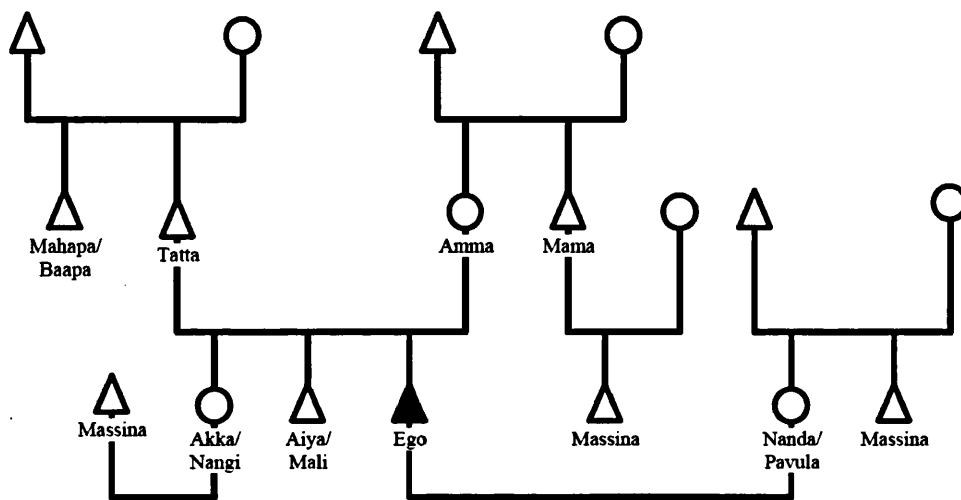


Figure 4.4: Male ego and his bilateral kin group of older/younger brothers (*ayiyā /mallī*), wife's (*nanda/pavula*) brother, older/younger sister's (*akka/nangi*) husband, male cross-cousin (*massinā*), father's older/younger brothers (*māhapa/bāppa*), and mother's brother (*māmā*).

For brothers in dispute, key relationships are usually formed with other consanguines and affines, as with them no competition over inheritance exists. But these individuals will only normally associate when it is economically advantageous for them to do so: that is, when relationships are likely to be mutually beneficial. However, the vast majority of brothers do not find themselves in dispute characteristic of the Kandyan system. And when brothers are not in competition, they often prefer to associate amongst themselves and other cognates, as this way the fruits of their collective endeavours accrue within the patrilineage. My landlord cooperated with his brother on various economic ventures, and

when I asked why their relationship was as good as it appeared, he quipped: ‘Because we have no land to quarrel over!’ This strategy is particularly important in the contemporary period because the traditional means by which a patrilineage wins back land and assets in subsequent generations – cross-cousin marriage – has all but disappeared (see Chapter 6.2).

Extended kinship networks

The differential status of land as an asset at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa shines through onto how people within each community perceive kinship. At both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa it is never the case that *gē* always assume they can, let alone will, associate with bilateral kin. At Suduwella this may be the result of the colonisation process, which alienated individuals from natal villages and thrust them into a community of unrelated *gē*. At Kachchakaduwa this is almost certainly the result of landlessness and engagement within a waged economy in which ideologies of meritocracy are becoming increasingly important. In any case, the starting point for most people is the patrilineal *paramparā*, formed by clusters of *gē* that share the same *vāsagama*. The formal translation of the term *paramparā* is ‘ancestor,’ and it is significant that in Madampe this term is also used to identify specific living relatives. The term stresses the lineal nature of kin identity, as opposed to the bilaterality of Kandyan *variga* (c.f. Gamburd 1979; Obeyesekere 1967, 1984; Yalman 1967)

Beyond the *vāsagama* line, *paramparā* may also incorporate affines such as *massinā* and also the *gē* of the mother’s brother (*māmā*). However, these relationships are not considered inevitable and only obtain significance if they offer some kind of material

or social benefit (see Chapter 5.3). Only *gē* of equal material and social status refer to themselves as *paramparā* and so benefit from the forms of support they offer. But at the same time, *paramparā* are highly informal groupings that exist only so long as individual members are happy to exist in relationships of reciprocity with one another. In most cases, they contain no more than five or ten *gē*. Other relatives may compete for relationships with the *gē* with whom ego has relationships. Because resources are not unlimited, *gē* must decide with whom they wish to associate and who they will ignore. In this sense, *paramparā* exemplify the utilitarianism of Sinhalese kinship in the short term.

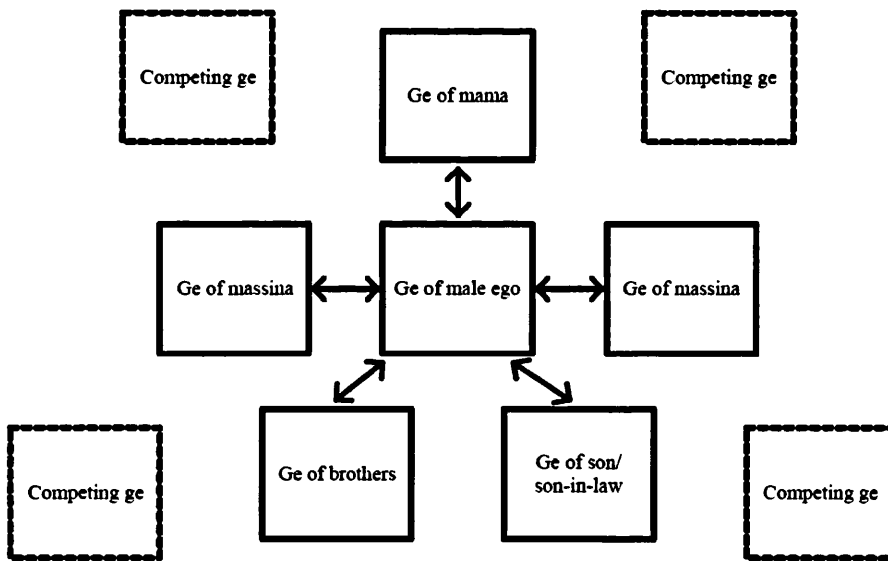


Figure 4.5: *Paramparā* of male ego who cooperates with brothers and bilateral kin. In the Kandyan system the *gē* of brothers might normally be excluded, with *gē* of *massinā* considered the more important. In Madampe, ego may prefer to cooperate with brothers and certain other patrilineal kin only.

The complexities of *paramparā* as a system of relationships and social status – but incidentally why *paramparā* are best *not* understood as a sub-caste – are clearly illustrated by its various manifestations amongst the Herath Mudiyansele of

Kachchakaduwa. Because of their mythic origins, H.M. people tend to think of themselves as rather superior to other Kachchakaduwa people, including other *goyigama*, and identify themselves as forming a single *paramparā*. But at this level of discourse, ‘the H.M. *paramparā*’ is an ideological description only, and it is far from the case that all H.M. people associate or cooperate or form an ‘effective’ *paramparā* (c.f. Leach’s description of the effective *pavula* and sub-caste at Pul Eliya, 1961: 106-107).

Despite their ideology of shared ancestry, H.M. people do not associate on equal grounds and large socio-economic differences exist between them. In fact, at least two quasi-effective H.M. *paramparā* exist in Kachchakaduwa. The two H.M. *paramparā* have been created by unequal claims to the H.M. *vāsagama* itself, alongside differential levels of ownership of Kachchakaduwa lands, occupational wealth, and positions within local government.

All H.M. people resident at Kachchakaduwa are descended from two male cross cousins: H.M. Dingiri Banda and H.M. Tikiri Banda, who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century (Figure 4.6). Only Dingiri Banda was H.M. by agnatic descent, while Tikiri Banda was a sisters’ son adopted by the H.M. Kachchakaduwa by the mother’s brother when the mother died. As an adopted child, Tikiri Banda apparently received a smaller inheritance of Kachchakaduwa lands than Dingiri Banda, and the respective children and grandchildren of these men have been unfriendly ever since. While the descendants of Dingiri Banda inherited ample lands, the ancestors of Tikiri Banda have been forced to squabble over his more limited share. As a result, two distinct H.M. patrilineages emerged and these have never intermarried and never cooperated.

Even at this level the *paramparā* is an ideological description only. Amongst

H.M. Tikiri Banda's sons and daughters, continued disputes over land have meant that individual *gē* do not recognise each other as kin in any practical sense. Tikiri Banda's three sons – Gunarathna, Piyathilaka, and Gunathilaka – were for several decades locked into violent battles over an acre of their father's land that allegedly resulted in two attempts on Piyathilaka's life and a final deadly sorcery attack in the summer of 2004. Piyathilaka's wife and children accused Gunarathna and Gunathilaka of sponsoring the attack, an allegation that seemed for many Kachchakaduwa people to have some truth when neither brother attended Piyathilaka's funeral. Due to Piyathilaka's poverty and the relative wealth of his wife's brothers, Piyathilaka had been unable to create more than the simplest association with his *massinā*. As a consequence, Piyathilaka's *gē* was 'nucleated' to an extreme degree. Reflecting upon this, Nalin, his son, complained: 'I know that I cannot depend upon my relatives for anything. I have to do things on my own.'

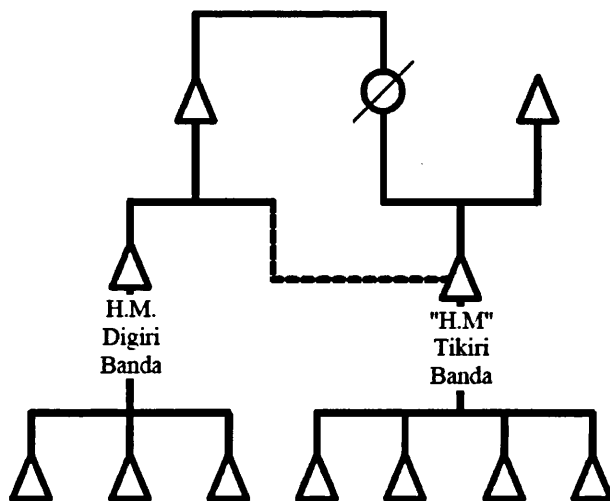


Figure 4.6: Patrilineage of H.M. Dingiri Banda and H.M. Tikiri Banda. Disputes over the H.M. *vāsagama* and rights to land have meant that not only do the two lineages not call each other *paramparā* but brothers within each lineage do not associate. In this case, individual *gē* form *paramparā* with *massinā*.

At Suduwella, a similar emphasis is placed upon patrilineal and patrilateral aspects of kinship. But while Kachchakaduwa H.M. share deep ancestral roots that have fragmented into separate socio-economic lineages in the present, the colonisation process of Suduwella meant that almost all *gē* in the community were originally unrelated to all the others. Only over the past few generations have locally-based *paramparā* been able to form, as the sons and daughters of Suduwella *gē* started to marry. Two *goyigama* Buddhist lineages in particular, the Gunathilaka Siriwardena and the Weliyakadi Arachchige Don, have exchanged children. In fact, the pattern has been for G.S. sons to marry W.A.D. daughters (Figure 4.7). The result has been the expansion of Suduwella plots within the G.S. lineage from one at time of colonisation to more than ten today. As a result, all *gē* of G.S. people are of similar socio-economic standing (*tattvaya*) and together with their W.A.D. *massinā* say they form a single *paramparā*. Ironically, then, *paramparā* at 'modern' Suduwella resemble bilateral kin groups similar to the 'traditional' Kandyan *variga*.

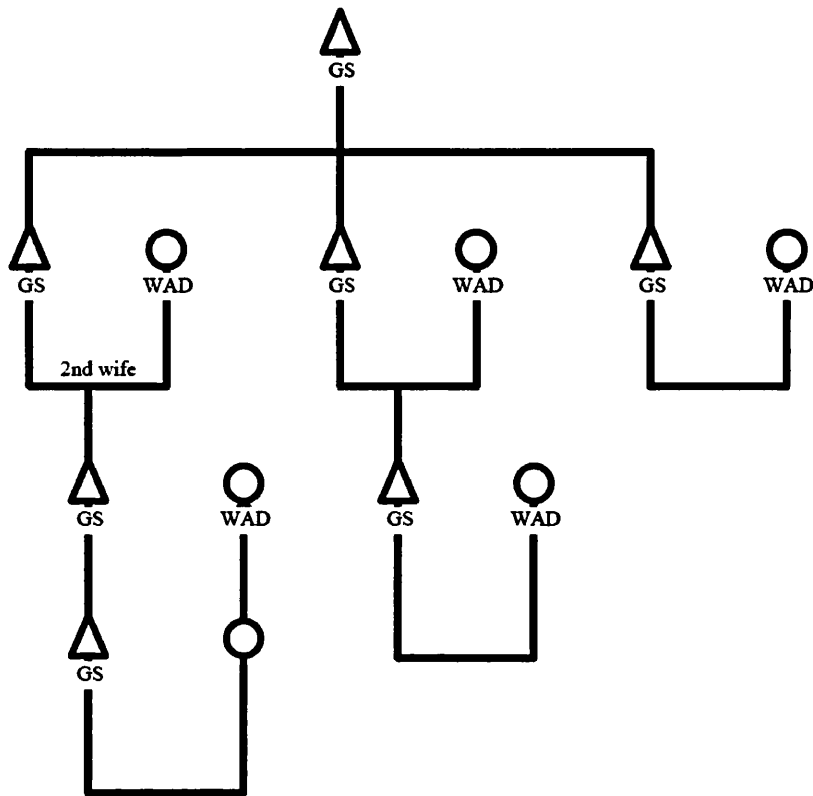


Figure 4.7: Marriages between G.S. brothers and W.A.D. sisters (second generation Suduwella residents) and G.S.-W.A.D. cross-cousins (third generation residents) have created a *paramparā* between unrelated Suduwella colonists (G.S. and W.A.D. first generation settlers). Relative wealth in land means that both brothers and *massinā* are keen to cooperate. I will return to their story in Chapter 7.1.

Gē and the morality of kinship

The core unit of the Sinhalese kinship system in Madampe fits the bourgeois type: a nuclear unit (*gē*) formed by a formal marriage contract and composing of husband, wife, and their biological or adopted children (Stirrat 1988). It is to this unit that all kinship ultimately leads, and moral demands emanate. Within the *gē*, men hold duty (*kāriya*) as ‘wage-earner’ and ‘law-maker,’ while women hold *kāriya* as ‘wage-manager’ and ‘law-enforcer.’ In addition, and most importantly, women as wives and mothers are assumed to ‘nurture’ *gē* through ‘mother’s love’ (*ammāgē ardari*). Thus, fathers are regarded as

being emotionally distant from their children, whilst women are seen to be engaged with their development on an everyday basis (Obeyesekere 1984). Children are considered inferior to fathers and mothers, and between themselves older siblings are superior to younger siblings, and brothers to sisters.

Formation and structure of gē

In the following discussion I will give what is best described as a mostly normative account of the *gē* and the gender roles – including the gendered division of labour – upon which it is supposed to be based. It is a model that most men in Madampe would accept and aspire towards, but most women would reject and in practice contradict on an almost daily basis. In the words of one female informant: ‘Our men are lazy so we have to do all the housework, and also find a job because they cannot earn enough.’ Moreover, the practice of being a housewife bestows women with a great deal of power within the domestic realm that in fact provides a constant source of challenge to patriarchy.

Gē are formed by the marriage of one man to one woman who then establish a household of their own. Married couples that remain resident in a natal home (*māhagedara*) are assumed to form a part of that existing *gē*. If a newly married couple remain in a natal home, the status of husband vis-à-vis wives and affines depends upon whether they settled patrilocally (what Sinhalese call *dīga* marriage) or matrilocally (*binna* marriage). People say that a *dīga* marriage is preferential for a husband, as he is not so easily held to account by his wife or her relatives (although this expectation depends upon his material and social status vis-à-vis potential *paramparā*). On the other hand, men who settle in *binna* may ultimately reap some benefit as daughters that remain at

home to care for their parents usually inherit the *māha gedara*. Finally, the terms *dīga* and *binna* are also used when couples establish their own *gē* but settle on parents' land or in the natal village. In this case, the negative connotations of *binna* for men are not so great, although they are still assumed to suffer from the distance from their own kin.

Upon formation of *gē*, husbands and wives come to owe different kinds of duty (*kāriya*) with respect to each other, and to each other's kin. The kinds of *kāriya* expected of and by husbands and wives are substantially the same regardless of whether a marriage was contracted following a proposal or a romantic relationship. However, the kind of marriage can have a direct impact upon the nature of relationships men and women expect to have with both consanguineal and affinal kin. Some love marriages result in absolute financial and social isolation from parents and other family members if one or both families do not agree with the union. In such cases, which usually involve elopement, the relationship between husbands and wives can be adversely affected by the resulting isolation and, often, poverty.

Marriage and duty

All marriages struggle with the transition from unmarried to married life. Prior to marriage, men and women owe *kāriya* to their parents, siblings, and other kin. In practice, unmarried men submit to the will of parents, especially father (*taatta*), his brothers (*māhapa* and *bāppa*), and the mother's brother (*māmā*). A cardinal rule is that men should never risk bringing blame (*baṇina*) and shame (*lājja*) upon the *vāsagama* or *paramparā* through bad behaviour. Everyday *kāriya* are, however, somewhat sparse. In fact, sons are usually encouraged to focus more on their own career development than the

everyday wellbeing of the *gē* or other relatives.

Upon marriage, the *kāriya* of men extend considerably so that the bulk of their time and money is spent creating and maintaining the *gē* for wives and, later, children. In addition, men come to hold *kāriya* to *massinā* (both wife's brothers and sister's husbands) and *paramparā*. The consequence is an effective limitation of the social freedoms once enjoyed. If the couple at first settle with parents, the husband's primary objective is to buy some land and build a house, or build a house on existing land. Men's next objective is to equip the house with furniture and other household items. When a couple settle in *dīga* the husband, although under pressure from his wife, will find this a less trying task than men who settle in *binna*. In the case of the latter, wives' parents and other relatives put pressure on men to provide a proper residence with modern conveniences.

Unmarried women, on the other hand, are closely involved with the everyday maintenance of the *gē*, to the point of having very little time for their own career development or leisure interests. Unmarried women rarely socialise with contemporaries outside of school hours, and upon graduation their chances of meeting friends reduce practically to zero. Women who transgress this expectation are also blamed, and quite severely. Although women who subsequently marry in *dīga* are likely to find the transition to married life more problematic than those who marry in *binna*, for both few new responsibilities emerge. Problems stem rather from the appropriation of time between husband, parents, and affines. When married in *dīga*, the care that women provide for parents is transferred to husbands and affines, including the mother-in-law. Women in Madampe claim this relationship to be particularly difficult. But when married in *binna*, women split their time between husband, parents, and consanguines.

Thus, upon marriage men's freedoms become limited but women's *kāriya* remain quantitatively the same. However, upon motherhood wives' *kāriya* transform somewhat dramatically. Within the normative model, the women's place is considered to be within the home: the domestic space is the primary locus of child rearing and moral education, and women, seen as natural care-givers, rule it. Because of this, wives-as-mothers come to exert a power over husbands that outside the *gē* women do not exert over men. In particular, wives may legitimately control all financial resources. If men are wage-earners, women become wage-managers. When any money arrives in the household it is assumed that mothers will spend it on her family as she sees fit (Stirrat 1989a). This often leads to conflict between husbands and wives. As I will explore in chapter 7.2, men require money to accomplish their role as wage-earner, and a significant portion of their expenditure goes to funding drinking parties.

4.5. Kinship, class, and personhood

Due to increasing importance of class-based evaluations of social status, people in Madampe cannot simply rely on their good *vāsagama* or *paramparā* for moral standing. Instead, they must prove good personhood or 'character' through their own deeds, and through the kinds of relationships they have. But at the same time, misdeeds and relationships with persons of a bad character reflect poorly upon an individual's relatives. People in Madampe are thus careful who they call friend (*yaaluva*), and who they chose to ignore.

Upon meeting people for the first time, individuals in Madampe habitually place

new acquaintances in certain moral boxes. The character of others and the box within which they are placed is judged by both proven behaviour, past or present, and that which is gossiped about or merely suspected. Such behaviour, gossip, and speculation are subject to a moral assessment and the total of that behaviour, the resulting character, is deemed moral or immoral.

No one in Madampe actually uses the terms of moral and immoral to sum up – box – a person. Rather, they use terms like innocent (*ahinsakayi*) and simple (*sarala*) or cunning (*kupputi*), good (*hondayi*) or bad (*naraka*). ‘Good character’ in males is determined by honesty, simplicity, openness, and the absence of cunning. When people in Madampe box a male in this way, they will usually say something like ‘He is very good, very honest; he is not cunning.’ On the other hand, a good character in females is defined by the presence of innocence: a quality that can be defined as, for the unmarried, social and sexual naivety and, for all women, willing submission to the patriarch’s will. While in males a good – honest – character is often judged by the absence of undesirable qualities, in females it is judged by the presence of desirable qualities. This means that while males are assumed to have a good character until proven guilty, females are assumed to be deviant until proven innocent. The qualities that disprove a good character in males and prove a good character in females first stems from their assumed positions in society, as public and domestic actors respectively.

Honesty and masculinity

Men are expected to engage with the world in order to provide for their families. But due

to the nature of the material world, it is taken for granted that such obligations will inevitably require them to compromise their honesty, for example when seeking to build their economic or political capital. The fact that men are expected to provide for their families and so endanger their characters does provide a margin of error for forgiveness, and so the benchmark upon which dishonesty is shown is set fairly high. Men whose activities exceed the accepted limit of dishonest behaviour usually engage in some kind of activity that compensates for it, and thus helps them to retain their honest characters.

One of the most popular ways in which men who by profession are assumed to be habitual transgressors of honesty might absolve their crimes is to invest in nationalistic or religious community development programmes. The pinnacle of such behaviour has been reached by the Chairman of Ceylinco Consolidated, Sri Lanka's largest private company – and so largest organisation that 'corrupts' Sinhalese Buddhist *sanskritiya* – Dr Lalith Kotelawala. A discussion of the activities that Kotelawala engages with, while being something of a digression, does provide a clear example of the procedures men must go through in order to keep their good name.

Kotelawala has made significant contributions to community development by establishing the island's first micro-credit scheme. Although the programme clearly has been established to improve the lives of those it reaches, the manner in which the scheme is publicised leaves little doubt that other intentions lie behind it. It is not apparently enough simply to help the poor and needy, as the company actively sells its commitment to corporate social responsibility²² – corporate honesty – to the population at large, through an extravagant media campaign. The company has created its own media

²² See http://www.ceylincoconsolidated.com/social_responsibility.html

production unit that specialises in documenting all aspects of the micro-credit scheme.

The programmes made range from studio interviews with the Chairman through to location visits with those he helped, and coverage of the ceremonies during which financial awards are given to local people. These are broadcast as bulletins on national television at 6.45 pm weekdays, coinciding with peak viewing time. In keeping with all development events in Sri Lanka (Spencer n.d.; Tennekoon 1988), the decoration and theme of the award ceremonies is clearly meant to show that it is the Sinhalese Buddhist nation that is being developed. (Although this does not always detract critics from pointing out the Chairman himself is Christian.) In addition to these activities, the company funds high profile 'rescue trips' to Middle Eastern countries where housemaids have been left stranded by war and expired visas, or hospitalised by violence committed against them. Given the massive unpopularity of migration coupled with the widespread belief that the government abandons housemaids to a cruel fate, such activity only serves to increase the honest image of Ceylinco and its Chairman.²³

Similar endeavours are repeated by businessmen in Madampe. Kapila, 36, lived at Mugunawatuwana with his wife and two children. Kapila worked for an employment agency that recruited housemaids to work in the Middle East. Kapila made a good living from his work, and had been able to purchase several acres of land upon which he built a large house, kept chickens, and cultivated some crops. However, Kapila had never been easy with his employment, and frequently expressed dissatisfaction with it. He was highly aware of the dishonest and immoral connotations that it had, and, what was more,

²³ Endeavours which in early 2009 came crashing down, when Kotelawala and eleven Ceylinco directors were accused of financial fraud amounting to more than LKR 15 billion. See: <http://sundaytimes.lk/090111/FinancialTimes/ft321.html> (accessed 29 June 2009)

had become afraid that some elements of it pose a risk to the safety of his family.

The market in false documentation and people smuggling is a significant one, and Kapila was dabbling at least around the edges of it. Although this brought him significant economic benefits, it did require him to bribe the local police and associate with members of criminal gangs. More than once he expressed a fear that things could get out of hand, and was worried that the going rate for the assassination of men of his standing (*tattvaya*) was a mere LKR 10,000 (£50). Although there was no reason to think a bounty was on Kapila's head at that time, just one foul deal or run-in with the law could give a business associate or rival a reason to do away with him. 'It would be very easy,' Kapila told me, clearly enjoying the drama. 'Some men would come at night and ask to speak to me for a minute, away from the house. Then all they would do is shoot me!'

An everyday danger that Kapila faced was village disapproval of his business activities. Neighbours were likely to find his involvement in the migration economy – both as a man who was responsible for sending women overseas and as a man who bribed the police – deeply unacceptable, and his financial success a cause for jealousy (*irisiyāva*). Although direct violence was unlikely to result, Kapila was clearly worried that he could be ostracised from the community, or his wife and children made to suffer. For these reasons, Kapila invested a part of his wealth in village development projects and helped fund annual national and religious celebrations, such as the *Alut Aruduru* (Sinhalese New Year), *Wesak* (May full moon), and *Poson* (June full moon) festivals. While not all villagers would find such gestures appeasing, they were probably compensation enough for most people. Kapila's honest character was threatened because he was assumed responsible for endangering the nation through his role in sending

women abroad, but he was also praised for his protection of Sinhalese Buddhist *sanskritiya*. Thus, a de-meritorious (*pau*) and dishonest occupation was counterbalanced by meritorious (*pin*) and honest spending.

Not all men engage in such morally dubious, and do not have to go to such lengths to counterbalance their de-meritorious or dishonest actions. Nevertheless, the underlying principle for them remains the same. Men are assumed to be honest so long as they do not exceed ‘acceptable’ levels of immoral or illegal behaviour. On an everyday basis, the most important of these include the consumption of alcohol and the cunning (*kupputi*) obtaining of favours or money from people without due reciprocation or compensation.

In Madampe, the phrase *data gallonnavā* (extracting teeth) refers to the act of taking advantage of someone’s good nature for financial gain. Because of their innocence, even the most painful negative transaction goes unnoticed by the victim: it is therefore the worst kind of immoral behaviour. Its bite is made worse by the fact that the cheat involved duplicity: those who have their ‘teeth extracted’ have not only lost money but face, too. They were duped, but never realised it. I was often warned, due to my foreign naivety, that teeth extractors ‘come as your friend’ (*oyagē yaaluva ena aya*; I enjoyed the Goodfellas ring of this!), and for this reason I would not notice them. As the analogy suggests, good dental surgeons cause you no immediate pain but can have lasting effects.

Even long-time residents of Madampe rarely feel safe from the threat of dentists. All strangers are viewed warily for this reason, and kin (beyond the *gē*) and friends are always seen as potential teeth extractors. A ritual that most people go through when

meeting someone new is to ask them of their native village, from where they proceed to name individuals in the area they might both know. I was often surprised by the number of times that through the complexities of kinship people did in fact find out that they had a friend or business associate in common. The importance of this process of seeking out shared references was the assumption that if 'so-and-so' is good enough for my 'who-ever,' he or she is good enough for me. Nevertheless, a good or even bad character is never a sure thing, and through new knowledge or village gossip, a person can be re-boxed accordingly. Trusted friends may turn out to be cunning, and strangers over time may prove themselves to be innocent.

Innocence and femininity

In contrast to men, women are expected to remain within the home and 'protect it' using the resources supplied by her father (when unmarried) or husband (when married). One of the surest ways that a woman can fail to prove her innocent character is by engaging with the public world through employment in any way except that which is expected by her family (for example working on the family farm or store), or in one of the caring or teaching professions. Married women are barred from public engagement because it is assumed to detract from domestic responsibilities, while unmarried women are barred because it demonstrates a social (and by implication sexual) confidence unbecoming of a female. As such, the quality of innocence is proved through due regard to constrictions of shame (*läjja*), primarily as a social actor but also as a sexual being.

Unmarried women who fail to exhibit fear of shame (*läjja baya*) in behaviour,

speech, or fashions are dismissed by men as 'Colombo girls,' assumed to be sexually 'open,' and likely to commit adultery. Similarly, women that work in garment factories are known as 'garment girls,' and identified by their modern dress, hairstyles, and exhibitions of jewellery (Lynch 2002). In addition to the fact these women work for a living, they are negatively valued because people say they must offer sex to the factory manager in return for a job, and that by commuting home from work after dark they expose themselves to the risk of rape. Incredibly, these are not accusations that all garment factory managers – all of whom were male in Madampe – necessarily try to disprove. I recall one particularly depressing evening at the local bar when one factory manager boasted to me about how many of 'his girls' he had slept with.

Conversely, unmarried women who do not display these qualities and so prove their innocence are praised by men as being 'village girls,' assumed to be virgins, and (less) likely to commit adultery. Village girls are identified by their manifest qualities of innocence. In their behaviour, village girls are characterised by a soft, submissive tone of voice and careful avoidance of eye contact. They appear to be painfully shy, and blush when in conversation with men. Village girls walk or take public transport (and then only in daylight), but never ride a bicycle or drive a motor vehicle. They also never drink alcohol. When they are not at school, class, or visiting relatives, village girls stay at home: they rarely visit friends, unless they happen to be neighbours. Village girls help their mothers with housework, and do not regularly play sport. In fashions, village girls wear knee-length skirts with high necks and covered shoulders. Their hair is long and straight, or occasionally tied into a ponytail or platted, and display only modest gold jewellery. In short, every aspect of their person is highly regulated to fit an ideal image of

the 'blushing virgin': a figure that combines social innocence and sexual naivety that is 'closed' to all but the right man.

The models of Colombo girl, garment girl, and village girl also express class and caste distinctions and prejudice. Colombo girls are the sophisticated, westernised, urban elite; garment girls the urban or rural working class; village girls the small-town and rural middle class. In behaviour, village girls are considered to be closest to that belonging to the agrarian past and least tainted by processes of social change that are said to have created Colombo girls and garment girls. In this way, and introducing one of the few spaces in which caste consciousness shines through onto individual behaviour, village girls are said to resemble good *goyigama* women, conscious of tradition and village ways. But the models, when stripped of their prejudicial bases, do reflect a real difference between kinds of young women that goes beyond a simple chauvinistic view. Young women are perfectly aware of how their gendered class status reflects real material differences in their lives, and the kinds of comportment such differences manifest or demand.

Nalika, 22, was the daughter of a working class Suduwella couple who had been employed in garment factories in the Middle East for several years. As a result Nalika had been able to buy land at Silva Gate and was planning to return overseas in order to earn money to build a house. Because her parents had never owned land and rented a house at Suduwella, employment had enabled Nalika to secure a more stable future. Like other garment girls, too, Nalika wore expensive jewellery and styled her hair in a fashionable way. But for Nalika these expressions of her class position and economic independence were consciously appropriated and meant to signal that she did not fear shame (*läjja-baya*

nææ). Nalika told me that she dismissed village girls and their painful shyness, and she thought them to be weak and unable to take charge of their own lives.

Despite Nalika's criticism of village girls, those I knew who resembled the model were no less conscious of how the image was a carefully constructed persona when required, and discarded when not. Like Nalika, village girls appropriated the model because it expressed their middle class background and ambitions in school and work. Indika, 27, was a graduate of the University of Colombo and member of the Kachchakaduwa H.M. *paramparā*. As a descendent of H.M. Tikiri Banda, she did not stand to inherit much of value and was orientated towards building a career in the public sector. Following graduation Indika struggled to find employment and toyed with the idea of working in a newly-opened garment factory. But having spent so long in education and belonging to a middle class family (in heritage and aspirations, if not contemporary financial status), Indika eventually decided against it. Indika told me that although she desperately needed the income, she did not want to be labelled as a garment girl because that could risk her future job applications, and even marriages.

4.6. Popular religion

Religious affiliation in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa reflects the caste constitution of each community (Table 4.13). Apart from a few recent Protestant converts, the Suduwella *goyigama* identify as Buddhist, while the KSD call themselves Roman Catholic. At Suduwella, and reflecting the number of mixed-caste marriages, twenty-three households contain married couples who report belonging to different religions. In nine cases the

husband is Buddhist and the wife Catholic, in two cases the husband Buddhist and wife Protestant, in six cases the husband Catholic and wife Buddhist, in two cases the husband Protestant and wife Buddhist, and in one the husband Hindu and wife Buddhist.

Religion	Suduwella	Kachchakaduwa
Buddhism	74.7	91.6
Roman Catholic	20.7	8.3
Protestant	3.9	-
Hinduism	0.5	0.2
Other	0.1	-
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=792)	(N=606)

Table 4. 13: Religious constitution of Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa in 2001.
(Source: Madampe AGA Office, 2004, unpublished)

In the scheme of things, inter-religious marriages are less controversial than mixed-caste marriages. This fact is due to various degrees of overlap in religious practice amongst adherents to the different religions, where Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Hindus recognise the existence and power of each others gods, saints, and demons (*yakku*) (and make them their own: Obeyesekere 1963) and partake in each others festivals and holy days. Of equal importance, however, is the degree to which people recognise the efficacy of deities, saints, and *yakku* in their own lives (Stirrat 1992). While Madampe Buddhists and Catholics turn to local deities and shrines in times of specific personal performance or need such as examinations or ill health, similar tactics only sometimes emerge – or, at least, are only considered especially useful – when faced with the bigger questions of economic or social success that necessarily involves one’s interaction with ‘the economy,’ ‘the government,’ or ‘the society’ writ large. But even in this space not everyone considers the supernatural to be of use. If problems exist at too grand a scale the local

deities are considered too weak to help, and special trips may be arranged to the 'super centres' (Stirrat 1984) of Sinhalese Buddhism and *sanskritiya*: places like Anuradhapura, the Kandy Dalada Maligava (Temple of the Tooth), and Kataragama. Of course, the practicality of visiting such faraway places reduces greatly the actual frequency at which they are turned to.

Beyond this, the extent to which supernatural rather than mundane causes of things are invoked depends largely upon the extent to which such problems are 'caught up,' so to speak, in the material relations of everyday life (Stirrat 1992). Throughout this chapter I have painted a picture of Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa that relates them in different ways to the economic and social history of the Madampe Division. Kachchakaduwa, a self-consciously *purana* village, is characterised by strong caste prejudices but a kinship system that is more-or-less patrilineal. Suduwella, by contrast, is less concerned with caste but has a firmer interest in bilaterality. Economically and politically, Kachchakaduwa people tend to be of higher status and 'market-orientated'; Suduwella people of lower status and 'socialist-orientated.' Put very crudely, Kachchakaduwa people tend to be more individualistic and Suduwella people tend to be more collectivistic.

These orientations shine through in their different approaches to religious practice. At Kachchakaduwa, the efficacy of deities and saints and the threat posed by *yakku* are considered less important than at Suduwella. Indeed, Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella people tend to resemble Stirrat's Ambakandawila and Pallansena people respectively. Stirrat (1992) suggests that amongst the Roman Catholic fishermen and women of Ambakandawila, material success depends upon the impersonal forces of the

sea, a degree of skill, and certain amounts of luck. The sale of fish – the duty of fishermen’s wives – is determined by the impersonality of the market, with the price of fish fluctuating according to the simple logic of supply and demand. Correspondingly, this-worldly success is considered to exist beyond the efficacy of saints; likewise, misfortune is unlikely to be the work of *yakku*. As such, fishermen and women do not turn to religion for good fortune in their material ventures. On the other hand, the importance of patronage for securing public and private sector employment in Pallansena emphasises the centrality of others’ agency in one’s own rise and fall in economic and social standing. Because of this, Pallansena people are deeply concerned with the work of saints and *yakku*, and religious practices are orientated to their devotion or placation accordingly.

At Kachchakaduwa, economic and social success depends upon involvement first in the unwieldy machines of public administration and the open market, and only secondly upon kin-patronage links. Thus, the fishermen’s uncontrollability of the sea is in this case found in the uncontrollability of the government and the global economy, and the use of deities and the threat of *yakku* pales into insignificance. This is even though, as at Pallansena, success in work and life is mediated through specific others. ‘That is why I am suffering,’ complained a middle-class informant, echoing the sentiments of many, who worked as a teacher and who suggested his job was being made hard by a lack of political will to implement better policies: ‘The politicians don’t care about the people.’ Reflecting this, the religious orientation of Kachchakaduwa people tends to be largely rational-ethical (what Obeyesekere [1979; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1984] and others [Malalagoda 1976: 205; Roberts 1997: 1020] have called ‘Protestant Buddhist’), aimed at

‘other-worldly’ gain and being largely non-superstitious.

But at Suduwella, where inheritance of land and employment in the factories are tied to the operation of kinship and political party affiliation, material success is related to the activities of other people and subsequently deities and *yakku*. This was immediately noticeable in the number of devil masks (*veshmuhunu*), carved representations of animals and *yakku*, which graced Suduwella doorways but were almost entirely absent from Kachchakaduwa. So too was it evident in the various protectionist observances and rituals in which Suduwella people engaged when building new homes and extensions to ward off the ‘evil eye’ (*ās vaha*), but again Kachchakaduwa people did not. For with the ties of extended kinship and worker solidarity came commitments to supporting those individuals and their *gē*: an obligation that Kachchakaduwa people, and especially the strongly unilineal Herath Mudiyansele, did not have.

Within these general orientations, of course, refuting cases can and do emerge. One such case concerns H.M. Piyathilaka, the second son of H.M. Tikiri Banda, who due to land shortages was locked into an on-going battle with his brothers. The feud was particularly strong between Piyathilaka and the elder brother, Gunarathna, and the youngest brother, Gunathilaka. As a result of the dispute, no members of their respective *gē* associated. Throughout the course of twenty years, Gunarathna and Gunathilaka made various alleged attempts at swindling Piyathilaka out of his inheritance. The tactics they are supposed to have employed were ones of intimidation and violence, culminating in at least two attempts on Piyathilaka’s life. In fear, in 1980 Piyathilaka sold his land to Gunathilaka and moved his family to Dankale, and then in 1984 back to the very southern slope of Kachchakaduwa at School Junction. In the summer of 2004 Piyathilaka suddenly

fell ill and died. Prior to this death, Piyathilaka claimed to have seen a ghost outside his house; a local white-magic practitioner also claimed to have witnessed a *holman* (apparition) in the same vicinity. In the last few weeks of life, Piyathilaka began to hear voices telling him it was 'time to come.' According to Piyathilaka's wife and children, no medical cause for his sudden death could be found. As such, and on the basis of the supernatural goings-on, they accused Gunarathna and/or Gunathilaka of using sorcery to kill their brother.

Finally, however, a great many 'causes of things' are located in the mundane world, and considered the work of neither supernatural agents nor impersonal human institutions. Both Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella people often directly blame personal misfortune on the selfish activities of kin, friends, colleagues, and neighbours. In this sense, ideas of duty (*kāriya*) and shame (*läjja*) are paramount. As will be seen in the next chapter, it is in this space that suicidal behaviour arises as a means by which such problem situations can be escaped or redressed.

4.7. Summary: social integration and disintegration in Madampe

In this wide-ranging chapter I have followed the effects of economic change since the nineteenth century on the social structures that define practice within two communities in the Madampe Division. Far from creating a uniformly modernised, individualised, and anomic population, 'old' and 'new' ways of organising and understanding one's place in the world have combined in sometimes surprising ways. Caste continues to hold sociological significance in marriage but seems to have reduced its influence (if ever it

did) over occupational success. This is more the case in the *purana* village of Kachchakaduwa, where not only marriage but residency patterns respect caste boundaries. In land-rich and lower class Suduwella, caste is less important for both, although still appears to regulate the majority of weddings nevertheless.

Parents in Madampe commonly lament (sometimes hypocritically) the rise in popularity of love marriage, and claim that it represents a diversion from older and more proper ways of doing things. But it is likely that from the end of the nineteenth century attitudes towards marriage hardened, as a certain embourgeoisement took hold. This moral disposition may itself be a reflection of concerns with the material significance of formal proposal marriage, and the importance of securing claims on land and obligations between *massinā* (as well as, it must be stressed, the impact of Protestant Buddhism amongst the middle classes since the late 1900s: Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988). More recently, the shift towards a more patrilineal system, at least at Kachchakaduwa, may have somewhat reduced the value of marriage in this regard, and thus validated love marriage. On the other hand, the continuing interest in bilaterality at Suduwella would appear to be at odds with the increase in love marriage also seen in that community. It may be that Suduwella youth are likelier to come into dispute with their parents over the way that marriage partners are chosen, who in turn would be expected to display a greater interest in proposal marriage as a means of ensuring the upkeep or expansion of their lands. In fact, data relating to marriage attitudes presented in Chapter 6.2 complicates this assumption. As it stands, then, further research is required in order to further untangle this issue.

With the stabilisation of *gē* as a unit bounded by the legal marriage contract,

'new' ways of being a spouse and parent developed. For individual men and women, these differences reflect through onto ideals and practices of personhood. Men and women may both suffer from shame, but while the former need only disprove a bad character the latter must constantly prove it. These expectations reflect class materiality as much as they reflect class prejudice. 'Garment girls,' unmarried working class women, may receive criticism from their middle class neighbours but actively nurture their image as a way of taking pride in their independence. Similarly, the middle class 'village girl' turns out to be a useful form of comportment for young women hoping to do well in education and their subsequent careers, just as men need to cultivate an image of honesty. Finally, religious practice in Madampe reflects its various material bases. In Suduwella, concerns with kinship and patronage orientate people towards a concern with the supernatural; in Kachchakaduwa, restricted kin networks and recognition of meritocracy lead them to question the efficacy of deities and demons in day-to-day life.

In the previous chapter it was seen how causes of suicidal behaviour amongst men revolve around 'occupational' problems and conflicts with spouses and other members of the *gē*; amongst women, disputes within the *gē*. Youth, meanwhile, commit suicidal behaviour in the context of romantic problems and romantic loss. When viewed in light of this chapter, it can be seen how those patterns, reflecting as they do less than 1,000 individuals living in the Madampe and wider Chilaw area, may stem from a myriad of different social contexts. Those contexts themselves are delicately related to divergent material conditions 'on the ground.' When men encounter occupational problems, women encounter disputes within the *gē*, or youth encounter romantic problems, to what extent can it be said these individuals are struggling with a sense of anomy caused by changing

notions of what it means to be a man, woman, or a young person in love, themselves shaped by 'fundamental forces'? The answer depends, I suggest, on the immediate relational contexts within which such questions arise, the particular histories of men, women, and youth, and their position within wider social structures from which they derive a social status that grants ability to act within given situations.

Social change may provide a starting point for understanding suicidal behaviour; it does not provide an answer. People in Madampe who share a geographical space nevertheless inhabit different social worlds: both today, and in the past. But who is to say that 'ancient' Kachchakaduwa, with its general orientation towards individualism, is any less integrative than 'modern' Suduwella, with its own brand of kin and political collectivism? A more useful question to ask is: How does an individual's position within the social structure of Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, a social status produced by history and its contemporary social consequences, make suicidal behaviour a functional response to certain kinds of problems? Over the next three chapters it is this question I will try to answer.

5.

Shame and the social functions of self-harm and self-inflicted death

In this chapter my aim is to explore the relational contexts within which acts of self-harm and self-inflicted death arise, and how they function as a means of redress. A particular emphasis will be placed upon understanding how certain kinds of kin relationship may be more likely to manifest suicidal responses when they encounter problems, as a consequence of their assumed inevitability and the relational power dynamics involved. The shifting political economic context of Madampe Division has reshaped and reformed normative rules that govern social life and in so doing the kinds of problems that trouble individuals and groups. Such rules differ internally to the Division and its communities according to their particular histories. It will be argued that when the moral basis of such relationships is brought into question, the likelihood of suicidal behaviour increases. The act of suicidal behaviour in turn stands as a reminder of the inevitability of sociality, and indeed as a denial of sociality. *Which* relationships are considered inevitable and thus how suicidal behaviours distribute within society depends upon the material basis of the kinship structure.

5.1. Relational context of suicidal behaviour

At both CMHC and MPS, 'social' causes of suicidal behaviour were highly gendered, and related to status positions within the *gē*. At CMHC, patients told about and clinicians probed for the relational context of self-harm, revealing what both consider problematic

relationships in Sinhalese kinship. Extracts from all patient histories that revealed relational contexts are listed in Appendix 5. Here, a statistical summary of such relationships will be presented, followed by a brief review of common problems.

Unmarried males and females

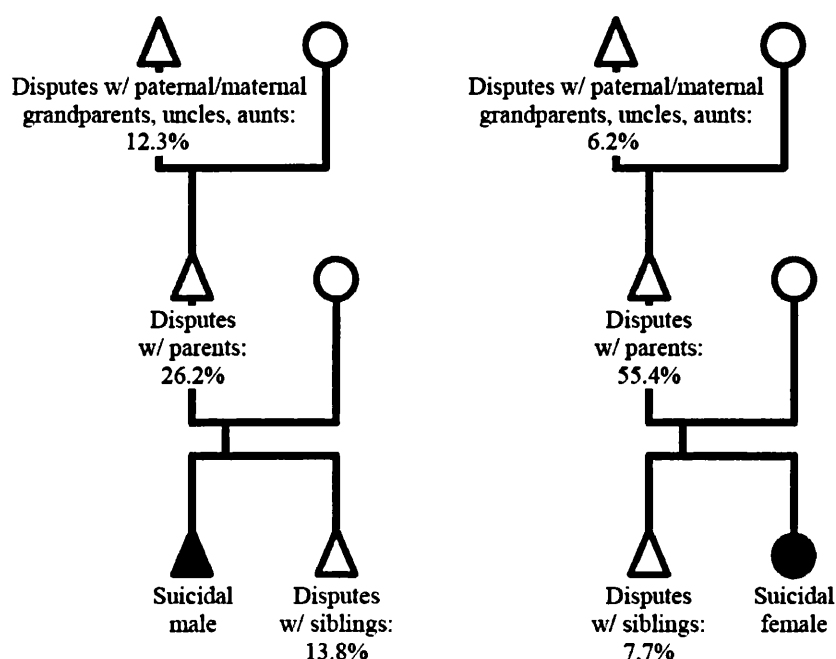


Figure 5.1: Relational context of self-harm amongst unmarried males ($N=65$) and females ($N=66$).
(Source: Data obtained from CMHC, January 2005 to June 2006)

Amongst unmarried patients presenting at CHMC (Figure 5.1), unmarried females were more likely to self-harm following disputes with parents than their male counterparts (55.4 per cent compared with 26.2 percent). On the other hand, unmarried males were slightly more likely to self-harm following disputes with older siblings (13.8 per cent compared with 7.7 per cent), and much more likely following disputes with older kin outside the *gē* (12.3 per cent compared with 6.2 per cent). Thus, while the problems

leading females to self-harm appeared to be limited within the *gē*, problems experienced by males extended beyond its borders.

Males

Amongst males, many issues revolved around disputes arising in the context of romantic love, and what I have called ‘occupational’ problems. One patient swallowed poison following the break-up of a love affair, a problem that was compounded by his own parents’ separation at the same time. Many others committed self-harm in the context of opposition to a relationship on behalf of parents and wider family members. Interestingly, in a few cases love affairs were between cross-cousins, a recognised form of marriage in ‘traditional’ models of Sinhalese kinship (Leach 1961; Tambiah 1965; Yalman 1967; also see Chapter 6.2).

Disputes with *older* siblings – the only form to lead to suicidal behaviour – arose in the context of joblessness: the suicidal individual committed self-harm after being ‘blamed’ for failing to find employment. In one case, a patient self-harmed following an argument with his older sister who he claimed forced him to give up school because of family poverty. Disputes with parents and other relatives arose for the same reasons. In two cases, disputes over land precipitated the act. The first followed a dispute with an older brother; the second when the patient discovered he was adopted and had no ownership claims.

Many cases arose in the context of more general disputes with parents, for example those concerning moral or behavioural regulation. One patient complained he always suffered from suicidal thoughts when arguing with family members; the incident

that led him to self-harm was with his mother. In another, the patient had self-harmed after being scolded by his mother for disobeying his grandfather. In a third, the patient swallowed poison after being told off from arriving home late from school.

In several cases the clinician recorded the cause of self-harm simply as being 'trivial issues.' For example, one patient was recorded as having self-harmed following arguments with a brother over a 'trivial issue,' and had subsequently come to feel unwanted. In this particular case the clinician noted that the act of self-harm was 'copy-cat,' in the sense the patient had recently witnessed another do the same.

Females

Unmarried females, on the other hand, appeared more compelled to self-harm in the context of disputes with parents over moral and affective problems. For example, one patient self-harmed after being scolded, via a letter, by her mother, who was working abroad. The mother had migrated following the breakdown of her marriage and the patient gone to live with her brother, who physically abused her. The patient subsequently went to live with her sister, to which the mother objected in her letter.

In several other cases patients self-harmed in the context of disputes with parents over love affairs. Several cases arose in the context of disputes between parents. In such cases patients appeared to be particularly allied with their mother, and commit self-harm following the mothers' abuse by husbands, apparently in a show of solidarity with their mothers. Similarly, daughters used self-harm as an attempt to affect reconciliation between disputing parents.

Married or separated males and females

Married men and women were equally and overwhelmingly likely to self-harm following disputes amongst themselves (79.5 per cent and 79.7 per cent respectively; Figure 5.2). Reflecting this, disputes with egos' own parents triggered self-harm in a tiny number of cases (4.4 per cent amongst males and 4.3 per cent amongst females), as did disputes with husbands' parents amongst married women (6.5 per cent). However, amongst married men disputes with wives' parents led to self-harm in double the number of cases than did disputes with the patients' own parents (8.8 per cent compared with 4.4 per cent). Similarly, disputes with wives' siblings – in most cases her brothers – led to self-harm in twice the number of cases than did disputes with men's own siblings (8.8 per cent compared with 3.3 per cent). Conversely, married women self-harmed following disputes with their own or their husbands' siblings in a tiny number of cases (2.2 per cent and 3.2 per cent). Finally, both men and women self-harmed following disputes with their own children (13.2 per cent and 11.8 per cent respectively). As seen in relation to unmarried self-harmers, then, problems troubling females tended to be restricted to the *gē*, but problems troubling men extended beyond the household to involve other kin.

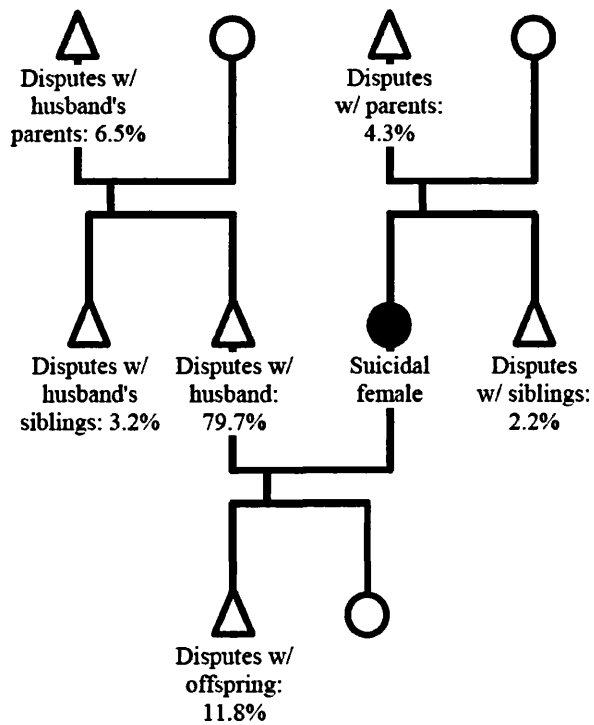
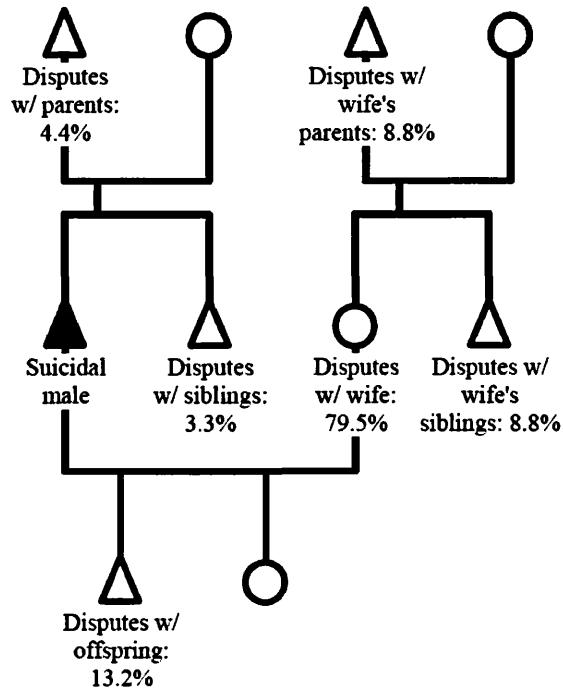


Figure 5.2: Relational context of self-harm committed by married males ($N=82$) and females ($N=90$).
 (Source: Data obtained from CMHC, January 2005 to June 2006.)

Males

Amongst married men, precipitators to self-harm included a range of occupational problems and their impact upon the stability of *gē*. Central to these were men's ability to make a living, and wives' responses through scolding men for being unproductive or leaving husbands to work abroad. For example, one patient self-harmed due to financial problems, while another did so because of his inability to repay a loan. In a third case a patient committed self-harm because his wife wanted to go abroad to work in order to provide an income that he apparently could not.

Many cases arose in response to a second challenge to masculinity: the infidelity of wives. In these cases, men committed suicidal behaviour following discovery that wives were having extra-marital affairs, or in the wake of their wives' elopement. However, some men also self-harmed after being accused or found out of having an affair themselves. Probably the majority of cases involved alcohol. While intoxication may have led men to self-harm with 'less care' and so increase the accidental suicide death rate, it is likely too that drunken men experienced more severe emotional reactions to their problems. In other cases, wives and other family members argued with men about their level of drinking, to which men responded with self-harm.

In two cases, wider structural issues had a direct relationship with suicidal behaviour. In one a man fell into dispute with his *massinā*, thus undermining the assumed amity of that relationship (see 5.3, below). In the second, a man was troubled by the reality of his *binna* marriage, which placed him at the mercy of his wife's family. Finally, the migration of sons and daughters, or their own financial or marital problems, led to arguments between fathers and their children.

Females

Amongst married women, problems revolved around disputes with husbands and children. As with men, these arguments arose in relation to household finances, migration, and marital strife. In one case, a patient self-harmed after her husband took money from her savings. In another, a patient took poison in the context of on-going marital problems and abuse. The patient had tried to separate from her husband on two previous occasions but had been unsuccessful each time as she had no place to stay, and no money. In a third case, the patient self-harmed following her return from abroad and subsequent problems experienced when readjusting to life with her husband and kin. Again the nature of marriage had an affect: in two cases at least, women self-harmed due to stresses caused by *dīga* marriage.

Many cases involved disputes with children. One patient committed self-harm after being scolded by her daughter; the patient also complained of sexual abuse by an unrelated man and was diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In another, a patient self-harmed to frighten her son, with whom she had argued. Finally, many cases involved husbands' infidelities or the patients' own infidelities, as well as husbands' drunkenness. One patient self-harmed in the context of disputes with her husband and in fear that he would be unfaithful; she was also diagnosed with depression. In a second case, a husband physically abused the patient because he suspected she was having an extra-martial affair, to which the patient swallowed poison. In a third, the patient self-harmed after she was attacked by the relatives of a married man with whom she had been having an affair. The man had committed suicide after his wife discovered the affair.

5.2. Functional kinds of suicidal behaviour

As suggested, many acts of suicidal behaviour in Madampe arise as a form of redress. Building on this, Marecek (n.d.) has proposed two terms that focus upon the communicative nature of redress: 'monologue suicide' and 'dialogue suicide' respectively. Monologue suicides are those in which the individual 'simply' wishes to escape the problem situation but also, perhaps, limit the effect of their death beyond that event itself. Dialogue suicides, conversely, are those that arise as part of a wider on-going discourse between individuals, and in which the aim of the behaviour is very much to affect other people and situations.

Marecek's distinction between monologue and dialogue suicides is useful, and helps to explain many aspects of suicidal behaviour in Sri Lanka. However, a few qualifiers should be noted. First, suicidal individuals have a limited degree of control over how their acts of suicidal behaviour are interpreted by others, and thus the kinds of ramifications they will have. Some dialogic acts may fail in their intended aims by implicating the wrong party, or by not implicating anyone at all. Conversely, monologic acts may end up having dialogic consequences. Secondly, in all cases the legitimacy of dialogic suicidal behaviour will be 'up for debate' amongst those involved. While some people may agree that the suicidal individual was treated unfairly and so vindicated in their response, others will disagree. Thirdly, survivors of self-harm are often ambiguous about the nature of their intent, or may 'misreport' their intent.

Suicide threats

Suicide threats, which amongst people in Madampe took verbal and behavioural forms, are arguably acts driven entirely by the wish to create dialogue and co-opt a response in others. At no time during them is a real move towards death ever taken. The verbal suicide threat is very common in spoken Sinhalese and usually, although not always, refers to the consumption of a poison. I have already mentioned how people in Madampe refer to *wāha bonnāva*; during her fieldwork in a village just east of Katunayake, Elizabeth Frantz (LSE doctoral researcher, personal communication, 2007) recorded suicidal gestures based on the threat to drink iced water: *mama ice watura billa merendone*. In this statement, Frantz suggests, individuals imply suicide had occurred to them because of some problem (usually romantic problems or marital dispute), but upon consideration have decided to just drink water. Presumably, the chance that they might drink something more noxious in the future should circumstances not change is also implied.

In both cases, the potency of the statement is located in its ambiguity. Stopping short of stating a desire for permanent separation, those who threaten to swallow water or poison are nevertheless also saying they might eventually seek permanent separation should the conditions troubling them not change. Because of their ambiguity, however, suicide threats are often not taken seriously. They have as a result become quite normal expressions of suffering or sorrow following specific low-level experiences of misfortune. A clinician with whom I worked expressed the phenomenon thus: ‘When you English might say “I don’t like my job; I feel sad,” we Sinhalese say “I don’t like my job;

I'm going to take poison.” Although in the statement Sinhalese directly express suicidal ideation, there is in fact no reason to assume intent to self-inflicted death is immediately present.

Amongst teenagers and young adults verbal suicide threats form a common part of negotiations in love affairs. They may be used as advantage in attempts to win a heart. ‘If I can't have you I will take poison’ is an established verbal threat in courting rituals, while ‘If you leave I will take poison’ may be deployed to stop attempts at separation. Many people in Madampe treated such threats as completely unserious, and often laughed whenever they heard of a case. Rightly or not, they assumed suicide threats made by love-struck youth to be part-and-parcel of the courting game and highly unlikely to lead to an actual suicide attempt. But the suicide threat can precede acts of self-harm that result in death. The following case, a wife's testimony extracted from coroner's notes, demonstrates how the successive use of suicide threats can, it seems, eventually result in death:

Nihal was a labourer. He has three children. He drinks *arrack*²⁴ and so always scolds me for any reason. [On the day of suicide] Nihal went to work as usual. He came back home at about 5.30pm. After that, he had a bath at about 6.45pm. He asked me for LKR 100 [the cost of a bottle of *kasippu*²⁵] but I didn't have it. Therefore, I couldn't give him the money and he scolded me. After that, he had dinner and went outside. Then he came back and said ‘I have taken poison’ [*mama wāha bivva*] but I

²⁴ Generic name for all spirits; also a popular legal coconut spirit usually of between 30 percent and 35 percent alcohol by volume (ABV).

²⁵ *Kasippu* is an illegal spirit of uncertain ABV. More will be said about this tantalising drink in Chapter 7.

didn't care because he normally says that to trick me. However afterwards I saw a bottle outside the house and that made me suspicious. I told his mother and our eldest son. We took him to Dambadeniya [Peripheral Unit]. He died that day at about 1am. Maybe he was fed up with his life because of drink.

Nihal's wife claimed that her husband used suicide threats as a way of 'tricking' her: that is, as a way of getting what he wanted. The power of the trick lies in its potential to bring shame (*läjja*) upon the one towards it is directed, as they are condemned for 'playing' with a person's life. The fact that Nihal was forced to resort to such behaviour is a good example of how women, by virtue of their status as housewives and mothers, obtain a deal of power over their husbands. He could not, it seems, simply demand money and expect to receive it. The wife was compelled to use the money in order to provide for the family altogether.

Suicide threats may also take the form of gestures or mime, and similarly carry either no intent or real intent to die. According to the 54-year-old Chilaw City Coroner, men who argue with their wives and other family members can sometimes be seen outside the house, circling the base of a tree and looking up into its branches. People that witness the act assume the man is selecting a likely branch from which to hang in some possible version of the future. The implication is that someone within the house, probably the wife or maybe one of his children, is behaving in a reckless fashion and 'playing with his life.' Similarly, women may douse themselves with kerosene and go to strike a match, or put a bottle of poison to the mouth and threaten to drink from it. Although acted out within the home, she would not be alone at the time: probably the person she held

accountable for causing her problems would be present to witness it and so become 'afraid' (*baya*).

Self-harm/suicide attempt

People in Madampe recognised that suicide attempts are made with differing degrees of suicidal intent. They range from those that are acted out in the 'safest' possible way – in which case they are perhaps best understood as deliberately non-fatal acts of self-harm – to those that only by chance do not end in death. Either kind can be monologic or dialogic in intent, but in practice it is often difficult to distinguish one kind from another. The following six cases illustrate various elements of self-harm as they arise amongst unmarried and married individuals.

The first case concerns Erundi, 18, an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist woman who lived with her parents. Erundi was admitted to hospital following the consumption of three *känēru* seeds. She had taken the seeds the day after her own mother had swallowed *känēru* in response to her husband's (Erundi's father) drunken acts of physical and psychological violence. The mother had taken *känēru* after her husband had returned home drunk and began accusing her of infidelity. When Erundi learnt about her mother's act of self-harm, she immediately took *känēru* too, apparently in an act of solidarity with her mother and as a way of bringing further attention to their domestic situation.

The second case concerns Samantha, 17, an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist male who lived with his parents at Kachchakaduwa. Samantha swallowed fly killer following an argument with his mother. The mother had accused Samantha of helping his 16-year-

old matrilineal cross-cousin (*nāna*) elope with her 20-year-old boyfriend. Samantha disputed his mother's accusations, but after he realised she did not believe him he picked up the bottle of pesticide and drank from it. He was subsequently taken to GPU, from where he was discarded in good health several days later.

Samantha told me that he had taken the fly killer in an effort to make his mother afraid (*baya*) and to cause her shame (*lājja*). That is, he wanted people to know that she had acted in such a way that had driven him to end his own life. But Samantha also insisted that he did not know how dangerous the substance would be, and had harboured no intention to die. Rather, Samantha had hoped that his actions would add weight to his denials, make his mother realise how upsetting her accusations were, and also bring some form of attention to his plight.

The third case concerns Suranga: a married Sinhalese Buddhist man who had settled in *dīga* his wife and child at Suduwella and worked as a labourer in a fibre mill at Pothuwila. Suranga complained that following marriage his wife had turned out to be bad (*naraka*): she 'wouldn't cook and was lazy [*kumali*].' (This may too have been a euphemism for denial of conjugal rights.) Apparently because of this problem, Suranga took a mistress at Heen Agara whose own husband was working in the Middle East. One day Suranga arranged to meet his mistress at Hospital Junction. However, his wife found out about the meeting and when the couple were together challenged them. The wife publicly scolded Suranga and his mistress, using, I was told, 'filthy words.'

In Madampe, such public display of emotion, especially from a woman, was extraordinary. This, combined with his ousting, caused Suranga to feel shame (*lājja*). Immediately Suranga went to a near-by shop, picked up a bottle of kerosene and drank

one quarter of it. Upon seeing this, the mistress called for a three-wheel taxi and took Suranga to GPU which was just a few hundred feet away. Suranga survived his act of self-poisoning and according to hospital records, was discharged two days later.

According to a friend of Suranga, the wife never visited him in hospital. However, following discharge Suranga returned home and the couple remained together. Suranga suggests that his wife is now generally 'better': claiming that 'she cooks but can still be lazy.' It was not clear whether Suranga continued to see his mistress after the incident, but around six months later she left Sri Lanka to work in the Middle East. It is possible that once she had been ousted as a philanderer, she would have been subject to unwanted public attention. No doubt the story would also have reached her husband's family and probably the husband himself. While Suranga would have been forgiven for his errant ways – males generally are – the mistress would have been considered 'dangerous' (*bayanakayi*) – 'once a cheat, always a cheat.'

It seems that Suranga drank the kerosene not because he felt shamed at being caught by his wife, but because of her public shaming of him. At Hospital Junction, there is a three-wheel taxi stand and four shops: from these gossip would have spread far. Suranga told my friend: *mata läjja hithuna hinda mama wāha bivva* ('I felt shame and I drank poison'). After further questioning my informant told me that it was likely his attempted suicide also had the effect of shaming his wife. Her public accusation and use of filthy words was apparently a crime worse than that committed by Suranga, so much so that he felt the need to drink kerosene. This act obliterated her accusations of him and highlighted her own behaviour, while making him out as being the victim.

The fourth case concerns Karunawatti, 45, a married Sinhalese Buddhist woman

with three children. Karunawatti presented at CMHC following a medication overdose (twenty-six unknown tablets). She had been admitted to a local Peripheral Unit and subsequently transferred to CBH for further medical treatment. Karunawatti's husband was an alcoholic and displayed signs of pathological jealousy.²⁶ The husband accused Karunawatti of having sexual relations with a range of people, including her father. (Although not mentioned in the Karunawatti's case history it is likely that she was also physically abused by her husband.) Subsequently, Karunawatti developed depression and experienced suicidal thoughts for several months. She eventually took the overdose when alone in the house.

During clinical interview Karunawatti displayed depressive features and claimed that it would have been better to have died. However, she apparently had to active suicide plans at that time. In interviews several days later Karunawatti's depressive features had diminished but she still believed it would have been better to have died. However, she had no suicidal ideation.²⁷ Based on Karunawatti's long-term suicidal ideation, lonely suicide attempt, and regrets that she did not die, the clinician decided that Karunawatti had taken the overdose with the intent to die.

The fifth case concerns Regi, also 45, a separated Sinhalese Buddhist man with one daughter. Regi presented at CMHC following fertiliser poisoning. He had been admitted to a local Peripheral Unit and was subsequently transferred to CBH. Regi had been separated from his wife for a period of four months. The separation had been

²⁶ Pathological (or morbid) jealousy is a neurotic disorder commonly found in alcoholic males, in which sufferers develop unfounded suspicions that their wives/lovers are having affairs. These suspicions often lead to domestic and other forms of violence (TARRIER *et al* 1990).

²⁷ I.e. frequent thoughts about committing self-harm or suicide.

precipitated by Regi's alcoholism, which had made him abusive towards his wife and daughter. Following the separation Regi had become depressed and experienced suicidal thoughts. He attempted suicide once, that time by hanging. Although Regi insisted that he wanted to try the marriage again, his attempts at reconciliation had failed. In fact, his wife had told him of her plans to migrate to the Middle East to work: a departure that would have very much signalled the end of their marriage. The day before Regi's second suicide attempt, he abducted his daughter who had been in the care of his wife. The following day the wife's family assaulted Regi and took the daughter back. During interview, Regi expressed suicidal ideation and regretted the attempt had failed. The clinician decided that the suicide attempt was carried out with high intent of death.

This case is especially interesting, as it provides a counter-example to the previous case. The conditions that led to Karunawatti's act of suicidal behaviour were appalling. Experiencing such abuse, one possible solution for Karunawatti would have been separation followed by divorce. However, the clinician made no mention that Karunawatti was seeking this remedy, and nor, as in many similar cases, did the clinician recommend it. The fact that clinicians do not as a rule urge separation for abused wives is reflective of the strong social taboos against such a course of action. As such, Karunawatti swallowed the poison because she had nowhere else to go: as a woman she lacked the material and social capital to begin a new life on her own. Regi's wife, on the other hand, responded to her alcoholic and violent husband in quite a different way. Perhaps because she had a supportive family (it seems that it was to them that she returned following her separation) she was able to affect a successful escape from her situation that apparently did not involve her own threats of death. Regi, faced with this

move, was eventually the one who tried to kill him self.

The final case illustrates how the pattern emerging – dialogue suicides used as a way to ‘fight’ a problem situation – can lead to its logical conclusion: suicidal behaviour as a form of ‘mutually assured destruction.’ The case concerns a husband and wife who were both admitted to hospital following kerosene poisoning. In this case, the husband had returned home in a drunken state and began verbally abusing his wife. In response, the wife stood in front of her husband and swallowed a few mouthfuls of kerosene oil. Apparently not to be out done by his wife, the husband grabbed the bottle from her and swallowed the rest. Their child ran for help and the couple were taken to CBH for medical treatment. The wife, who swallowed only a small amount, was discharged a few days later. The husband remained on the ward for a whole week. Both husband and wife returned home and, as far as I know, remained living together, at least in the immediate aftermath.

Self-inflicted death

Epidemiological data has suggested that self-inflicted deaths taking place in the Madampe Division are in the majority committed by middle-aged males. Given that many such behaviours seem to take place when men are drunk, the death rate may be biased due to the decrease in level of care taken by self-harmers (not suicide attempters), for example through the consumption of more poison than might ordinarily be risked. But so too are the emotional responses of intoxicated individuals likely to be more severe. Problems that might be responded to through calm measures by sober men are more

likely to elicit a violent reaction in drunken men. Moreover, the effects of alcohol distort perception and interpretation to the extent that a ‘non-problem’ can become a ‘significant problem.’

All this being said, the heavily skewed male: female ratio may also be due to the fundamental nature of problems experienced by middle-aged males. The following cases illustrate how their experiences may exist beyond what is suitable for ‘just’ an act of protest or even ‘fight’ through self-harm, but demand as well a total removal of self from the situation. Comparable cases relating to sober females also helps support the notion that drunkenness by itself cannot just explain away male suicide deaths. The first case concerns Namali, 26, a married Sinhalese woman with one child. Namali committed suicide by swallowing *kānēru* seeds. Her motives were made plain in the note she left behind:

2003/6/6

9.30pm

Home

I have decided to leave. I want to say goodbye to all. I am feeling sorrowful – that’s why I am writing this letter. I can give up everything in life except my son! I can’t live in this cruel society.

Don’t allow Sarath [my son] to touch or even see my dead body. My money (Rs. 15,000/-) is with akka [elder sister]. Ask for that money. Rs. 1,000 is with Chaminda.

I hope my death brings justice.

I want to say goodbye to all,

Namali

It seems that Namali's suicide followed in the wake of separation from her son, Sarath. It may be supposed that Namali had separated from her husband who had subsequently claimed custody of the child. With this, Namali's social role as mother – a role that is highly esteemed in Madampe – was thus denied. In conjunction with the undoubted sense of loss that Namali experienced as a result of separation from her son, Namali's suicide did carry an element of what I have called intent to 'fight' the problem situation: 'I hope my death brings justice,' she wrote, perhaps hoping that, as in other cases, the husband would be subject to shame as a result. But the fact that Namali thought to leave a note at all suggests she did not intend to survive. As a childless divorcee, in her eyes she would have had very little to live for.

The second case concerns Thilakaratha: a married 40-something Sinhalese Buddhist man with several children. The case was reported by KMC coroners by Thilakarathna's wife:

The dead man is my husband. We married 16 years ago. I have two sons. My husband was an alcoholic. He had been addicted to *arrack* for five years. He quarrelled with me four days ago because he asked me for some money but I didn't give him any. After that, he took money by force and went out [from the house]. He came back after

four days and he asked for two sarongs and shirts. The doors of the house were closed but I didn't open them. I opened a window and gave him the sarongs and shirts. After that, he went away. I closed the window and went to sleep. Later I went to find him. I got to know he was working at the mine but I didn't go to meet him. I was afraid because I thought he would hit me. I went to the shop to buy some things. That was about 5pm. Manju, who works with my husband, came and told me that Thilak *ayiyā* [elder brother: a standard and respectful form of address amongst unrelated but friendly males] had hanged himself from a tree at the estate [probably coconut estate: a quiet location]. At that time I didn't go to see his body – it is about half a kilometre from our house. I think that the reason for his death was our family problem [marriage problem] and his drinking.

As seen in other cases, one lesser form of separation preceded the 'ultimate' form of separation, the self-inflicted death. In this case, the wife shut her husband out of the house. In so doing, the wife questioned the assumed order of things, in which the husband is lord of the house and can come and go as he pleases. However, through her actions the wife asserted her status as keeper of the domestic realm, a status which in fact gives her a degree of power over men. That the wife was able to shut out her husband at all is indicative of this. As a result, Thilakarathna had nowhere else to go, both materially and symbolically. Thilakarathna 'ought' to have been able to control his wife, and to that end he had 'failed.' For this reason, escape from the problem was the only solution. To attempt to engage with it would be stooping below his presumed level.

The third case concerns Ariyawardena, 55, a Sinhalese Buddhist man who was

married with four children. In 1995 Ariyawardena's wife travelled abroad to work, where she stayed for three years. The wife said that before she went abroad Ariyawardena rarely drank and the couple enjoyed a 'good family life' (*honda pavula jeevati*), but upon her return she found that he had taken to drinking *arrack* regularly. Because of this, Ariyawardena spent a lot of time out with his friends and rarely came home, even to take his lunch and dinner. His behaviour led to a succession of violent quarrels between them. One evening Ariyawardena returned home drunk and a row began. This time, however, Ariyawardena struck his wife, and she retaliated by hitting him. Immediately following this Ariyawardena disappeared outside. A few hours later Ariyawardena's son came to the house to tell the wife that Ariyawardena had become very ill, apparently after drinking some poison. He was taken to hospital but died as a result of pesticide poisoning.

This case can also be interpreted through the same lens as that through which Thilakarathna's suicide was examined. As I will discuss at length in Chapter 7, Ariyawardena's *gē* had been turned upside down when his wife went abroad to work. Through labour migration the wife became the main – perhaps sole – wage-earner, reducing Ariyawardena to the position of dependent rather than provider. As many males do in such situations, he responded by socialising and drinking with friends, a costly activity in terms of both money and health. When the wife returned, however, *gē* relationships would not have reverted to what they were prior to migration. The experience of reunion and subsequent renegotiation of domestic gender roles led to serious marriage problems and violence. Perhaps when Ariyawardena's wife returned his own punches the end of his reign as patriarch was made clear: like Thilakarathna, Ariyawardena had no place else to go.

5.3. Disputes between *massinā*

The relationship between suicidal behaviour and disputes between *massinā* highlights the extent to which patterns of suicidal behaviour reflect the kinship structure, kin morality, and political economy. On the one hand, people in Madampe talk about *massinā* relationships as if they were defined by absolute morality and also equality. To betray the fundamental nature of this relationship is to attract blame and shame. In practice, however, and as Bloch (1973) also noted, relationships between true *massinā* are defined by inequality. Marriages are never, or are at least very rarely, between equals. Some extent of caste or class hypergamy is always assumed to exist, if only by virtue of the unequal relationship between 'wife receivers' and 'wife givers.' Sisters' husbands (wife receivers) are perceived as being of lower status than wives' brothers (wife givers). Not only do sisters' husbands owe a duty of care to their wives, but they also owe a duty of respect to wives' brothers. This duty comes in several forms, the most important of which involves providing economic, social, and political support.²⁸ Under such circumstances, and recalling Spencer's social status argument discussed in Chapter 1.4, disputes between *massinā* in which sisters' husbands are challenged by wives' brothers are perhaps more likely to result in self-harm of the former.

Illustrating this, in the following case recorded at CMHC, a lower-status *massinā* swallowed poison following a dispute with his higher-status wife's brother. Pradeep was a 42-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist male. He had worked in Italy for several years in a

²⁸ During the marriage ceremony this status relationship is reversed, when the bride's brother washes the feet of the groom: a significant show of inferiority.

menial job, but had been able to save a substantial amount of money. While abroad Pradeep claims that he began to drink heavily as a way of dealing with his feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, upon returning to Sri Lanka Pradeep did not reduce his drinking and in time came to argue with his wife about the problem and the drain on household resources that it represented. Around nine months later Pradeep presented at CMHC following an act of self-harm whilst intoxicated. Pradeep explained to the clinician that the act had been precipitated by an argument with his wife's brother, concerning his 'excessive spending' on alcohol.

In this case, it seems that Pradeep's dispute with his *massinā* arose following the transgression of two sets of kinship expectation. In the first, Pradeep was obliged to care for his wife in such a way as to please his *massinā*, her brothers, who after marriage retained a duty of care, and also material interests. Under Sinhalese law, a woman retains title of all the property that she brings to a marriage; upon separation or divorce, this is returned to her family in total. In practice, this foundation for the marriage contract often manifests as a continued and legitimate interference in the lives of married daughters and sisters by parents and brothers, often to the annoyance of husbands and affines. Secondly, and as an extension of this, sisters' husbands are expected, whenever possible, to help support wives' brothers. Pradeep had migrated and returned to Sri Lanka as a wealthy man. Under such circumstances, his *massinā* would expect Pradeep to share the wealth, as it were, with them. Pradeep's tendency to fritter his money away on alcohol and other lavishes not only risked his *massinās'* sister's future wellbeing, but also their own.

The relationship between suicidal behaviour and the *massinā* relationship is interesting for another reason. So long as marriages are arranged, brothers may hold a

degree of control over who their sisters marry, and thus the likely qualities of brother's-in-law. However, over the past few decades arranged marriages have become the minority type, with more than two-thirds today contracted following a romantic relationship. Although youth in Madampe often recognise the importance of falling in love with someone of whom their parents approve, it is of course the case that romantic partners are not vetted for suitability in the same way as arranged partners.

Moreover, in Madampe's contemporary wage-labour and mixed economy, not all men consider the help of relatives to be either necessary or useful; this is especially the case in the emerging private sector where kin patronage is relatively defunct as a means of employment or promotion. Each of these issues relates back to the likelihood that men consider their *massinā* to be engaged (or engageable) in a relationship defined by long term reciprocity: that is, if the inequality between them is glossed by a morality of 'sharing without reckoning.' Thus, the relationships of *massinā* are defined by structures of kinship in which men operate. However, such structures are hardly rigid or homogeneous across Madampe, and differences can be identified between and within communities according to their economic and social histories.

The troubles of Buddhika, a Sinhalese Buddhist man aged 34, illustrate clearly the problems that accompany the *massinā* relationship as a result of these structural issues. While Buddhika himself did not, at least to my knowledge, ever commit suicidal behaviour, his experiences are none-the-less similar to those men who did find themselves faced with kin responsibilities they could not meet, and found themselves with 'no way out' other than self-harm or self-inflicted death.

Buddhika was born into a *goyigama*-caste, middle-class Kachchakaduwa family,

related by marriage to the H.M. *paramparā*. Given the only ideological significance of that relationship Buddhika did not, like other Kachchakaduwa people, expect to depend upon kin patronage in life, but instead on his own 'hard work.' After finishing school with three 'A' levels, Buddhika migrated illegally to work in Singapore, where he stayed for two years. During that time he saved around Rs. 50,000 (roughly £2,500), which he sent home to his brother for safe keeping. Buddhika claimed that he sent the money home for fear of it being confiscated had he been caught by Singaporean immigration authorities. In fact, towards the end of his two year stay Buddhika was arrested and detained for several months, before being returned to Sri Lanka.

Upon returning home, Buddhika discovered that his brother had spent the money he had earned, and also sold their parents' house and lands. Penniless, Buddhika migrated abroad again, this time legally, to the Maldives. There he stayed for another two years and saved twice what he had managed in Singapore, which he kept in a local bank account. His contract coming to an end, Buddhika returned to Sri Lanka and befriended the employment agent who had arranged his work visa. The agent offered him a job as a recruiter, and Buddhika returned to Kachchakaduwa to begin business.

Alienated from his family, Buddhika invested his savings in his work. He used money earned abroad to finance loans for women who sought to migrate abroad gain the proper paper work and pay for flights. After two more years, at the age of 29, Buddhika had earned enough money to buy land and build a house. He arranged a marriage with a *goyigama* Catholic woman, Namali, from Negombo, and the following year she gave birth to boy-girl twins.

Namali had three sisters, two of whom were older than her and were already

married. One couple lived with their children at Suduwella, while another lived at an LDO colony in the Madampe Division settled during the 1970s. The third sister was younger and married in 2005. Although Namali had no brothers of her own, then, her sisters' husbands fell into a classificatory sibling relationship and thus became Buddhika's *massinā*. In line with the presumed hypergamy of his marriage, Buddhika considered all three *massinā* to be of a lower status, in this case in class terms (like other people, Buddhika did not indicate much interest in caste status). On the other hand, the two older *massinā* assumed a higher status than Buddhika by virtue of age seniority, but also by virtue of the fact that as their wives' sister's husband, Buddhika was from their point of view the inferior wife-receiver.

Buddhika claimed the contradiction confounded his dealings with his *massinā*, and also his wider business pursuits. On the one hand, Buddhika's *massinā* expected him to help them financially and socially, and asked him to make use of the wide range of contacts in local government and the police that he had built, to aide their own ventures. In this way, the Suduwella 'penchant for bilaterality' came up against the Kachchakaduwa 'penchant for patriliney.' It pressed home a customary commitment to *massinā* that Buddhika understood, but was in contradiction with the material reality of his own life and expectations. This was not just a matter of kin morality, but also of social and cultural capital, in Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) sense. Buddhika moved in quite a different economic and social world to that of his *massinā*, and the favours that he required to do business were beyond the capacity of them to provide. Indeed, as a result of his lower-status *massinā*, Buddhika claimed to be lacking opportunities that men with more prestigious relatives enjoyed. Often he told me: '[My *massinā*] are not educated,

you have met them – they are masons. They are not intelligent. How can I rely on them for anything?’

Thus, most men in Madampe recognise the ideological commitments of *massinā* (in customary terms, and as an aspect of ‘culture,’ ‘*sanskritiya*’), but only some can or will act in recognition of them. *Massinā* find themselves in different occupations to each other, and as such with different needs and expectations. While residents of *purāṇa* villages such as Kachchakaduwa may also have given up on the prospect of land inheritance and thus the importance of bilaterality and cross-cousin marriage, men in LDO colonies such as Suduwella may be more sensitive to such traditional concerns. By the nature of Kachchakaduwa kinship Buddhika was constrained from the beginning in terms of the kinship network from which he could draw. For example, his other *massinā* – male cross-cousins – were unreservedly uninterested in cooperating with him (although as likewise was he with them). But after marriage Buddhika found that his wife’s classificatory brothers were not only unhelpful, but expectant that he should help *them*.

As I have suggested, patterns of suicidal behaviour map onto the kinship system. Within this, relationships that are considered long term and defined by a morality of altruism are especially related to acts of self-harm and suicide, when the supposed inevitability of such relationships fails. Within the *gē*, and despite the obvious great variety in practice, morality and inequality exist at extreme degrees. But outside the *gē*, only very few relationships are *a priori*, at least customarily speaking, assumed to be so defined. One of these is the *massinā* relationship.

Yet in practice the morality of this relationship is frequently put to the test, and challenges those men who find themselves exposed to an ambiguous *massinā*

relationship. It is in relation to this 'stretching' of kinship morality, and its perceived inevitability, that the higher rate of suicidal behaviour associated with disputes between men and their wives' brothers can be explained. At the same time, the relationship between kin morality and suicidal behaviour helps us to understand the concentration of self-harm and self-inflicted death within that most inevitable institution: the *gē* itself.

5.4. Shame and blame as cause and function

In many of the cases, shame (*läjja*) and blame (*baṇina*) appeared to be contributing factors (c.f. Stirrat 1987). In such cases, individuals were found to commit self-harm or self-inflicted death in response to their own shame: that is, in response to shame they had brought upon themselves. The link between suicide and the desire to escape shame is well known in suicidology (Lester 1997), and its occurrence in Madampe is therefore not anything particularly unusual. However, many cases of suicidal behaviour arose as a means by which the causes of shame were specifically challenged, through dialogic suicidal acts. In several cases the act of suicidal behaviour itself functioned as a means by which the shamed individual could cause shame for a third party.

Social function of shame and blame

Amongst Sinhalese in the Madampe Division the primary means by which personal socio-affective injury is caused and felt is via the appropriation of blame and consequent feeling of shame (c.f. Obeyesekere 1984: 499-508; Spencer 1990b: 169-173). In

Madampe blame is an accusation of wrongdoing or especially ‘bad character’ that is specifically intended to cause loss of face or status. Such accusations usually arise in response to an individual’s failure to carry out personal responsibilities and duties, or their responsibilities and duties moral relationships.²⁹ In turn, shame is the attendant emotion of low self-esteem as well as low personal status that accompanies being blamed. Shame is, then, both an affective state and condition of social being (Gilbert 1998; Gilbert & McGuire 1998; Lindisfarne 1998).

Blame and shame may be attracted through one’s own actions or the actions of others that impinge upon the self. To be blamed of committing shameful behaviour is to be accused of behaviour that damages the esteem of self or others, and, by effect, the nature of the relationship between the self and others. As both an individual and collective interest, then, people in Madampe are socialised from an early age to fear their own ‘ridicule or social disapproval,’ that is, to ‘fear shame’ (*läjja-baya*) (Obeyesekere 1984: 504-505). Obeyesekere (ibid: 505) describes the means by which verbal regulations of blame instils fear of shame in children:

Bad behaviour is corrected in the following manner: ‘*läjja nädda, mokada minissu kiyanne,*’ ‘aren’t you ashamed; what’ll people say?’ When a parent, or other socializing agent, simply says ‘*läjja nädda*’ the rest of the statement is implied, so that the reference to the “others” is contained in it...There is nothing unusual about these practices, which are found in many societies, except for one factor—the failure to conform is associated with ridicule and laughter by the parent, especially the father.

²⁹ And, as such, it is distinguished from everyday acts of scolding.

Shame can be both an aim of behaviour and a response to behaviour. Shameful behaviour is dealt with by using blame and shame: shame creates shame and controls shame. As an aim, to 'blame' someone is to seek to control his or her (potentially) shameful behaviour through the medium of personal, familial, and public ridicule or disapproval, or fear of shame. As a response, to 'feel shame' is to experience the weight of a specific other's, familial, or public ridicule or disapproval that can, in its most acute form, have disastrous consequences for one's self- and public-esteem (Spencer *ibid*; Marecek n.d.).

The relationship of suicide to blame and shame is, as a consequence, also two-fold: it exists as both an aim and a response. As an aim, suicidal behaviour can cause shame for those whose actions are deemed to have brought the injury that led to suicide: they are blamed for causing the suicide. In Madampe, the use of suicide to cause shame was one of the key aims of dialogic forms of suicidal behaviour. As a response, suicidal behaviour as a means of escape from problem situations was a way by which shame could also be escaped, or a means by which attributed shame could be challenged.

Shame and suicidal behaviour

The function of suicidal behaviour to distract from, cleanse one's self of, or to cause others to suffer shame, places acts of suicidal behaviour at the heart of social relationships. Suicidal behaviour is deployed as a response to, or as part of, an escalating dispute situation. Within them, suicidal behaviour is intended either to quell the problem, in which case suicide is best described as a 'pacifying act,' or as part of an escalating 'arms race,' in the sense that suicidal behaviour stands as a stronger retaliation relative to

an earlier injury sustained. In one case this even manifested in 'mutually assured destruction,' as one individual used a more lethal act of self-harm/suicide attempt to overshadow the same in another. In this sense, suicidal behaviour becomes an 'aggressor,' as Spencer (1990a) had suggested.

In a review of ethnographic studies of suicide, Giddens (1964) reported on the apparently unique nature of suicidal behaviour in small-scale societies. In those societies, Giddens claimed, suicidal behaviour was often socially sanctioned, as Durkheim had already argued. But rather than arising as a form of altruism, in many cases suicide often arose as a part of the wider system of 'punishment and sanction' (ibid: 115-116):

The suicidal act is...an accepted method of bringing pressure to bear upon others. Suicide, attempted suicide and the suicide threat...apparently function fairly independently as mechanisms of social sanction.

The ethnographic record of world societies suggests that the social function of suicidal behaviour is common to many, perhaps all, communities across the globe. Since beginning this research I have been collecting anecdotal evidence that the function, unsurprisingly, can also be found in the UK. For example, one individual reported how his girlfriend pretended to swallow a tube of pain killers after he ended their relationship. As the man was leaving the girl's house, she appeared at the window and made a show of ingesting the tablets. The girlfriend then ducked out of view and reappeared, pointing at the empty container. The man returned to the house, only to discover that she had spat them out. In another case, a paramedic responded to an emergency call in which a

teenage girl had swallowed a bottle of indigestion medicine. When the paramedic arrived at the scene, the girl was shouting at her mother, calling her a c**t, while brandishing the bottle from which she had drunk. It turned out that the girl had made the 'suicide attempt' following a dispute with her mother over a romantic relationship. According to the paramedic, such events make up a considerable number of suicide emergencies she responds to.

What seems to distinguish dialogic suicidal behaviour in the UK from that found in Sri Lanka, the Trobriand Islands, and elsewhere, is the fact that in the UK no obvious *social institution of vindication* supports such acts. While in both contexts the 'cry for help' (Farberow & Schneidman 1961) performs a similar function (gaining the attention of specific others), only in the UK is this not formally socially sanctioned. The boyfriend was not held up to public or legal account as a result of his behaviour, and neither was the girl's mother. The suicide of the Trobriander Kima'i *demand*ed that his death be redressed by kinsmen (see Chapter 1.4); in Madampe, Suranga's act of self-harm turned the tables on his wife and caused *her* public shame. But how does such vindication of suicidal behaviour operate? Why do people in Madampe think their suicidal acts with have a social legitimacy, beyond the consequences that it has within the interpersonal context?

5.5. Legitimising suicidal behaviour as a form of redress

The vindication or condemnation of a suicidal act is, of course, a matter of much dispute. What appears to one person or group to be a legitimate response may for others appear to be a wholly illegitimate response. Once, over drinks, two young male informants argued

over whether a suicide could ever be vindicated. Roshan, Kumara, and I had spent the best part of the day at Kuliapitiya Magistrates' Court translating coroners' files. After work, we retired to our local bar at Madampe New Town and discussed our findings. Roshan and Kumara were particularly struck by the fact that many suicides appeared to manifest in the context of inter-personal disputes within households in the manner I have described. Roshan told me: 'I cannot believe these things! I cannot believe our people live like this!'

Subsequently, our conversation moved on to the issue of vindication and condemnation. Significantly, the two men, both moderately active Buddhists, did not raise any obvious theological objections to suicide. Neither suggested that suicide was wrong because the soul would not enjoy a good re-birth, or repeat the monks' objection that suicide was caused by desire (*āśāva*) and a failure to live according to Buddhist principles (see Chapter 8.4). Instead, Roshan argued that people committed suicide because their problems (*prashna*) became too much to bear. If people committed suicide, Roshan said, it was because they had no other choice available to them: they 'were suffering [*dukkha*] from frustrations [*asahānaya*]' that could not be remedied by any means except their own death. Roshan suggested:

Suicide is the only solution for some people because their problems are too big for them. By committing suicide, they are hoping to solve their problems. When this is the case, we should not blame him. This is why I don't think suicide is always problem.

In this statement, Roshan was providing vindication for the idea that suicidal behaviour could be used as a means by which irresolvable problems could be addressed. His statement clearly excused the act of suicide itself and, by inference, also condemned those individuals that could be blamed for causing the problems that led to suicide. But Kumara countered that suicide was wrong because problem solving is the purpose of life itself. For this reason, he added, problem solving was always possible regardless the nature or extent of the problem faced, because problem solving was part of what makes us, humans, what we are:

I know many people [who have killed themselves] it is worrying. It is bad because taking a life is not the solution, facing the problem is the solution. Some people can't face their problems because they have no backbone. Their mental situation is not ready to face reality. Problem solving is life, no? But they don't try to solve [their problems]. They always try to escape the problem. But that's not life.

We can always find a solution. Many people think that it's not possible and give it to others [try to get other people to help them with their irresolvable problems]. They always try to depend on others. Then their problems get bigger. If they [suicidal people] have a loan, they think that they can't pay it back and so he thinks he will give up his life. Sometimes people think 'I do not have a good girl' and they give up their life. But everyone has someone...

For Kumara, then, the argument that suicide is a last-resort strategy was not convincing. Instead, he argued that suicide was a strategy chosen by people who lacked the

intelligence (which in Madampe was often equated with levels of formal education, and the high rate of suicide in rural areas were attributed to the 'backwardness' of those areas) to solve their own problems, think of alternatives, or relied too heavily on others.

Kumara's view was not an uncommon view in Madampe. According to Soma, a 56-year-old Buddhist widow living at Kachchakaduwa, suicide was also evidence of poor problem-solving skills and a general lack of intelligence:

...they are unable to solve their problems. They are weak; suicide is the only solution for them. They are weak in the mind. Every problem has a solution; they should have tried to find it. You shouldn't take poison because of [for example] a love problem. They should think about it.

Soma further argued that suicidal behaviour often led to problems for families. She pointed out that even if a person committed suicide with no ill intent towards another, village gossip would nevertheless ensure that some third party was blamed for it:

It is bad for the family when someone kills them self. Society [the local community] will say bad things about the family. If you kill yourself because of an economic problem villagers will start rumours that something else was the problem. They won't speak about the real reason.

Sketching the moral context of vindication

The kinds of debates and objections held by Kumara, Roshan, and Soma are illustrative of how many people in Madampe think about suicidal behaviour. At a general level, it is possible to mark out some way-points in the ways that they come to their conclusions regarding the moral status of a suicidal act. Amongst others, three factors that would seem to have particular relevance are: (1) the suitability of suicidal behaviour as a response in any given context, underwritten by (2) a causal logic that concedes a third party can be directly culpable for misfortune and thus the suicidal response of another party, and (3) the moral status of self-inflicted death vis-à-vis other kinds of ‘violent,’ ‘unnatural,’ or ‘natural’ deaths. While I would argue that these categories tend to be considered relevant by most people, their particular interpretations and implications vary widely according to the position of: (1) the suicidal individual within social strata; (2) the social structural relationship between the suicidal individual and the person or persons that have ‘caused them’ to commit suicidal behaviour; and (3) the attitudes of third parties, which are also dependent upon their position with social strata and relationships to the suicidal individual and cause of suicidal behaviour.

1. The ‘suitability’ of a suicidal response

In Madampe, much suicidal behaviour arises when normative structures of kinship are brought into question. This is usually through an individual’s failure to respect demands or expectations of relatedness or the proper duties of kinship: Nihal’s wife refusing to give him money; Erundi’s father abusing his wife, and Erundi’s mother’s abuse by her

husband; Samantha's mother accusing him of assisting an elopement; Suranga's public scolding by his wife; Karunawatti's abusive and violent husband; the separation of Regi from his wife and daughter; Namali's loss of her son; Thilakarathna's expulsion from the *gē* by his wife; and Ariyawardena's wife returning his blow. The common theme seems to be the failure of kin morality – that which is assumed to be long term and inevitable – and the shame subsequently experienced. Returning to the epidemiology, certain kinds of relationship dispute seem to be particularly associated with suicidal behaviour:

1. Unmarried females in dispute with their parents;
2. Unmarried males in dispute with older siblings or older kin outside the *gē*;
3. Married men and women in dispute between themselves;
4. Married men in dispute with their wives' parents;
5. Married men in dispute with wives' brothers;
6. Men and women in dispute with their children.

Each of the cases discussed above suggests that suicidal behaviour arises in contradictory ways. Regi lost his wife and children, as did Namali. Yet both responded with an act of suicidal behaviour. Who, as it were, would Madampe people decide to vindicate? Who, the father or the mother, has the greater claim to children following a divorce? In their individual occurrences, suicidal acts are vindicated or condemned through processes of claim and counter-claim taking place between those who support the premise of the act and those who reject it. For those in support of the premise, suicide is only likely be vindicated if the function of the suicide is found to be suitable for the person who

followed it and the circumstances that produced it. Correspondingly, those who condemn the act will argue that these are not valid reasons. The means by which the suicide may receive social sanction may be explained as:

1. If a suicidal act is to be vindicated, the injury that leads a person to risk his or her own life must be considered a greater crime than the act of threatened or actual self-inflicted death itself;
2. No other possible response to injury should still be available.

This 'rule,' as it stands, contains a considerable degree of leeway in the moral evaluation of suicidal behaviour. But the three relevant variables – the degree of injury suffered, the type of suicidal behaviour resorted to, and the range of possible responses to injury – are not arbitrarily related, and in fact depend on the function of suicidal behaviour as a denial of sociality:

1. Low-risk suicidal behaviour ('deliberately non-fatal' self-harm) that merely threatens separation may legitimately be used as retaliation or revenge against a low-level injury;
2. High-risk suicidal behaviour ('deliberately fatal' suicide attempt) that results in permanent separation may only legitimately be used against a high-level injury;
3. Legitimacy depends on the social status of the suicidal individual vis-à-vis the cause of injury.

The relationships between these factors, and particularly the third, are complex. In Chapter 4 I demonstrated how diverse materialities in Madampe manifested greater or lesser concern with caste as a principle of social differentiation, kinship structures and practices that ranged from ‘bilateral’ to ‘patrilineal’ types, and religious orientations focused upon this-worldly or other-worldly salvation, both between and within communities. Social status is not then a static property but is highly context dependent. In this sense, the ‘choice’ of suicidal behaviour as opposed to other possible responses to problems depends upon twin factors of social status and ‘relational power’: an individual’s ability to act in response to problems given their social status.

One way to conceptualise this relationship is by way of analogy with the game of chess. Individual pieces on the chess board resemble individuals in society; the different possible moves that pieces can make results from their pre-existing status as a rook, castle, knight, and so on. But possible moves are also determined by the location and status of other pieces on the board, at a given point in time. The ability of an individual piece to act thus derives from its social status – the normative qualities that it possesses as a rook (or, in Madampe for example, a Sinhalese Buddhist male of high caste, middle class, who is married and lives in his wife’s village) – and its relational power – the practical and pragmatic moves that it can make as a result (what being a high caste, middle class, Sinhalese Buddhist male who lives in his wife’s village means, and how that status manifests as practical action).

Within this, and when focusing upon the *gē*, it is possible to note relationship ‘constants.’ These include relationships defined by marital status, which can be divided into four stages:

1. Unmarried;
2. Married without children;
3. Married with children; and (for some)
4. Retirement with independent children.

As discussed in Chapter 4.4., duties (*kāriya*) amongst men and women change as they come to occupy each stage. As young unmarried agents, men enjoy a great deal of relational power, while their female counterparts are greatly restricted. Age and married life impose new obligations and duties upon men and in reflection their ability to act as and how they desire decreases. Conversely, in order to fulfil their own obligations and duties women-as-mothers obtain a greater relational power, especially in their relationships via men and male kin.

Thus, relational power is correlated with risk of suicidal behaviour on the basis that ability to act provides the range of possible responses to injury. Younger unmarried males who suffer an insult and experience shame are able to respond to that feeling via a greater number of possible responses than are their female counterparts. Older married males, on the other hand, are more restricted in their range of possible responses. This is not, however, because they lack the necessary economic, social, or political capital to deal with their problems. It is in fact because to engage at all is to engage with the premise upon which their problems are based: that it is women, and not men, who rule the domestic roost. Although tolerated and indeed expected by men, it is nevertheless also the case that they give up their power within the home begrudgingly.

2. Causal logic

The fact that some third party can be held responsible for some other individual's act of suicidal behaviour is not, as I have suggested, limited to Sri Lanka alone. However, in pre-colonial Sri Lanka suicidal behaviour functioned in this manner in a legally-sanctioned form. The earliest record of this institution can be found in Robert Knox's (1981 [1681]) *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*. Knox was a sailor employed by the British East India Company who in 1660 was captured and held imprisoned on the island for twenty years. Knox (ibid: 267) reported that under Kandyan law, a suicide by those considered of 'sound mind' was seen to be the fault of other people, who were accused of having failed in their duty of care. In some cases it seems that entire villages were fined for neglect, although more commonly specific individuals were held to account:

They have an odd usage among them to recover their debts...They will sometimes go to the house of their debtor with the leaves of the Neingala a certain plant, which is rank Poyson, and threaten him, that they will eat that Poyson and destroy themselves, unless he will pay him what he owes. The debtor is much afraid of this, and rather than the other should Poyson himself, will sometimes sell a Child to pay the debt: Not that the one is tender of the life of the other, but out of care for himself. For if the party dyes of the Poyson, the other for whose sake the man Poysoned himself must pay a ransom for his life. By this means also they will sometimes threaten to revenge themselves of those with whom they have any contest, and do it too. And upon the same intent they will also jump down some steep place or hang or make away with themselves; that so they might bring Adversary to great damage.

Amerasinghe (1999: 306), quoting Davy in *The Legal Heritage of Sri Lanka*, suggests that within the Kandyan system suspected suicides were referred to the *sāke-ballanḍa* (coroner court) for ruling. It was upon his judgement that culpability for a suicide was established:

It was the business of the [*sāke-ballanḍa*] to endeavour to ascertain the cause of death, and all the circumstances connected with it. In a case of suicide occurring in a village, the suicide having been of sound mind, or subject to only temporary fits of insanity, the *sāke-ballanḍa* inflicted a fine on the inhabitants of fifty *riḍies* (about twenty-nine shillings)...If the suicide were a confirmed idiot or lunatic, no fine was inflicted. In the first instance, the inhabitants were punished for want of attention to an individual who required it, and whose life might have been preserved had such attention been paid; whilst in the latter, they were excused because they were not supposed to have time to spare to watch individuals who required incessant vigilance.

The historical notes of Knox and Davy relate to the law of the Kandyan kingdom that administered the central parts of Sri Lanka from 1469 until 1815. The coastal regions outside the jurisdiction of Kandy were ruled from 1505 first by the Portuguese, secondly by the Dutch, and finally by the British. The last two of these introduced Dutch-Roman and English law there. According to Nadaraja (1972: 10), conversion to Dutch-Roman law was not carried out wholesale. However, it is likely that the native law that sought culpability for a suicide 'of sound mind' amongst third parties would have been replaced by a law that condemned suicide and punished the suicidal individual him- or herself.

This was certainly the case when the British took the coasts from the Dutch in 1796, and the whole island fell to them in 1815.

Under English law, individuals who survived their suicide attempts were bound-over while the estate of the deceased could be confiscated. This did not seem to deter the Sinhalese penchant for using suicide as a 'weapon' within interpersonal disputes. According to D'Oyly (1929: 37, 80), suicidal behaviour was still very frequent at the beginning of the nineteenth century and 'easily provoked' by 'slander, non-payment of debt, damage to crops, and thwarted love affairs' (ibid). Reflecting the tendency for suicide to be threatened in response to personal slight (Straus & Straus 1953; Wood 1961), such cases were often taken by British observers as being 'trivial.' In 1902, H.R. Freeman (AR-1902: S3, G24), administrator of the Chilaw District in the Northwest Province of Sri Lanka, commented:

Attempt to commit suicide – a rather prevalent offence – should be punishable with rigorous as well as simple imprisonment. Would-be suicides generally want pulling together by the tonic of hard work.

The flippant tone of the report has also been characteristic of most suicide journalism over the decades, to the point where it has been accused of sensationalising and perhaps encouraging suicidal acts (Centre for Policy Alternatives & The PressWise Trust 2003). Discourse analysis of newspaper articles throughout the twentieth century may reveal the consistency with which suicidal behaviour has routinely been modelled as a response to disputes with specific others. To take just a few examples from the English-language

Times of Ceylon from 1955, the intent to make culpable some third party is plain, even though it is the suicidal individual who is being legally charged:

Girl Bound Over: 'I am not satisfied with home-life' 16 year-old Acida Madanayake told court in answer to a charge of having attempted to commit suicide by drinking Jeye's fluid. 'Your life is too precious to end in so criminal a manner. Obey your parents and attend to home work,' the Balapitiya Magistrate advised her. Acida was bound over in Rs 200 with her father Edwin Madanayake, as surety to be of good behaviour for a year. (*Times of Ceylon*, 03/01/1955)

Set himself afire after family row: A man poured kerosene on his head and set himself on fire because of a quarrel with his wife over their child. This was related to the Additional Colombo Magistrate, Mr V.S. Gunawardena, when Nagoor Cassim of Vincent Street was charged with attempting to commit suicide. When Cassim pleaded guilty to the charge, the Magistrate told him that differences between man and wife were not unusual. They tended to relieve the monotony of everyday life. Cassim was bound over in Rs 100 for one year. His wife stood surety. (*Times of Ceylon*, 03/01/1955)

Suicide try to scare husband: Ms B.J. Charlotte Fernando (27), of Laxapathiya, Moratuwa, was bound over by the acting Panadura Magistrate Mr I.M. Ismail, for two years in Rs 200 with her husband as surety, for having attempted to commit suicide by hanging. Mr M.J.J. Silva, defence counsel, told court that his client anticipating

displeasure of her husband, wanted to frighten him. She had fixed a rope to the beam of the house and was about to put the noose around her neck when her husband intervened. (*Times of Ceylon*, 15/01/1955)

Although today third parties are no longer legally held to account, then, the causal logic of Kandyan law survives within the reasons that suicide survivors give for committing self-harm, as well as, more broadly, people's preconceptions of what causes suicidal behaviour. That is, Kandyan causal logic provides both a motivation for suicidal behaviour and also an explanation.

Yet such an explanation was also not ubiquitous and, like religious beliefs and practice at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, was grounded upon material conditions and expectations. Thus, Suduwella people may have been more likely to accept Kandyan causal logic, given the nature of kin and social relationships and their role within creating and sustaining livelihoods in that community. At the same time, however, the stronger recognition of deities, saints, and *yakku* by Suduwella people could suggest an interest in supernatural explanations for why people experience problems in their lives, and thus an alternative way of dealing with them (for example, through claims of possession and exorcism, c.f. Stirrat 1992). Similarly, Kachchakaduwa people could seek the causes of suicidal behaviour within the individual him- or herself, and reject the notion that third parties might be responsible. Such an attitude was stated by Soma (quoted above) who explicitly objected to suicidal behaviour on the grounds that resulting gossip implicated family members and others on false pretences. Equally, however, the 'failure' of extended kin relationships might for some be reason enough to resort suicidal behaviour, or seek to

rationalise a case in such terms.

3. *The religious and social evaluation of death, suicide, and the self-inflicted death*

If suicidal behaviour is to be a legitimate form of redress, to threaten or succeed in self-inflicted death must be considered a lesser 'wrong' than the cause of suicide itself. The moral status of self-inflicted death in Madampe is not, however, a straightforward matter. On the one hand it depends upon the religion of the deceased and the religion of observer. On the other hand, and regardless of religion, the evaluation is also regulated by a pan-Sinhalese distinction based on the time and manner of death, which in at least some respects is similar to the Hindu evaluation of 'good' and 'bad' death (Bloch & Parry 1982).

The religious attitude towards self-inflicted death in Madampe has been derived from the Theravada Buddhist, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christian faiths. In this discussion I will focus on Buddhism. Textual or 'normative' (Spiro 1971) Buddhism is famously ambivalent towards self-inflicted death, with no definite sanction against it. The fact that Buddhist countries have the highest rates of suicide when compared with all other nations is often attributed to this fact (Bertolote & Fleischmann 2002). However, Sinhalese Buddhism, like other forms of Buddhism, is no easy creature to define, and beliefs and practices of Sinhalese Buddhists depend largely upon the social status of worshippers (see Chapter 4.6).

Some Madampe Buddhists suggest that suicide was a sin, and that individuals who kill themselves may expect to go to hell (*apāya*), or to return as a malevolent spirit (*perētaya*) to haunt the living. But by no means was belief in *apāya* or *perētayō*

widespread, and such an attitude was more common – or at least such consequences were more feared – amongst Suduwella people. As such, the impossibility of a good re-birth was not routinely stated by Madampe Buddhists. To be sure, it was considered inauspicious to take any life, even when it was one's own, and the subsequent accumulation of de-merit (*pau*) was thus expected. But very few Kachchakaduwa Buddhist's I spoke with thought the suicide would return as anything other than a human in the next life (assuming that his or her life had been otherwise meritorious), although some informants did suggest the suicide could return as a lower animal. One Kachchakaduwa informant likened suicide a low-level crime akin to something like robbery.

In Madampe, though, perhaps the most important sanction against suicide came not from the fear of an inferior re-birth but the implications that suicide had for the living. Moreover, this attitude tended to span both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. Suicide was regarded as leaving wives and children without a wage-earner, husbands and children without a care-giver, and parents without their children. For this reason, self-inflicted death was regarded as inauspicious.

In Madampe an auspicious death is one that occurs as the consequence of natural causes at the end of one's life and when all of one's duties towards dependants have been completed. Elderly men and women who have obtained this position may prepare for their death by withdrawing from the world and becoming lay 'monks.' These individuals, known as *upāsakas*, give up all their material possessions and social attachments and move to the temple to spend their final days in meditation. Regardless of whether this path is taken or not (and very few choose it: I knew nobody in Madampe who had, or

wished to), those who die when they have fulfilled their duties – and so accomplished something of a quasi-separation from the world – are cremated (*adhanaya karanawa*). The soul of the deceased is expected to proceed to either the next life or the after-life (depending upon the religion of the commentator) without trouble, and the body, now an empty shell, and can be discarded.

An inauspicious death, however, is that which occurs before a person's duties are fulfilled and when they are, so to speak, tangled-up within the attachments of the world. Unlike the 'ready' aged person, the 'unready' person retains a number of duties vis-à-vis his or her elders or dependants that must be fulfilled. For this reason, the corpse (*maḷa kañḍa*) is buried (*pamidanaya karanawa*), as due to the 'early' timing of the death the soul may not have properly left the body and may therefore be improperly reborn or even linger in the world as a *holman*. Examples of those dying a bad death include children and young adults (who still have not lived their life), parents with dependent children (who still must care for their young), and wives with living husbands (who still must serve them). The inauspicious nature of the death stems not from what the suicide may suffer in the next world, but to what he or she condemns his or her dependents in this world. Suicide assumed to have serious ramifications for those left behind.

Despite changes to how the corpse is disposed of, the ritual structure of the funeral (*avamañgula*) is identical regardless of the cause of death. Amongst both Buddhists and Catholics the corpse is laid out in the home of the deceased, which for the duration of the funeral period is known as a *maḷa gedara* (death house). The corpse of an individual who died violently is assumed to be no more polluting than that of an individual who died peacefully; in both cases, people who come to the *maḷa gedara*

become infected by 'dirt' (*killā*: explained to me as the dangerous bacteria produced by the decaying body) which they must wash off before returning to their own home.

The Buddhist funeral lasts for seven days, with the day of disposal itself chosen by an astrologer (*dhivaghaya*) to take place on the first, third, or fifth day after death. Immediately prior to the burial or cremation monks (the number of whom in attendance is a direct reflection of the wealth of the *gē*) lead a merit-giving (*baṇa*) ceremony at the *maḷa gedara*. Following this the coffin is carried on the shoulders of six male relatives or close friends of the deceased to the cemetery. The way is marked by white sand thrown onto the floor to ward off *yakku*, and trailing the ushers are the congregation who will also witness the final disposal of the body. No monk attends the graveside or pyre itself.

On the sixth and seventh days, the monks return to the *maḷa gedara* to lead merit-giving (*baṇa*) and alms-receiving (*dānē*) ceremonies respectively. Again, neither of these rituals changes according to the cause of death. However, people are perhaps concerned to give more merit to those who die an inauspicious death in order to compensate, as it were, for the de-merit (*pau*) it might have attracted (Wickremeratne 2006: 128).

Yet the manner of death does have an impact upon the social function of the funeral, and this can be observed through who does and who does not attend. Funerals are the sole right of passage amongst both Buddhists and Catholics that place both male and female individuals at the heart of proceedings (Moore 1981; Yalman 1963). Births pass relatively unmarked, certainly in terms of public (beyond the *gē*) celebration; birthdays are mostly ignored. Menarche is recorded though ritual involving *gē* and *paramparā* but male puberty is not. Marriage is a decidedly public affair but focuses on *gē* and

paramparā as much as the individuals themselves.³⁰ Funerals, however, serve to illuminate the network of kin, friends, and colleagues that made up the deceased's social world: those who attend provide a final definition of what he or she had accomplished in life and solidify the nature of his or her character.

Reflecting this, from the moment a death is announced (by word-of-mouth and public advertisement through posters, banners, and signs across the local area), people begin to congregate at the *maḷa gedara*. For this reason a temporary cover and dozens of chairs are hired to provide shelter and seating at the front of the house. Kin within the *gē* and *paramparā* will stay at the *maḷa gedara* for the full seven days, and employers, especially those in the public sector, are compelled to grant leave for the entire period. Unemployed male youth also make up a core of those in attendance, and play *carom* and cards to pass away the monotonous hours. To signal their relationship in life, past and present employers, associations, and other organisations with which the deceased had business, erect white banners that send best wishes. The number of visitors to the *maḷa gedara* and range of banners on display signal very clearly the social standing (*tattvaya*) of the dead person.

Ideally, then, the funeral should be attended by practically everybody that had some kind of relationship with the deceased. Any boycott or noticeable absence during key ceremonies poses a question about the life of the dead person. Both Marecek (personal communication, 2005) and I recorded suggestions that some individuals would not attend the ceremony of a suicide for fear of being seen to 'take sides.' For example,

³⁰ A few lesser ceremonies are sometimes held, but these are not observed by very many families and in Madampe do not constitute public events: First Haircut, First Rice, Ear Piercing, and First-Letter Learning (Baker 1998; Yalman 1963).

one informant suggested that some people might not attend the funeral for fear of being caught up in a ‘blame game.’ The person or persons deemed responsible for the death might be singled out for retribution through public denouncement or even violence. Given that such individuals are likely to be closely related to the suicide, their absence can only cast a shadow over the whole proceedings. This was certainly the case at the funeral of H.M. Piyathilaka, whose death was alleged to have been caused by sorcery committed by his brothers. The two brothers in question, Gunarathna and Gunathilaka, did not attend the burial nor the *baṇa* or *dānē* ceremonies, although did visit the *maḷa gedara* on the first day following death. Nevertheless, their absence was noted by many in attendance as being representative of the long-standing feud, and was taken by Piyathilaka’s wife and family as further evidence of their complicity in his death.



Figure 5.3: Unemployed male youth playing *carom* at the *maḷa gedara* of H.M. Piyathilaka in Kachchakaduwa
(Photo: Tom Widger)

5.6. Summary: calling the ‘inevitable’ into question

Patterns of suicidal behaviour reflect the kinship structure. In particular, acts of suicidal behaviour appear to arise in response to the breaking of core kinship rights, duties, and obligations, or as a challenge to inflexibility or contradictions within the system. In the vast majority of cases that I investigated, suicidal behaviour arose as a form of redress. Moreover, third parties were made subject to blame and public shame as a result of their assumed culpability. In Madampe's 'patrilineal' system, the *gē* stands as the core social unit within which most individuals operate, and other kinds of relationship derive a moral status. However, it is only those relationships that are truly 'moral' – in the sense they are considered to be inevitable, long term, and 'tolerably unequal' – that seem to be most sensitive to accusations of shame and thus demand a response of suicidal behaviour.

Reflecting the overall patrilineal nature of kinship in Madampe, the majority of inevitable relationships exist within the *gē*. The few cases of suicidal behaviour that stem from relationships outside the *gē* – principally men in dispute with older kin, wives' parents, and *massinā* – reflect the limited extent of bilaterality in the Madampe area. If data were available for the village level, it may be that communities such as Suduwella display higher numbers of suicide cases arising in the context of disputes between extended kin than places like Kachchakaduwa.

The obviously much greater frequency of interaction between members of *gē* and close relatives is no doubt one reason for this. But I would argue that the correlation goes beyond the simple fact that members of *gē* happen to associate most often and so are more likely to come into dispute with one another. First, most people live in communities wherein the majority of people are unrelated. On an everyday basis people in Madampe spend at least an equal amount of time with friends, work colleagues, and other

associates, as they do with members of their own *gē*. What appears to be the important issue is not then the frequency at which people interact, but rather the kind of investment associated with their interactions: that is, whether it is short term or long term. Long term relationships that are considered to be inevitable are also characterised by a heavily imbalance of 'give' and 'take.' It appears to be when the unquestioned nature of this imbalance becomes exposed that suicidal responses arise.

The inevitability of kin relationships is also what bestows suicidal behaviour with its potency as a form of social action. Just as accusations of shame lead to acts of suicidal behaviour that cause shame for third parties, questions of kinship lead individuals to make further questions that purposefully expose the inherent evitability of the inevitable. Through the accomplishment of fatal self-harm, individuals demonstrate that even the most moral relationships must, in death, come to an end. By becoming implicated in causing the inevitable to become questioned, individuals are made to suffer shame.

Secondly, obvious status differentials exist between suicidal ego and those individuals identified as the 'cause' of suicidal behaviour. For example, disputes between ego and an older brother led to self-harm; apparently disputes with younger brothers did not. The very high level of disputes between teenage daughters and their parents is a further example. In this sense, Spencer's argument (see Introduction) that suicide arises as a response to problems when the parties involved are hierarchically unequal appears to hold.

On the other hand, the high level of suicidal behaviour amongst middle-aged men appears to refute the theory. While young women engage in self-harm for reasons of 'powerlessness,' amongst men they arise in response to both uprisings by the

subdominant and the loss of the material basis of their power. After all, those who hold power do so only temporarily, and experiences of acute or chronic (to borrow from Durkheim's [1951] theory of *anomie*) political-economic change always threatens to undermine their position. It is precisely during battles against this threat that similarly dramatic acts of suicidal behaviour are performed. When the patriarch begins to topple, an act of self-harm may have a steadying effect. But more than this, we may ask whether the dominant in fact want to be drawn into a game of 'who blinks first' with their subordinates: would that not signal acquiescence unbecoming of their status? With self-inflicted death, men may at least choose the time to fall: it is perhaps better to jump than to be pushed.³¹

³¹ Or to quote Neil Young, as *Nirvana* front-man Kurt Cobain did in his own suicide note: 'It's better to burn out than to fade away.'

6.

‘One life, one love’: romantic relationships, romantic rejection, and romantic loss

The largest category of reported problems leading to self-harm amongst unmarried males and females was depression, followed by romantic rejection or romantic loss, and arguments with their parents. Of those reporting depression, 54.6 percent of males and 45.5 percent of females also reported romantic rejection or romantic loss. Of those reporting arguments with parents, 43.8 percent of males and 38.7 percent of females reported disputes over love affairs as the cause. As such, romantic rejection or romantic loss accounted for the single largest cause of depression or disputes with parents amongst the unmarried. Moreover, as I suggested in the previous chapter, any act of suicidal behaviour committed by a young unmarried person tended to be assumed, *a priori*, as being caused by some kind of love problem. Not only did suicidal youth report love problems as being the cause of their suicidal behaviours, then, but in many ways love problems were always assumed to lead to suicidal behaviours.

In this chapter, I investigate the relationship between romantic relationships and suicidal behaviour. By romantic rejection I mean amorous advances turned down (including unrequited love); by romantic loss, the break-up of a love affair. The chapter begins with an analysis of what romantic love means in Madampe, and how that meaning at once places enormous pressure on local youth to succeed in their romantic relationships but without, and this is the significant point, many good chances of doing so. Within this, I describe how romantic relations acquire a sense of inevitability and morality akin to – and of course, in many cases preceding – real kin relationships. I then

go on to discuss four commonly recognised obstacles that stand in the way of youth pursuing romantic relationships, and the complications that these cause. In so doing I will illustrate the main of many reasons for why youth face problems in romantic relationships, as well as highlight the fact that arranged marriage and cousin marriage have become so uncommon today that the sanctions against romantic love seem even more peculiar. Finally, I will present a series of detailed case studies that illustrate how youth overcome these obstacles and contradictions to begin love affairs that culminate in marriage, or else fail when the obstacles and contradictions prove too big to surmount.

As the chapter progresses, evidence will suggest that the biggest barrier standing between males and females are those erected by the social position of young unmarried people in Madampe society. The greater risk of suicidal behaviour found amongst females will be seen to be expressly linked with how their position restricts what I have called relational power, and the range of possible responses to problems that are available to them. At the same time, it will become clear how references to romantic problems relate to wider discourses concerning issues such as social change and the breakdown of tradition. In this sense, reports of romantic love problems tend to exist within the popular social change theory of suicidal behaviour I have already discussed, and notions of sexual frustration I discuss in chapter 8.2.

6.1. The meaning of romantic love in Madampe: 'one life, one love'

Ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari

There are arguments in anthropology that claim romantic love is a western concept (for a brief review see: Jankowiak & Fischer 1992), and those informants in Madampe who subscribed to the Kandyan model of kinship seemed to agree with that theory. However, few of my informants nevertheless also thought that romantic love as it was experienced amongst Sinhalese was experienced as it was amongst 'Westerners.' Perhaps with the knowledge of North European and American divorce rates in mind (Parry 2001), most maintained that Sinhalese love was unique. Its defining characteristic, they argued, is the belief in 'one life, one love' (*ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari*): that in the world there is only one person with whom one can hope to have a truly loving relationship, and if that person is missed or lost, a second will never come along. In this sense, romantic relationships were perceived to be *a priori* inevitable, at least in an ideal sense. Some further argued that this one person is also that person with whom one has their first romantic relationship, which for most is experienced sometime during their school or university career. As such, the belief in its extreme form maintained that the first love is also the one true love.

The belief in *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari* creates plenty of scope for failure in romantic love, which of course is the point. Madampe romantics, like their eighteenth century European counterparts, rarely see the path of true love as running smooth, but instead as being marred by disappointment and suffering (*dukkha*). Indeed, a relationship

that exhibits these characteristics is usually assumed to be more romantic and more loving than one that does not. The reason most often given for this is that romantic relationships able to withstand obstacles and setbacks are presumably stronger and truer – and thus ‘more’ inevitable – than those that are not put to the test. Although this assumption can probably be found the world over, in Madampe romantic rejection and loss is assumed to have particularly fatal consequences. If the first person with whom one falls in love is also the one person one can only truly love – and, of course, can only truly love you – then any obstacle to realising that love is an obstacle to happiness in life in general.

The Sinhalese belief in *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari* is also significant for another reason. On the one hand, positive images of the belief dominates the popular media (television dramas, music, and trashy literature especially) and this helps to reinforce the desirability and acceptability of love in the minds of the romantically inspired. But on the other hand, romantic love is so roundly rejected as being either desirable or acceptable by parents, school teachers, and other adults, that youth cannot act out what they, their friends, and their favourite TV soap stars, musicians, and fictional heroes and heroines are advocating.

Together with the social bases and consequences of these objections, which I shall describe fully below, youth in Madampe pursue romantic love in an environment riddled with contradictions, obstacles, and challenges standing in their way. While all this does consequently make the troublesome enterprise of romance seem even more romantic, it also means that youth often face failure in love even after considerable investment has been made in trying to make it work. I argue that it is this discrepancy – the amount of

emotional investment versus level of emotional return – that drives ‘ordinary’ broken hearts towards suicidal behaviour. It is also the discrepancy between what youth want and what they are allowed to do that makes suicidal behaviour for some an effective dialogic response.

Rajiv and Gayani

Take the case, for example, of my good friend Rajiv, aged 23, who was involved in a romantic relationship with a woman called Gayani, aged 21. Rajiv and Gayani, both *goyigama* Buddhists of middle-class backgrounds, had met while studying at Central College, Madampe’s premier state school, when Rajiv was 18 and Gayani was 16. After some period of courtship, the process of which I shall describe below, the couple began a meaningful romantic relationship although one that never, as far as Rajiv would admit, turned into a sexual relationship.

An unconsummated and even non-tactile relationship outside of marriage is ordinary amongst Madampe youth. Perhaps as a consequence they focus their sexual desire (*lingika āśāva*) into an intense expectation and pressure on the platonic aspects of their relationships. This focus is directed through such a narrow lens, however, that fairly mundane aspects of their interactions are blown into exaggerated proportions, and imbued with hefty meanings and expectations (as Madampe youth are the first to admit). In relation to Rajiv and Gayani, as with most of my friends, the pressures put to bear on their relationship meant that high hopes for success in romantic love were based on very little tangible evidence of attachment at all.

While at school, the relationship between Rajiv and Gayani was conducted in the

utmost secrecy. When students are caught having affairs by teachers they can, and often are, expelled. For this reason, the relationship between Rajiv and Gayani during school hours, which constituted the main opportunity for the two to see each other, was conducted in the few brief moments available during break times when teachers backs were turned. However, due to similar levels of parental surveillance, the couple also rarely had opportunities to meet outside of school. While some youth who are neighbours are able to arrange 'coincidental' meetings while out running errands in their village, Rajiv lived at Suduwella and Gayani lived at Kuliapitiya, thirty miles to the east. As such, the relationship between the two was conducted almost entirely through snatched meetings to and from school, when Gayani walked between the Madampe New Town bus stand and Central College.

For Rajiv, who subscribed strongly to *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari*, Gayani was his first – and so only possible – love. However, the lives of youth are rarely established enough to maintain serious commitments with lovers, as other commitments inevitably stand in the way. For Rajiv such an obstacle to the continued realisation of his desire (*āśāva*) was an expectation to attend university. When Rajiv was 21, he thus enrolled on an engineering course at Peradeniya, several hundred miles away in the Kandyan hills. Because Rajiv had to live on campus during the week, the opportunities he had for meeting Gayani dwindled practically to nothing. Just one window was open to him, and this was during his weekly commute home on Friday evenings or return to Peradeniya on Sunday afternoons. Because he had to change buses at Kuliapitiya, Rajiv and Gayani tried to engineer a meeting during that time. Unfortunately, more often than not some extraneous factor – a family function, a study commitment, or simply a late bus – meant

the two rarely met even during this time. In fact, over the year of their relationship when I was in Madampe, Rajiv and Gayani averaged meeting less than once per month.

Understandably, Rajiv was always worried that the strain of these infrequent meetings would spell the end of their relationship. But at the same time, he exalted the virtue of 'Sri Lankan love' (*Lankawa ardari*). 'It doesn't matter how often we meet,' Rajiv would try to convince me (and maybe himself) 'Sri Lankan girls are innocent [*ahinsakayi*]. Therefore, when they fall in love they do not end their love – whatever the problems!' For Rajiv, like for many of my male friends, the strength of his relationship with Gayani was built on the obstacles that lay in the way of it. The contradiction this led to, however, was that Rajiv ended up investing more and more in less and less.

By his second year at university, Gayani had enrolled at the Open University in Colombo, and so Rajiv tried to engineer new meetings with her there. These were fewer still. The increased distance in time and space between the couple led to an emotional distance between them, and the relationship floundered. Upon travelling to Colombo for one of his meetings, he claimed that Gayani all but ignored him when he arrived and stayed talking with her friends. This may have been expected had their relationship been young, but as it was many years old, such a snub could only mean one thing. Dismayed, Rajiv returned home to Madampe. Several weeks later, the relationship was dead.

Would Rajiv and Gayani have stayed together if they had been allowed to meet openly, or consummate their love? Maybe, maybe not: many childhood sweethearts simply out-grow each other, and many couples suffer from the pressure of long distance relationships regardless of whether they have had sex or not. Countless more relationships end for a myriad of other, lesser, reasons. But my point here is a little

different. As many Madampe youth complained, they are not given any time or space together to know if a relationship between them will work in the first place. They complain bitterly about the social pressures put upon them that stop them from meeting, and they think that their parental oppositions are often misplaced, and even hypocritical, as many of them actually married in love but nevertheless try to deny the same for their children.

6.2. Four obstacles in the path of love

The first obstacle: the 'cultural unsuitability' of romantic love

The first obstacle standing in the path of love is derived from what I have called the *purāṇa* view of the Sinhalese past. It is most clearly seen in the different ways that youth talk about – or rather carefully deny – their romantic relationships, and thus signal the ambiguous moral status of romantic love in Madampe society. Upon first meeting my unmarried informants in Madampe, they all denied two things: first, having any romantic attachments; and second, amongst males, drinking alcohol. These denials, manifestations of female 'innocence' and male 'honesty,' lasted for literally months. Amongst my closest friends they did not disappear until almost twelve weeks into fieldwork when the 'façade of respectability' they had carefully constructed could no longer be maintained, and I had gained a level of trust with them. Having given-up the pretence to shame, in fact, the rest of fieldwork with my unmarried male friends and 'Colombo girl' and 'garment girl' female friends rarely departed from the issue of romantic love, so central was it to their

lives. My female 'village girl' friends, on the other hand, steadfastly maintained the façade, careful as they were to display their innocent characters.

The initial rejection of interest in romance was also accompanied by the use of accusations of such interest against their friends, and this continued even after dropping the façade of respectability. In a way that rather reminded me of my pre-pubescent days, male youth found teasing others of having a 'connection' with a girl the height of hilarity, and a good insult to match. As such, my informants lived in a peculiar world in which romance was both highly desired but known to be immoral, and so in most situations absolutely denied.

The basis of this unsteady relationship to romantic love was in part derived from the social world in which my informants lived. For many people in Madampe, romantic love smacks of Western cultural influence and is seen to be irresponsible when compared to proposal marriage, which in turn is seen to be a responsible contract that is only agreed upon with kin and caste interests in mind. For others, however, romantic love was seen to be native to Sinhalese culture but nevertheless irresponsible, for the same reasons. Finally, still others saw romantic love as both native and perfectly responsible, so long as the two lovers were matched in terms of their backgrounds, futures, and characters.

Attitudes towards romantic love

In my marriage attitudes survey,³² I tried to assess the extent to which romantic love was considered socially unacceptable or acceptable. Results obtained (presented in full in

³² See Appendix 6 for full details. The marriage attitudes survey was inspired by and based on a survey designed by Chris Fuller (2005, unpublished).

Appendix 6) suggested that different approaches to and understandings of romantic love were expressed by people of all ages and backgrounds. Factors that did apparently make an impact upon attitudes to romance and marriage were based around meta-groupings such as marital status and village of residence (Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella), creating large blocks of people within and between the two communities who held different opinions that could, and did, come into conflict. Interestingly, I could find no statistically significant differences on the grounds of caste or occupational class. As such, a great deal of disagreement seemed to reign in Madampe over just how socially acceptable romantic love was.

Love marriage vs. proposal marriage

Participants in my survey were first asked whether they thought romantic love marriage, the goal of romantic love relationships in *ekayi jeevati*, *ekayi ardari*, were more desirable than proposal marriages (Figure 6.1). At Kachchakaduwa, significantly greater numbers of unmarried than married respondents thought romantic love marriages were more desirable than arranged marriages. If, then, unmarried participants are representative of the 'youth' population and married participants are representative of the 'adult' population, a clear and obvious gap exists between what youth and adults in that village think. Furthermore, while youths may be said to be in general agreement over how they think about marriage, adults were in general disagreement over what they think. Half of the adult population thought one way about the matter, while the other half thought another way.

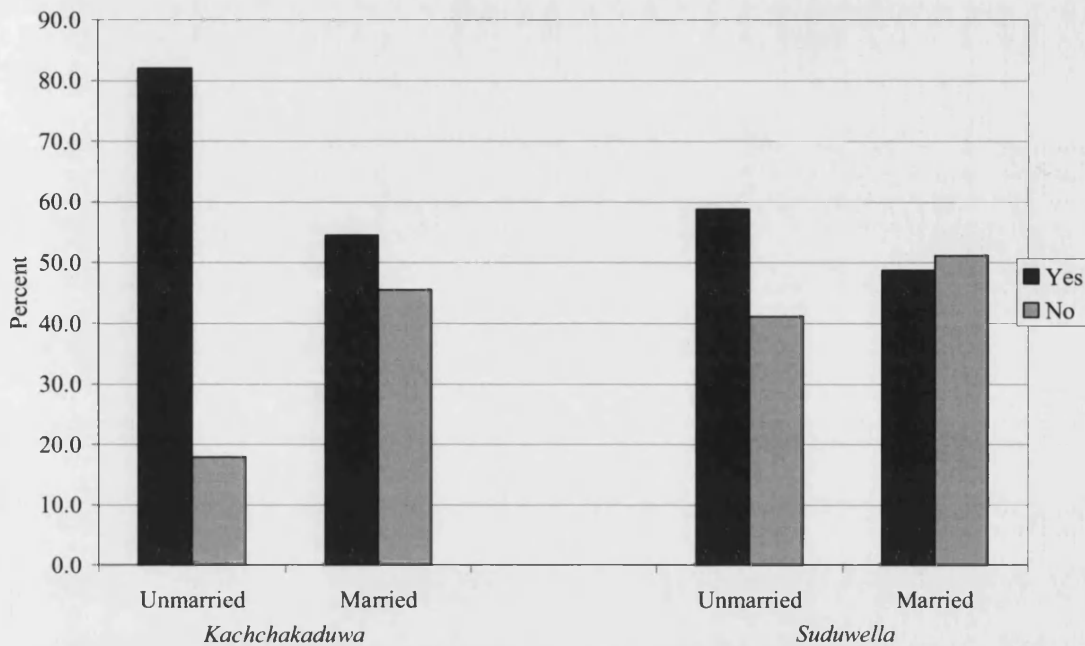


Figure 6.1: Are romantic love marriages more desirable than proposal marriages?

At Suduwella, on the other hand, no such difference was found. Youth and adults were in equal disagreement *amongst themselves* over the desirability of love marriage. Slightly more than half of unmarried people thought love marriage was more desirable, and so were slightly less than half of married people. This finding is surprising, at least so far as the youth response is concerned, but may be due to issues of land ownership and kinship discussed in Chapter 4. The preference for proposal marriage – or, perhaps amongst the youth population, expectation that proposal marriages are more desirable – relates to the fact marriages are contracted with dowry (*dāvādda*) and land inheritance in mind (see Chapter 7.1 for further information on marriage and land inheritance within Suduwella *gē*). On the other hand, the similar rates love marriage in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa complicates this suggestion.

The overall sense that the data gives, then, is a general lack of agreement within

the two villages about the desirability of romantic love marriage. It can be postulated that disputes over the desirability of romantic love are likely to arise in this context of overall general confusion. If, as was indeed the case in this instance, Rajiv's parents were agreeable to the idea of romantic love but Gayani's parents were against it, Rajiv could very well feel within his rights to accuse his parents of unfair conservatism and stubbornness concerning the issue. In fact, as shall be shown below, such lack of agreement amongst parents often provides the material support for eloping couples, as they have the opportunity of residing with the one set of parents who are not in objection to a love marriage.

Status of romantic love

In Chapter 4.3, I suggested that love marriage (serial monogamy) was probably far more common in pre-modern Sri Lanka than people today admit. The marriage attitudes survey investigated people's attitudes towards the 'cultural suitability' of romantic love in Madampe society. The first item asked whether romantic love was a 'western imposition' (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). At Kachchakaduwa, around three-quarters to two-thirds of unmarried and married respondents agreed that it was. At Suduwella, just over one-half of respondents agreed that it was. Unmarried people at Kachchakaduwa were significantly more likely to agree that romantic love is a western imposition than unmarried people at Suduwella. On the other hand, the same number (around two-thirds) of married people at both villages agreed that it was.

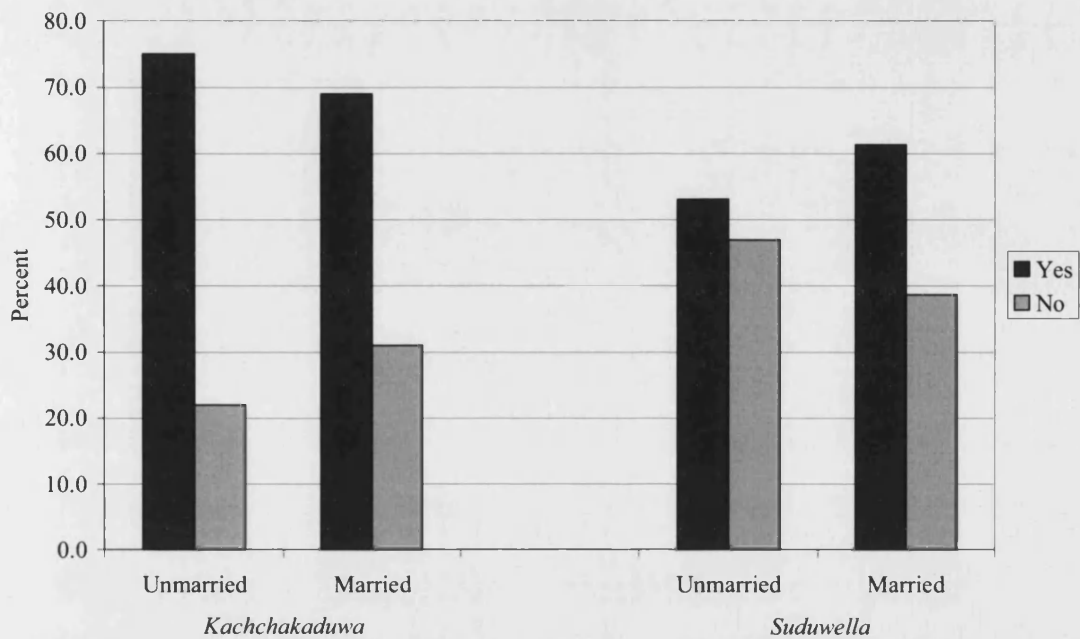


Figure 6.2: *Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella* – Is romantic love a western imposition?

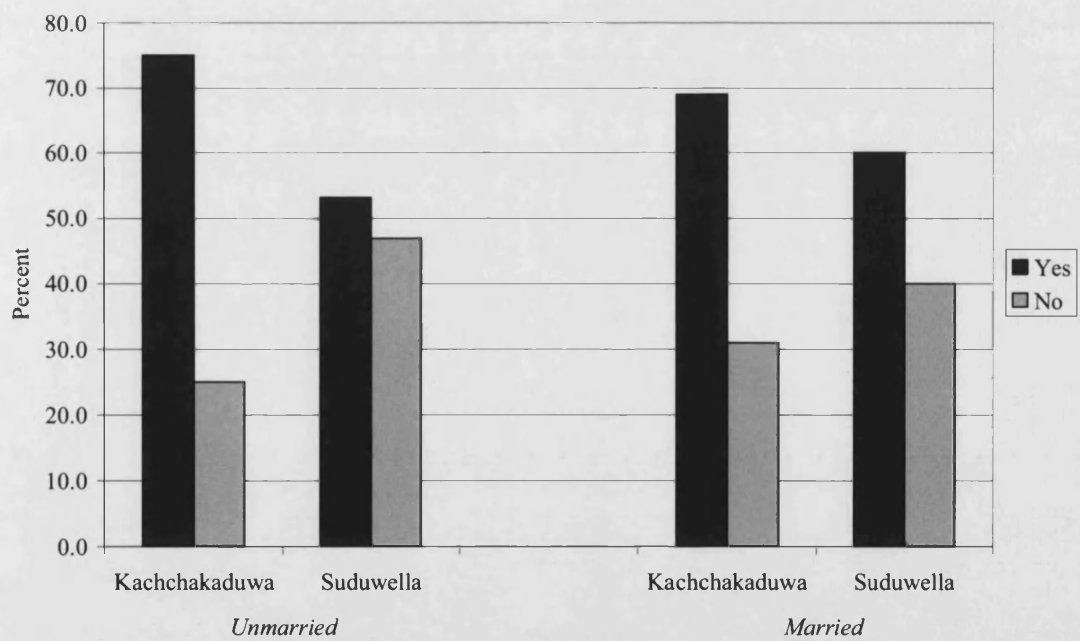


Figure 6.3: *Unmarried & married* – Is romantic love a western imposition?

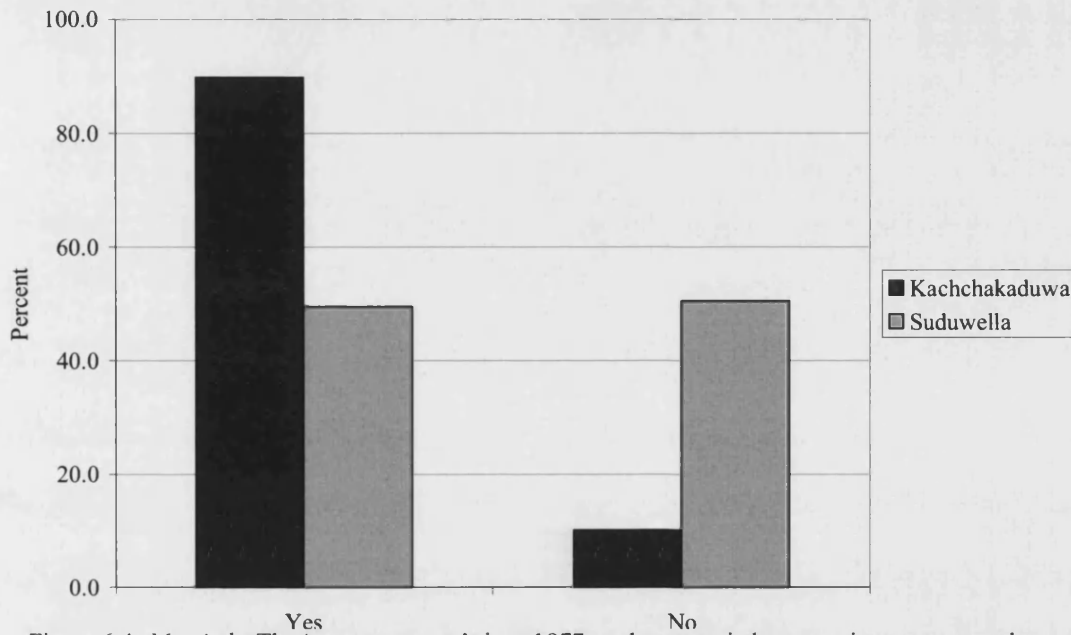


Figure 6.4: *Married* – The 'open economy' since 1977 made romantic love marriage more popular.

Again, what I find most interesting in these data is the general lack of agreement over the roots of romantic love in Madampe society. At Kachchakaduwa there appears to be a surer link between westernisation (social change) and romantic love than at Suduwella, where the link is considered more tenuous.

The same finding holds for the relationship between the economic changes of '1977' and the subsequent spread of western cultural behaviours. Kachchakaduwa people were significantly more likely to blame the popularity of romantic love on capitalism than were Suduwella people (Figure 6.4). It seems that, even while they have love marriages, Kachchakaduwa people rally behind a political critique of romantic love characteristic of the high-caste, middle-class, and 'traditionalist' constitution of that village, Suduwella people divide their loyalties between a 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' critique, which is of course characteristic of its mixed-caste and working-class base (although not, I have argued of its kinship structure, which more closely resembles the

‘traditional’ Kandyan *variga*).

Another item asked whether, regardless its foreign or native roots, romantic love is ‘suitable’ in Sinhalese *sanskritiya* today (Figures 6.5 and 6.6). Kachchakaduwa people displayed greater adherence to a traditionalist critique than Suduwella people did over this item. At Kachchakaduwa, unmarried and married people agreed in the majority that it was not suitable, while at Suduwella smaller majorities agreed with them. Both unmarried and married Kachchakaduwa people were significantly more likely to reject the cultural suitability of romantic love than their Suduwella counterparts.

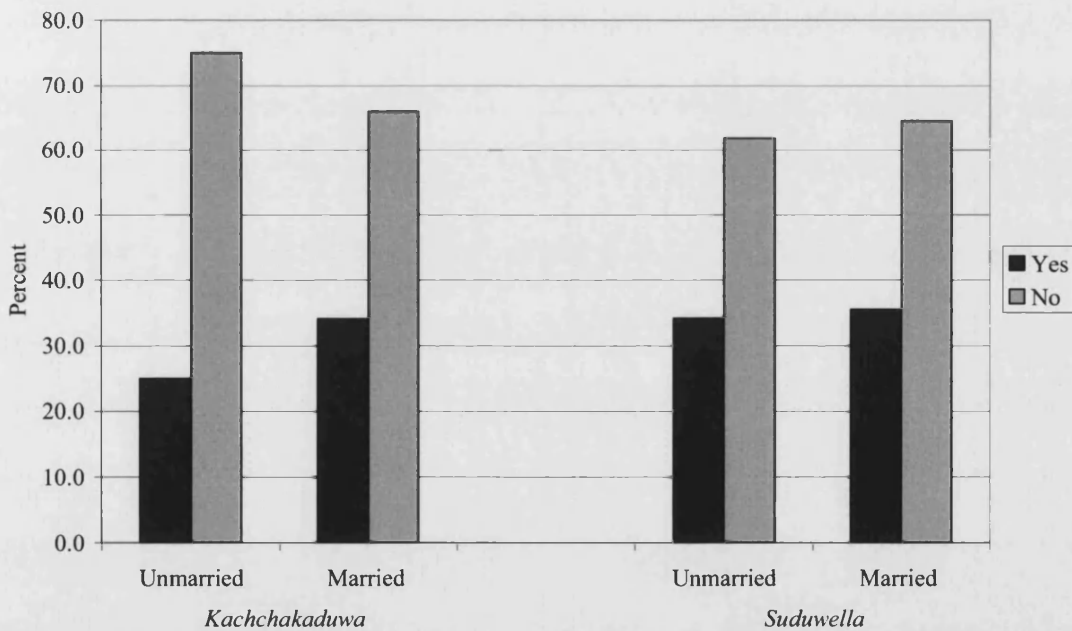


Figure 6.5: *Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella* – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture?

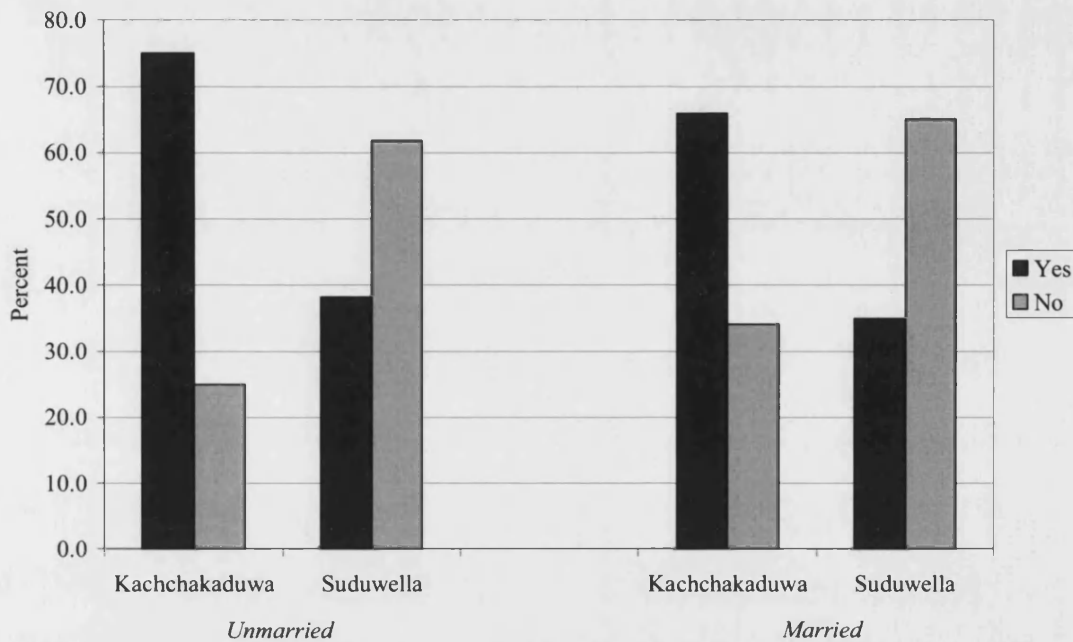


Figure 6.6: *Unmarried & married* – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture?

Further evidence of a general lack of consistent agreement over the moral evaluation of romantic love is provided by these findings, especially when it is recalled that at Kachchakaduwa greater numbers of unmarried respondents thought romantic love marriages were desirable than married respondents. Nevertheless, what these last data suggest is that unmarried Kachchakaduwa people are at least aware of the unsuitability of their desire or respect for romantic love. With personal wants and needs in contradiction with village expectations, the extent to which the emotional lives of youth suffer as a result is an important question.

The second obstacle: what youth look for in a romantic partner

This last finding leads me to the second obstacle in the path of love, which is what youth look for in a romantic partner. Whether or not youth or parents happen to agree with the

suitability of romantic love, enough ambiguity exists to ensure that when such marriages do take place the actors involved strive to ensure they occur under the most agreeable circumstances. One central means of doing this is to choose lovers of whom parents would not object. In addition to equal caste, class, and religious status, the character of the individual must be good too.

Attitudes towards personal qualities in lovers

In general, unmarried males and females in Madampe look for similar qualities in a spouse, although the way that they talk about them does differ. The marriage attitudes survey asked unmarried people what kind of qualities they looked for in a partner (Figures 6.7 and 6.8). At Kachchakaduwa, there was no statistically significant relationship between sex and the qualities that youth look for in a romantic partner. At Suduwella, there was a moderate relationship. In particular, significantly greater numbers of Suduwella females looked for a good job in males, whilst males looked for physical attractiveness in females.

The single most popular quality amongst youth was that of a good character. This quality received the highest majority of support amongst males and females in both villages (see Tables A6.14 and A6.15 in Appendix 6). It may be wondered why, of all qualities, a good character would not be desirable for all Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa youth. Beyond possible biases created by misunderstanding the question or false responses, it may be that youth are reacting against the constraints of character that I discussed in Chapter 4.5. After all, a good character is synonymous with particular qualities that when found in males can actually hinder success in their economic

endeavours, and when found in females can hinder their pursuit of romantic relationships and other public or social activities. Put simply, moralistic youth are probably not much fun to be around.

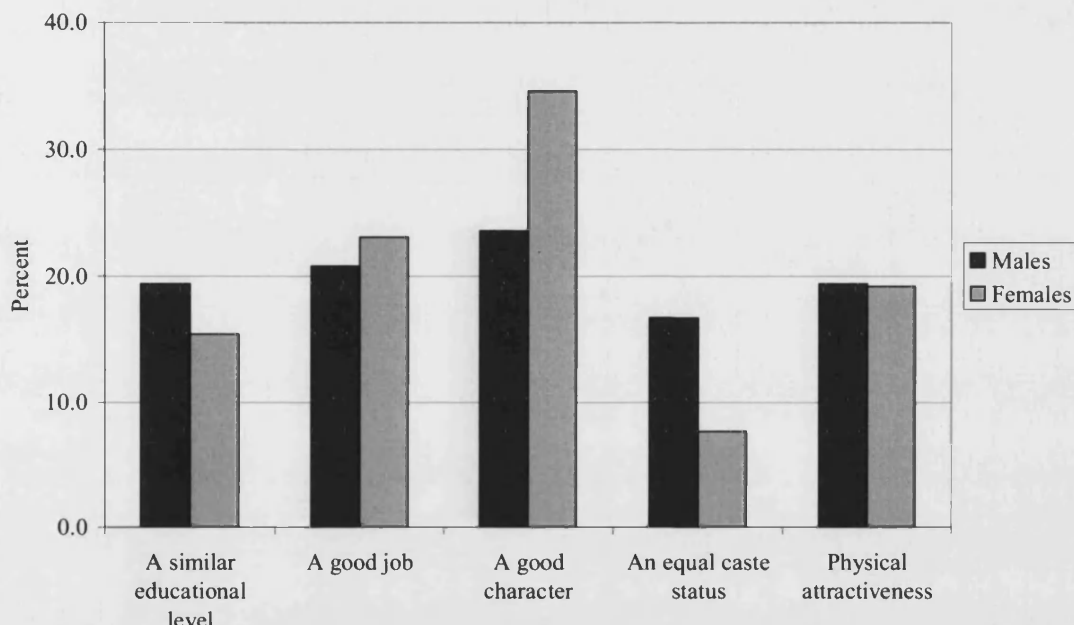


Figure 6.7: What Kachchakaduwa youth look for in a romantic partner

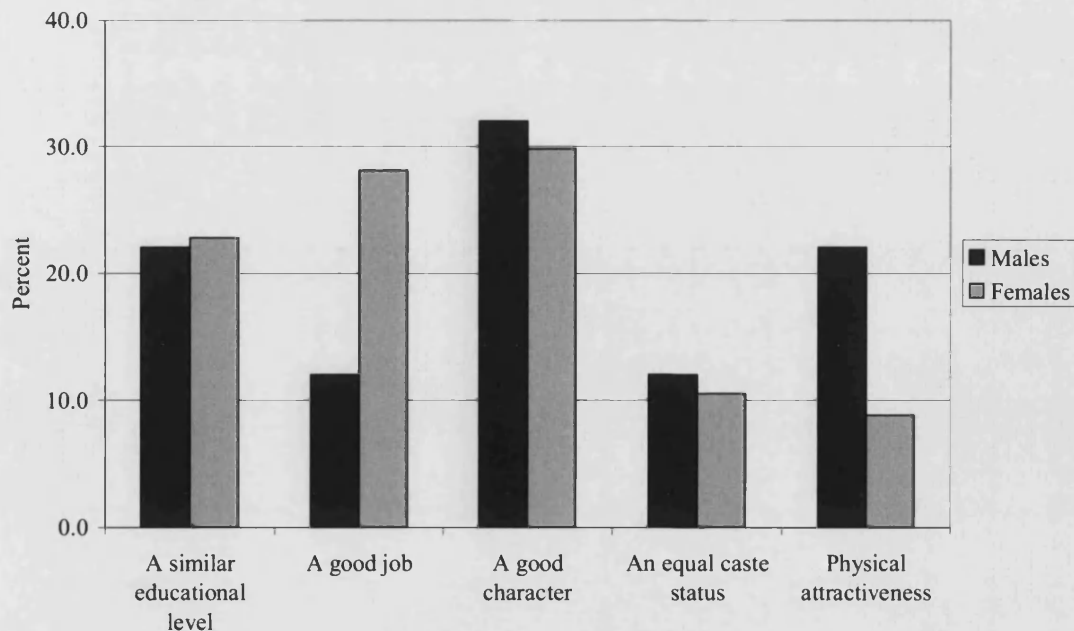


Figure 6.8: What Suduwella youth look for in a romantic partner

Effect of character on courting

To recall, males must divert attention from their dishonest behaviours and at least pretend to prefer 'village girls,' while females must continuously prove their innocence and at least pretend to prefer 'honest' males. As Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988: 199) have also noted, herein resides a contradiction, and it is this that helps create a second obstacle to romantic love amongst Madampe youth. As males must only avoid falsification of their assumed honesty but females must actively prove their innocence, romantic advances usually only take place in one direction. Village girls are not women who can openly express their interest in having a romantic relationship, and nor indeed are they women whom one can easily meet in order to have any kind of relationship, romantic or otherwise. As such, Madampe youth have reached an almost stalemate in the kinds of relationships they can have with each other. A man who desires a romantic relationship with a 'village girl' is barred from meeting her because of the restrictions surrounding her behaviour, while a woman interested in a man who fears that he may prefer 'village girls' cannot make her intentions overtly plain, as this would contradict her claim to innocence.

To get around this problem, youth in Madampe go to extraordinary lengths to show an interest in, meet, and court one another. On the surface, these lengths appear to dictate that males 'chase' while females play 'hard to get,' a somewhat lazy opposition that I shall use for convenience. Of course, the distinction obscures a far more complex set of relationships that utilise the resources available for each sex when pursuing romantic love (as well as other social freedoms) to its fullest, while striving to remain within the bounds of what constitutes acceptable behaviour for each. Below I will present a number of case studies that indicate this clearly. It is also a distinction that is sometimes

reversed, so that females chase and males choose.

Overall, however, males chase more than females. As males must only avoid falsification of their assumed honest character, 'first moves' towards declaring romantic interest usually starts with them. To this end, a male who harbours desires for a female will be prepared to chase her for quite some time – and maybe suffer a series of rejections – before she may even hint at reciprocating the interest. It is often the case that males try to reduce the time he has to follow the chase by making allusions to marriage. Although such proposals are rarely taken seriously and certainly at this stage do not amount to a promise to marry, it is hoped that moves towards stating serious intent will encourage her to drop the pretence to shame and innocence and allow a more intimate discourse to follow.

The third obstacle: parental opposition to romantic love

Attitudes towards arranged marriage and love marriage

Parental opposition to a love affair was a common obstacle encountered by youth in the cases discussed above. The marriage attitudes survey asked participants whether they thought parents and children were in agreement over which kind of marriage – arranged or love – children should have (Figures 6.9 and 6.10). The survey asked this question from the perspective of both parents and children, and here I shall analyse the data according to the marital status (by which I infer 'youth' and 'parent/adult' statuses respectively) of participants.

At Kachchakaduwa, large majorities of unmarried and married participants were

in agreement that youth prefer love marriage. However, they were in similar agreement that parents' prefer arranged marriage. At Suduwella, all unmarried participants and a large majority of married participants thought children preferred love marriage. Just less than two-thirds of unmarried and married participants thought parents preferred arranged marriage. As such, both Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella people assumed that children and parents are in disagreement over which kind of marriage – arranged or love – their children should have.

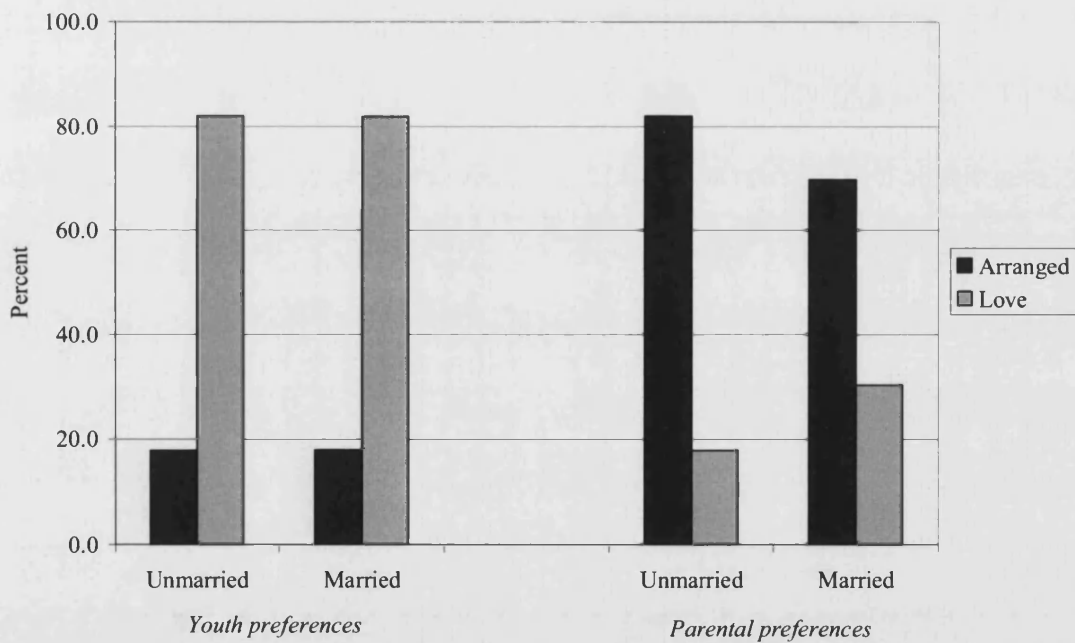


Figure 6.9: Kachchakaduwa – The kind of marriage youth prefer for themselves and parents prefer for their children.

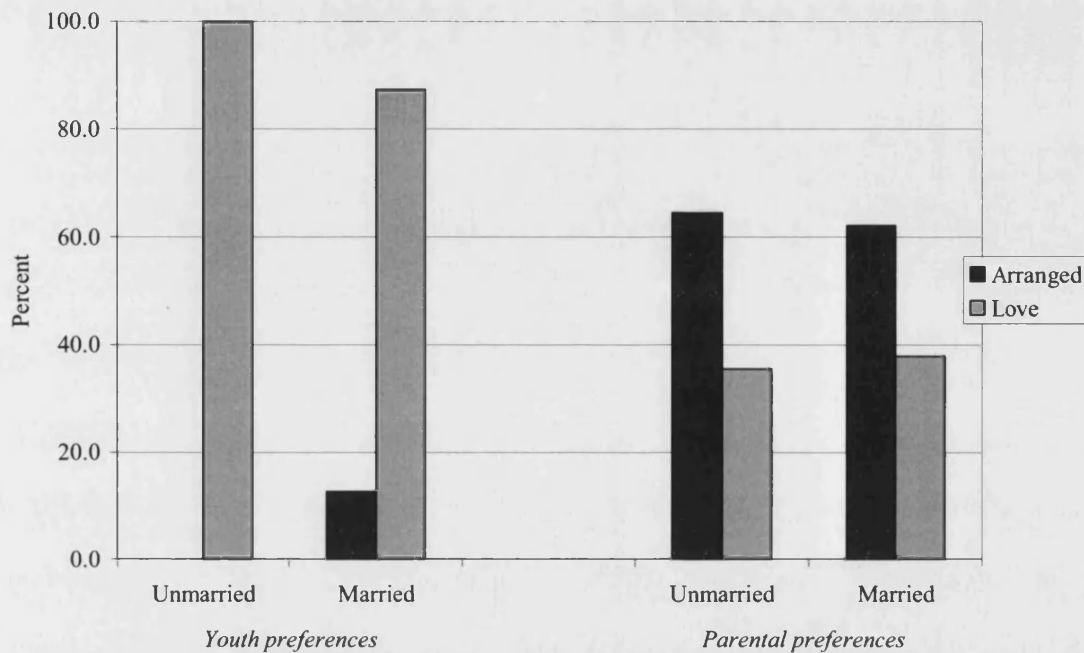


Figure 6.10: *Suduwella* – The kind of marriage youth prefer for themselves and parents prefer for their children

The marriage attitudes survey also asked participants to identify the specific grounds upon which parents might disapprove of romantic love marriage (Figure 6.11). As found above, the first striking feature of the data is the overall lack of agreement over most items. Indeed, only one item obtained high levels of support from participants, and this concerned caste and class. At both Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella, more than two-thirds of all respondents agreed – or, in fact, *inaccurately assumed* (data presented in Chapter 4.3, Tables 4.9 and 4.10 suggests that the majority of love marriages are caste endogamous) – that issues of caste and class are not taken into account. Beyond this objection, however, very little overall agreement was found. Smaller majorities thought that parents are better at choosing marriage partners than their children. Finally, large minorities thought that spouses might turn out to be different after marriage (as family members will not have researched his or her background for evidence of undesirable

qualities).

On four items, however, Suduwella people were in more agreement (although they actually disagreed with the problem suggested itself) than Kachchakaduwa people. Significantly smaller numbers of Suduwella respondents thought that the problem of unknowns extended to the spouses family also. Suduwella people were also significantly less likely to think that parents would not support children who married in love, that romantic love marriages are irresponsible, or that they are based on lust and not love. Each of these findings can, I submit, be related to the lower caste and class status of Suduwella, aspiring classes notwithstanding, where issues of propriety over romantic love are less significant than at high-caste/high-class Kachchakaduwa (assuming, however, that the caste and class of lovers is matched).

Interestingly, unmarried and married respondents at both villages were in agreement over the reasons for disapproval of love marriage. This suggests, as might well be expected, that youth are aware of the objections their parents and other adults have against romantic relationships. Such awareness can only add success to the strategies that youth employ to convince their parents that the person they have fallen in love with is both appropriate for them and their family.

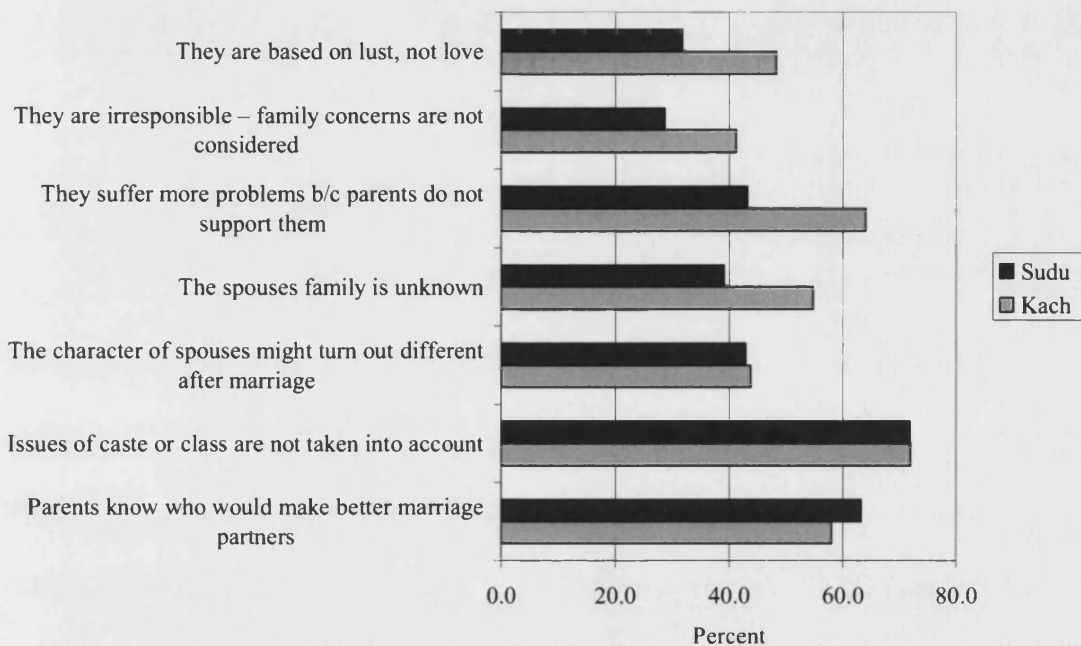


Figure 6.11: *Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella* – Reasons parents may disapprove of love marriage.

The contradictory context of parental opposition: decline of proposal marriages

Youth are afraid of parents discovering their romantic relationships, but are also aware of the contradictory context in which this opposition exists. Romantic love marriage has become the dominant type in Madampe in recent decades (see Chapter 4.3, Figures 4.2 and 4.3), and it is not uncommon for some parents to deny their children a love marriage when they themselves actually had the same. When parents object to their children’s’ love affairs, three options other than submission are open to youth: (1) try to secretly carry it on; (2) try to change their parents’ minds by arguing with them or by committing self-harm; or (3) try to elope.

The first option is likely to be very difficult because when parents discover relationships they often restrict their child’s movements, thus reducing his or her chances of meeting their lover. (I did not hear of a single case where a parent suggested

possession and exorcism as the response.) The second option certainly does happen very often, and one parent complained to me: 'We have to be very careful when telling our children not to have love affairs; otherwise they might go and jump in the well!' The third option, however, probably happens less often than self-harm. Elopement requires enormous capital for it to be a success, and most young unmarried people simply did not have the money, resources, or status required to make it work. As the marriage attitudes survey revealed, more than three-quarters of unmarried Kachchakaduwa people think love marriages do not work because parents do not support them. If elopement is the ultimate expression of romantic devotion, it is also the ultimate violation of parental writ, not to mention the surest way of excluding oneself from any future economic or political capital that parents give their children.

Not only this, however, but elopers also have the law against them. Police have the power to detain lovers aged less than 18 years, and charge males with statutory rape. Some parents actively use rape charges to put a stop to the affairs of sons and daughters, and to find and bring back elopers. Indeed, the use of police in this way has apparently become so popular that the Sri Lankan government considered reducing the age of consent from 18 to 16 years. Significantly, in these cases it is never the young woman herself who makes such accusations but her parents.³³ Consider, for example, the

³³ To avoid being misunderstood, let me add further caveats here. The cases where police have been asked to follow up statutory rape charges upon which I am making my argument constitute only a small fraction of all rape cases that I reviewed. The vast majority of rape allegations are made, as it were, with real reason, after real crimes have been committed. I am merely talking about those charges that fall within the popular Sinhalese preoccupation of making false claims against one another in order to achieve other, entirely unrelated, ends. This is not to say that all, or even a significant minority, of rape allegations made by Sinhalese women are in fact spurred on by parents or these motives.

following few cases that were recorded by Madampe Police Station.

Usha, who was aged 15, had been having an affair with a 19 year-old man called Jegan for three years. Both Usha's and Jegan's parents knew about the affair, and had tried to put an end to it on several occasions. Usha's parents had even withdrawn her from school for the past twelve months in an attempt to prevent the couple meeting. Nevertheless, the two continued to meet at every slight opportunity.

One weekend, Usha and her parents visited the Hindu temple Munnesaram at Chilaw. Usha had informed Jegan of their visit, and arranged to meet him there. The couple hoped that the throng of worshippers would provide them a cover under which they could elope. However, when Usha tried to find Jegan she got lost. With night having fallen, she asked for help from three men she met. These men took her to a house at Udappu, a small village an hour north of Chilaw. From there Usha contacted Jegan who subsequently took her to his home at Grandpass. However, Jegan's parents objected to Usha's elopement and contacted the police. Jegan was arrested, but later released without charge. Usha was returned to Madampe.

Rislina, aged 17, had been having an affair with a 25 year-old man called Rameez for over a period of four months. Rameez had promised Rislina that he would marry her and, for this reason, Rislina consented to sex. Two weeks prior to the charges being made, Rameez informed Rislina that due to the objections of her parents the two would be unable to marry. He had as a result decided to marry another. In the meantime, Rislina's parents, who had discovered the pair had engaged in sex, reported Rameez to the police.

Following Rameez's internment, Rislina became very upset and stopped going to school for several weeks. Eventually she attempted suicide by hanging but was found by

a family member, and survived. Rislina was taken to Chilaw Base Hospital where she was treated for depression by clinicians at CMHC. According to her file, Rislina admitted to continued suicidal ideation and told staff that she felt no point in living if Rameez was not going to marry her. As a consequence of her depression and suicide attempt, Rislina's parents agreed to the marriage with Rameez, which was subsequently arranged.

Lakshmi, aged 16, was having an affair with a 25 year-old man called Ravindra. The couple had been having an affair for several months before Lakshmi's parents discovered it. They immediately objected to the affair, not least because they claimed Ravindra was already married and was father to two small children, although he denied this. As soon as Lakshmi's parents discovered the affair, the couple eloped. They were found one month later at Ravindra's home, and Lakshmi was returned to her parents. Soon afterwards, Lakshmi eloped again. This time Lakshmi's parents reported the elopement to the police, who soon apprehended them. Ravindra was produced before the courts and was subsequently remanded in custody for six months.

Sunethra, aged 15, had been in a relationship with a 19 year-old man called Nishantha for one month. Sunethra's mother had died when she was small, and she had been reared by a maternal aunt. When Sunethra's father learnt about the affair, he strongly objected. As a result, Sunethra and Nishantha eloped and went to stay at his relative's house. The couple lived at that house for two months, during which time they had sex. When Sunethra's father learnt where she was staying, he informed the police. Nishantha was subsequently arrested and imprisoned.

As seen, elopement is considered such a crime against parents that they will report their own children to the police in an attempt to put a stop to it. The police, who are

sympathetic to the parents' point of view, readily use rape charges to catch the couple and return them home. In this case, one might ask, why do youth risk elopement at all? First, of course, many youth do not consider it a realistic option and it is for this reason they are funnelled towards self-harm and suicide. Secondly, not both sets of parents object to their children's relationships; in some cases, they provide a home and support for the errant couple. Possibly Jegan thought his parents would not object to Usha, and that was why he took her to his home.

But, thirdly, many parents eventually decide to forgive their children, at least to some extent. Although very few who elope are forgiven entirely and so welcomed back into the household with open arms, the majority are invited to benefit from the emotional and social support a family can provide, while remaining, significantly, excluded from financial support. The catalyst for such forgiveness tends to be the arrival of the first grandchild, as parents say, 'they are innocent, and should not be made to suffer the mistakes of their parents.' It is this gamble, that parents will forgive once children are born, that spurs youth on to elope. I shall revisit this theme below.

The fourth obstacle: decline of cross-cousin marriage

Social conventions that restrict socialising between males and females do not extend to related individuals, and for that reason many cousins end up falling in love. In some situations, males exploit the access they have to female relatives and rape them. At CMHC, four cases of self-harm were related to problems between what clinicians described as 'first cousins,' with three relating to romantic loss and one relating to sexual

assault. Three males aged 20, 22, and 23 years committed self-harm following the break-up of a love affair with their cousin. In the case of the 22-year-old, the parents of the male objected to the affair, although the clinician did not record why. In any case, it is interesting that the parents of the lovers – presumably siblings or at least affinal kin themselves – objected to what was until very recently a customary form of marriage. In the fourth case, a 19-year-old female committed self-harm after being raped twice by a male cousin. The patient had covered up both events, and only committed self-harm after the second event. According to the patient, she had not told anyone about the rapes because she feared her father, who was very strict, would blame her.

Customary cousin marriage practices and their modern day equivalents

In the Sinhalese kinship system, kin are classified into two groups: those whom one may not marry, and those whom one may marry. A considerable amount of literature has been produced on the Sinhalese kinship system, and it is not practical to discuss it all here. Broadly, the discussion has been over whether kinship practice follows kinship terminology, or vice versa (for a review see: Tambiah 1965). The relevance of these arguments to the present study is the apparent assumption – regardless of how often or not it arises in practice – that cross-cousins can marry if they so wish. The question of whether it is real cousins or fictive cousins who marry is of lesser importance. The reason is that cousin marriage, as either a real or a fictive type, provides some kind of legitimate route for individuals to meet and fall in love with members of the opposite sex without objection. Cousin marriage is, from the perspective of romantic youth, the inevitable romantic relationship *par excellence*. Reflecting this, some young men refer to women

they might fancy as *nāna* (female cross-cousin), thus evoking their customary right to marry anyone who occupies that office of kinship. However, as data from CMCH suggests, in some cases parents do object to cousin marriage. Moreover, anthropologists working across South Asia have noticed that preference for cousin marriage seems to have more or less disappeared (Fuller & Narasimhan 2008). If so, this route for romantic expression is being closed down.

Alongside ethnographic evidence, I collected two sets of data that provided a window onto practices of cousin marriage in Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella. I will discuss the quantitative data first, and then consider their implications in relation to the qualitative evidence. During my household census, household heads were asked if any of the marriages they reported had taken place between relatives (*nadayo*). Kinship data was also examined to locate any other cousin marriages that may have been misreported or forgotten. Throughout the twentieth century, just fourteen cousin marriages took place at Suduwella and twenty took place at Kachchakaduwa. Of those at Suduwella, two were proposal marriages and twelve were love marriages; at Kachchakaduwa, sixteen were proposal marriages and four were love marriages. Overall, then, it seems that cousin marriage has been very rare.

Furthermore, data obtained from my marriage attitudes survey suggests at least an ideological opposition to cousin marriage at both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. Minorities of participants in both communities thought cousin marriage was the preferred type today (Figures 6.12), with not many more thinking that cousin marriage was preferred in the past. Across both villages, the most popular reason to support cousin marriage was that land, business assets, and property were kept within the family

(Figures 6.13). The higher support for this argument at Suduwella is probably because, as an LDO estate, land remains an important family asset while at Kachchakaduwa landlessness means people value employment more. The most popular objection to cousin marriage was that it posed a risk of disability or illness in children (Figure 6.14). Similar findings have been recorded in studies in India (Fuller & Narasimhan 2008).

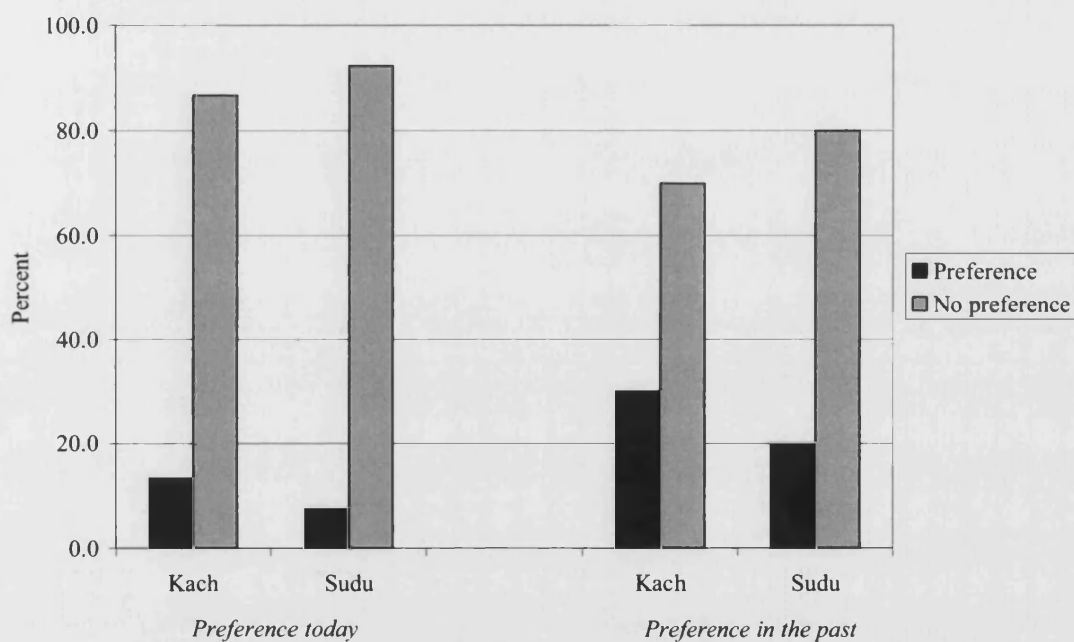


Figure 6.12: Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella – Perceived preferences for cousin marriage today and in the past.

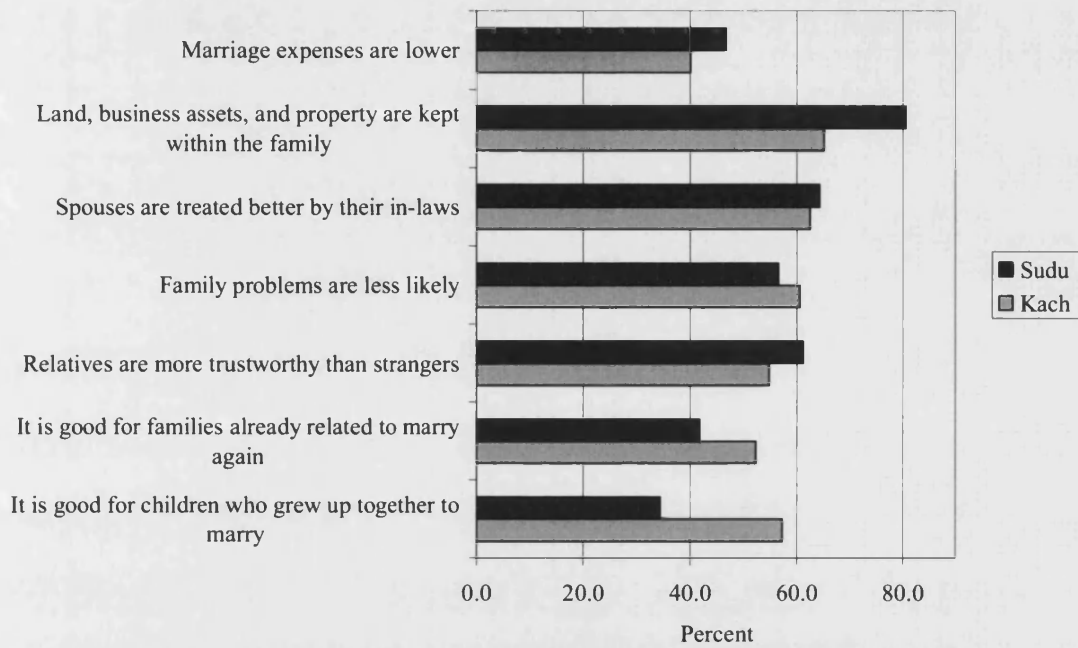


Figure 6.13: *Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella* – Reasons for the approval of cousin marriage.

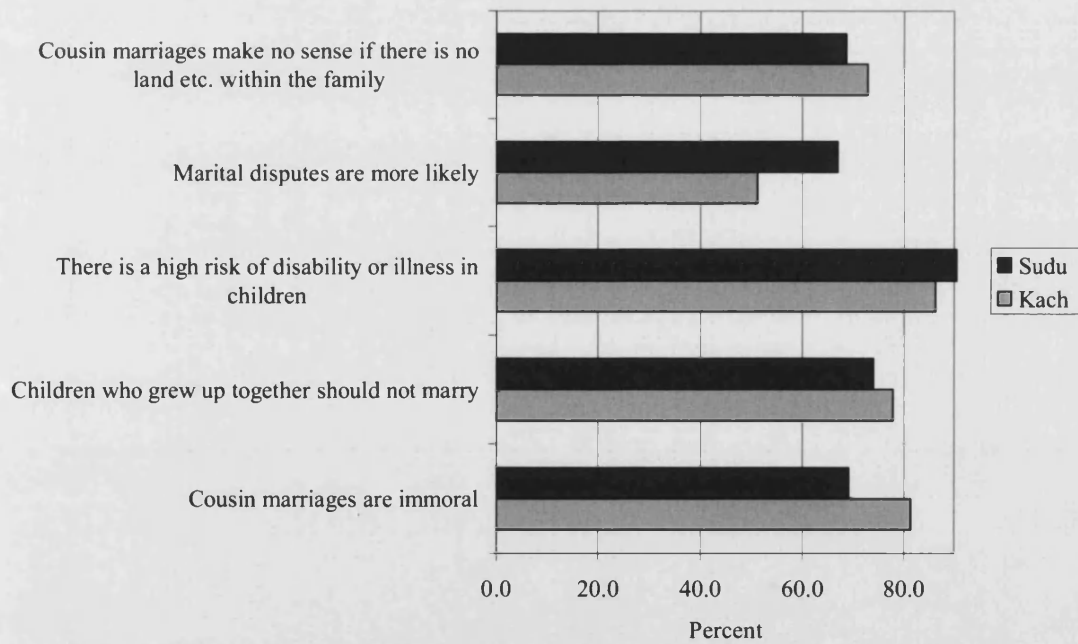


Figure 6.14: *Kachchakaduwa & Suduwella* – Reasons for the disapproval of cousin marriage.

In sum, cousin marriage may have provided a legitimate route to romantic love in the past. It may also be the case that at Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella, youth continue to fall in love with their cousins. However, the rate of cousin marriage has always appeared to be low, and it certainly is so in the present. The decline in land holdings and rise in meritocratic routes to status may have made the reasons for cousin marriage less favourable, along with concerns over close genetic relatives having children and other reasons. Nevertheless, for youth relationships with cousins still provide one space in which sexual or romantic attraction may be explored. For Jonathan Parry (personal communication, October 2008), cousin marriage would appear to exist as the pole opposite of love marriage. Indeed, some Madampe youth would seem to spurn the so-called 'Westermarck effect,' the psychological theory which states that individuals closely brought up since infancy are less likely to wish to enter into sexual relationships or marriage (Wolf 1995).

By way of illustration, I present the case of Nalin, a 22 year-old *goyigama* Sinhalese Buddhist who lived at Kachchakaduwa (I will discuss more of Nalin's love life below). Through parental involvement (or at least a purposeful lack of involvement), Nalin and his female cross-cousin, Tamara, aged 19, built a joking relationship that strayed far beyond the normal respectable bounds of male-female interaction. Had it not been for the sense of immorality today surrounding cousin marriage and Nalin's interest in other women, the relationship might well have culminated in a true love affair and marriage. From all the available evidence it seems that while the parents of the two individuals did not out-right expect a marriage to occur, they had nevertheless acted in such a way that meant one was very likely to occur.

Tamara lived at Wattawatta, a small and remote village a few miles northeast of Kachchakaduwa. Following the death of Nalin's father in October 2004, Tamara and her mother visited Nalin's house often, in order to provide company and support for the widow. It was during these many visits that I became aware that normal restrictions regulating the bounds of inter-sex socialising between males and females was completely absent between cross-cousins and that the joking relationship between them, encouraged by other family members, encompassed aspects of eroticism and suggestions of marriage.

I had always been struck by the close relationship between Nalin and Tamara. When arriving at the house, the two would greet each other with a hug, and rather than move towards the back of the house and sit with the women Tamara would remain in the reception room and sit with the men. Her sole focus and interest, however, was only Nalin, and it was towards him that she would direct her conversation and gaze. More than that, however, was the tactile relationship between the pair. Both Nalin and Tamara would allow the other to rest their hands on each other's shoulders, drape their legs across the other, and lay their heads on respective laps. At the same time, the pair would tease each other mercilessly: a behaviour that between members of the same sex is a sign of close friendship but between the sexes is only ever read as a form of flirting. On several occasions I asked Nalin outright whether he had any romantic feelings for Tamara, as all his behaviour had indicated. This suggestion he flatly denied, telling me that it was 'not good' (*hondayi nææ*) for relatives to marry.

On the first anniversary of Nalin's father's death, Nalin and his household made a trip to the local Buddhist temple to give alms. Tamara and her mother, the only other relatives in fact, also accompanied the family. After the ceremony, the party returned to

Nalin's house for their mid-day meal while Nalin and I went elsewhere so that he could make a telephone call to his then current girlfriend. After an hour or so, we returned to the house for our meal. As usual, Tamara sat with Nalin and me in the reception room, while the other women sat outside at the back. Having finished his food, Nalin then picked up his mobile telephone and started to write and send text-messages to his girlfriend. Clearly aware of this, Tamara became sulky, and as Nalin continued to ignore her and send text messages, she grew sulkier still. Eventually she started to cry and at that moment stood up and moved towards the back of the house where the other women were sitting. She did not return to the reception room for the rest of the afternoon.

Upon witnessing this chain of events, I asked Nalin what had caused Tamara to become upset, but he told me that he did not know. When I suggested that perhaps she was jealous (*irisiyāva*) of his girlfriend, Nalin agreed but then started to sulk himself! Later that week I was able to discuss the whole event with Nalin over a beer. In the looser atmosphere of the local bar, Nalin talked more freely on the matter than he had done before. Nalin admitted that a relationship beyond the normal bounds of friendship had developed between Tamara and him self – and had been in existence for quite some time – but that he was not at all committed to the idea. Nalin told me that he did not want to marry Tamara because it would be bad for their children (they might turn out disabled) but also – and probably more importantly if I know Nalin – because he did not think her to be pretty enough. I suggested that, in comparison with his other affairs that all suffered from the problem of status mismatches, he at least would not have to worry about gaining family approval. This seemed to hit home with Nalin, and it occurred to me that perhaps the two families had been engineering a match all along. I put this idea to him, but he

refused to speak any more about the matter!

In this case, it seems that a potentially romantic relationship between Nalin and Tamara was allowed to grow of its own accord. But the growth of these feelings was clearly no accident: the parents had allowed it to happen, as if they were laying the groundwork for a proposal at some point in the future. Both families were poor, and Nalin's mother was being forced to sell parts of what little land she owned to pay debts. It may be, in this case, that the marriage was aimed at pooling what little assets the family had.

The relationship between cousin marriage and romantic love is important for another reason, too. Male and female cross cousins enjoy an unconstrained relationship characterised by joking and flirtation. It seems that romantic relationships between unrelated youth perfectly resemble this relationship (c.f. Osella & Osella 1998). The process of courtship is conducted first as a joking relationship, secondly as a flirtatious relationship, thirdly as a romantic relationship, and finally, in a minority of cases, as a sexual relationship. The joking and flirtatious stages appear to be based on a template borrowed from cross-cousin relationships. It is to this issue that I now turn.

6.3. From joking to talking and flirting: the path towards romantic love

Males chase females in an environment hardly suited for it. To impress them with the honesty of their love, males are required to spend months making romantic gestures. They must also do this without drawing any attention from parents or their neighbours or friends, as to do so could risk the whole endeavour. As such, males must be able to find a

time to court a female when she is alone, but few social spaces provide this opportunity.

Most men in Madampe say they prefer women who are aged between two and five years younger than they are. Men say that with age come knowledge and experience, and so a younger (and therefore less knowledgeable and less experienced) woman is 'more easy to control.' My unmarried male friends were aged between 19 and 29, and so were interested in women or had girlfriends aged between 15 and 24. For this reason, most of my friends focused their attentions on schoolgirls. But schoolgirls made a good target for my friends' romantic endeavours for other reasons, too. The routine of the school day provided a predictable time – the journey to and from school – during which they could try to talk with girls that took their fancy.

Nalin lived on School Junction at Kachchakaduwa. Weekdays at 1.30pm the Herath Gunarathna School would close and students walk past Nalin's front door on their way home. My single (unemployed) friends would duly arrive at Nalin's house at 1.15pm and take a seat on the porch, ostensibly to play *carom* but in fact to keep an eye on the female students as they walked past, and to try to speak with them. The way that my male friends related with each other at this time was as interesting as the ways they tried to relate with the girls who walked past. While most male youth desire romantic relationships, few do not fear the repercussions that can result if their parents or other adults discover them speaking with a female. As such, my friends teased each other about the potential of having a girlfriend, referring to it as 'dangerous' or 'fearful' (*bayanakayi*), and to males who had girlfriends as 'womanisers' (*ganu pretiya*, or 'devil for women'). The teased would reject all claims of wanting or having a girlfriend, claiming to be innocent. Alternatively, they would draw fire away from themselves by pointing to a

friend and accuse him of being the one in a relationship. While all these behaviours were carried out with tongues firmly planted in cheeks, they did highlight an inevitable obstacle in the path of romantic love: parental and wider social disapproval.

Several of the young female students who walked past Nalin's porch had caught the eyes of my friends. Having teased each other of wanting to do the same, the bolder of my friends might call out to them: 'Hey, very nice! Won't you stay to talk?' knowing very well that they would probably receive no reply, but persisting all the same. The young women, for their part, usually ignored these heckles although occasionally, especially when with several of their own friends, would call out a reply. Often muffled by giggles, their responses would stay well within the parameters of shameless behaviour expected of a village girl, although not usually without a subtext of tease. 'Why should I speak with you?' would be one reply, but in a tone that requested the male to give a convincing response. 'If I spoke to you I might be sick!' was another, less gracious reply, obviously enough if no attraction was present. Other responses centred on the fact these men were unemployed, and so hardly a desirable catch: 'I only talk with men, not boys!'

I was often bemused by the nature and content of these exchanges, and in the beginning failed to see the connotations within them. My friends set great hope in them, and clearly assumed that these most fragmented elements of a joking relationship could and would blossom into romance. And, indeed, after several months of sporadic conversations of this kind with a student, one of my friends managed to establish a more romantic rapport with her. Saman had singled out Sajani for several months of joking before she replied with any more of a response than those already described. As Sajani also lived in Kachchakaduwa (at Dankale), Saman had more opportunities than just the

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end of the school day to speak with her. Nevertheless, the nature and content of Saman's 'conversations' with Sajani are likely to have been much the same at those other times as those I observed from Nalin's porch.

Saman had always been struck by Sajani's beauty, as in fact had all of his friends. As a girl with particularly pale skin, she appealed to the conventional image of beauty that most of them shared. The early content of Saman's comments congratulated Sajani on her skin tones, which Sajani, like many women in Madampe, sought to shield from the sun by walking beneath an umbrella. The first sign Sajani gave Saman that his advances were working sprang from his comments on her skin. Saman and I were alone on the porch at the time, and perhaps with the other men absent (and not realising how much Sinhalese I knew) she was emboldened to respond. 'Hey *nāna*, you are so white [*sudu*] – so beautiful [*alangkara*]!' called Saman one day, when Sajani walked past, 'You could be an actress!' Sajani turned her head at this and blushed, but did not hide behind her umbrella as she often did. 'What part would I play?' she inquired, with the suggestion of a smile. 'Oh, the beauty, of course!' responded Saman with no hesitation, as if perhaps he had hoped she would ask that question, 'With those, you'd earn a million lakh!' At this remark, which was directed at her chest, Sajani offered Saman a wicked smile, and disappeared from view.

After this exchange, and no doubt others that I did not witness, Sajani made an effort to walk past Nalin's porch at times when fewer people would be around. She would wait until the last minute to leave school and in so doing ensure that teachers and the less amorously inclined of her fellow students had left the vicinity. This allowed the couple space away from public eyes and gossip to talk and, eventually, for Saman to accompany

Sajani down the road. When Sajani appeared, my friend would leap across the low fence that divided Nalin's land from the public road and offered to carry her bag. The two would round the corner out of sight, according to Saman deep in romantic conversation. The couple continued to court in this way for several months, until the end of my fieldwork. The last I heard, Saman and Sajani still considered themselves boyfriend and girlfriend.

Joking relationships serve to loosen the tension between young and shy men and women, for whom platonic relationships with members of the opposite were unheard of. They provide a less-than-serious foundation for what many hope will become deadly serious relationships. But females do not let males think they have succeeded in their endeavours too soon, as to do so would potentially risk their image of shamelessness. Emboldened by flirtatious replies, males then make declarations of love. None of my friends put much weight in a rebuttal at this stage, as invariably, they said, women always 'said no' when first advanced. This was not a set rule, but for many of my male friends it seemed that a lot of courting and at least one refusal took place before a girl fully accepted his advances. My friends just accepted that women playing 'hard to get' was another obstacle – but so another reason to invest in – a future romantic relationship.

Jayananda met Shyamalie when I was working on a development programme in Madampe in 2001. Jayananda was aged 22 at the time, and had been working as a supervisor in a garment factory. He had temporarily left that employment to participate in the programme and during this time had met Shyamalie, aged 20, who was also working on the programme. Although I failed to notice any relationship between the two at the time, Jayananda and Shyamalie maintain that their interest in each other had begun after

the first meeting: a sure sign of *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari*.³⁴ Working in close proximity with each other during the programme, Jayananda suffered none of the usual obstacles in the way of courtship. Free to talk to her almost at will, after just six weeks Jayananda made his love known, and asked Shyamalie to marry him. However, Shyamalie refused, telling me when recounting the event five years later that although she did secretly love him it was too early for such promises to be made.

Undeterred, Jayananda continued his courtship. The programme also continued, and this gave Jayananda more time to convince Shyamalie of his love. Then, five months later, the couple began spending time together in front of their colleagues, for example by sitting next to each other on the bus. It became obvious to the project team that the couple were romantically engaged: a fact that did not sit easily with some of the local staff, who thought it inappropriate. Also recounting the events five years later, Jayananda told me that by that time, he had proposed to Shyamalie again and she had accepted. Shyamalie added that after her first refusal, Jayananda's unflagging interest had convinced her that his love was true, and that she need not 'worry' about his proposal.

Jayananda and Shyamalie did not announce their engagement to their parents for another four years. Jayananda said that he was worried he did not have a good enough job to do so, as his current employment in a garment factory was poorly paid, poorly viewed, and with few prospects. He therefore aspired to a better job before he asked Shyamalie's parents for her hand in marriage. Jayananda's breakthrough came when he obtained employment as an assistant manager on a tea estate, located in the hills above Kandy. This position afforded a good salary, status, and prospects, and now armed these he

³⁴ Of course, a *post hoc* claim of *ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari* helped to legitimise a relationship

predicted his proposal would be accepted.

As I have argued, people in Madampe tend to find that the path of true love never runs smooth, and Jayananda and Shyamalie's relationship was no exception. Although Jayananda believed Shyamalie to be a 'good village girl,' I had always known her to be amongst the most assertive and independent women I knew. Unlike her contemporaries, Shyamalie did not pay much heed to the behaviours expected of her, and had no qualms about making eye contact, speaking out, or pursuing a career either before or after marriage. However, this aspect of her personality and life did not come without trouble, and when I knew her in 2001 she often described herself to me as being 'mad, bad, and sad' (*pissu, naraka, dukkhayi*). At the time I did not know what this meant, but have since come to learn that she was referring to the ways in which her own behaviour and expectations came into conflict with those of Jayananda. During her time at school, Shyamalie had trained as a Kandyan dancer and had won several national competitions. After participating in the 2001 development programme, she won a six-month scholarship to study dance in India, which she accepted. Jayananda was unhappy about this, as he wanted – expected – Shyamalie to remain at home before their marriage. Nevertheless, Shyamalie went to India for six months, and Jayananda was forced to accept her decision or end the relationship. He accepted her decision.

Upon returning to Sri Lanka, Jayananda and Shyamalie decided to announce their intention to marry. As far as I know both sets of parents agreed to the union, and, initially anyway, set no obstacles in their way. Both Jayananda and Shyamalie are *goyigama* castes and middle class: Jayananda's father, by then deceased, was a government servant; Shyamalie's father, a retired government servant, ran his own small convenience store

from a building on his land. An engagement ceremony was organised, to which I was invited. Both sets of parents desired to suggest that the basis of their children's union was a proposal and not a romantic relationship, and so I was instructed to pretend to meet Jayananda for the first time at the ceremony.³⁵

Following the engagement, Jayananda and Shyamalie continued to have different ideas about what kind of life Shyamalie should lead. Jayananda continued to insist that she submit to the behaviour proper of a 'village girl,' while Shyamalie expressed a desire to teach Kandyan dance. Teaching is in fact a rather acceptable profession for a female, so it is probable that Jayananda subscribed to a particularly stringent view of innocence, even by Madampe standards. Shyamalie's parents, for their part, wanted to see her pursue a career as a dance teacher too, and tried to convince Jayananda to let her do so. When I asked Jayananda why he objected to Shyamalie teaching dance, he replied that it would distract from her main role as mother and housewife. Also, Jayananda pointed out, he was careful not to behave in an improper way, such as that which might jeopardise his employment or make him a poor father or husband. 'I don't drink, smoke, or take drugs,' Jayananda told me, 'but many of my friends do. If can behave in this way, why can't Shyamalie?'

Despite Shyamalie's pleading, Jayananda was stubborn in his view and refused to change his mind. Sri Lankan engagement ceremonies are legally binding, and in many ways stand as greater declarations of commitment than the marriage itself. As such, Shyamalie and her parents had little choice but to accept Jayananda's demands. If they

³⁵ By then I had already visited Shyamalie's home and knew several of the other guests. In order to make a convincing demonstration, then, I had to pretend to be Shyamalie's friend and not Jayananda's friend, as might have been more appropriate.

sought to break the engagement, Shyamalie's future chances of marriage would be greatly diminished. Finding herself trapped in a relationship that was not turning into the one she had hoped for, Shyamalie began to make suicide threats to a mutual friend. I spoke to Shyamalie about these threats, and understood they were intended to express the extent of suffering that Jayananda's unbending opposition to her employment was causing. Fearing the worst, Jayananda agreed to Shyamalie teaching a few dance classes at her local school.

Jayananda and Shyamalie married in the April³⁶ 2005. After marriage, the couple went to live on the tea estate where Jayananda worked, where they currently live in a British colonial cottage set high in the mountains. An intensely beautiful but isolated spot, Jayananda stressed that Shyamalie could hardly commute to a job from there, as buses were few and the closest school far too distant to walk. For this reason, Shyamalie has not taught dance since marriage, but hopes that if one day they move to a more populated area she may have the chance. Jayananda, for his part, told me that Shyamalie would have children to care for before then, and so would probably never return to work.

Other men rely on the opportunities neighbours or relations provide for meeting women and so encounter fewer problems than those I have discussed here. Although also grounded on a joking relationship, they have more chance of success simply because the number of possible meetings is higher, along with the length of time such meetings can last.

One informant, a 29 year-old man named Thilak, combined the two when he began an affair with a patrilineal cross-cousin named Samanthika, who was also his

³⁶ The most auspicious times of year to marry is between March and May.

neighbour. Thilak was 21 years old and Samantha just 15 when he first declared his love and hopes to marry her. As was appropriate in those early stages, Thilak and Samantha kept their relationship a closely guarded secret, neglecting to tell even their best friends in case the truth came out. Although Thilak says he was sure that neither his parents nor Samantha's parents would object to the union, he did think her parents would want Samantha to complete her education first. Thilak and Samantha were happy to comply with this expectation, as it also gave him a chance to pursue his career as well.

Thilak left school at age 20 with three A-levels. After graduation, he worked in a number of irregular commission-based sales posts until he eventually secured a salaried sales post at the age of 25. Thilak remained in that job for three years, when he moved to a new post with better pay, career opportunities, and job security. By the time I met Thilak at the age of 29, he was achieving excellent sales records and had received a promotion that also gave him use of a company car. As only one other villager in Kachchakaduwa owned a car, this increased Thilak's status around the village somewhat dramatically.

Samantha, for her part, also wanted to work for a couple years before marriage. She too graduated at age 20 with three A-levels, and subsequently worked for three years as a cashier in a supermarket at Chilaw. Although fully intending to comply with Thilak's wish to give up her employment after marriage, she wanted to work after completing her studies for the experience and chance to earn some money that it would give. Samantha's mother had worked for a number of years in the Middle East as a housemaid, and although her parents were not short of money, Samantha wanted to

contribute to her own wedding expenses, including her dowry (*dāvādda*). (Dowry's do not constitute an expected part of love marriages, but are often included to help give the union a sense of propriety.)

With these aims in mind, the couple maintained a secret but probably sometimes-sexual love affair until 2005, when Thilak was aged 30 and Samanthaika was 24. Although it is unlikely that either set of parents did not come to learn about the affair during this time, Samanthaika's parents were nevertheless angry when the couple announced their intent to engage. Samanthaika told me that her parents were upset that she had lied to them for so long, but that this objection was not very serious (they were not apparently concerned about genetic closeness, as the common ancestor was several generations back): within a few days of the announcement, Samanthaika's parents had accepted the idea and gave the union their blessing. The engagement was formally declared, and the couple could meet openly in public for the first time.

Thilak referred to Samanthaika as a 'good village girl,' and, like Jayananda, he expected to live according to the same standards he expected of her. This implied that he would not engage in any activities that might prove him to be dishonest, beyond of course what he was required to do to succeed in his employment as a salesman. For this reason, and amongst other things, Thilak was careful never to drink, nor take advantage of other people's good nature. Whenever I asked Thilak if he would like to accompany me to the bar, he always declined. 'My girlfriend will blame me!' he exclaimed, worried at the thought of how it would appear to Samanthaika.

6.4. Insurmountable obstacles: the consequences of romantic problems

Yet youth, of course, sometimes fail in their romantic endeavours. The reasons are many, but among the most frequent stated are unrequited love and those caused by the two main obstacles discussed, including requited love that fails due to difficulties in meeting and maintaining a relationship, requited love that fails due to infidelity or other problems, and parental opposition.

The consequences of unrequited love

Many young men and women I spoke to claimed that the loss of their first love, requited or otherwise, was devastating for them. If it did not cause them to attempt suicide, it certainly led to a conscious engagement with dishonest or shameful behaviour. On average, it seemed that males were more compelled to dishonest behaviour than suicide, while females were more compelled to suicide than shameful behaviour: an ethnographic ‘hunch’ that is supported by the epidemiological data.

My male friends assumed that they or their friends would resort to dishonest behaviour if faced with the loss of a first or only love. They predicted that heavy drinking, socialising with ‘bad types’ (*ganan-kāriya*) and ‘womanising’ would be the result. Indeed, the assumption that males who unwillingly fall out of love turn to a brief life of trouble-making is so common I often had the feeling that my friends who found themselves in that situation felt somewhat compelled to do so. I have less detailed evidence about how females themselves assume they would react, but from conversations

with Shyamalie (whom I introduced above) and Waruni (whom I shall introduce below), restrictions on their behaviour meant that what I have called their ‘range of possible responses to injury’ is greatly diminished. As such, suicidal behaviour (as indeed Shyamalie resorted to) is seen to be more likely.

After collecting epidemiological data from GPU, I presented admission rates of self-ham attempt patients by sex and age in a graph (see Chapter 3.2, Figure 3.2) and showed it to a group of my friends. I then asked this group, which consisted of three males and one female, how they would account for the pattern portrayed, including the fact that young females outnumbered young males. One of the males immediately picked out the sex difference, and made the argument that I have already stressed: ‘Obviously boy’s drink when they have a love problem. Girls can’t do that and so they take poison,’ he said. This observation was supported by the other males in the group, while the female amongst them made a different observation. ‘Perhaps girls are more upset by their love problem?’ she suggested, ‘Perhaps they have felt more shame?’ Drawing on the fact young women must continuously prove their innocence rather than compensate for occasional acts of dishonesty this statement contrasted the freedom that males had when dealing with problems – a greater range of possible responses to injury – than females (the psychological effects of this will be explored in Chapter 8). Finally, I produced a graph illustrating the number of patients presenting at GPU following physical assault (Figure 6.15). All four informants suggested that the heavy bias towards young males was the result of their greater tendency to drink and get into trouble, especially in the context of romantic loss.

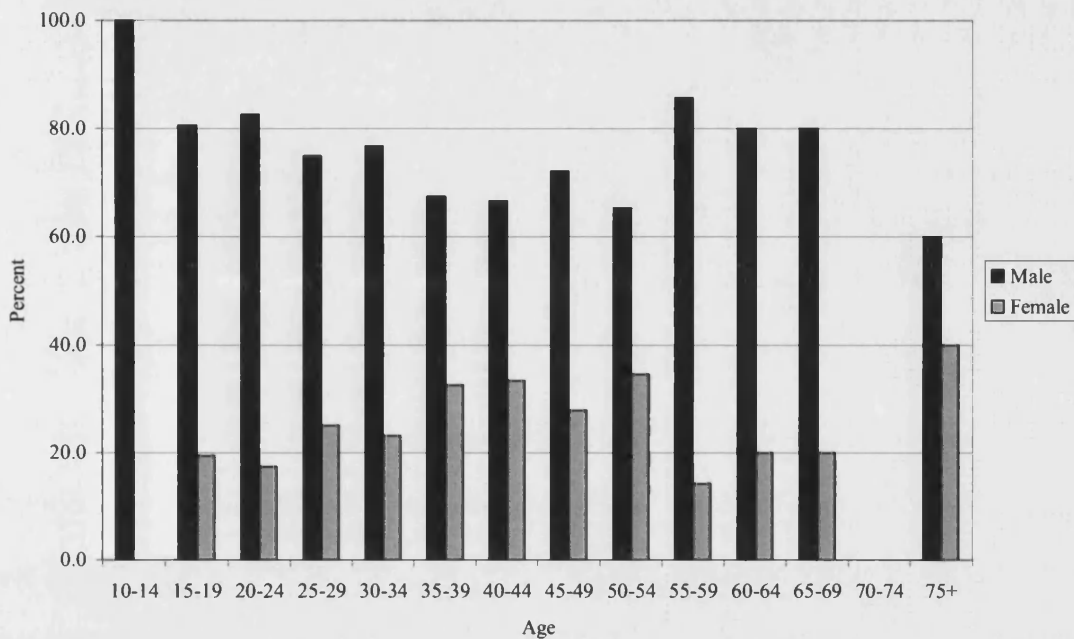


Figure 6.15: GPU – Admissions for physical assault by sex and age.

Males and females are presumably in as much risk of unrequited love as each other. But perhaps males, given they are usually expected to make the first advance, are more at risk of being rejected. My male friends claimed to react to rejection with a range of emotions and behaviours, but the most frequent and most interesting from the standpoint of this thesis was with the emotion of anger and its aggressive behavioural consequences (see Chapter 8.1). Pahansilu, a 24 year old male, said he reacted with ‘sudden anger’ (*ikman kopēya*) when the object of his desires told him that she was uninterested. Pahansilu had been courting Darshani for several months before he made his first bold move. Darshani was a schoolgirl attending college at Marawila, whom Pahansilu had met on the Marawila-Madampe bus. As far as I could ascertain, Darshani had never shown any special interest in Pahansilu’s advances. But Pahansilu persisted in his endeavours and eventually, with the hope of confirming her interest in him, made a proposal. Darshani

rejected it, and Pahansilu became angry at the shame it had caused him. Investing time and effort into his courtship, Pahansilu felt that Darshani had led him to believe his love was reciprocated, and as such had told his friends about it. With nothing now to show for it, Pahansilu risked being teased by his friends for his failure.

The consequences of lost requited love

Pahansilu told me his story while we were drinking together in a bar with our mutual friend, Nalin. Pahansilu claimed that he did not often drink – ‘only at weddings,’ he told me, when it is socially acceptable – but that his rejection had forced him to do it. Nalin and I also often drank together, and Nalin’s excuse for drinking was always the same as that given by Pahansilu. Nalin told me that before he lost his first love he did not drink, but having lost this love (combined with other significant life stresses), he started. Moreover, Nalin claimed that because of his loss, he began ‘talking to many girls, like a womaniser.’

I have already described Nalin’s relationship with his cross-cousin. In addition to Tamara, Nalin also tried to talk with several other women, one of whom he described as his first and only one true love. The nature of most of these ‘relationships’ struck me as rarely anything more than flights of fancy on his part, but I submit the importance that he attached to them signals strongly the impossible environment within which Madampe youth try to find love and make it succeed. Some people have commented that the resulting picture I have presented of Nalin is a young man who is something of a ‘loser’ when it comes to women. However, far from being extraordinary, his situation was not

very unlike many other young men I knew.

When I first met Nalin, he denied, as is socially appropriate, any involvement with women. But after a few months of friendship, it emerged that Nalin did indeed have a girlfriend named Kanchana, although their relationship had recently soured. Nalin had been in an affair with Kanchana for two years, since they were at school together. Kanchana lived with her parents on the LDO estate at Kudirippuwa and in October 2004 was working in a communications shop at Hospital Junction. Nalin described their relationship as having been ‘close,’ apparently progressing to a sexual stage although stopping short of intercourse.

Although Nalin claimed to be committed to the relationship, he had been guilty of dishonest behaviour that Kanchana had found unacceptable. In the spring of 2004, Nalin’s elderly father had become ill and bed-ridden. The burden of care was too much for Nalin’s elderly mother, and because his only sibling, an elder sister, was away at university for most of the week, Nalin was forced to give up his employment as a mobile phone salesman. To release the ‘frustration’ (*asahānaya*) this was causing him, Nalin began drinking ‘until [he] vomited,’ smoking, and ‘loitering with bad fellows.’ Nalin claimed that Kanchana objected to this change in his character, and asked him to give up his dishonest ways. Nalin ignored Kanchana’s request, and although this did not end their relationship, it had made it more difficult, and compounded the problems that were to come.

The heaviest blow for Nalin’s relationship came when some of his friends decided to play a joke on him, and told Kanchana that Nalin was ‘speaking with’ another woman. Upon hearing this news, and in view of his changed character, Kanchana refused to speak

with Nalin any longer. For all intents, their relationship was dead. Nalin claims that he tried to persuade Kanchana that his friends had been lying, but to no avail. Subsequently, Nalin began to drink even more.

By the end of the summer, the health of Nalin's father had deteriorated. Fearing the worst, he asked Nalin to stop drinking, as soon he would be responsible for taking care of the family. Nalin claimed that he listened to his father, and gave up his 'bad ways.' By October, Nalin's father had died. Despite this heavy loss, Nalin kept his word and did not resume his drinking. But having squandered his 'one love,' Nalin claimed, he was 'forced' to begin a series of love affairs. Over the next two years, Nalin frequently met and rapidly proposed to young women with whom he made acquaintance in a way that by his own words made him a 'womaniser.'

To take just one example, Nalin began to court a 24-year-old woman called Kumari. Nalin maintained an active interest in Kumari throughout the whole of my fieldwork, even as other women came and went. The nature and early intensity of the relationship between Nalin and Kumari was surprising, given that the couple never actually met in person. In its entirety, the relationship was conducted via mobile telephone – a technology that has significantly expanded the range, frequency, and duration that meetings between youth can now take place (although not without new problems) – but despite this, the medium does not seem to have affected the level of romantic attachment felt.

Initially, Nalin claimed that his interest in Kumari was only supposed to make Kanchana jealous (*irisiyāva*). But very soon the relationship between the two became quite intense, and apparently turned into a real interest. Nalin's attachment for Kumari

had increased when she revealed her parents had promised her to a Sinhalese man currently working in Italy, and was to be married within the year. Nalin had a particularly romantic soul, and faced with such a classic obstacle in his way I doubt whether he could but help fall into a deeper love for her. Whatever the cause of it, the flow of romantic text messages between the two increased, and became ever more flirtatious. Just four days after first contacting Kumari, Nalin received twelve messages from her, while Nalin spent four hours speaking to her on the telephone (at a cost of LKR 2,500, or £12.50: a sum about equal to his monthly wage at that time). Even from a financial point of view, the affair between Nalin and Kumari was clearly going to be costly. Nalin's friends, enjoying the high-stakes of it all, predicted that the affair would be expensive emotionally, too.

As part of his courtship, Nalin often asked me to speak with Kumari on the telephone as well. The fact that Nalin had a friend from the UK could only help to cement whatever picture of honesty he was painting of himself, and it also gave me the opportunity to get to know Kumari and so ask if she would be willing to participate in my research. She agreed, and the couple let me reproduce some of the messages that passed between them. Selecting messages sent on the day the relationship between Nalin and Kumari turned from a joking relationship to a fully-fledged romantic relationship, the tone I discovered was one of deep love with very high levels of expected commitment. The first set of text messages were sent by Kumari. These followed a 40-minute telephone conversation during which Nalin had made strong declarations of love, but stopped short of a proposal:

If you forget me I'll feel sorrow

Don't forget me, I am very innocent [*ahinsakayi*]

If you hurt me I will cry

These messages were received in rapid succession and before Nalin had a chance to reply individually. In them Kumari was clearly making allusions to her innocence and the fact that she was liable to suffer greatly if abandoned or betrayed. The next set arrived after Nalin convinced her that he meant what he said: that he was honest about his love:

My baby I'm very close to you now

My dearest I want only your love

I love you more than my life X

I love you. We will be each others for ever

I love you my baby, you are mine aren't you?

After Nalin replied in the affirmative, the final two messages cemented her trust in him:

Mmmm. Is that enough?

Where is your kiss?

In Sri Lankan text-speak, 'Mmmm' stands for a kiss.

Even though mobile telephones give youth new chances to engage in love affairs, some old problems still exist, including finding the time and space to make telephone calls. Indeed, the ease and efficiency of the technology can sometimes do more to exacerbate these problems than it does to ease them. If mobile phones imply loved ones can be on the end of the line at any time and any place, the assumption is that loved ones should be so easily obtainable. But before Nalin could phone Kumari he had to leave his

home in order to avoid his mother listening to his conversation. Nalin at first used to hitch a ride to Hospital Junction where Kanchana, whom of course he still loved, worked in the communication shop. In the first few days of his relationship with Kumari, Nalin did this so she would see him having long telephone conversations that he hoped would make her jealous. But, significantly, by the fourth day Nalin complained that Kanchana's close presence was putting him off his amorous discourses, and so he instead walked to the library on the far western side of the village.

Seven days into the relationship, Nalin and I set off on one of our now many trips to the library, ostensibly to read the papers but in reality to phone Kumari. Earlier in the day Nalin and I had accompanied his family to the Kachchakaduwa *vihara* to give alms for his father, and by the time we set off for the library he had missed the pre-arranged window during which he was supposed to make his call. When he did manage to phone, thirty minutes late, Kumari had already turned off her phone in what Nalin described as an act of protest. Nalin became very upset about this. He exclaimed 'shit!' (English *shit*, not the Sinhalese *chi*) several times, put his head in his hands, and tried to call again. After several tries, Kumari eventually turned her phone back on and Nalin got through. After a long conversation, Nalin said that Kumari had forgiven him for not keeping his promise and their relationship was still safe. (It was upon his return home that Tamara learnt he had been speaking with Kumari and began to sulk.)

One month into the relationship, Kumari invited Nalin to Kandy in order meet her parents. At this very bold statement (which could only mean his earlier allusions to marriage had been taken very seriously), Nalin took stock. He admitted to me again that he had only started the affair with the intention of making Kanchana jealous, but had not

expected it to lead to marriage: after all, Nalin exclaimed, 'I don't even know what she looks like. She could be fat!' To put some of his fears to rest, Nalin asked Kumari to post him a photo (picture phones were still six months away from ubiquity in the Sri Lankan market at that time). Kumari agreed, but the picture took a week to arrive. During that time, Nalin was worried Kumari would send a photo of a friend instead (according to Nalin a common ploy). When the photo arrived, however, Nalin's worst fears came true. 'She's as fat as a pig!' Nalin shouted, after opening the envelope. 'I can't marry her! She'd squash me when we fucked!'

It was not difficult, of course, for Nalin to turn down Kumari's invitation. While still maintaining that he loved her, he regrettably, *heartbreakingly*, had been prevented from travelling around the island by his mother, who feared for his safety.

The last time I spoke to Nalin about his romantic problems, which was in January 2008, three years after the events I have reported took place, he claimed to have 'given up women' for good. Both Kanchana and Kumari were married, and Nalin had recently secured full time employment as a sales executive for a mobile telecommunications company. Now, Nalin told me, he just wanted to focus on his career and, with his elder sister married and with baby, taking care of his aged and ill mother.

Females are said to respond to romantic problems in different ways, and were more likely to resort to suicide. Saduni was a 21-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist woman who was unmarried and lived with her parents at Kuliapitiya. During 2003, she met, through a mutual friend, Jaliya, a 23-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist man living at Suduwella. They fell in love and began an affair that lasted until April 2006. The affair ended when Jaliya decided that he did not love Saduni any more. Upon hearing the news,

Saduni began making suicide threats to Jaliya over the telephone and through written letters. She also told mutual friends about her suicidal plans. Around twelve days after the separation Saduni telephoned Aravindra (aged 23), one of Jaliya's male friends, and told him that she had bought a bottle of fertilizer with the intention of drinking it.

According to Aravindra, Saduni told him to 'apologise' to their friends for 'causing them trouble' by committing suicide, and gave every sign that she intended to do it. She claimed that while all she wanted was the best for Jaliya, even if that meant him being with another woman, she could not go on living without him. Aravindra responded by telling Saduni she was young and had plenty to live for, so should not commit suicide. He asked Saduni not to drink the fertilizer until he had a chance to come and speak to her the following day, to which she agreed. Following their meeting Saduni stopped threatening suicide and several months later Aravindra began a relationship with her. Aravindra later told me that he was concerned about its chances of success. His parents were privy to Saduni's suicide threats and it is likely they would disapprove of the union on that basis.

Although Saduni's suicide threats were clearly aimed at winning back Jaliya, she did have other problems that contributed to them too. According to Aravindra, Saduni also spoke about how the loss of Jaliya had been compounded by the loss of her father who had recently migrated to the Middle East for employment. She was apparently very upset by this: he had left in the context of marital problems with his wife and Saduni was afraid that he would marry a woman overseas and never return. As such, although the immediate precipitators and aims of Saduni's behaviour seem to have been romantic loss, a wider sense of instability within home life had apparently added further stress.

The second case concerns Waruni: a 20-year old Sinhalese Buddhist. Mahesh, aged 26, met Waruni through her matrilineal parallel cousin, Shon. Mahesh and Shon both lived at Suduwella, while Waruni lived in the Kegalle District. Shon's mother lived and worked in the USA, and had returned to Sri Lanka for a brief visit. Shon had organised a party for his friends in honour of his mother, and Waruni had timed her visit to her aunt so that it coincided with the party. Unusually, Waruni was able to mingle with males at the party. Shon's mother, who had worked abroad for over ten years, saw no fault with it. 'They have to learn to make their own mistakes,' she told me. Although Waruni stayed close to her aunt during most of the evening, she did occasionally wander off to speak with Shon and some of his friends that she already knew.

The next day Mahesh was clearly impressed by Waruni, and stated that he loved her. Waruni was to stay in Suduwella for two more days, after which she returned to Kegalle. During those two days Mahesh made numerous visits to Shon's house, and these visits were greatly facilitated by the fact Shon's mother did not object to them at all. More importantly, Waruni seemed to enjoy his visits, and acted, as far as Mahesh was concerned, in a flirtatious way. As such, Mahesh was able to start easily a joking relationship with Waruni, and told me that he put much hope in that fact.

When Waruni went home to Kegalle, Mahesh longed for Waruni to return. She was all that he could talk about, and together we would drown his sorrows at the local bar. But to be proactive, and because Waruni did not own a telephone, Mahesh resolved to put his feelings into writing. In his letter, Mahesh spoke at length for the love that he had for her, and stated that he was prepared to suffer any obstacle to see that love realised. He was sure, he told her, that she felt the same way, and that together they could

make their mutual love come true. Unfortunately, Mahesh also had a problem. Several months previously he had been given a contract to work as a carpenter in the Middle East – a prized job – and was soon to be going away. But, he promised Waruni, by the time he returned she would be older and in a better position to marry, perhaps after she had completed a university education. (Waruni had gained three ‘A’ grades at A-level, but had for personal reasons described below not gone to university.) Mahesh promised that with his salary he could afford to pay for Waruni to attend the Open University.

Waruni’s first reply to Mahesh’s letter, which took the form of a telephone call on the Sri Lankan New Year, was, Mahesh insisted, positive. She thanked him for the letter, and said that she had been made happy by its contents. Although making no allusions to love, she hoped that she would see him again soon, so they could talk. A week later Mahesh received a letter from Waruni, in which she regretted to tell him that she had been thinking about his proposal, but could not accept it. Furthermore, Waruni said, she ‘feared’ for the fact Mahesh was soon to be going away, as did her parents. Whether this admission about her parents was true or not, I cannot say, as it would have meant she had discussed Mahesh’s proposal with them, which is unlikely. Nevertheless, the tone of Waruni’s letter apparently convinced Mahesh that his earlier hopes had been dashed, and we frequented the bar more often than before.

Several months later Waruni visited Shon for a second time. She had failed to find employment in Kegalle, but Shon’s brother, Thilana, was thinking about opening an internet café in Madampe New Town. Thilana asked Waruni if she wanted to work in it, and she had travelled over to talk with him about the idea more fully. As I had become quite well acquainted with Waruni during her last visit, and as Shon and Thilana were

also close friends of mine, I was able to ask the three together about the grounds of Waruni's rejection of Mahesh. The three spoke better English than I spoke Sinhalese, so we conducted our conversation in that language. According to their descriptions, Waruni's rejection related in part to Mahesh's impending migration, problems stemming from Waruni's first lost love, a past suicide attempt, and parental opposition.

In general, Waruni told me, she did not have any problem with Mahesh. She knew he was honest, but she did not hope that he would make a proposal. Indeed, his strong statements of love seemed to have scared her:

I know that he is very good and friendly. And he is very special. I haven't any hesitation about him [about his character]. But I can't think why he likes me. Over the past few days, I have been thinking about this. Actually, I didn't hope that I would receive a proposal from him...I am a normal girl [I can't understand why he loves me so much].

Waruni went on to imply that perhaps Mahesh had claimed to love her more than he did, and that the support he promised her would not be forthcoming. She related this fear to her past experience of a romantic relationship, when she had been hurt by her first love. Even the thought of loving another made her think of her previous lover, for whom she still clearly had feelings:

I think about love very seriously. I have lost my first love, so I am afraid to love again because I'll have lost my love again. I can't bear it. I think I am very sensitive.

Thilana explained the story of Waruni's first love. The man was called Levin, and the couple had met while at school. During that time they had become very attached, and made promises of marriage. But Levin also 'wanted to be a rich man,' and so organised to travel to Japan to work for an uncle who lived there. Waruni did not want Levin to go abroad, as he planned to stay for at least five years, or until that time when he had enough money to start a business in Sri Lanka. Because the couple felt they were too young to marry (they were both 18 at the time), Waruni did not have the option of travelling to Japan with Levin, but in any case Thilana predicted that her parents would have objected. Like many parents, Thilana suggested, Waruni's parents preferred to have their daughter living close to hand. As such, the couple found themselves in a dispute, and Waruni argued that if Levin did travel abroad their relationship would be over. Thilana told me that at this threat, Levin: 'abused Waruni. He attempted suicide to abuse Waruni because of this problem.' The consequence of Levin's suicide attempt was to make Waruni feel considerable guilt and pain, and lose her way in life. It was for this reason she did not apply to university.

Aspects of Thilana's story were alluded to by Waruni herself. Levin's suicide attempt (described by Thilana explicitly as 'abuse') seemed to have put Waruni off romantic relationships for good. Indeed, without the problems caused by love Waruni hoped to reclaim some of the things that she had lost:

My parents don't like to marry me him because he is going abroad. They are afraid of it. And I also feel it.

Now I don't think about love or marriage. I am only 20 years. So I think I have time to think about it. I haven't any boyfriends. I have only friends. I think of Mahesh as one of my friends. A very special friend to me. Because he's very good and nice.

The problem is still I haven't felt love. I don't know when it will born in my heart. There are some problems to me. I try to forget my past. I have lost lots of things because of love: my confidence and my education. Therefore I fear to do love again.

Sometimes love will be a treatment for me [allow me to get over my past failure]. But I should make my heart for it. I want to time for it. And the things I avoided...I want to do again. Especially now I think about my education.

Still, Waruni hoped that after attending to her own needs, she would be ready to love again:

One day I will be ready to love again. But I don't know when that day will come. Mahesh *ayiyā* is such a good person he can understand my feelings. I am not fearful of him [not fearful that he will attempt suicide as Levin did]. If I can mend my heart I haven't any other problems.

Sometimes I think I am very childish girl. I don't know why I am think seriously about love. I am wrong. I don't understand it. I have strength to make my heart. But I want time for it. So I don't tell him to keep hope about me. But ever he is a friend to me.

The consequences of parental opposition

In the previous cases, parental opposition has always been found a factor in creating romantic problems. I have already explained how some parents might resort to the police in order to end their children's romantic relationships. In the two cases that follow, more detail concerning elopers' experiences will be considered. The cases are also interesting because they provide further information on why young unmarried females who, by their social status, lack relational power and many viable options to elopement than submission or suicide.

The first case concerns the suicide attempt of a female student called Arsha, who lived at Suduwella. In many ways, it could stand as an 'ideal-typical' example of suicide attempt amongst unmarried females (Spencer 1990a). I first heard about the case from Arsha's friend, Nimesha. Several weeks later, I was able to interview Arsha herself about the case. In the following account, I will present Arsha's story from her own perspective, but add Nimesha's comments when they contribute something of interest. Overall, however, the two accounts were virtually identical.

When Arsha was aged 15, she became involved in a love affair with an 18 year-old man. Upon discovering the affair, Arsha's parents demanded that it finish. Her parents disliked the man because he was unemployed but also disapproved because Arsha was still in school. Nimesha claimed that when Arsha's parents found out about the affair, her father beat her. However, Arsha made no mention of this. Nevertheless, Arsha drank, on the morning of a school day, one-quarter of a bottle of insecticide. Arsha claimed this was the first and only time she had ever made a suicide attempt, and Nimesha also told me

that, as far as she knew, Arsha had not made any other suicide attempts.

When I asked Arsha what other options she may have had instead of attempting suicide, she explained that she could have eloped. Nimesha also suggested this was a possible response. However, both Arsha and Nimesha agreed that she did not do this because she feared the repercussions that could, or would, have followed. Both women explained that if she had eloped with her boyfriend but then tried to return home and seek forgiveness, she would only have been rejected. Since this amounted to loss of parental support, all the usual assistance they provide for a new couple, which includes emotional as well as financial support, would have been denied. At only age 15, Arsha was not prepared to face life without her parents.

I also asked Arsha and Nimesha why she appeared to have preferred death over a life alienated from her family. Arsha suggested that she did not in fact think her suicide attempt would be fatal, and only did it to make her parents afraid. As such, she was not so much choosing between the ultimate aims of her actions, just two different pathways to obtaining what she desired: a relationship with her boyfriend. Nimesha gave two reasons for Arsha's choice of suicide attempt over elopement. First, Nimesha suggested that Arsha was simply upset at being forced to break off relations with a man she had loved. In this sense, the suicide attempt was simply the product of fatalism: 'How could she live without him?' Nimesha asked. But, secondly, Nimesha also suggested there was a sense in which Arsha's suicide attempt was an attempt to change her parents mind. She claimed that the suicide attempt would have made her parents afraid that their actions could lead to the death of their daughter, and so make them come to accept the relationship.

It seems, though, that whatever Arsha and Nimesha might have believed about the

consequences of her actions, Arsha's suicide attempt did not alter her parents' position. Once Arsha had recovered from the suicide attempt, she was allowed to return to school but was confined to home at all other times. This had the effect of ending the affair, a loss that Arsha claims to have affected her deeply. Nimesha, on the other hand, suggested that Arsha was not in fact very upset about the break up of the affair, and today has a relationship with another man. I asked Arsha and Nimesha what had become of the boyfriend. Arsha said she had not heard any news of him after she had been grounded but imagined that he would have found another girlfriend. Nimesha claimed to have heard that after the relationship ended, he had become very upset and began drinking during the day and causing problems.

In the following case, which occurred within a family I have know very well for more than seven years, the effect of a young woman's social position on choices is well illustrated. Compared with Arsha, the woman, called Sharika, was older and had more life experiences – amounting to greater economic and political capital and relational power – at her disposal. Furthermore, as is often the case in successful elopements, the boyfriend's parents did not object to the relationship, and allowed the couple to stay with them.

Sharika, aged 28, was in a long-term relationship with a 33-year-old man named Sujith. Some debate exists over exactly how the couple first met. According to Sharika and her friends, they met at school and had been lovers ever since. But according to her parents and siblings – and this formed part of their objection to the union – the couple had met only recently. Whatever the facts, it was certainly the case that Sujith drove the Madampe-Kuliapitiya bus that Sharika caught every morning to run the family shop in

the town of Dummalasuriya.

Sharika's parents had long hoped to arrange a marriage with a suitable man from a good *goyigama* family. To that end, they had been in contact with the parents of a professional man in Colombo, and were in the latter stages of finalising the deal. To facilitate the union, Sharika's father, by then a retired middle-level civil servant, had accrued a large dowry (*dāvādda*). For the moment, though, all marriage plans were on hold. When Sharika came of age, an astrologer had forecast that a marriage between the ages of 27 and 28 would be inauspicious (*aphalē*), and so her parents had set the date of the wedding to fall soon after her 29th birthday. Sharika was to turn 29 in March 2005, and this was to set her engagement into motion. Sharika was aware of this, and so knew that she had only a few months to persuade her parents to allow a marriage with Sujith.

Such was the situation when I first arrived in Madampe in October 2004. Three months later, however, the family store at Dummalasuriya had been closed and Sharika stayed at home. At the time, I did not know Sharika was involved in a relationship, and I believed the story that her parents told me, which was that the store was closed because it was not making a profit. But I later learned that the store was closed precisely because Sujith used it as an opportunity to visit Sharika.

Over the weeks that followed the store closure, Sharika and her parents rowed frequently. By then I had learned that Sharika had a boyfriend, and also that her parents were arranging a marriage for her. But Sharika clearly had no intention whatsoever to go ahead with the arranged marriage. Even though her parents had tried to prevent continued meetings between the pair, Sharika took every chance she had to talk or meet with him. We would sit together on the porch of Sharika's house, which faced the Madampe-

Dummalasuriya road, and waited for Sujith to drive past in his bus, at which point Sharika would give a coy wave. Accompanied by her friend and later co-conspirator Ayesha, she would make use of errands in town to meet with him. She would also spend hours on her mobile phone speaking with him, until her parents confiscated the handset. Not to be outdone, Sharika waited until her parents had left the house and made calls from the landline. When they found out, they bought a phone that could block the number she was calling.

It was clear that the impasse could not last long. So, one morning in February, four weeks after the store had been closed, Sujith paid a visit to Sharika's parents and asked for their permission to marry. Sharika's parents always maintained that Sujith was a recent lover, and that the couple had not been together since school, as they claimed. They were convinced that Sujith was only interested in Sharika because of her wealthy background, and the dowry amounting to several million rupees, a house, and a car that was promised. For this reason, they told me, Sujith's proposal was refused. A few days later, at 4am, Sharika threw a few items into a bag and left her parents house. I did not see or hear from her again for more than one year.

On the morning of Sharika's elopement, but knowing nothing of it, I went as usual to Kachchakaduwa to work on my household survey. By the time I returned to Suduwella at 5pm, the family, their neighbours, and their relatives were all convinced that Sharika had eloped. So great was the shame and sadness that Sharika's parents felt, it was left to their younger son to tell me what had happened. In the months that followed Sharika's parents came to terms with what they saw as Sharika's betrayal of their love in two different ways. Sharika's father owned and worked a small farm and chicken broiler on

the outskirts of Dummalasuriya, and took to staying there for days on end rather than returning home in the evenings as he had previously done. Sharika's mother, on the other hand, resorted to the support provided by relatives and spent hours on the telephone, speaking with sisters and sisters-in-law about the problem. What neither tried to do, however, was get Sharika back. They reasoned that as a mature woman who now had begun a sexual relationship, their plans for Sharika's marriage had been ruined.

More than a year passed. Then, one day, I heard that Sharika would be visiting her parent's home. She had recently given birth to a boy, and upon hearing the news Sharika was invited to introduce the baby to his grandparents. Sharika accepted the invitation, and paid her parents a visit. Sujith, however, had not been invited. Following this first visit, Sharika made frequent visits to her parents, sometimes bringing Sujith with her. One such evening Sujith and I had a drink together at the family home, and Sharika's father participated. Significantly, though, he did not dress up for the occasion, but instead wore his usual sarong and open shirt. Ordinarily, the father dressed up for esteemed guests, but for Sujith he made no such effort. Although now father to their grandchild and accepted into the home, and even offered a drink, Sujith was very much made to feel the poor relative.

When I found out about Sharika's love problem I was genuinely surprised. I had known the family for many years, and they had always struck me as being amongst the most affable and liberal I knew. That liberalism was most evident in their attitude towards their daughter who, it seemed, had been encouraged to develop a strong and independent personality. Unlike the vast majority of her contemporaries, Sharika did not display anything but a modicum of fear of shame and was granted many freedoms: she ran the

family store, drove the family car, and enjoyed a glass of beer or whisky³⁷ in the company of her father, brothers, and uncles: all activities that ‘village girls’ would never be seen doing.

Considering these liberties, then, Sharika was in almost every way a ‘Colombo girl.’ What is more intriguing, however, is the fact that her parents had seemingly encouraged it. Under these circumstances, the sanction against romantic love contradicted the rest of her life. When I mentioned all this to my friends at Kachchakaduwa (and it took a while to convince them that Sharika really did drink beer and whisky with her parents), they too were surprised that she was allowed such space in one area of her life, but still expected to accept an arranged marriage in another. They agreed such a contradiction was bound to lead to trouble.

The circumstances of Sharika’s upbringing and freedoms she had been granted provide an explanation for why Sharika eloped, and why the elopement succeeded. Quite simply, she was allowed to develop an independent mindset unencumbered by fears of shame. Facing her problem with a ticking-clock (the countdown to her 29th birthday), Sharika had four choices. She could submit to her parents will and marry the man at Colombo; she could try to change her parents mind (perhaps by making a suicide attempt); she could escape the problem altogether by killing herself; or she could elope. Considering Sharika’s previous life to that point, however, only one of these options could ever have been chosen: elopement.

First, submission would not have been an option for Sharika. Having been granted

³⁷ Knowing that Sharika enjoyed whisky and that the family did not object to her drinking, I once gave Sharika a bottle of whisky for her birthday: something that would have had me banished from anybody else’s house!

such freedoms before, life in an arranged marriage would have been quite impossible. (It is surprising that her parents had not foreseen this.) Precisely because of these freedoms option number two, a suicide attempt, and option number three, death, were also highly unlikely. As ‘last resort’ strategies, Sharika had no need for them. She had taken part in activities and had learned skills that were normally beyond the majority of her contemporaries, even those who have been to university, which she had not. Yet they provided a space – increased her range of possible responses – within which she could deal with her problem. With an understanding of how the world worked, and a set of in-laws who were open to their relationship, Sharika risked alienation from her family confident in her ability to deal herself with the challenges such a choice would present.

Compare Sharika’s situation with Arsha’s situation. Arsha did not elope with her boyfriend because she feared alienation from her family more than she feared death. Aged only 15 at the time her love affair had been discovered, Arsha was still a schoolgirl and would have had very little by way of experience in the wider world. It was therefore ‘easier’ for her to inflict harm upon herself, even with the attendant risks, than to face life alone. Sharika, by contrast, was aged 28, and with experience in work and the wider world. She was, in a sense, simply too old to kill herself, and therefore took a chance: life as an orphan, instead of life trapped in a marriage she did not want.

6.5. Summary: the inevitability of romantic love

In this chapter I have explored the link between suicidal behaviour and romantic problems and loss amongst Madampe youth. My focus has been on describing how

romantic relationships are often viewed as being, like the kin relationships they often turn into and the cross-cousin relationships they mirror, inevitable. However, due to a number of obstacles and contradictions, they are often exposed as being evitable. It appears to be during turbulence created during this realisation that suicidal behaviours arise as a way of restating the expectation of inevitability, by symbolising its complete denial. When romantically disappointed youth threaten or commit self-harm, they are expressing a belief that life is worthless without their chosen love.

At the general level, romantic relationships lead to the majority of marriages in the Madampe Division. But at the village level, economic and social histories predispose certain kinds of attitudes towards love marriage. At the *purana* village of Kachchakaduwa, the majority of youth and around half of all parents think that love marriages are more desirable than proposal marriage. Yet they also think that love marriage is indicative of social and moral collapse of the kind described by W. George Edward (Chapter 4.2). At Suduwella, youth and parents are more likely to agree that love marriage is not so desirable, a viewpoint which is perhaps a function of greater interest in land and bilateral kin relations in that community. But it is not simply the case that 'more respectable' (higher caste and higher class) people in Madampe disagree with love marriage: it is more a case of how useful are arranged marriages for individual *gē* in terms of material gain. The LDO has meant that lower-class *gē* may adopt a more 'traditionalist' approach to marriage.

Perhaps with historical accuracy, some argue that romantic love in Madampe is a local institution. Recognising this, I have described in its own terms the clearly defined path of 'joking>talking>flirting>union' along which many romantic relationships

proceed. An interesting question in this regard is the extent to which romantic relationships reflect relationships that grow between cross cousins. *Massinā* and *nāna* are the only youth that may legitimately associate without adult supervision, and in some circumstances this lack of oversight can lead – is supposed to lead – from joking to flirting to marriage. Unfortunately, existing historical and ethnographic evidence does not shed light on the extent to which cross-cousin marriages and love marriages are outgrowths of each other.

Together, the arguments of this chapter have suggested that although unmarried men and women appear to commit self-harm and self-inflicted death in the context of romantic problems at equal rates, the kinds of romantic problems they suffer are likely to be quite different. So too are the kinds of responses they have to such problems. Amongst males, romantic problems associated with suicidal behaviour are likely to stem from rejection as well as loss. Men are expected to make the first move, and so risk the shame of being disappointed. Even if at first successful, they are also at risk of being dumped later on. But amongst females, restrictions on their behaviour suggest that the risk of rejection is much lower, because they are far less likely to make the first move. Romantic problems are then more likely to arise from loss, on the occasion of being dumped.

Even though males are, then, ‘more at risk’ of romantic problems than females (rejection+loss compared with just loss), males have more possible responses to such problems than females. Males who experience romantic rejection or loss have a well-defined path of overt, often aggressive, behaviour to explore. They become drunkards, womanisers, and loiterers: all activities that are designed to show how badly treated they feel themselves to be. Females, by contrast, are restricted in their responses to more

introvert behaviours: like Waruni, feelings of hurt, pain, and an inability to trust and love again. Although this implies that females therefore commit self-harm or suicide in the context of depressed emotional states, evidence presented in Chapter 8 complicates such a conclusion. In fact, it will be argued, a female's act of self-harm may be just as overt as a male's public drunkenness.

7.

‘Middle East Syndrome’: men, migration, and kin separation

Staff at Chilaw Mental Health Clinic coined two phrases for the social and psychological problems they see in patients somehow involved with international migration. When a patient reports a set of complaints and mentions, usually following prompting, that either they or a relative has been working overseas, clinicians can be heard to mutter ‘Middle East Syndrome!’ or ‘Italian Syndrome!’ These particular diagnoses were never recorded in patients’ files, being replaced instead by a formal diagnosis like depression, adjustment reaction, or some other problem. Nevertheless, within patients’ histories migration was associated with suicidal behaviour amongst 11.2 percent of males and 8.8 percent of females. The level of migration from the Puttalam District was 5.1 percent.

During tea breaks I would discuss with clinicians what they saw to be the effects of migratory separation and reunion upon the wellbeing of individuals and families. The phrases Middle East Syndrome and Italian Syndrome were used to describe such effects in the context of female and male migration respectively. In this way, clinicians were acknowledging a popular belief that female migrants from Sri Lanka typically went to one of the Gulf States, while male migrants went to Southern European states, most often Italy. Amongst ex-migrants, either Syndrome referred to the consequences of long-term separation from families, abuse suffered at the hands of employers, difficulties experienced when reuniting with spouses, children, and other kin, and the effects of alcoholism. Within this, and as seen in Chapter 5.1, suspicions and accusations of infidelity were paramount. Amongst kin of migrants, Middle East Syndrome referred to

the consequences of marital separation upon husbands, and maternal deprivation upon children. As one clinician told me:

Middle East Syndrome is what children suffer from when their mother goes abroad to work: mental problems, social problems, and educational problems including learning disabilities. They also suffer from a lack of energy and lack of interest. Middle East Syndrome is caused by the breaking of the mother-child bond and subsequent loss of 'mother's love.' Meanwhile, father becomes a drunkard, and sometimes sexually abuses his children.

Italian Syndrome was thought to be somewhat different. The same clinician told me:

It's what children suffer when their father goes abroad to work. Although he sends money, the children miss his love – they become addicted to alcohol and drugs, visit prostitutes, and miss school. They don't learn how to spend the money he provides because he is not there to guide them.

Middle East Syndrome and Italian Syndrome can be understood as the clinicians' rendering of a wider moral discourse concerned with the social effects of migration. In many ways, this wider discourse is simply concerned with the effects of kin separation, a problem that has long been perceived as a source of misfortune and suffering in Sri Lanka, for example during earlier periods of internal migration (Kearney & Miller 1985, 1987, 1988; Silva & Pushpakumara 1996). But whilst in the clinic both male and female

migration was described, in Madampe the worst effects of international migration were assumed to arise when women, not men, migrate. Indeed, so great was the concern with female migration as a source of social disruption (a concern that is fast replacing '1977' as a cause of social woes in the popular imagination), that the absence of wives and mothers was taken as evidence enough for the causes of behavioural and emotional problems amongst children and men.

In this chapter, the context surrounding men's suicides will be explored. In Chapter 5 I argued that suicide arose in response to the 'dead end' of patriarchy. Here, I will look at the kinds of economic activities in which men engage and from which they derive pride, and, crucially, forms of social and emotional support. Migration will be used as a focal point in this analysis not just because it highlights particularly clearly the kinds of problems that arise between spouses when men fail in their economic endeavours and women become wage-earners, but also because people in Madampe associate it with suicidal behaviour too. Thus, the relationship between suicide and migration can be modelled in two ways. First, as an empirical fact; but secondly, as a means by which people in Madampe attribute misfortune within the *gē* – which is to say, largely as the result of prejudice: a problem that greatly complicates analysis of the relationship between the two variables.

In this chapter, and reflecting the context of my research that limited time spent with women, my discussion of suicide and migration will be largely from the male/critical perspective. This perspective risks reproducing the normative model of the bourgeois family and accepting men's concerns that their position within the family is being undermined by women's migration and economic activity. But it would be wrong

to characterise the link between suicide and migration as fully the result of prejudicial patriarchal discourse. First, one can be critical of the social effects of labour migration while still recognising the important route out of poverty and/or abusive marriages it offers for women (and indeed men). But for men who commit suicidal behaviour in the context of migration, the reasons they cite are as real as those experienced by any other, no matter how much we may disagree with the premise of their complaints.

Secondly, the husbands of migrant women themselves do not escape prejudicial labelling. In fact, they are routinely assumed to become alcoholics and child sex abusers, and in that sense are seen to become overtly aggressive in response to loss just as are romantically disappointed young men. Thirdly, prejudicial views of migrant women are highly class based, with members of the middle class their primary critics. Male migrants tend to be middle class (and anyway construed as middle class regardless of the work they do) but female migrants are almost always working class (first because they migrate to replace the low economic capacity of their working class husbands, and secondly because domestic labour is regarded as low status work). It is due to this underlying class prejudice that the husbands of migrant women too end up being blamed for social problems, as well as migrant women themselves.

7.1. *Gē* economics: how men make money in Madampe

Kapila, the housemaid recruiter I discussed in Chapter 4.5, and his childhood friend, Lalith, would often meet for drinks. Lalith, aged 36 and married, ran an upmarket bar and guesthouse at Marawila, and like Kapila was financially successful. The two men drank

at Lalith's bar, and spent their evenings reminiscing about how they had made their money and how successful they had become. Both proudly told about how a life of hard work, an earlier testing period of migration, ongoing entrepreneurial acumen and, importantly, an ability to 'play the system,' had paid off. By this, they had been able to provide for their *gē* and *paramparā*, and proved themselves to be honest husbands, fathers, and *massinā*. Kapila and Lalith thus thought of themselves as the embodiment of the normative model, standing out against their peers as economically savvy and successful individuals who, despite lowly beginnings (Kapila was an orphan and had been adopted by a *goyigama* family at Mugunawatuwana but received no inheritance and had left school at age 16), rose to stature within their communities.

Starting out: the lack of economic certainty and the rise of meritocracy

If Kapila and Lalith were unusually successful, they were predictable in how they understood routes to economic success. For every young man I knew who had gained employment or business opportunities through relatives or friends, two had done so by making an application to an advertised post and doing well at interview, or making careful investments of time and money in possible ventures. In Madampe, ideologies of meritocracy drove men's career ambitions just as much as it drove employee selection, hence of course the value placed upon education and training, the importance of building up a good CV, and having a demonstrably good character. Thus in Madampe social status is not considered to be fixed across generations, and men know they have to work hard just to stay within the same occupational class position as that of their father, let alone

rise up the class ladder.

The effects of this on status change can be grasped from an analysis of my household data. Information on intergenerational trends in occupational class at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa were only available for two generations: current head and head's father. I have classified occupational mobility between the two generations in three directions: 'upward,' 'downward,' and 'no change.' The data was analysed to see whether any correlation could be found between caste status and mobility (that is, does ascribed status assist fathers and sons in keeping their achieved success?), as well as overall patterns of mobility (to what extent do son's rise or fall in relation to their fathers?).

The relationship between caste and occupational mobility was found to be insignificant (Tables 7.1 and 7.2). Occupational mobility over the two generations was not confined to high, middle, or low caste groups but was found in all caste groups at the same rates. Reflecting findings presented in Chapter 4.2, high caste status does not predispose men to retaining or improving their high class status, just as low caste status does not act as a constraint.

Social mobility	Goyigama	KSD	Low
Upward	27.7	18.2	26.7
Downward	15.7	22.7	20.0
No change	56.6	59.1	53.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=83)	(N=22)	(N=15)

Table 7. 1: *Suduwella* – Caste and occupational mobility between fathers and sons
 $P = <0.05$; $\chi^2 =$ not significant
 (Source: Author's household survey)

Social mobility	<i>Goyigama</i>	<i>Radā</i>
Upward	28.3	50.0
Downward	25.0	10.0
No change	46.7	40.0
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=60)	(N=10)

Table 7. 2: *Kachchakaduwa* – Caste and occupational mobility between fathers and sons
 $P < 0.05$; χ^2 = not significant
 (Source: Author's household survey)

Similarly, overall rates of upward and downward occupational mobility were the same in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa (Table 6.3). Around half of sons gained employment in occupations within the same class status as that of their father: in many cases, sons worked the same job as their father. But another half worked in a job with a lower or higher social status than that of their father. As such, occupational mobility – or, put another way, economic uncertainty – appears to be a fact of life in Madampe. In the context of uncertain patronage, the importance of personal responsibility in ensuring mobility is upward rather than downward moves to the foreground.

Social mobility	<i>Suduwella</i>	<i>Kachchakaduwa</i>
Upward	25.8	31.4
Downward	17.5	22.9
No change	56.7	45.7
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N=120)	(N=70)

Table 7. 3: Overall social mobility between fathers and sons at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa
 $P < 0.05$; χ^2 = not significant
 (Source: Author's household survey)

Putting marriage and inheritance to work: diversification and economic opportunity

The majority of *gē* at Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa had one main source of income provided by the husband, while wives and older children living at home occasionally earned a little extra through some home cottage industry or casual labour. The most successful *gē* were those that permanently diversified their sources of income. My hosts benefited from a monthly salary provided by the husband (that upon retirement was replaced by a pension), money from a chicken broiler run and worked by the *gē* (and also a daily-wage labourer), and rent payments from me and at times other lodgers. In addition, *gē* make future speculations through the contract of favourable marriages. By uniting with other successful *gē* and *paramparā*, *gē* can to some extent combat the fluctuating nature of their internal economics as children are born and divert resources, grow up and contribute resources, but then move away to establish their own *gē* (Chayanov 1965 [1925]; Greenhalgh 1985).

The most successful *paramparā* at Suduwella, the Gunathilaka Siriwardena, had risen to a position of economic strength precisely through such activities. Their story begins with the settlement of Suduwella. H.G. Herath Singho, a *goyigama* Buddhist, was an Estate Supervisor on a coconut plantation at Mudeliwatta, north of the colony. He was granted land at Suduwella in 1939. Along with all other residents, the contract that Herath Singho signed limited succession of his plot to just one named individual. However, Herath Singho had ten children: six sons and four daughters. With so many possible successors, he would ordinarily have been forced to choose just one to succeed him, and hope that the remainder could find their own land. Often the *prima genitor* was named as

the eldest son, but in Herath Singho's case it seems that this man was over-looked. When the eldest son married, he did so in *binna* and the couple lived on the wife's land at Negombo.

By the 1950s, when Herath Singho and his family had been in residence at Suduwella for at least eleven years, the remainder of the plots on the colony were allocated. When some colonists gave up their land because it had not been cleared, Herath Singho was able to secure these free lands for his children and thus solved some of his inheritance problems. In total, he found land at Suduwella for six of his children: three sons and three daughters. What happened to the other two sons and one daughter, however, I am mostly unable to say. It may be that Herath Singho was unable to find them lands and, like Dharmasena, they married either in *dīga* or in *binna*. On the other hand, I do know that the youngest son, Karunarathna, committed suicide. Information about this case was unforthcoming, as his descendants (who lived at Suduwella) did not want to talk about it.

By their second generation of residence at Suduwella, the G.S. *paramparā* had come into at least seven acres of land. Herath Singho's moves to obtain land at Suduwella did not stop there, however. Three of his sons who received LDO land (Jamis Appuhamy, Edwin Appuhamy, and Podi Appuhamy) married three women (Magaline Nona, Pabalina Hami, and Asalin Nona) of the Weliyakadi Arachchige Don *paramparā*, who also lived at Suduwella. The most interesting and successful lineage to come out of these unions was that between G.S. Jamis Appuhamy and W.A.D. Magaline Nona, who married sometime during the 1940s.

Jamis and Magaline Nona lived on land that Jamis had been granted by the

government. Like other colonists, Jamis did not receive a government grant to build a house: instead, he first erected a *cadjun* dwelling and only later built a brick dwelling. The couple had three sons, but no daughters: these were Sumanasena, Basil, and Thilakarathna. At death, Jamis divided his estate between two of the sons, with Sumanasena receiving a cash payment and Thilakarathna receiving his land. Meanwhile, Basil inherited land from his *māmā*.

The events that conspired to result in Basil obtaining land from his *māmā* are interesting, and worth mentioning. Because of them, Jamis was able to spread his own lands further, while adding to the lands within his lineage. Magaline Nona, Basil's mother, had two brothers and one sister. Her father was called W.A.D. Simion Appuhamy, and prior to taking up residence at Suduwella (apparently before 1951), he lived at Mugunawatuwana. Like Herath Singho, Simion was interested in maximising the potential he saw in living at a place like Suduwella. At first, he arranged for the marriage of two of his daughters³⁸ with two G.S. men, who by now owned their own land at Suduwella. Next, Simion arranged for one son, W.A.D. Louse Appuhamy, to obtain discarded land during the 1950s. The other son, W.A.D. Joseph Appuhamy, succeeded him on his own land. Fortune did not favour these two men and they both died without producing an heir. Louse married a *goyigama* woman named Rego Nona who eloped before producing any children, and he never married again. Joseph never married at all. As a result, when he died, Louse's plot passed to Basil in lieu of an inheritance from his own father Jamis.³⁹

³⁸ W.A.D. Asalin Nona was a cousin.

³⁹ Put another way, Basil became Louse's adopted son. It is a common practice amongst siblings that should

By the third generation of residence, then, the G.S. *paramparā* had one way or another obtained at least ten acres of Suduwella land. These included Herath Singho's one acre, at least six discarded acres, two acres via marriage, and one acre via the *māmā*. The children of Jamis who stayed at Suduwella, Basil and Thilakarathna, used their share of this land to further the wealth and prosperity of their family.

In 1971, Basil married Hemalatha, a *goyigama* woman from another village. As a well-drained piece of land, Basil uses it to cultivate a range of fruits, including coconut, banana, and mango. Only the coconuts, however, are grown for commercial purposes, while the remainder is consumed within the *gē* and *paramparā*. Basil sells his coconuts to his brother Thilakarathna, who uses them to manufacture fibre. From the coconuts, which number about 1,000 every two months, Basil earns LKR 1,000 (£5). But Basil also exploits his land to house a large chicken broiler, and from which he is able to produce about 600 per month for sale. From the chickens, Basil earns a further LKR 6,000 (£30). Overall, Basil earns in the region of LKR 6,500 (£32.50) per month direct from this lands.

Basil and Hemalatha had three children: two daughters and one son. Both daughters moved away from Suduwella after marriage leaving the son, Sudath, sole successor of the land. Sudath also contributes to the household finances by driving a taxi-van. From this, he earns around LKR 5,000 to 6,000 per month. Together, father and son earn about LKR 12,500 (£62.50) per month for their household: a respectable sum in the colony (the range of salaries can be seen in Figure 7.2, below). When Basil dies, Sudath

one not have any children of his or her own, a brother or a sister who has had several children will 'give' one of their own to the childless one.

will inherit all these enterprises, securing his future in the colony.

It was Thilakarathna, however, who was the true entrepreneur in the family. Thilakarathna's economic livelihood has always been based on the coconut. At time of marriage, Thilakarathna made a living by collecting empty coconut shells that he sold to fibre mills. These mills extracted the fibrous husk and sold bundles of fibre weighing one kilo each to a range of other manufacturers who used the product to make a wide range of products from oil to clothing. No doubt Thilakarathna ran a successful collection business, as by 1978 he was able to purchase W.A.D. Joseph's land, which remained unoccupied after his death, and upon which he built a house. On his original land and in the same year Thilakarathna built a fibre mill, which today employs up to twelve Suduwella people, and provides a net income of around LKR 50,000 (£288) per month: a very respectable amount indeed! Using this wealth, Thilakarathna has been able to purchase and run two private buses between Madampe and Negombo that derive further income, plus purchase twelve Suduwella plots amounting to around six acres of land.

Thilakarathna had three children: two daughters and one son. The eldest daughter married in *dīga* in 2000, while the son married in 2004 and remained at Suduwella. After Thilakarathna's death, all of his estate will be shared equally between the three children. His son, however, a man called Ranga, has already made use of the land and wealth into which he was born. Thilakarathna owns land along the northern border of Suduwella. Upon this land Ranga, who is a marshal arts expert, has built a training hall from where he teaches local boys Karate.

Ranga married Madalawela Arachchilage Sama Sithawe, his cross cousin. M.A. Sama is the daughter of M.A. Ananda Gamini, the son of M.A. Abraham Singho and his

wife G.S. Josephine Hami. Josephine Hami was the sister of G.S. Jamis Appuhamy, Ranga's grandfather, and one of three sisters that received abandoned land during the 1950s. Because both Gamini and Sama were only children, through this marriage Ranga has come into possession of his grandmother's land. Following marriage, Ranga built a café on the land, which is by chance adjacent to his training hall. This business now provides an income for his wife. The couple live on land they bought at Jayabema, an LDO estate north of Suduwella settled during the 1970s.

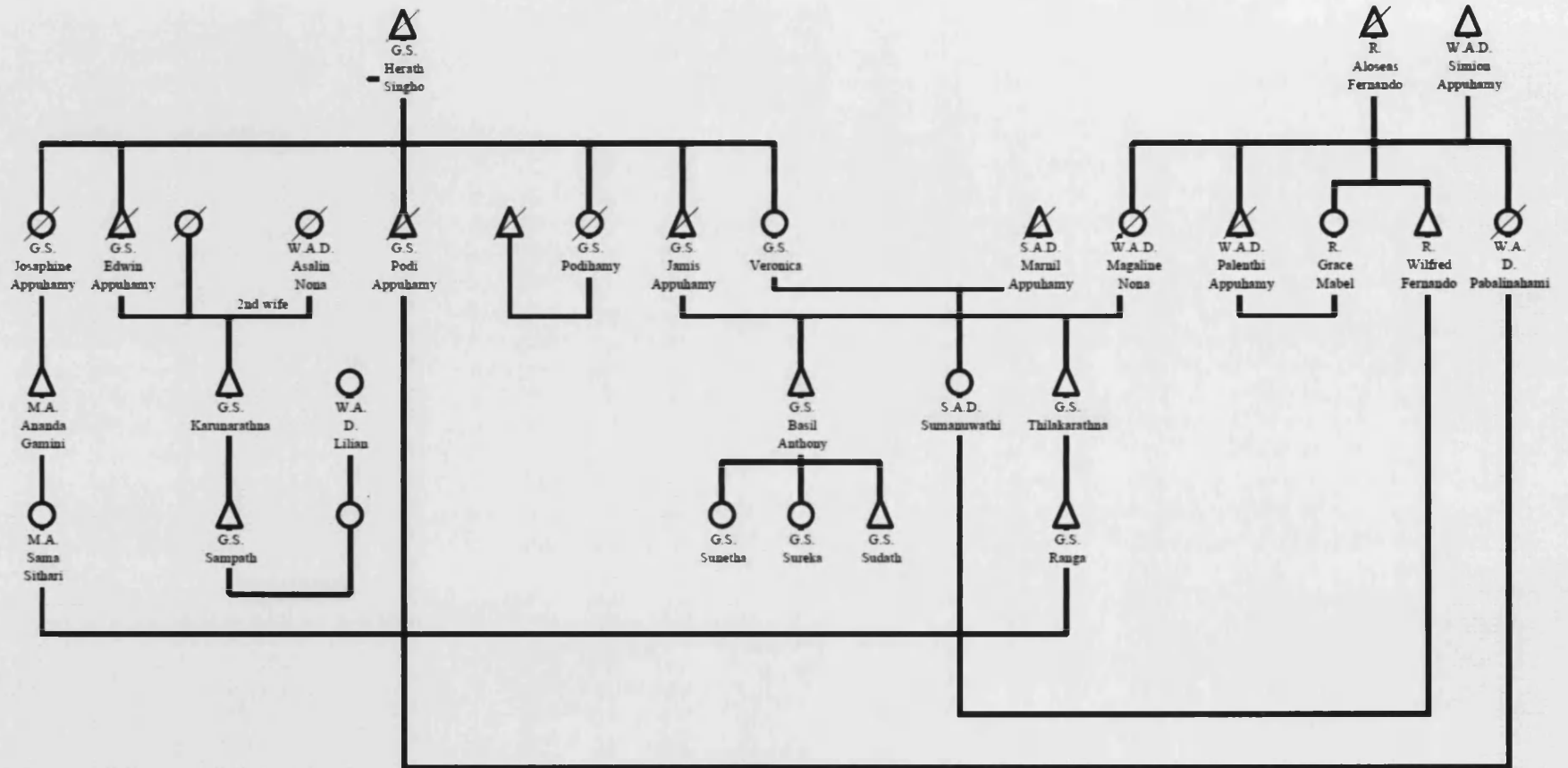


Figure 7.1: The *paramparā* of the Suduwella Herath Gunarathna, Weliyakadi Arachchige Don, and selected affines.

Thus, by the fourth generation the descendants of Herath Singho had not only retained the original lands he had obtained in 1939 and during the 1950s but substantially added to them as well. The marriage between Ranga and Sama also returned Josephine's land to the G.S. *paramparā* (although I do not think this was the reason for the marriage: theirs was a love match). Furthermore, Herath Singho's sons, grandsons, and great grandsons have all made good use of the lands he obtained for them, and established lucrative businesses on them.

But very few colonists, of course, have been able to make such good livings off their land. The majority of the 250 Suduwella people for whom incomes data have been recorded (69.2 percent) earn between just LKR 2,000 and LKR 5,000 (£10 and £25) per month. Only 4.8 percent earn above LKR 6,000 (£30) per month. It seems instead that the majority of colonists have used their land itself as a way in which to attract wealth to them: they have managed this by using it as advantage when contracting favourable marriages for their children, or by offsetting costs by allowing their children to reside on the land after marriage.

Recall that the LDO restricted inheritance to the *prima genitor*, but also that the law proved unworkable. As such, plots of land began to be subdivided between siblings. Originally, Suduwella was divided into 113 plots of land, with presumably 113 dwellings between them. Four of the 113 plots have since been consolidated by H.G. Thilakarathna to form two plots. These larger plots contain one dwelling only, with the other halves being given over to a chicken broiler and Thilakarathna's fibre mill. Of the 111 plots today, 196 dwellings are spread between them: since colonisation, eighty-three new dwellings (housing eighty-three individual *gē*) have been built. Of these, 44.1 percent

contain one dwelling only. On at least five of these, a second dwelling is under construction. A further 36.9 percent contain two dwellings, and in two cases a third is under construction. Finally, 11.7 percent contain three dwellings with none under construction, and 4.5 percent contain four dwellings or more, again with none under construction.

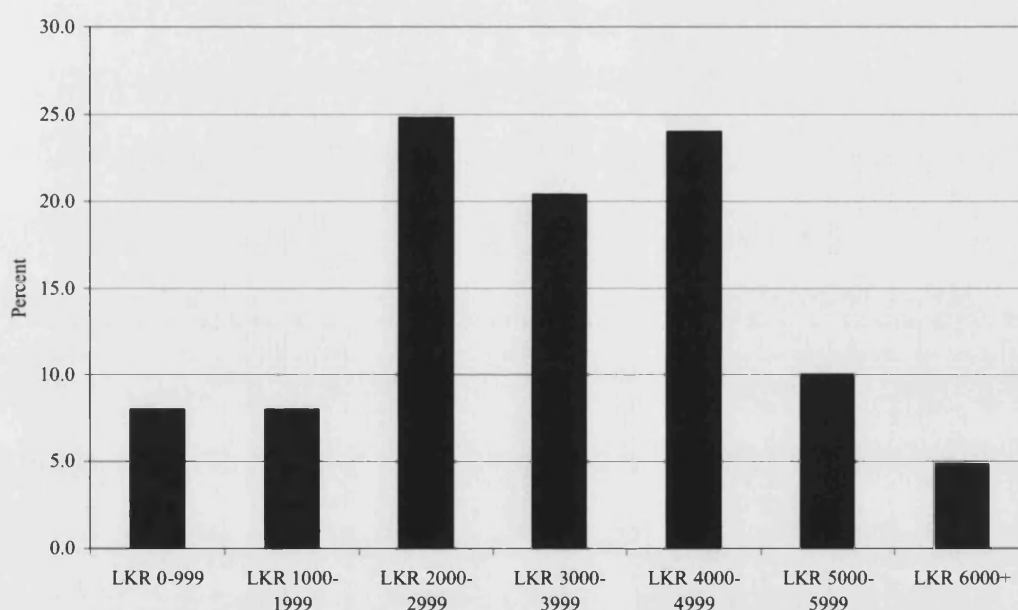


Figure 7.2: *Suduwella* – Monthly salary of residents.
 (Source: Data obtained from Suduwella Grama Nilhadari, 2004, unpublished)

Clearly, the trend at Suduwella is towards greater land fragmentation. In 44.1 percent of cases, the land has passed in successive generations since colonisation from father or mother to one son or daughter only. But in 55.9 percent of cases, the land has been divided between sons, daughters, or grandsons and granddaughters. The figure below illustrates marriage residency patterns according to the number of dwellings available. If just one dwelling exists, it seems sons have slight advantage over daughters when it

comes to inheritance. Yet when more than one dwelling exists, parents prefer to give land to daughters as well.

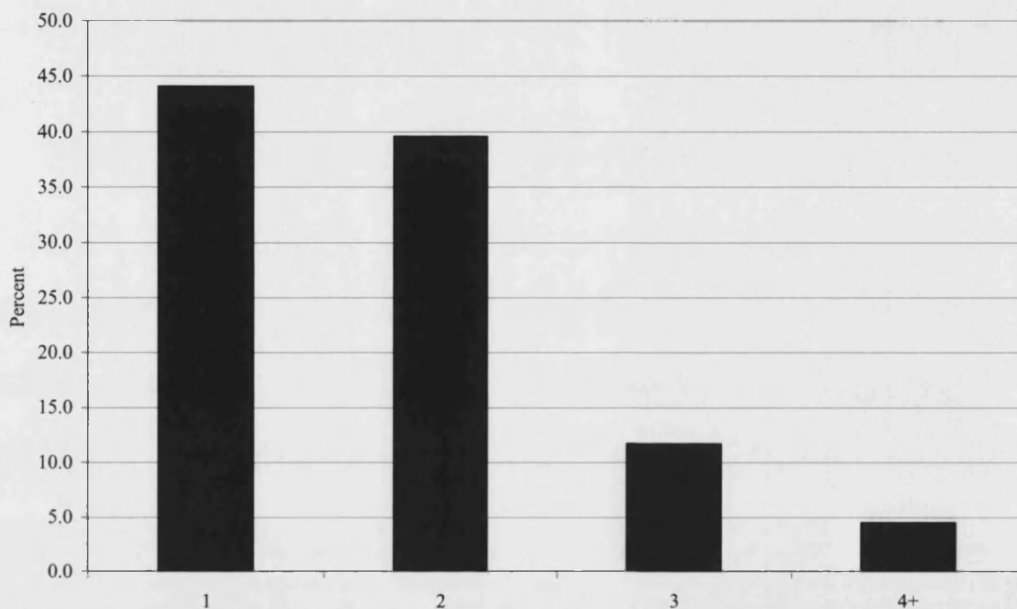


Figure 7.3: *Suduwella* – Number of dwellings on individual plots.
(Source: Author's household survey, 2005)

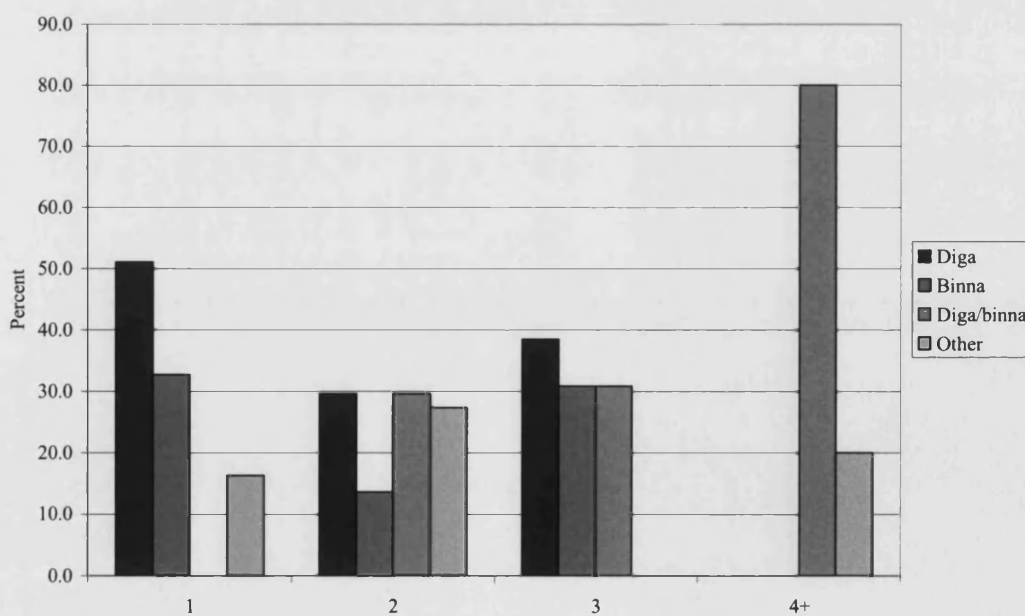


Figure 7.4: *Suduwella* – Number of dwellings and residency pattern.

$P = <0.05$; $\chi^2 = 36.838$; $V = 0.33$
(Source: Author's household survey)

As such, of the 111 plots that constitute Suduwella today, sons are dominant on 38.7 percent, daughters on 23.4 percent, and sons and daughters share the land on 18.9 percent. A final 19.0 percent has been rented to Suduwella natives or outsiders, given to Suduwella natives or outsiders as part of their employment, or was unoccupied at time of research.

Parents may sacrifice *paramparā* land if they can use it as an advantage when contracting marriages that bring other kinds of wealth or status. For example, in 1958 the daughter of an original colonist belonging to the *goyigama* caste was had an arranged marriage to a male of the KSD caste. This marriage was hypogamous, a union that even today is highly disfavoured, but contracted because of the occupational class status of the prospective husband. While the wife's father was a daily-waged labourer, the husband worked as an Estate Supervisor and had, as such, good prospects. It seems that landed assets were traded for his monetary assets. The pattern of inter-caste proposal marriages witnessed at Suduwella throughout the twentieth century (see Chapter 4.3, Figure 4.9) may be attributed to such strategies.

7.2. Drinking circles as a source of economic, social, and emotional support

Men in Madampe know they have to make the best of whatever opportunities available to make a living. A spirit of entrepreneurialship underwrites their activities, and successful men like Kapila and Lalith derive pride from that. Nevertheless, some men know that at times they will have to make use of networks of kin or friends, for example when financing a new venture, solving cash flow problems, smoothing bureaucratic difficulties,

evading legal regulations, escaping police interference, or simply benefiting from forms of social and emotional support they can offer. At Suduwella, where bilateral kin ties are stronger, this requirement may be a little easier to accomplish. For Kachchakaduwa people, on the other hand, it may be more difficult.

Even so, Kachchakaduwa people know they cannot operate alone forever, and so have to build relationships with unrelated men. Even men who enjoy stronger familial support may ultimately prefer to build relationships beyond the *paramparā* too. Although Kapila was able to use his economic and political status to help his *massinā* (wife's brothers) they were not, being less well-off and without significant contacts, in a position to reciprocate. For this reason Kapila, like Buddhika whose case was discussed in Chapter 5.3, felt trapped between his obligations to them on the one hand, and the unreciprocated drain on his time and money they represented on the other.

Both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa men recognised the importance of well-off, well-connected, kin and friends. For this reason they invest a good deal of time and money into making such individuals feel special. Almost ubiquitously, they nurtured such relationships through the hosting of drinking parties. Men that did not drink were conscious about how this was economically, socially, politically, and emotionally detrimental to them, with one, a medical doctor, complaining: 'People do not trust me!' But as integral as drinking may have been for men, hosting parties meant spending *gē* resources that might be used by the wife. It also meant engaging in an activity that threatened their honest characters. In Madampe one of the most common arguments between husbands and wives and men and family members revolved around the issue of drinking.

Moral ambiguity of alcohol

Alcohol, like romance (see Chapter 6.1), has a contradictory nature about it. The majority of men that I met would initially deny being a drinker, claiming it was bad for their health, against their religion, or, most often, would get them into trouble with wives, girlfriends, parents, and even children. After some time, however, the 'façade of respectability' would crumble and it would turn out these men at least drank with a select group of male kin and/or friends, weddings and other life-cycle events, and possibly at the local bar. Indeed, in Madampe any and all social events, including religious pilgrimages, were for men by prerequisite drinking events. They were characterised by heavy consumption of *arrack*, gin, or brandy, and generally occurred fairly frequently. Depending upon the size of a *gē* and its social network, men typically found themselves at drinking events several times per month, if not more often.

But the façade of respectability nevertheless also determined that men who drank at most public events did so 'secretly.' Following the wake of a friend's uncle, who was Roman Catholic and had been cremated at the Madampe cemetery, his kin and friends congregated at the *maḷa gedara*. As was usual for such events, male and female attendees did not mingle, with the men setting up camp at the back of the house and the women inside. Having seated me down in the garden, my friend turned in a conspiratorial kind of way, and, accompanied by the South Asian head waggle, asked: '*ape bonnavda*' ('shall we drink?'). Never one to turn down a tippie, I graciously replied '*ov*' ('yes'), and he led me to the open side door of a van parked away from the house. Within it, a few bottles of good *arrack*, some soft drink mixers, and a couple of glasses were laid out. We poured

ourselves a slug, added some soda water, and swallowed the drink in one go. By then, a couple other men had arrived to take a drink, and we headed back to our seats. In this way the men at the wake, who numbered around twenty in all, spent the evening getting progressively drunk, in a very obvious but nevertheless 'discrete' kind of way.

Interestingly, when men drink at home on their own they often do so in a similar fashion. My landlord typically drank a quarter-bottle of *arrack* in the evening. However, his glass would be left on top of the fridge in the side room, with the *arrack* placed quietly on a workbench and a bottle of soda water or ginger beer kept cool in the fridge. For him, the evening began spent going over the *gē* accounts and also those of some friends who paid him a small fee for doing so. Every thirty minutes or so he would rise from his desk, saunter somewhat subtly to the fridge, take a shot, and sit back down again. At around 9pm, one hour before the evening meal was served, he would join his children to watch whatever tele-drama was playing that night. He continued to drink covertly during this time, and only stopped when the meal was served.

The moral opposite of my landlord's quiet drinking behaviour is that displayed by the local *kasippu miniha* (*kasippu* man), or village drunkard (*beer-baḍa*). Widely regarded as a joke but nevertheless potentially threatening individual, *kasippu minissu* (*kasippu* men) contradict the bounds of socially acceptable drinking. *Kasippu* is a generic name for home-brew, but the term is also used for an illegally-produced and sold spirit of varying and uncertain strength favoured by very low-income men. A decided aura of mysticism surrounds the production of the drink, with people speculating wildly on its usual contents. It is said to be produced in giant vats in the middle of paddy systems or the depths of the jungle, where no-one can see it. Mosquito coils (burning rings of

mosquito repellent) and barbed wire are popularly assumed to constitute its main ingredients, as are any unfortunate creature that happens to fall in and drown. This is in contrast to the contents of socially-accepted *kasippu* home brew, which is said to be made from mangoes and other fruits.

As a consumer of illegal *kasippu*, *kasippu minissu* visit the *kasippu gedara*, the private house from which *kasippu* is typically sold. *Kasippu gedara* are occasionally raided by the police, and their owners and customers fined. More often than not, though, the owner of the *kasippu gedara* bribes the police to stay away. A relatively small *kasippu gedara* at Kachchakaduwa that sold around five litres of *kasippu* in quarter, half, or one litre measures per day paid LKR 1,000 per month to avoid being closed down. As such, *kasippu minissu* are implicated in corruption.

But worse than this is how *kasippu minissu* become drunk. Socially acceptable drinking, except in special circumstances, is that which is accompanied by restraint: that is, *läjja-baya*. Drunkards are not expected to lose control of their speech or body, and men that do are often shunned as drinking partners by those conscious of *läjja* (and also because they are, of course, quite tiresome). One characteristic of *kasippu minissu* is that they cannot control their behaviour, and make an exhibition that attracts shame upon themselves and their *gē*. Marecek (personal communication, 2004) has reported cases of self-harm amongst young teenagers that arose specifically in response to a father's shameful drunkenness. Padmisiri, the middle-aged *goyigama* Buddhist male that owned the Kachchakaduwa *kasippu gedara*, was also known to be a *kasippu miniha*. Together with his friends, Padmisiri would get drunk at School Junction and make a scene, for example by shouting at passers by or dancing in the road. With his bad characteristics

taken altogether, Kachchakaduwa people regarded him as one of the *ganan-kāriya* ('ruffians' or 'hooligans') of the village, and not welcome in their *gē* (the fact he married a *radā* women did not help his case).

The only social space in the village in which it is acceptable for a man to drink and become demonstrably drunk is at a wedding. Indeed, drinking, eating, and dancing in a slightly embarrassing manner are key elements of any wedding ceremony in Madampe, as they are around the world. At weddings, the bar that sets *lājja* for males and females is thus pushed much higher than in everyday life, and both can engage in behaviours they would never ordinarily be allowed to do. It is not unusual to see unmarried men and women talking together, or said males trying to impress females with their moves on the dance floor. Equally, the topic of conversation following weddings is centred on the quality of hospitality on offer, and the amusing drunken exploits of self or others.

Quality of hospitality is measured by the brand of alcoholic beverages and range of snacks and food supplied for guests, and for several reasons it is important for the couple and their respective *gē* to impress in this way. Simply, the larger the wedding party and the more expensive the refreshments, the higher socioeconomic standing (*tattvaya*) the core actors will be assumed to be. For this reason, weddings in Madampe were incredibly expensive affairs, and *gē* seemed quite prepared to sink into deep debt over them. Spending was usually relative to the income of *gē*, with all *gē*, regardless of their wealth, spending more than they could actually afford. Of the several weddings that I attended at Suduwella, Kachchakaduwa, and elsewhere across Madampe and Sri Lanka, *gē* took loans from village moneylenders of around LKR 50,000 (£250): the equivalent of several months' wages.

Trips out of the village are also times when the normal codes of moral restraint may be discarded. 'Religious' pilgrimages to ancient temples, cities, and other locations across Sri Lanka provide a regular opportunity in the ritual calendar for several *gē* to squeeze into a minivan or bus and spend several days touring the sites. The month of August marks the most auspicious time to visit Kataragama, the Hindu-Buddhist shrine to the deity Skanda, in the south-east of the island. Because I happened to be away from the field at that time, my hosts kindly postponed their annual visit until September.

As usual, my hosts hired a local taxi-van and driver, and early in the morning set off to the home of my landlord's brother in the outskirts of Colombo. Having picked them up, we settled back for the long drive to Tissamahara, the town closest to Kataragama. The music was turned up loud, and for a while I assumed we were all focused on singing and enjoying the views of the towns and countryside as it flew past. I then noticed my landlord, who was seated in the front of the van, surreptitiously pass a bottle of *arrack* back to his brother. Filling his glass, the brother then passed the bottle back, again very discreetly. By the time we had reached the shores of the Tissa Wewa, where we were to eat our lunch packets of rice and curry, the two had polished off the whole bottle.

After lunch we travelled to the local pilgrim hostel where my hosts had reserved a room. It was self-catering accommodation, with a kitchen area with fully installed open fire places, sinks, and a few work surfaces. The room itself had no beds, but my hosts had packed a few mats to cover the hard concrete floor. They also brought a full crate of Sri Lankan-brand *Lion* beer, several bottles of good *arrack*, and some soda. In the evening, after my landlady and her sister-in-law had prepared our evening rice and curry and the men had slept off their day-time drink, we visited Kataragama. Returning to the hostel the

two brothers, their sons, and I sat on one side of the room and opened the *arrack*, while the women sat on the other and opened the beer. In this way the whole party, albeit with a nod to respectability, drank out the evening. This was one of the few times that I ever witnessed my landlady drink alcohol (another was at Christmas when the family, who were Buddhist, helped me to celebrate with some whisky, and at her brother's son's wedding). But as a trip away from the village and everyday life, the pilgrimage – an otherwise pious activity meant to endow the participants with merit – was a space in which the usual bounds of social and moral regulation could be suspended.

Drinking parties: problems and functions

The importance of drinking parties in the development of men's public personalities (as economic, social, and political beings) and as sources of social and emotional support cannot be over-emphasised. They are supposed to be lavish (relative to the participants socioeconomic status) but frequent affairs, during which men who engage in cycles of reciprocity come together to reaffirm their relationships over the best drinks and food money can buy. But such gatherings too are about building trust, and constitute spaces in which men discuss whatever personal problems are troubling them. Inasmuch as drinking parties provide a form of social support, and accepting the fact that alcohol intoxication tends to increase risk of suicidal behaviour (Gamburd 2008b; Murphy 2000; Williams 1997), drinking parties can be understood as a central means by which men share the burden of their troubles and thus in fact *decrease* suicide risk.

Typically composed of the host and just two or three others, the aim of drinking

parties is not necessarily to make new acquaintances but strengthen and deepen ties with existing ones. The unwritten rule in Madampe is that men who drink together collaborate together: the drinking circle defines the scope of a man's economic and by extension social and emotional world. Reflecting their exclusivity, drinking parties are normally held at men's *gē*. I have also attended parties for particularly important friends – and those with whom men would probably not discuss personal problems – in the bars of local tourist hotels, for example Lalith's bar at Marawila.

By inviting men into the *gē*, the host is making an explicit declaration of kinship, regardless of whether such a relationship exists or not. When a kin relationship does exist, the man is being accommodated within the *paramparā*. But even if the men are unrelated, they will begin to refer to each other as *machang*, the informal and friendly term for *massinā*. This is more than just a symbolic label: *machang* assume an essential relationship of amity that is supposed to exist between proper *massinā*.

Drinking parties usually take place in the evening, after younger children have gone to bed. However, men prefer to hold parties when the rest of the family is away, otherwise they become subdued affairs. All parties, regardless of whether the wife is at home, begin calmly. Men in Madampe tended to be socially awkward when sober, and highly conscious of the need to maintain an image of good character. Despite their exclusivity, men behaved no differently when arriving at drinking parties. But after a few glasses, men and their tongues start to loosen up and for a while the conversation is freely flowing and witty. It is during this time that men may share problems they are experiencing, for example with work, business, wives, or children. The other men listen and give advice, perhaps sharing similar experiences and providing solutions.

It was in just such a space that Sriyantha, whose case I discuss below, shared with Kapila and some other friends the gossip that he had been hearing about the infidelity of his wife. In so doing Sriyantha signalled a level of trust with his drinking friends, whose advice he found to be satisfying and helped him to manage his concerns. At a subsequent party, Kapila told about how he was struggling to find LKR 40,000 (£2,000) to pay for the roof on the new house he was building. As a signal of their friendship, Sriyantha agreed to lend Kapila the money, with no interest.

When the family is present, at around midnight the host's wife will begin to ask the men to behave quietly so as not to disturb the children. It is normally at this time that conversation is dying due to the effects of advanced inebriation, and singing takes its place. Singing is viewed as an essential part of any drinking party, as it extends men's drinking capacity by at least one more bottle. The content of songs tends to be funny, often rude, and most usually about lost or unrequited love. One or two men lead the song, with others beating out a rhythm on their legs, arms of their chairs, or the table in front. As the momentum increases and men find their musical souls, so does the volume. It is not unusual for drummers to send glasses and plates flying as they become unconscious of the force they are using.

As such, husband and wife begin a spiralling discourse in which the wife asks the husband to quieten his guests, to which he pretends to cower and look afraid, and his guests respond with a nudge and a chuckle. Eventually the wife loses her temper and demands that they take their rice and curry (and thus cease drinking), and in response the husband becomes angry (*kopēya*) that he must ask his guests to leave. By this time, however, the guests have usually drunk and sung all they can, and somewhat thankfully

take their dinner before departing. These kinds of disputes are regarded as being part-and-parcel of drinking parties, and not treated very seriously.

Disputes between husbands and wives became more serious when parties begin to dominate a man's life: that is, when they cease to be about patronage relationships but represent an economic and health problem for the husband and his *gē*. Parties are held several times a month, with each man in the drinking circle taking his turn as host. In Madampe, a middle-class man with a well paid job and side investments that together earn LKR 20,000 (£100) per month may typically spend in the same period between LKR 2,500 to LKR 5,000 (£12.50 to £25) on drinks and food for his guests. This is equal to at least 12.5 to 25 percent of his total monthly income. The cost of drinking to men's health is also significant. A review of admission records at GPU for the year 2004 suggested that 32.3 percent of all admissions with a non-communicable diagnosis (including accident, assault, and suicide attempt) followed alcohol poisoning and other immediate alcohol-related illnesses. A great deal of accidents and the majority of assaults presenting at GPU also occurred while under the influence (Baklien & Samarasinghe 2003).

Money men spend on drinking parties is also supposed to help wives meet their own *gē* responsibilities. As such, the question that wives ask of husbands is whether such expenditure is necessary, or whether the money might be better spent elsewhere. When husbands can demonstrate that guests attending his parties are of some definite value to the *gē*, spending on parties can be legitimated. Problems arise when parties – on top of more routine drinking at the bar that itself might cost between LKR 1,000 to LKR 2,000 (£5 to £10) per month – become so frequent that they cannot possibly return a 'profit.' In this case, wives might suspect that drinking parties have simply become a social pastime,

or indeed suggestive of an addiction, as would probably be the case. It is in these contexts that husbands and wives fight over the level of a man's drinking, and in some cases such disputes lead, as has been seen, to acts of suicidal behaviour.

Even a man's friends can become concerned over the amount of money he is spending on lavishing his guests, or about how much he is risking his health. When Kapila began treating a chief police officer stationed at MPS to regular parties, Sriyantha, who as I have shown was a close friend of Kapila, concerned himself with its implications. Kapila told me that he needed to give parties for the officer because the business he was in was a dangerous one in which the boundary between legality and illegality was frequently broken. A trusted contact at MPS, however, could help keep the law at bay. But when Sriyantha told Kapila what he felt, Kapila did not respond positively and for a few months the two did not drink together. In this way, the supposedly inevitable nature of their friendship, framed as it was within a moral discourse of kinship, was proven to be evitable.

7.3. Migration as an economic strategy

'These days migration is like a fashion: everybody thinks they can go abroad to work and solve all their problems,' one middle-aged male ex-migrant told me, who had worked in the Maldives and Europe for several years. Many people in Madampe thought that international labour migration was a means by which economic uncertainty could be avoided. Across the Division, men and women from poor backgrounds returned from abroad with the money to purchase land, build a large house, equip them with all-new

consumer goods, and invest in a range of business ventures. By migrating for a couple of years, or so the story went, *gē* could leap in socioeconomic standing (Gamburd 2000; Hettige 1992).

Migration from Sri Lanka

The migration economy was initially instigated by the rising price of oil during the 1970s, but exploded during the 1990s. The high price of oil brought economic and social transformation to the Gulf States, as labouring men were able to make use of education and rise up the class ladder to work in new white-collar occupations. The migrant economy from Sri Lanka was thus originally focused towards replacing the disappearing native labour class. During the 1990s, however, the nature of the migrant economy changed. Ever-increasing wealth in the Gulf States meant that households could afford to employ domestic help. The result was a mass increase of female migration from Sri Lanka to work in the Middle East as housemaids and childminders. While in 1986 two-thirds of all migrants were men, by 2001 two-thirds were female. In the last few years the gender gap has narrowed, with more women and less men migrating overseas.

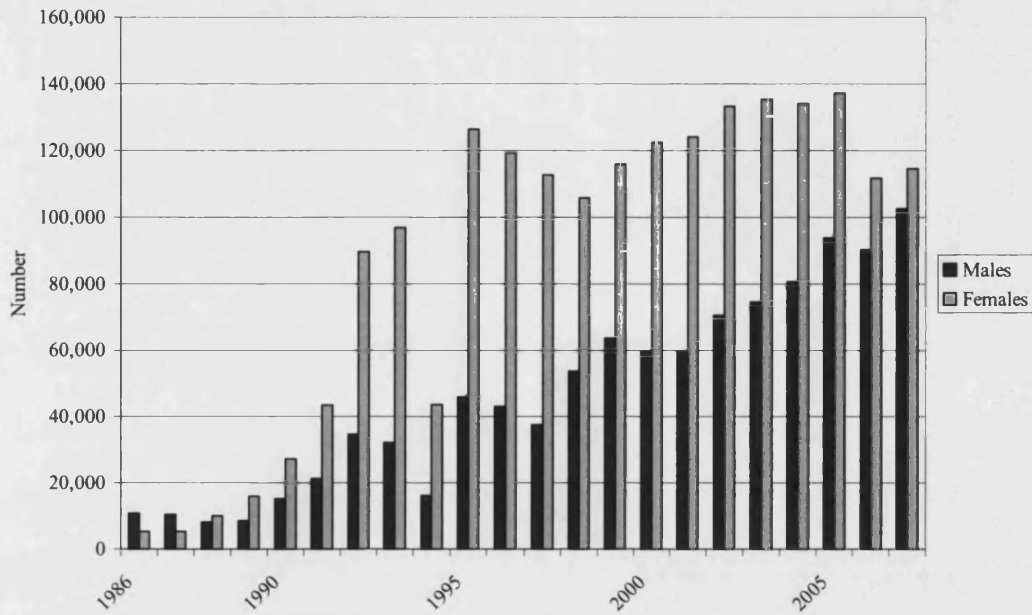


Figure 7.5: Departures for foreign employment, 1986 to 2007.
 (Source: Bureau of Foreign Employment 2007)

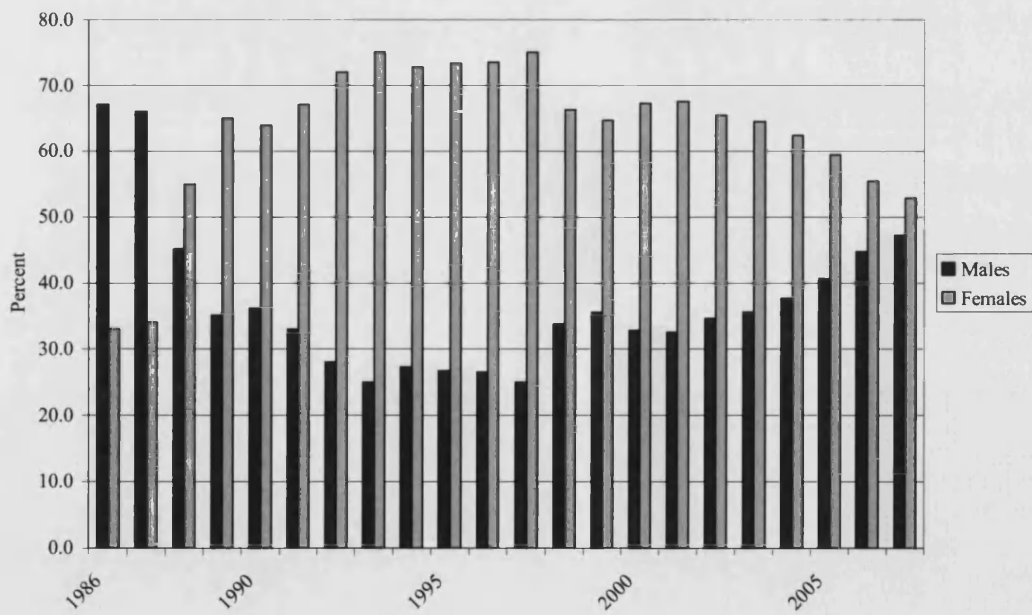


Figure 7.6: Percentage of male and female departures for foreign employment, 1986 to 2007.
 (Source: Bureau of Foreign Employment 2007)

Migration from Madampe Division

In June 2004, Madampe AGA asked all Grama Nilhadari to collect information on levels of migration from their locales. Some 790 Madampe people, or 2.6 percent of the total population, were recorded as living abroad. Of these, 48 percent were male and 52 percent were female. The average age of males and females was 35.5 and 35.9 years respectively. The percentage of Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa people working abroad was 2.0 percent and 1.3 percent respectively. Of Suduwella migrants, four were male and eleven female; of Kachchakaduwa migrants, one male and seven female. As such, migration from Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa was largely female in character.

These data, however, are likely to under-estimate total levels of migration as those travelling abroad illegally were not counted. Yet illegal routes of migration account for high numbers of departures amongst men, although probably very few amongst women. In Madampe illegal migration was widely known to be a dangerous venture that even the best-prepared men would struggle to achieve. Very few *gē* would be prepared to risk with well-being of wives and mothers in such a way. I knew of only one such case of a women trying to migrate illegally, and then in the company of her husband. The pair flew to Bahrain on tourist visa but was turned away at port of entry.

Experience of migration amongst men

Unmarried men in Madampe migrated for the purpose of raising economic capital to buy land, build a house, start a business, and/or get married. Married men, meanwhile,

migrated in order to provide for their *gē*. For most men I knew, migration was assumed to offer a quick route to economic success and pride, as well as a chance to see something of the world and have an adventure. Although the kinds of labour available were typically in the construction and service sectors, the nature of work did not affect the class status associated with it. Working class migrants came to hold middle class status when they returned home, and middle class men who were employed in decidedly working class positions overseas nevertheless retained their original status back home. For this reason, the number of legal routes for migration was far lower than the number of men wishing to migrate. Thus, of the five men in Madampe I knew who had migrated abroad to work, only one had done so legally.

Throughout fieldwork I was constantly asked, by literally every man I met, whether I could find him work in the UK. But as many men find out the hard way, it is no easy feat to travel abroad without the proper paperwork. The subject was a popular one in the bar where I drank, and I knew several men who tried to migrate to the Middle East, Europe, or Australia during my stay. A few of my friends had calculated the succession of countries through which one had to pass in order to gain a visa for the next with a minimum of difficulty. Interestingly, they were also rather coy about revealing their plan to me, but I learnt enough to know that it involved passing through some combination of India, Russia, Africa, and the Baltic's, finally to fetch up in Germany, then France, and eventually the UK.

In early 2006, one of these men, Chandrasiri, aged 34, attempted the journey himself. Chandrasiri had recently married and, as is often the case, decided that in order to build a proper home for his family needed to travel abroad to earn money. Chandrasiri

disappeared from Madampe without much fuss two months after his wedding. For a week, his friends in the bar heard nothing. Then one day Chandrasiri made a telephone call to say that he was in southern India, and was making his way north. Chandrasiri next called his friends one month later to say that he had made it to Czechoslovakia. Another month passed, and I heard rumours that he was in North Africa. Finally, four months after he had left Sri Lanka, Chandrasiri returned to Madampe, apparently having failed in his attempts to get into France and subsequently deported from Spain. Having spent more than LKR 500,000 (c. £2,000) on the venture, Chandrasiri put any ideas about migrating behind him, and by luck returned to his job at the Voice of America broadcasting base at Ambakandawila.

For those who could afford it, an alternative means by which men sought to travel abroad was by using a tourist visa. The bar owner, Warana, 38, paid a fortune – LKR 1 million (c. £5,000) – through a third party for a Sinhalese couple that were UK citizens to sponsor him for a three-month visit. Warana's reasons for travelling abroad were somewhat different to those of Chandrasiri. First, he was still unmarried, although apparently a 'girlfriend' lived in London. Secondly, as the owner of the bar, Warana was financially very well off and did not need to travel abroad for money. Perhaps for this reason, Warana's regular drinkers were rather sceptical that he would ever leave Madampe. They said that in order to travel abroad, people required a 'strong mind,' or at least a good reason to put up with the difficulties that it caused. They doubted that Warana, who was known to be rather relaxed and somewhat shy, had the personal strength to succeed. Some of Warana's friends even tried to deter him from making what they thought would be a disastrous trip. They pointed out that Warana was, as a rich man,

a person of standing (*tattvaya*) in Madampe. But overseas, they argued, he would become nobody. As it happens, and although Warana had paid out a large sum of money, he did indeed cancel his trip, and remained in Sri Lanka.

In the absence of contacts to sponsor tourist visas to rich countries, men seek to enter countries by other means. Ihusida, aged 28 and unmarried, had previously worked legally in the Maldives where he earned LKR 14,000 per month (£70) as a carpenter. (The same job in Sri Lanka would have paid around £25 per month.) Using the money he saved, Ihusida paid LKR 3 million (£15,000) for a passage to Australia. His 'agent' (in Madampe the organisational structures of illegal migration reflect those of legal migration) for this was a man in Negombo only known as Jude. Jude was 'subagent' to a man in Colombo called Derek. Ihusida and eighteen other men (fifteen Sinhalese and three Jaffna Tamil) flew to Indonesia on fourteen-day tourist visas with Jude. When they arrived Jude took the men to the port and showed them what Ihusida described as 'a good boat,' telling them 'that will take you to Australia.' Until it was ready to sail, the men stayed in Jakarta for seven days and Bandung for seven days. During this time, Ihusida said he saw 'more than five hundred Sri Lankan's' (I don't know whether he counted or not!) apparently waiting for their boats to depart.

Jude arranged for all nineteen men to stay in one house in both cities, but did not pay for it. Instead, the men were expected to pay for their own food and lodgings, on top of the LKR three million they had already given to Jude. Their lodgings amounted to LKR 500 (£2.50) per day, and food was bought from local outlets. However, none of the men had carried very much money with them and after paying for the rent up front their finances ran out, and the men began to go hungry. At the end of the fourteen days, the

men boarded a different and far less impressive ship to the one that Jude had originally shown them. Ihusida said that after his experiences in Jakarta and Bandung and then the disappointing ship, he and the others became very worried that their attempt was going to fail. But having no visa and having invested LKR 3 million in the attempt, they had no choice but to trust Jude.

Not long after leaving port the ship was intercepted by the Australian coast guard and they were turned back to Indonesia. Ihusida spent fourteen days in jail until his parents could raise money for a return flight to Sri Lanka. Although Ihusida could not tell me what happened to the other men, he assumed they too would have returned to Sri Lanka after someone back home sponsored a flight. However, many of those Ihusida had travelled with had sold their house and land to pay for the trip and so it was not clear to what they would be returning. Ihusida, who was married when I interviewed him, told me that he was trying to return abroad again, this time legally to the Maldives.

In addition to these cases, I knew or heard of several other attempts at migration that similarly ended in failure. Nevertheless, such stories did not deter most men from wanting to travel abroad to work. This was despite the warnings of men such as those in Warana's bar that 'somebody' becomes 'nobody' overseas. Indeed, those that managed to migrate successfully were treated with a good deal of respect from others, and when they returned to Madampe were greeted as if they were local celebrities.

Economic significance of migration for women

Unmarried women in Madampe migrated with the mind to accrue a dowry (*dāvādda*) in

the form of land and a house, and/or because they wished to contribute to the natal *gē*. Married women travelled for similar reasons, for example if their husbands were landless or jobless. Many simply stated they wish to give their children a better life. In addition to these reasons, some women cited marital problems, and for them migration was best understood as a form of separation and as such an alternative to suicidal behaviour. However, Marecek (personal communication, 2004) interviewed several women for whom migration followed an act of suicidal behaviour, when self-harm had failed in its attempt at redress.

If male migrants were or became middle class, female migrants were almost always working class to begin with and remained so upon returning home. Middle class women in Madampe never migrated except in some professional capacity, for example to work as a nurse or doctor in a western country. The vast majority of female migrants left Madampe precisely because they stemmed from poor backgrounds, and needed to earn money to replace salaries lost through the economic inactivity of fathers or husbands. Despite returning from abroad often much richer than middle class women, their class status would not change. But as Nalika proved (see Chapter 4.5), this inability to climb the social ladder did not bother many women, who often took even more pride in their economic success than men.

Women's pride was all the more felt because migration enabled them to make significant in-roads into the real estate economy. Although I have been unable to locate any sound figures on the extent of the economy, anecdotal evidence provides some glimpse of the size and nature of it. In the Madampe Division between 2004 and 2006, four large (one kilometre-squared plus) areas of coconut estate were cleared and

‘blocked’ into half-acre plots for development. Two of these were on green-field sites (and so the number of settlements in the Madampe Division shall in the near future become fifty-four), while the other two were created within the bounds of existing settlements.

In the autumn of 2005, two young men involved in the selling of plots on green-field sites lodged with me at Suduwella. Acting for a private company that owned the land, the men sold plots of land for between LKR 200,000 and LKR 500,000 (£1,000 and £2,500), depending upon size and location. Looking through their receipt books, I noticed that the majority – at least two-thirds, although unfortunately I never made an accurate count – of the customers were women. The agents told me that these buyers, indeed their main customer, had earned the money while working abroad. In many cases these women were unmarried and had bought the land to act as a ‘dowry’ for a future marriage. In Madampe, the migration economy is creating a class of female private-landowners which, while not completely outside the bounds of local social expectation, is significant by its sheer size.

7.4. Migration, *gē* relations, and the ‘crisis of masculinity’

The normative model of the Madampe *gē* supposes men to be the wage-earner and women the domestic keeper; in practice, women become wage-managers as the demands of domestic *kāriya* (duty) outweigh those of men’s *kāriya*. But as seen, men derive an enormous amount of pride from succeeding in their occupational *kāriya*, and also, through the importance of drinking parties, a major source of social and emotional

support. When men migrate, they regard it merely to be an extension of their existing *kāriya*, and a way of providing for their *gē*. In this case, too, women are expected to continue with their domestic *kāriya*, and nurture the *gē* using their husband's income.

But when women migrate, *gē* relationships are turned on their head. Women become the wage-earner and men the domestic keeper. As such, migrant women assume the symbolic status associated with wage-earner, although, importantly, lose the practical experience of being the wage-manager. While this means that men cannot *legitimately* claim money for their own pursuits, and most importantly cannot claim funding for drinking parties, they can claim money to fulfil their newly-acquired domestic *kāriya*. In some cases of female migration, children go to live with female relatives or the *māmā* (mother's brother), and as such men cannot claim money for domestic *kāriya* as this is paid to child minders instead. However, in most cases women still send money to men, so they can accomplish whatever task the migration was supposed to be for: building a house, starting a business, repaying a debt, or whatever.

Thus, most husbands of migrant women may be expected to maintain an ambivalent attitude towards female migration. Although by becoming wage-earners women usurp men's position within the *gē* and thus, to some extent, 'challenge masculinity,' men nevertheless acquire the role of wage-manager. With wives safely abroad, men, especially those who settled in *dīga*, may spend remittances in more or less whatever way he sees fit (men who have settled in *binna* may expect his wife's relatives to regulate the use of remittances). One of the first uses remittances may be put to use for, then, are drinking parties, and so men still enjoy and benefit from the social and emotional support they offer. Put another way, the husbands of migrant women may

'gain' just as much as they 'lose' when their position as wage-earner is taken away from them.

However, migrant women are also aware that men, as wage-managers, may use remittances to service their own interests before those of the *gē*. Women have returned home following several years abroad to find that no house has been built and no money has been saved. In reflection of this, some women place their salaries in local bank accounts and only send a very small amount home, if any at all. On the other hand, some employers do not regularly pay their female recruits, or only pay them at the end of their contract. In these cases, no money will be sent home. The status of husband *vis-à-vis* wife in such circumstances is likely to remain fairly level, as in the absence of financial capital social status will not change.

Finally, women who migrate to escape abusive marriages will not, in many cases, send money to men. In such cases, men are not even always aware their wives had intended to migrate until they suddenly disappeared one day. If the couple had children, prior arrangements for them to live with the wife's family might have been made, but it is just as likely they will be left in the care of husbands. In the case of the former, men may enter into disputes with the wife's family in order to claim them back. In the case of the latter, men may make good parent or, unfortunately perhaps too often, poor ones. In either case, women will probably not send money home. It is in these cases that any male ambivalence towards migration will disappear. As I have suggested, the patriarchy that men enjoy is precarious, and more than women becoming wage-earners, women leaving men and taking the children stands as challenge to it. Indeed, women's actions in this regard fully undermine men's position within the *gē*, and suicide as a form of separation

is very likely to arise as the only means by which the wife's act of separation can be 'beaten' (see Chapter 5.2).

Thus, the problem that people have with female migration, and the reason that female migration stands as a core allegory for many kinds of marital dispute that lead to suicide amongst men, is the separation of kin. Men derive pride from success in their economic *kāriya* not for the experience of work and business in their own right, but because they enable them to provide for the *gē*. When men are denied this role, people in Madampe assume men will crumble and become, simply, abusive drunks. However, as I have said, this view too contains a number of prejudices, including those involving the 'proper' roles of men and women, and also the jealousy (*irisiyāva*) of others.

7.5. Perceived effects of migration: family breakdown and class prejudice

Yet it is not just these issues that exercise popular moral concerns about migration. At work is class prejudice, reflected in the fact that it is the middle classes who are most critical of migration, and of female migration in particular.

Jealousy and gossip

Aside from the financial benefits, few of my informants had good tales to tell about migration. Those who had gone abroad and returned were often reluctant to describe their experiences, while those who had not were keen to criticise the economy as a whole. Material gains accumulated by migrants led to gossip amongst those left behind, as a way

of levelling the economic differences created between them. Jealousy perverted those accounts, which often attacked the material greed of women. As one male non-migrant told me:

These women who migrate are only interested in money. They have no love in their hearts; they abandon their children and they suffer.

Jealousy also manifested as attacks against women's fidelity. Although sometimes seen as the victims of unscrupulous employment agents who were said to trade jobs for sex, women were more often accused of starting affairs on their own volition. Husbands of migrant women heard gossip that while abroad she formed a 'connection' with another man; if it was the husband who migrated, he was told his wife had an affair with a local man. Often gossip circulated so widely that stories about one couple could be heard from a myriad of different people. Informants at both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa told me stories about Sriyantha, who lived at Mugunawatuwana. Because I was well acquainted with Sriyantha, I was able to discuss the problem with him at some length.

Sriyantha had migrated to Italy on a tourist visa (sponsored by his brother who lived there) in 2002, where he stayed for two years. Sriyantha told me that during his stay he became very lonely, and began drinking as a way of dealing with the social isolation he experienced. But while other Sri Lankan men would also visit prostitutes, he would, he said, 'make do with a bottle of whisky and late-night pornography.' In the two years that Sriyantha was away, he claimed never once to have thought about cheating on his wife. But in time, Sriyantha came to learn that his wife, Satsura, had begun an affair with

a married man at her place of work. Although Sriyantha told me that he was sceptical about this, he cut short his stay and returned to Sri Lanka.

Upon his return, Sriyantha received a number of anonymous telephone calls from a man claiming to have information about the affair. These calls were infrequent but continued throughout the twenty-one months of my fieldwork. Sriyantha said he normally put the telephone down when he realised who was calling, but one time directly asked him why he was telling these stories. The man replied that he was trying to help him, to which Sriyantha said the best way he could help was by not calling anymore. Although Sriyantha remained married to Satsura, his suspicions grew. The fact that he was still drinking heavily did not help his case. It was widely assumed that Sriyantha and Satsura rowed about this problem, but Sriyantha always maintained that drinking was his sole vice: and, as I have suggested, drinking parties provided Sriyantha with a space to talk about his problems.

Perhaps due to the support Sriyantha received, he began to see through the gossip he had been hearing. It is perhaps for this reason that Sriyantha's responses to Satsura's alleged infidelity were never as dramatic as they often were in Madampe: for example, suicidal behaviour. Moreover, Sriyantha was the kind of informant with whom one could have 'sociological' conversations. I asked Sriyantha if he thought the gossip he had been hearing had anything to do with the fact he had been abroad, earned money, built a large house, and bought lucrative coconut lands. Sriyantha replied in the affirmative, associating the gossip and telephone calls with the jealousy (*irisiyāva*) of others: he knew it was a common problem faced by many who had been successful when others had not. Although Sriyantha did not completely disregard what he had been hearing, then, he

nevertheless maintained a sceptical attitude.

Denial of men's role as husband and father

The break-up of marriages is considered the first casualty of migration, although it is assumed to be closely followed by relationships with children and other kin. In the most extreme cases, migration was associated with the death of a family member. Bandara, a primary school teacher at a remote village in Madampe called Heen Agara, was particularly interested in the effects of migration on *gē*. Many of Bandara's students came from families in which a parent, often the mother, had migrated. Bandara explicitly linked such backgrounds to poor performance and delinquency at school; when family members attempted or committed suicide, Bandara argued a clear link between the cause and the migrant.

Like all my informants, Bandara talked about migration assuming it was a female economy, or at least its worst effects were known when women migrated. We often had long discussions about how the separation of wife and mother from husbands and children was bad, but the most interesting account of his attitude arrived in my email inbox one day several months after my return from Sri Lanka. The email began by describing for me what made a family (the bold typeface is his):

Father, mother and their children make a family. It's like a machine. [For it to] work...properly, all the parts must work [together] and proper maintenance is very much needed. We must oil it, grease it and service it at the right time for good performance.

A family also needs good maintenance. What is needed...is love, sex, compassion, sacrifice, money and so on. If one of them is missing then the trouble begins.

According to my point of view, **having good sex is a great bond to unit husband and wife.**
(Of course you can have good sex in many ways but what I mentioned above is different from that.)

Sleeping with his own wife not only gives perfect sex but it gives him love, care, kindness, selflessness etc.

The email then went on, in a surprising way, to discuss the development of emotional life:

Now let's come to the matter. John Gray, a psychologist, who presents "**the theory of love tanks**" has divided man's lifetime into periods of [ten] years. During these periods a kind of love a man needs differs, e.g.

During pregnancy: God's love

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 to 7 years: | parental love |
| 7 to 14 years: | love of family, friends and fun |
| 14 to 21 years: | love of peer groups |
| 21 to 28 years: | self-love |
| 28 to 35 years: | love for husband or wife |
| 35 to 42 years: | loving to a dependant...and so on |

According to [John] Gray if one tank is not filled with the relevant love there are problems in the outcome, [who is] the man.

Finally, Bandara explained the significance of love and life-stages in relation to migration:

Most Sri Lankan men and women just after getting married go abroad searching for green pastures [in] their **prime age (between 28 and 35 years)**

When husband or wife is away during this time I think I need not say the outcome. Of course they earn money but eventually ruin the whole family.

Now I think you can imagine the massive destruction caused to families in Sri Lanka by the **migration of Sri Lankan men & women.**

John Gray is the author of the best-selling self-help books *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992) and its sequel *How To Get What You Want, And Want What You Have* (1999). The theory of 'love tanks' and '10 stages of life' are set out in Chapters 5 and 6 of the latter. I have no idea how Bandara came across these books, but the fact they appealed to him is probably unsurprising. Gray's arguments draw on Christian and 'Eastern' philosophies, including Buddhism. His idea of life stages, an amalgam of several systems, is also expressed in Buddhism.

But however local belief systems and modern popular psychology intertwined in Madampe, ideologies of kinship and relatedness directed the moral evaluation of migration. As Bandara's statements make clear, the household is considered a mechanism within which each part depends on the next for its proper functioning. He considered sexual access to his wife a crucial part of keeping the machine 'oiled,' and for making possible his future devotion to the family. Bandara also considered it crucial that all parts

of the machine stayed together, for the loss of one would lead to the failure of the whole.

Wayward men: alcoholism and child abuse

These thoughts were not held by Bandara alone, but constituted one of the most prevalent social attitudes that I encountered in Madampe. By the end of fieldwork, I could often predict exactly where a conversation about migration would be going. Most informants held in their minds a three-step scheme: (1) wife migrates; (2) husband becomes alcoholic; (3) father or some close male relative rapes daughter due to lack of maternal care. A training manual issued by the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment, *Health and Reproductive Health for Women Migrant Workers* (2001) repeated the assumption:

[Mothers] leave behind young children, sometimes infants as young as 2 to 3 months. The children they leave behind are psychologically affected without the love of their mother. Especially the girl child is very badly affected when there is no woman guardian to protect her or provide advice and care at times of need. Very often the children of these women are abused sexually by relatives.

A similar view was put forward in *Ravaged Innocence: A Study of Incest in Central Sri Lanka* (Silva *et al* 2002). The report was published by the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) in Colombo, and organisation which describes its mission as 'facilitating the realisation of the full potential of women in achieving equality in all spheres of life.' Assessing prosecutions of incestuous rape in one province, the authors came to the

conclusion that the absence of the mother, especially in the context of migration, was a special factor in causing the sexual abuse of young girls:

It must be noted here that departure of mothers to the Middle East leaving behind their children, daughters in particular, in the care of other family members, has had a considerable impact on the incest situation in Sri Lanka. Of the [cases reviewed]...the mother was away in the Middle East in...50% of [them]...pointing to the significance of Middle East migration of mothers as a factor contributing to trends in incest in Sri Lanka. (ibid: 16)

My own survey of thirty-eight incestuous rape cases that passed through CMHC on the way to court found that mothers were listed as absent in 37 percent of cases. Although in 21 percent mothers were reported as definitely living at home, in 42 percent the records lacked the relevant information to judge. Given, however, the fascination with ascribing migration as the cause of misfortune by clinicians, I am tempted to speculate that in these cases many mothers were in fact at home.

As Silva *et al* pointed out, research into incest is very difficult and their study was constrained by the fact they could only consider those cases that came to the attention of the authorities. My own survey was no exception, and in this case quantitative data that might be indicative of general patterns is best taken as potentially misleading. But looking at the case studies presented by Silva *et al* and comparing them against those I collected, it seems far from obvious why the migration of mothers should place a girl in such danger. Rather, the cases seem to suggest that migration, if significant at all, simply

makes abuse more likely to come to the attention of the state than abuse when the mother is at home. It was apparent from witness statements held at CMHC that families were keen to deal with the problem of incest internally. Given the limited range of options open to women following marital separation, there was no obvious path to take following a public airing of abuse. Moreover, the victim would be condemned to shame by her other relatives, neighbours, and friends, and most mothers seemed unwilling to attract insult to accompany the injury of her daughter. If more recorded cases of incest arise in the context of migration, it is probably because the mother is not able to deal with the problem herself, and the child turns to a teacher or some other individual to help.

Parenting and the state

Indeed, some agents of the state see it as their primary responsibility to step into the void created by the migration of women. Every month a meeting of preschool teachers in the Madampe Division takes place at Madampe AGA. Preschool education and day-care is a growing sector in Sri Lanka, partly as a response to migration but also because the Sinhalese have always seen education as the main route out of poverty. At the meeting the teachers, who were all women, elected committee members to lead a co-operative of early-year's providers in the Division, through which they could make their needs heard. When business was over, the floor was thrown open to question and comment.

What followed surprised me. Every woman who stood up related a story of child neglect or abuse in the area they worked or lived. Each story involved the migration of mothers and the 'abandonment' of children to grandparents, uncles, and other relatives.

While in such care, they said, children were frequently forced into slavery or subjected to sexual abuse. But it did not end there. One preschool teacher rose to tell a story about how migration was leading to total moral collapse: a woman (she neglected to mention whether she was actually involved in migration at all) in her village had been caught having sex with a dog; following that several other women got up and told similar stories.

7.6. Blaming migrant women: wife/mother separation as ‘the cause of death’

Ultimately, people in Madampe blame the most extreme kind of misfortune – premature and inauspicious death – on the migration of women. In the following three case studies, the perceived causes of one accident/suicide, one unnatural death, and one case of self-harm are explored. As can be seen, despite plenty of contradictory evidence those commenting on the deaths seemed concerned solely to blame migrant women.

Suranga

The first case concerns Suranga, 21, a Sinhalese Buddhist male who lived at Kachchakaduwa. Suranga was one of a group of young unmarried men with whom I spent a good deal of time. On the day of his death I was attending a conference at Colombo and only learned of it when a mutual friend telephoned and asked me to come back for the funeral. My friend explained the circumstances of the death. Suranga had gone swimming in a fast moving river after drinking alcohol and smoking *ganja* (marijuana), and had been washed away. He added that Suranga had not been a good

swimmer and at that time of year, during the wet season, it was madness for him to have gone swimming in the swelled river at all.

By the time I arrived back at my lodging house at Suduwella my hosts knew all about Suranga's death. The next morning the Grama Nilhadari for Galmuruwa North, an area adjacent to Kachchakaduwa, visited my lodging-place to tell a rather different story: he reported that Suranga had committed suicide. According to accounts furnished by four of Suranga's friends who were present at the time, Suranga took a drag from his cigarette, said 'that was my last,' and jumped in the water. He resurfaced down stream caught up against a tree branch, but by that time he was already dead.

At the time of Suranga's death I had only been in the field for six weeks and the fact I was there to study suicide was not widely known. At Kachchakaduwa I had started work with a household census and none of my informants yet knew of my interests, as I had reasoned it would be more appropriate to approach a difficult subject carefully. Under the circumstances it was obviously inappropriate to ask my friends in the village probing questions about this aspect of his death and in fact I never tried to do so. I was, however, on good terms with the Child Probation Officer at Madampe AGA, Mr. Neal Bandara. He, like the Grama Nilhadari, was likely to be aware of other information relating to the death and was also someone I felt I could talk to; moreover, he was also a resident of Kachchakaduwa, having settled in *binna* after marrying the eldest daughter of H.M. Gunathilaka.

When I mentioned to Neal that some people were saying the death was a suicide his response was, I think, strangely illusive. Neal did not dismiss the accusation out right, but rather fluffed the issue, saying:

Suranga did have a love problem a while ago but not any more; he wasn't that affected by it. Some people are saying it was a suicide, some even that his friends pushed him. People say things. The correct thing to say is that it was an accident...yes, that is the correct thing to say.

Neal's assumption that a young man would commit suicide because of a love problem (rather than, say, disappointment in education, work or financial trouble) is common in Madampe and signals how acts of suicidal behaviour become stereotyped to fit broader expectations and assumptions. The second part of his statement was less easy to understand. At the time I found it intriguing, although by no means conclusive, that he felt it necessary to point out that 'the correct thing to say' was that the death was an accident, as if the judgement carried moral weighting. As I was to find out, the moral weighting of the death was indeed extremely important to my informants, but not in the way that I had imagined.

Before I discuss this, however, I want to add some information that arose over a year later. One night I was having an after-hours drink with some friends on the banks of the river downstream from where Suranga had drowned. I was with Kapila, Chandana, a police officer at Marawila, and a third man. The river had again swelled to twice its size following the rains of previous weeks and quite out of the blue Kapila mentioned Suranga's death. Although I had been friends with Kapila for around six months I did not realise he had known Suranga. (Kapila lived at Mugunawatuwana, which was some way from Kachchakaduwa.) All three men agreed that Suranga had committed suicide because of poor health. Apparently he suffered from constant headaches and respiratory problems

and in his despair he ended his own life. When I mentioned that the coroner had recorded the death as an accident Chandana, the police officer, told me that was common practice. Unlike hangings, poisonings, or other more 'obvious' forms of suicide, the context of drowning – by accident or intent – was always too difficult to call. But, he assured me, the death was certainly a suicide.

For me, finding out if Suranga drowned or committed suicide was a way of categorising and therefore making sense of his death. Although the Grama Nilhadari, Kapila, and Chandana called the death a suicide, the vast majority of my informants, including the residents of Kachchakaduwa, called it an accident. For them, it seemed, the real interest was in how Suranga's death could be fit into a moral story about migration, family breakdown, and who could be blamed. At Suranga's funeral, all that mourners seemed to talk about was why he died; how he died was not mentioned at all. The popular, in fact the only, explanation I ever heard charged his mother and went something like this:

Suranga came from a broken home. His mother has worked as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia for the past five years, and some people say she has a second husband there. In fact, some people say she once brought him back to visit Sri Lanka. As a consequence, Suranga's father was heart-broken and left Kachchakaduwa and his family to marry again at Anuradhapura. Together with his younger sister, Suranga went to live with his *māmā*. With his mother absent, Suranga lacked the love and care that would guide him along the correct path in life. He became involved in drink and drugs, and did other dangerous things that eventually cost him his life. If his mother

had not been so greedy, if she had love in her heart instead of only wanting money, then he would still be alive today.

The assumption was that Suranga died because his family had fallen apart after his mother, the figure keeping families together, had migrated. The father who eloped and the *māmā* who fostered the children were absolved of all responsibility. When I asked people if these men, and particularly the father, were in some way implicated in the death, they said no. If any other party was to blame it was the father's second wife: she should have thought about his first wife and family before stealing him away!

Sirisena

The second case concerns Sirisena, a 40-something male who lived in rented accommodation with his wife Somawatti and their children, three sons and one daughter, at Suduwella. In 1999 their daughter Nalika, aged 17 at the time, travelled, on false papers that made her age 20, to Dubai, to work in a garment factory. In 2003 Somawatti travelled to Kuwait to work as a housemaid. Upon Somawatti's departure, the two younger sons Kumara and Harsha (then aged 13 and 10 respectively), remained at home with Sirisena. Their elder brother was apprenticed to a mason at Colombo, where he also lodged. The aim of both women was to earn enough money to buy some land at the Silver Gate Estate, a newly cleared and blocked coconut plantation adjacent to Suduwella, upon which they could build their own house and start a business.

According to neighbours, Somawatti's departure badly affected Sirisena. He

started mixing with poor company and with a new-found income began drinking heavily. Soon he became alcoholic and this affected his moods, which were frequently angry. Many people implied that when he began shouting at and striking his children, it was because he was suffering from *lingika asahānaya* (sexual frustration). As a result, the children were taken to live with their paternal grandmother, Alice.

Alice lived on a small plot of land adjacent to my boarding-place. The land belonged to her daughter Lakshika, who had brought it with money earned abroad. While Lakshika lived with her husband Lionel and 8-year-old daughter Nilmini in a bungalow at the top of this land, Alice lived in a small, one-room hut at the bottom. Early in 2004, Nalika returned to Sri Lanka and moved in with Alice and her two brothers.

The three children and their grandmother lived together in a space ten-foot-by-five for the next eight months. It was at this time that Nalika decided to migrate again, to a garment factory in Jordan. When I arrived in Madampe in October 2004 her visa application was under way and it was only a matter of time until she reckoned on leaving. As my closest neighbours the three children became good friends, and we often spent time together. Because Alice's hut did not have electricity, the boys came over most evenings to do their homework or watch television. I would help them with their English and talk to Nalika about her experiences abroad.

One day, barely three weeks after Suranga's death, I returned home to discover Sirisena had died. The story circulating was that he had, at age 56, succumbed to his alcoholism and suffered a massive heart attack. The three children were completely devastated. Just Nalika found the strength to speak to me, although only in reference to her two brothers. Her attitude was one of forgiveness: 'He was a drunkard, but he was

still their father. That is why they are so upset,' she said.

Although I started thinking about Sirisena's death in terms of alcoholism and personal tragedy, my informants' thinking took place in terms of sociality and relatedness. *How* Sirisena had died was again not what occupied people; they were more interested in *why*, and *who* should be blamed.

Many people accused Somawatti for leaving the family and said that her migration led to all the problems the family had faced, including Sirisena's death. Other people speculated that she probably had a 'connection' with a man in Kuwait, and that when Sirisena found out about it he drank himself to death. For many that story was confirmed when they realised Somawatti was not returning to Sri Lanka for the funeral, although others said that when she had heard about the death she became hysterical and had been committed to a psychiatric ward.

But Alice let it be known that she blamed Somawatti for her son's death. Soon, the accusation led to problems between her and the children. The source of disagreement between grandmother and granddaughter seemed to be that Somawatti was not sending money to pay for the upkeep of her children. Alice claimed payments were frequently late or did not arrive at all, and when money did arrive it was not enough to supplement her meagre income as a labourer in the steel plant when she had three children to feed.

Sirisena's death piled more expense onto Alice and these spilled over to Lakshika and Lionel. Funerals ordinarily take place in the house of the deceased but because Sirisena was in rented accommodation this could not be the case. Lionel, as Sirisena's *massinā*, was therefore obliged to hold the funeral at his house, but relations between Sirisena and Lionel did not appear to fit the ideal described. Lionel had already blamed

Sirisena for being an alcoholic and his three children took this as an offence to their dead father. On the night of the burial, customarily one time when everyone known to the deceased should congregate at the funeral house, a dispute erupted after Lionel caught some local boy's playing cards. Lionel shouted at them to get off his land and the disruption led to many others leaving too. Card playing, along with other games, is seen as a normal part of funeral activity as it helps pass the time between dusk and dawn. The incident was taken by Nalika and Kumara as being highly unfair, not to mention inauspicious, and a public statement that even in death Lionel did not treat his obligations to Sirisena seriously.

On the sixth day of the funeral Nalika received her employment visa and a ticket to fly. A week later she left Suduwella by taxi at 1am in order to catch her morning flight. Lionel is a taxi-driver and it was a sign of how bad relations were that she hired her fare from a third party.

After Nalika left for Jordan, relations between Alice and Kumara appeared to settle down and the three continued to live together. Then, about ten months later and quite out of the blue, my landlord's son came running into my room excitedly reporting that Kumara had run away from home and that Alice had reported him to the police for assault. Although it turned out that Kumara had not assaulted but insulted Alice, the row apparently started because she had again blamed Somawatti for not sending money. Kumara defended his mother, the two had a fight, and he stormed off to live with his mother's sister at Madampe.

As in Suranga's case, misfortune befalling a family was said to have been caused by a woman's migration. In both instances, misfortune took the form of death, and in both

cases, people did not perceive this as a personal tragedy so much as they perceived it as a crisis of kinship. In Sirisena's case, other kin were drawn into the furore, principally the migrant woman's mother-in-law and her brother-in-law, and subsequently the woman's children. It was assumed that the obligations between *massinā* had failed, just as the relationship between the mother's-brother and sister's children failed. Furthermore, many of my informants were critical of Alice, whom they thought could have done more to step into the shoes of Somawatti.

Sajith

The final case concerns Sajith: a 14-year-old boy who committed self-harm in the context of problems at home. I first met Sajith when he presented at Madampe Peripheral Unit. He had taken kerosene after a dispute with his grandmother, with whom he was living at the time. In the company of the doctor on duty, I interviewed Sajith about the events that led him to make an attempt on his life. Questioning was led by the doctor as part of his routine duties, with additional questions or clarifications from me.

When he was four years old, Sajith's mother, Asalin Nona, left Sri Lanka to work in Saudi Arabia as a housemaid. Following this Sajith lived some of the time with his father, Premarathna, and some of the time with his father's parents. Sajith said he stayed with his grandparents because his father was unable to provide care for him. In 2004, Sajith learned that Premarathna had begun an affair with a married woman called Gunawatti, whose husband was also abroad. Soon after that, Gunawatti moved in with Premarathna and as a result Sajith moved-in permanently with his paternal grandparents.

Sajith told me that he did not want to live with his father because he felt he had betrayed his mother. He also said that his father's new wife would not have cared for him properly even if he had stayed because he was not her son. (The alleged neglect of children from previous marriages by new wives is a problem commonly alluded to in such situations and often determines the custody of children in a divorce.)

Sajith said he used to enjoy staying with his grandparents when it was an impermanent arrangement. He emphasised that he had a good relationship with his grandfather, Lal, and claims that he still does. But after the arrangement became permanent, Sajith said that his grandmother, Irangani, became cruel. He accused her of treating him like a slave, making him do all the housework and other chores. Because the burden was so great he could not go to school, but even if he played truant, Sajith said, he could still not keep up with the work he was required to do.

One day, Irangani asked him to prepare food for an alms-giving ceremony. Sajith knew that he would be required to work very hard to finish everything on time, and that he would receive little or no help. As a consequence, he would have to miss school for two whole days. He described his head as becoming 'hot' (*rasnayi*) by this and seeing the bottle of kerosene on the floor wanted to make Irangani feel afraid by drinking from it.

Sajith explained that Irangani treated him badly because she resented taking care of him. He thought that only his mother, not his grandmother, could love him properly. In a separate interview, he also told the doctor that he did not want to go back to his grandparent's house but rather to a children's home. The doctor spoke to the boy's grandfather and he too thought it better if Sajith went to a children's home. But when I called at the hospital to visit Sajith the following day I found he had been discharged and

had returned to his grandparent's house. I asked the Child Probation Officer if he had received any requests for transfer to children's homes in the area but he replied no. As far as I know, Sajith still lives with his grandparents and I do not know whether his problems have been solved.

These three cases illustrate in slightly different ways how absent wives and mothers come to be blamed for misfortune befalling their families. Amongst my informants, the causes of misfortune were rarely considered in terms of personal tragedy but sociality: as a crisis of kinship. First, as discussed in Chapter 5, the blame for tragedy that took place was based upon kinship ideologies, and principally the *kāriya* that come with wifehood and motherhood that were seen to have failed. Secondly, however, the effects of migration were thought to impinge upon kin outside the household. It was not just that wives were blamed for their husband's errant ways or that mothers are blamed when their children meet with a tragic end. In the case of Sirisena, *massinā* were seen to fail; in the case of Sujith and Irangani, the grandmother was seen as unable to provide care. Suranga's *māmā*, on the other hand, was assumed to have done all that he could by providing a home although could not be blamed for failing to provide 'mother's love.'

7.7. Summary: Middle East Syndrome in historical perspective

The moral panic that surrounds women's migration seems to far outweigh the size of the economy. Part of the criticism levelled against migrant women stems from men's concerns that women are replacing them as wage-earners, although most men married to migrant women benefit from the arrangement. In any case, the husbands of migrant

women hardly escape negative portrayals, being popularly associated with alcoholism and child sex abuse. As such, another source of moral panic is found in the jealousy of non-migrants, who witness their less affluent neighbours suddenly come into wealth and status. A third source of panic stems from the perceived effects of parental, but especially maternal, neglect on children. This criticism relates to wider nationalistic discourses that places the future of Sinhalese Buddhist *sanskritiya* in the hands of mothers. A fourth source of panic, and probably the one that compels men to suicide more than any other, is the act of separation itself.

The contemporary period of international migration follows on from two periods of internal migration that took place between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. The first period of migration was, as discussed in Chapter 2, instigated by the growth of labour opportunities in the coconut estates of the west and south of the island, and also by the British in an attempt to relieve over-crowding in those same areas. Then, labourers and their families relocated from natal villages to colonies like Suduwella. Both at the time of colonisation and today LDO colonies are perceived to be places where poor and ill-mannered people live. Although reflecting class prejudice, this concern echoes an assumption that individuals and families cut off from their kin moorings inevitably find themselves adrift in immorality.

The second period of migration, which began during the 1970s and 1980s, was aimed at settling and making productive to north-central and eastern 'Dry Zone' of the island. The Mahaweli Irrigation Project has become synonymous, both in Sri Lanka and amongst scholars, with economic, social, and health problems amongst settlers and their families (Kearney & Miller 1985, 1987, 1988; Silva & Pushpakumara 1996; Spencer

2003). Levels of self-harm and self-inflicted death are too said to be very high in the Project and, indeed, despite the common occurrence of both in Madampe during my fieldwork, informants often told me that I should do my research in the Mahaweli areas as that was where suicide 'really' happened. Although there is no doubt that Project settlers have experienced severe hardships, moral discourses surrounding the causes of these reflect again an underlying concern with kin separation. In particular is the assumption that families separated from kin networks tend to do badly.

Thus, Middle East Syndrome reflects wider moral concerns about kin separation and family breakdown, and exists as one part of the popular social change theory of suicide discussed in Chapter 4. In this way, migration as an explanation for suicidal behaviour, while being legitimate (Gamburd 2008a), is also prejudicial. In any case, it provides a useful way of understanding how people in Madampe think about the causes of suicidal behaviour, and indeed what for them stand as 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' reasons to kill oneself, as well as explanatory models for the observers of such cases.

8.

The expression of psychopathology

In previous chapters I argued that social status and relational power combine to funnel individuals towards certain kinds of responses to their problems. Along the way I mentioned often-used Sinhalese terms that indicate troubled behavioural and emotional states arising from or causing such problems. These included: anger (*kopēya*), frustration (*asahānaya*), suffering (*dukkha*), and the formal clinical diagnosis of depression. In this chapter my aim is to examine what is meant by these terms, trace as far as possible their histories and interconnections, and provide a sketch of how social status and psychopathology relate within individuals. In so doing, I link individual reports of psychology and suicidal behaviour to four ‘professional’ models and one ‘lay’ model of psychopathology, and from there to Sri Lanka’s transitions from colonialism to post-colonialism and globalisation.

By ‘professional’ models I mean theories of suicide and psychopathology that have been strongly expressed by agents of the state, academics, medics, and Buddhist clergy. Within each model, anger, frustration, suffering, or depression have been given primacy at the expense of the others. On the other hand, the ‘lay’ model, expressed by ordinary people in Madampe, tends to encompass anger, frustration, and suffering (but not normally depression) as part of a single whole. In fact, suffering is understood to lead to frustration that ultimately erupts in anger. The relationship between professional and lay models is complex, especially that between depression and suffering. The four professional models arose as part of a historical process that reflects colonial and post-

colonial transformations, as well as 'Great' and 'Little' (Obeyesekere 1963; Redfield & Singer 1954; Spiro 1971) Buddhist traditions. The lay model too reflects Buddhism as it is understood and practiced in Madampe: that is to say, within a Little Tradition. The orientation of each shines through onto how the different models represent suicide, broadly: as a legal issue, a social issue, a medical issue, and a religious-social issue.

Thus, anger, frustration, and depression are models that arose within colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary periods respectively, while suffering, frustration, and anger arise within local (Buddhist) discourse today. A central question is to what extent, historically, the lay model shaped the professional models, and *vice versa* (and, indeed, to what extent professional models are themselves Great or Little Traditions). Another question is to what extent, in the present, self-reported experiences of anger, frustration, depression, or suffering represent self-understandings of 'actual' psychological problems, understandings of problems adopted from professional discourses (Great Traditions), or understandings that utilise either professional or lay models while nevertheless reflecting 'real' psychological complaints too. That is: to what extent are discourses of anger, frustration, suffering, and depression 'really' experienced?

The chapter begins with a discussion of anger, frustration, suffering, and depression as they arise within everyday speech. The historical development of each model is also charted. While historically anger was attributed by colonialists to the colonised subdominant, today anger is associated more often by men to women and members of the working and rural classes. Frustration, meanwhile, an academic and folk critique of social change (recall W. George Edward's complaints in Chapter 4.2), is said to be experienced by those at the forefront of the modern economy: unemployed youth,

struggling men, migrants and their families, and housewives straining under the 'all-day, everyday' nature of their work. Depression is currently restricted to medical and social welfare settings, but perhaps stands a chance of popularisation through its similarities with the lay model.

Finally, I should say a word about the use of the term 'psychopathology.' Psychopathology is a stigmatised label that comes with a series of assumptions and prejudices that I do not have space to go into here (see Appendix 7 for a more extended discussion). The most important objection to the use of the term, as I shall discuss below, is that it is irreconcilably ethnocentric and threatens to 'psychologise' – over-diagnose – what people in Madampe may not consider 'psychological.' However, I wish here to use the term a little more loosely and thus escape some of the more extreme criticisms that it might attract. Thus, by psychopathology I simply mean 'emotional' or 'inner' states that are experienced by actors themselves as being problematic: that is, as restricting the pursuit of life goals in the immediate or long term, and thus significantly reducing a sense of wellbeing, however that may be defined. As will be seen, people in Madampe who say they experience anger, frustration, suffering, or depression are in no doubt that these states do affect their lives in adverse ways and are, as such, 'pathological' for them.

8.1. Anger and impulsivity: the colonial model

In many cases, suicidal behaviour in Madampe can be understood as an attempt to establish a dialogue with the cause of problems and within this sometimes to actively 'fight' it. This bestows suicidal behaviour with an 'aggressive' quality, and, reflecting

this, people talk about how they or others commit acts of self-harm or suicide when angry. Another feature of this explanation is the apparent impulsivity by which acts of suicidal behaviour arise, in that people are said to swallow poison in a rush of, or 'sudden anger' (*ikman kopēya*). Such explanations appear to relate, however, to a colonial model of suicide and homicide that explained both as the consequence of 'ungoverned passions': that is, as an effect of Sinhalese racial characteristics. In the present day, the model survives in men's views of women and middle-class views of the working and rural classes. Significantly, though, it is not just these others who attribute anger to such individuals, but those individuals who also attribute it to themselves. In this sense, suicidal individuals who report anger are associating their behaviour with what is at least in part a prejudicial model (in this sense, discourses of anger are similar to discourses of Middle East Syndrome discussed in the previous chapter).

Suicide and anger

A range of evidence that highlights the importance of anger in peoples' constructions of suicidal behaviour and psychopathology can be marshalled. I begin with a case that I interviewed at CMHC. Padmini was an unmarried 19-year-old Sinhalese woman of the *goyigama* caste, living in the Chilaw District. On 28 April 2006, Padmini was admitted to a local PU after swallowing poison, and was subsequently transferred to CBH for further medical treatment. Padmini swallowed the poison 'impulsively' – that is, with anger – after being scolded by her landlady following revelations that she was involved in a love affair with a married man. The clinician diagnosed depression, low self-esteem, and

continuing suicidal ideation. As such, the clinician decided Padmini had swallowed the poison with moderate intent to die.

Padmini explained the problems that led her to develop feelings of depression and low self-esteem that resulted in anger. In so doing she also clearly expressed the lay Buddhist model of suffering, frustration, and anger. First, Padmini explained that she lived in a reconstituted household. Her father and mother had separated some years previously, and since then her father had remarried. Unusually, Padmini and her one sister lived with their father and stepmother. Although Padmini would not be drawn on the context of the separation, it seems likely under such circumstances that the mother had either eloped or migrated abroad to work, but never returned.

Padmini and her sister did not have a good relationship with their stepmother. This relationship was further compounded by their father's financial problems. Although Padmini had obtained good A-Level results and hoped to enter university, she was compelled by her father and stepmother to enter employment as soon as she left school, in order to support the household. As such, and against her own will, Padmini secured a place on a nursing course. This combination of factors led to Padmini's suffering or depression:

I feel sad [*dukkha*] when I think about my sister and father. I couldn't do further education because my father and mother are not living together and sometimes there are problems with our stepmother. Also, father has some economic problems. Because of these things, I couldn't do further education.

Padmini graduated from nursing college in February 2006. After graduation, she obtained a job in a private hospital at Chilaw. As the journey between Padmini's home and the hospital was too long for daily commute, she lodged at a house nearby. Padmini found her new job and home disappointing. She claimed that her work colleagues treated her badly, and this maltreatment had gotten worse since some had learned about her love affair, and gossip began to spread. As such, she started to feel isolated. Padmini told me:

Although I decided to be a nursing officer, I am disappointed with the situation. The people I love don't love me. I feel lonely. I am troubled [*mata karadarayaki*].

Padmini was conscious that her maltreatment, suffering, and frustrations could lead to anger. She tried to cope with her problems and not get angry. One way of doing this was to observe the *pansil*, the Buddhist precepts for living a *sahānaya* (contented) life.

Padmini told me:

I don't get angry with anyone. I want to be friends with others. I always try to cope with my problems, my mental problems [*mānasika prashna*], and harassments from others. I try to live life happily even while I am suffering. I help anyone who asks me. I always believe what others tell me. I am always open. I observe *pansil*. Therefore, I think that I am not doing anything wrong.

Nevertheless, Padmini's problems were brought to a head when news of her love affair reached her landlady and she scolded her: the consequent feeling of shame manifested in

a suicide attempt (see Chapter 5.3).

Ikman kopēya

Anger is a commonly expressed emotion connected with frustration and suffering. In discourse allusions to anger appear in a range of contexts, and usually as ‘sudden anger’ (*ikman kopēya*). A map of the island issued by the Sri Lanka Tourist Board in 2001 thought it prudent to issue tourists with the following warning:

So long as you respect our people, they will always be friendly. But be careful, they can become suddenly angry when offended!

I have dozens of anecdotal statements to the same effect. One man, the Head Chef of a tourist hotel on the coast at Marawila, explained to me:

We are very hospitable. People will always try to help you and they ask for nothing in return. But they can also become suddenly angry at nothing! Then straightaway they are friendly and calling you *machang* again.

Another man, 24-year-old Pahansilu from Madampe New Town, claimed to have gotten ‘suddenly angry’ after he felt that his girlfriend was not listening to him. Pahansilu claimed that through her neglect she made him feel shame, as she did not behave in a way that he expected: that is, she made him feel powerless. Roshan, a 26-year-old male from

Kachchakaduwa, claimed that he ‘suddenly got angry’ after telling a young woman that he loved her, only to be rejected. Roshan claimed that her reaction made him feel the need for revenge, as his unrequited love made him feel shame.

Clinical records of anger

At CMHC, clinicians recorded ‘sudden anger’ as a precursor to several cases of self-harm. Significantly, five of the six were female.

1. Sumith, 25, an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist man with a history of depression, swallowed poison following ‘sudden anger.’ The clinician failed to provide any further details about his problem, apparently assuming the diagnosis spoke for itself.
2. Charmali, 27, a married Sinhalese Buddhist woman with a history of depression, swallowed poison with high intent to die. She took the poison following an argument with her husband during which she become ‘suddenly angry.’
3. Anusha, 25, a married Sinhalese Buddhist woman, swallowed hair-styling gel after her mother-in-law told her that people were criticising her husband. It seems that the shaming accusations against her husband made her ‘suddenly angry’ and as such attempted suicide.
4. Harshani, 17, an unmarried Sinhalese Buddhist woman, swallowed poison after becoming ‘suddenly angry’ after her grandmother blamed her. Harshani, who reported neglect from her parents, had allegedly been involved in a serious of love affairs that were ‘inappropriate’ to her.

5. Nishani, 27, a married Sinhalese Buddhist woman, swallowed fertilizer after becoming 'suddenly angry' at her husband, with whom she had been experiencing marital difficulties.
6. Dhammika, a 32-year-old married Sinhalese Buddhist woman, swallowed fertilizer after becoming 'suddenly angry' at her sister-in-law, who she claimed was 'very arrogant.' Dhammika said she had suffered this problem for over ten years, but finally could not accept it anymore.

In most cases, sudden anger was attributed to feelings of shame, fear or experience of romantic rejection, marital problems, interpersonal problems, and scolding: each context affected self-esteem and demanded retaliation. In the case of Dhammika, sudden anger was consciously caused by long-suppressed frustrations.

School childrens' self-reports of anger

References to anger and sudden anger also arose within volunteered statements by Madampe school children who took part in the YSR survey. Anger was referred to by both suicidal and non-suicidal students. Just three male students referred to anger, compared with thirteen females. Becoming angry was modelled in a negative way and without much need for clarification; being angry was considered a problem in itself, as well as being the consequence of problems.

Just one 'angry' male reported suicidal behaviour. Denudu, 14, admitted to suicidal ideation and suicide attempt. He associated his anger with parental reprimands: 'When my parents scold [blame] me I always become angry'. As seen in previous

chapters, suicidal responses tend to arise in the context of disputes with parents. The two other 'angry' males did not report suicidal behaviour. Shehan, also 14, prefaced his statement of anger with a note drawing attention to his good performance at school: 'I work well at school but can become angry.' His statement implies he was trying to say: 'I am a good person, even if I do become angry.' Supun, 17, wrote that he was consumed with anger, although offered no reason for it: 'I am a very angry person.'

Of the thirteen 'angry' females, six also reported suicidal behaviour:

1. Nilmanthi, 15, admitted to suicidal ideation and suicide attempt. She wrote that her anger was accompanied by sadness [*dukkha*] in the context of loneliness: 'I get angry and always cry. I don't have any friends.' In this case, then, anger seemed to be a precursor to suffering, or at least sustained prior suffering.
2. Anjula, 17, admitted to suicide attempt. She associated her anger with a lack of parental love: 'I am a friendly person but sometimes I can feel angry because my parents love my sister and brother more than me.'
3. Nayanathara, 15, admitted to suicidal ideation. Like Denudu, she suggested that although generally well behaved, she was prone to anger: 'I am a good child but sometimes I can get angry.'
4. Anoma, 18, admitted to suicidal ideation and suicide attempt. She associated her anger with physical disabilities and sensitivity: 'I have a lot of physical disabilities; they are a problem for me. I feel angry very easily. I am very sensitive.'
5. Erandi, 16, admitted to suicidal ideation. She implied that for her anger was a

continuous problem: 'I always feel angry.'

6. Piumali, 17, admitted to suicidal ideation and suicide attempt. Like others, she wrote about how although she tried to live without anger, she could not. Piumali suggested that this caused her problems: 'I can't control my anger. I would like to get along well with my friends but I cannot do it. As a result of my anger I have a lot of problems.'

Eight female students who wrote about anger did not report any suicidal behaviour.

Interestingly, two mentioned aggression:

1. Ishara, 17, wrote that she became angry when others behaved badly: 'I like to be friendly but sometimes other people do bad things and that makes me angry.'
2. Sehini, 15, attributed her *aggression* to an impulsive nature: a nature that is often attributed as the cause of suicidal behaviour and in the colonial model of homicide: 'I am an aggressive person. I can't see what is wrong. I do things impulsively. I always do what I want.'
3. Jewanthi, 14, wrote that she tried not to become angry but was not always successful: 'I like to be friendly but sometimes I get angry.'
4. Srimati, 15, and again echoing the colonial model, wrote that minor problems made her angry: 'I get angry over small things.'
5. Dulmini, 14, simply wrote: 'I can get very angry.'
6. Anuradha, 14, suggested that other people made her angry: 'I get angry with others.'

7. Nayomi, 19, wrote that her sensitivity (presumably to problems) made her angry. Afterwards, like Nilmanthi, she felt sad: 'I am very sensitive. Sometimes I get angry quickly but after that I feel sad [*dukkha*].'
8. Harshani, 14, wrote that *aggression* was an aspect of her that was troubled by extreme feelings: 'I am aggressive and too passionate.'

Amongst students, anger was both a response to problems such as suffering and a problem that caused suffering, in terms of others' negative responses. Students' comments revealed the moral and social causes of problems that led to anger. These included attempts at leading a 'good family life' (*honda pavula jeevati*), treating others with love and respect, avoiding gossip, and telling the truth. Personal injuries were suffered when family members and friends did not respect these codes of conduct.

'Sudden anger' in historical perspective

Reviewing British and Ceylonese *Administration Reports* held at the SLNA, I was not surprised to find very few references to suicide. The years they spanned, from the middle of the nineteenth through to the early twentieth centuries, pre-date the take-off phase of the suicide rate. Homicide, on the other hand, was then a major issue (Rogers 1987; Straus & Straus 1953; Wood 1961), and the explanations attributed to this in the ARs were surprising. By that time, I had already noted the common appearance of the phrase 'sudden anger' in reference to suicide, and was interested to find that it was often attributed by the British as a cause of homicide.

Amongst the British, the theory of ‘sudden anger’ was developed in relation to an assumed Sinhalese incivility. Over the last quarter of the nineteenth century, G.W.R. Campbell, Inspector-General of Police on the island for twenty-five years, wrote extensively on the subject. His contemporaries and successors in the colonial administration, following his lead or under their own steam, wrote at almost equal length. For Campbell (AR-1879: S3, B26), ‘many of the murders were cruel, and many had but slight cause.’ Often murders were committed on ‘persons against whom they have no ill-will whatsoever – sometimes their own nearest relations – solely to bring a false charge of murder against an enemy’ (AR-1883: S3, C35). Near Kurunegala, for instance, a 12 year-old boy was reportedly strangled solely ‘in order to fasten the murder on some Buddhist priests, with whom [the perpetrator] was at enmity’ (ibid: S3, 49C).

Every year, ARs contained cases that were for their authors seemingly completely senseless. In 1909 C.C. Longden (AR-1909: S3, B5), Campbell’s successor, was clearly exasperated when he wrote:

In view of the trivial causes which lead to many of our murder cases I do not venture to prophesy: when A murders B merely because B steps down into A’s field, it is a little difficult to make any estimate.

The majority of homicides, according to the AGA of the Puttalam District (AR-1895: P3, B2), were:

The result of hasty, ungovernable passion, roused, in the course of disputes, often on a

trifling matter and at times inflamed by arrack. The excited person seems completely to loose his head. A blow is struck or a stab is given openly in the presence of witnesses, and apparently without fear of the consequences.

In lieu of understanding, practical solutions were offered. The Sinhalese were seen to be 'habitual' (Campbell AR-1883: S3, 1) carriers of the clasp knife, which they had tucked into their belts at all times. When 'evil passions [are] suddenly aroused,' the Solicitor-General (AR 1889: S3, 2A) argued: 'I do not believe that usually the accused ever seriously [contemplates] the results that...follow from the use of the knife.' Campbell (AR-1889: S3, 2B) suggested that open knives should be outlawed and replaced by folding knives:

If [a man] were allowed to carry only a clasp knife [he] would have a moment to think while he opened it, and his opponent would also have a moments grace, and if, after all, the thrust were made, the blade would probably close on its owner's fingers and somewhat damp his ardour.

Ultimately, the aim was to civilise the country out of its errant ways. The Ceylon Police thus proposed to teach Sinhalese boys how to box. Stabbing was taken to be the 'national way of fighting' (AR-1910/11: S3, B5), but to effect a change children could be targeted:

At present if two small boys have a dispute, it is usual for one to threaten to stab the other, even though he may have no knife. Such is the common national threat, and

children be imbued with the idea that the use of the knife is proper and manly. It has been suggested that boxing should be encouraged as a national pastime in schools. It could do no harm, and in years to come might well tend to a more general use of fists to the exclusion of the knife.

Although the measure was not apparently adopted in the national schools, Police Boys Brigades encouraged all their members to use fists and even the government allocated money to teach boxing in villages. By 1925, the Inspector-General of Police (AR-1925: S3, B13) commented on apparent success in the scheme:

Apprehension has been expressed in some quarters lest the spread of boxing should give rise to a new type of village bully, but all experience tends to the contrary. Our experience is that the man who has been taught to box as a boy does not go about the world looking for people to hit. One of the first lessons a boxer has to learn is the lesson of self-control.

Thus, civilisation would reach the village through fisticuffs, apparently the way gentlemen settled an argument. The final reference to self-control, also implicit in other extracts above, is revealing. Like homicide, suicide is often supposed to arise impulsively in the context of sudden problems (see Chapters 3.4 and 5.2). The popular association of suicidal behaviour with anger and sudden anger thus seems to share roots in historical and colonial accounts of homicide and the temperament of Sinhalese as rash and impulsive. In contemporary Madampe, the same qualities are assumed to be

demonstrated by young people and young women especially.

Criticisms of the colonial model

Yet there was a counter-discourse at the time, but which later became dominant, proposing that anger was in fact the product of *excessive* self-control. This theory has emerged in anthropological theories of youth violence and suicide that draw from the frustration/aggression hypothesis (Wood 1961), for example the work of Obeyesekere (1977, 1978, 1981, 1984, 1990; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988) and Spencer (1990a). Towards the end of the British Administration in Ceylon, discourses moved away from Orientalist models of 'roused passions' in 'hot-headed natives' and towards a concern with the social conditions that caused some people to turn to crime. Leonard Woolf, a 'reluctant Imperialist' (Ondaatjee 2005), who administered several Districts of the island during his posting there between 1904 and 1911, came to exactly that conclusion.

Woolf presented his thoughts in *The Village in the Jungle* (1981 [1913]), a novel which was set in a disappearing village in the jungles of the Hambantota District in the south of the island. In one sense, Woolf's novel was a story of how broad social changes, including urbanisation, came to destroy traditional patterns of life in Ceylon (see Chapter 4 for a criticism of this view). But it was also more than that, being a story about how imperialism exacerbated class differences within the colonised population, and therefore avoided an all-too easy romanticisation of such populations as a homogenised colonised subjugated by a homogenised coloniser.

Woolf presents such a critique at the climax of his novel when the principal

character, the peasant Silindu, murders two Sinhalese of the entrepreneurial-class who were bent on destroying his livelihood and taking his lands. The murder was based on a real event recorded in Woolf's diaries (1997 [1962]), and in many ways was typical of land disputes that frequently led to homicide at the time and today (Rogers 1987). Following the murder, and rather than trying to evade detection, Silindu walks to the court at Hambantota to confess, a pattern of behaviour also frequently reported in homicide cases (Rogers 1987; Spencer 1990a; Wood 1961). A subsequent discussion between the magistrate (through whom Woolf speaks) and an officer from the Native Department illustrates clearly the questions that Woolf came to pose about imperialism:

Now then, Ratemahatmaya, here you are; a Sinhalese gentleman; lived your whole life here, among these people. Let's have your opinion of [Silindu]. He's a human being, isn't he? What sort of man is he? And how did he come suddenly to murder two people?'

'It's difficult, Sir, for me to understand them; about as difficult as for you, Sir. They are very different from us. They are very ignorant. They become angry suddenly, and then, they kill like – like – animals, like the leopard, Sir.'

'Savages, you mean? Well, I don't know. I rather doubt it. You don't help the psychologist much, Ratemahatmaya. This man, now: I expect he's a quiet sort of man. All he wanted was to be left alone, poor devil...'

'I don't think that you know, any more than I do, Ratemahatmaya, what goes on up there in the jungle. He was a quiet man in the village, I believe that. He only wanted to be left alone. It must take a lot of cornering and torturing and shooting to

rouse a man like that. I expect, as he said, they went on at him for years. This not letting one another alone, it's at the bottom of nine-tenths of the crime and trouble...'
(Woolf 1981 [1913]: 146-147)

The extract is interesting for two reasons. The first is in how the native administrator seems as willing to allocate the causes of homicide to the incivility of the natives as his British superior. The Ratemahatmaya represents middle-class Sinhalese who both then and today view their lower-class countrymen and women with a great deal of socio-economic prejudice. It is possible to imagine British officers sitting with their native aides at sundown, absorbing Sinhalese preconceptions of what the peasantry were like, and reproducing those views in their own theories of homicide. The second is how Woolf implicitly introduces what was within a few decades to become the dominant explanation for 'sudden anger': the theory of 'suppressed frustration.'

8.2. Frustration and aggression: the post-colonial model

Many of the problems I have been addressing in this thesis, from unrequited love through failure in education and employment to the migration of wives, are said to cause their bearers 'frustration.' In Madampe, people use the term *asahānaya* to imply frustration, although formal translations also include 'hopelessness' and 'discontent.' However, as the diametric state of *sahānaya*, which means a kind of contented 'calm and quiet,' 'frustration' perhaps best conveys agitation as well as a sense of impossible longing for expectations or desires to occur. In Madampe this took two forms: sexual frustration

(*lingika asahānaya*) and mental frustration (*mānasika asahānaya*).

Experiencing frustration

Amongst my unmarried male informants, sexual frustration was associated with unrequited love and the longing desire (*āsāva*) for unobtainable women. 'I experience sexual frustration when I watch the girls walk past [my house] but cannot speak with them,' said one. Similarly, when Sirisena's wife Somawatti migrated abroad to work, people said that Sirisena became sexually frustrated and this manifested in alcoholism and violence (see Chapter 7.6). Mental frustration, on the other hand, was associated with problems relating to occupational activities. Amongst youth, mental frustration was said to be caused by failure in examinations or finding a good job after graduation; in married males, economic uncertainty and failure to provide for the *gē* was a prime cause; and for married females, it was associated with the failure of husbands to earn money, men spending too much money on drinking parties, and even the 'all day, every day' nature of their domestic duties. For most people, the two kinds of frustration were said to be experienced simultaneously. Men complained: 'When the money is there; the sex is there. When it is not, sex is not!'

If economic inactivity caused men to suffer from *mānasika asahānaya*, its consequences in the bedroom lead to *lingika asahānaya*. Kumara was an unmarried 22-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist of *goyigama* caste living at Kachchakaduwa. He had been educated at the Herath Gunarathna Vidalaya to A-Level, and subsequently obtained a place on a management course at Peradeniya University. As part of his degree, Kumara

gained ten months' work experience in the Wayamba Development Bank. He graduated in 2005 with a lower second-class Honours degree, although told me that he felt disappointed by his grade and should have done better.

Following graduation, Kumara, like many of his cohort, could not find employment within the field for which he had been trained. As a consequence, his mother and father were scolding him. To improve his chances of employment, Kumara proposed to undertake further studies in IT, but his parents, thinking that this would make little difference, told him he should take any job he could find. Kumara disagreed with their suggestion, and preferred to remain unemployed. Kumara claimed that following this he developed low self-esteem and this manifested in feelings of anger:

Because I am unemployed and have no money, I have no feelings of self-worth. I can't do anything. I think why should I live? Parents ask their children 'why don't you do a job, why don't you give your family something?' When they say that, I feel angry because I can't help them. If I can't help them how can I feel self-motivated [*artmabimanaya*]?

The stress of unemployment, uncertainty, and parental expectation led Kumara to develop mental frustrations that manifested in abnormal behaviour. Kumara told me that he became angry and confused when his parents scolded him, while his friends reported that he would sit on the bus and talk in a loud voice about inappropriate things and without seeming to care that other passengers overheard. As Kumara's unemployment reduced his chances of marriage, and as those of his same age began to marry, Kumara's friends

teased that he would develop sexual frustration. Although Kumara denied it, his friends said that he would use boys' legs to release his unfulfilled urges, in an act locally known as 'cutting the stones' (*gal kalpanawa*).

To earn money, Kumara engaged in a range of activities that included drawing on his passion for art and his knowledge of mathematics. Kumara once told me that he would have liked to be a professional artist, and was employed by local businessmen to design and paint billboard advertisements. He also gave tuition lessons in mathematics to students preparing for the GCE and A-Level examinations. Kumara found both of these activities to be cathartic. In relation to his tuition work, he told me:

Teaching is a marvellous experience. When the students get happy I also get happy...their minds are pure unlike adults.

With this statement, Kumara was implying that children did not place the unfair expectations on him that adults, and in particular his parents, did. The nature of work, too, was fulfilling, as it provided a distraction and self-confidence:

My experience of frustration is to feel not wanted [*epa-onne*] because I can't find any work. This makes me think that the value of my life is not so important. I can feel better by doing a job. It gives me something to think about and then I can forget my frustration. We are encouraged by our own actions and after that we feel more motivated.

Kumara's interpretations of his frustration, and the solutions he found for it, were rooted in Buddhist ideals. Although normative Buddhism states that frustrations are developed because of attachments to the material world, followers are nevertheless encouraged to engage with the world. In this sense, Kumara's 'Buddhist' understanding of his frustration was confined, as it were, to the ritual space. The monk at Galmuruwa *vihara* advised Kumara: 'All things are empty, so don't dwell on them. Thinking is not the solution, working is the solution.' Kumara found solace in this advice, which encouraged him not to dwell on his negative thought processes, but to find employment:

[Buddhism] gives me relaxation to my mind. It gives the real way to solve problems. Meditation [*bhāvanā*] is also important to keep our mind in one place. When I am fed up with my life, I think about Buddha's way and I feel relaxed. When I get tired with working my mind asks for relaxation [*sahelu*]. When I want relaxation, I go to the temple. It's a quiet place and that helps me to keep my mind in one place and on one aim.

Thus, Buddhism, meditation, and the temple grounds provided Kumara with explanations for and routes to solving his frustrations. However, the refuge did not offer a lasting solution, as Kumara estimated that the relief gained from each visit would last little more than a week. On the other hand, finding confidence in self through work and the material wellbeing it could provide did offer a lasting cure.

Frustration in historical perspective

By the middle of the twentieth century the theory of sudden anger was brought into question, and within government discredited. The critique is perhaps attributable to the work of one man. During the late 1950s, the American sociologist Anthony L. Wood travelled to the island to conduct a study of homicide, suicide, and economic crime, and discover their 'social and cultural determinants' (Wood 1961: 6). At that time, homicide was still recognised as a major problem, and suicide was an emerging problem. Wood worked in partnership with the Ceylon Police Department, from whom he gained access to homicide records and to whom he presented his findings.

As a sociologist interested in deviance, Wood was an advocate of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. This hypothesis predicted that pent-up frustrations would erupt as inwardly- or outwardly-directed aggression (suicide or homicide), depending upon the psychological and sociological status of the person. Through Wood's work, the theory directly influenced the thinking of the police force. For example, Wood's effect on Sir Richard Aluwihare, Inspector-General of Police and native of Ceylon, could not have been more striking. In 1954, Sir Richard (AR-1954: S3, A15) echoed the theories of his colonial predecessors when he attributed the causes of both homicide and suicide to a lack of 'self-control and moral inhibition.' But in 1957, by which time Wood had begun his work with the Ceylon police, Sir Richard (AR-1957: S3, A46-47) demonstrated a change in his thinking:

Considering that Ceylon is in the throes of social revolution, the slight increase in

violent crime is not altogether surprising...Education, deeper religious instruction and, above all, social justice and security will help to eradicate the root causes that have been responsible for the high incidence of violence over the past 50 years...Murder shows an upward trend. It is a paradox that a country steeped in the Buddhist tradition should also exhibit such propensity for violent crime, but the explanation, as I see it, is that modern Ceylonese culture and society are at the crossroads.

A year later, when Wood presented his Interim Report, the transformation of Sir Richard's ideas appear complete:

In the majority of violent crime the causes have been attributed to sudden quarrels. The cases are instances of behaviour in which a tremendous amount of aggression suddenly explodes, apparently without sufficient cause. Although such cases are superficially somewhat puzzling and therefore conveniently categorised as sudden quarrels, a closer examination might reveal that the quarrel was not so sudden after all. Minor conflicts tolerated with difficulty over a period of time can suddenly summate to a strong aggressive intent beyond the capacity of a man, subject to frequent frustrations, to resist...

From observations made over a period of years, I am inclined to accept the school of thought that:-

- (a) aggression is always a consequence of frustration;
- (b) that the strength of the instigation to aggression varies directly with the

amount of frustration; and

(c) that the inhibition of any act of overt aggression varies directly with the amount of punishment anticipated to be a consequence of that act. (AR-1958: S3, A183-184)

The theory of frustration also came to inspire other government policies. In 1967, the Ceylon parliament published *Youth in Ceylon*, a two-part assessment of education, youth under-achievement, and national development. The first part of the report addressed the issue of a growing population of schoolchildren that held aspirations to further and higher education but was denied the chance to participate. The report argued that:

Once the individual youth is denied the social supervision of the school, he [has] nowhere to turn. The young person is abandoned by society as a failure. He does not enjoy the care of organised institutions, instead he is exposed to the influences of negative elements. (ibid: 29)

The report criticised a culture of achievement that had led to examinations becoming 'ends in themselves' (ibid: 18). Furthermore, universal aspirations for capitalist progress had meant 'the families of labourers and farmers [were] no longer at peace with their destiny' (ibid: 30):

The majority of families in Ceylon today are affected to a larger or smaller extent by modern frames of reference. Technology and modern communications have reached

almost every remote village in Ceylon. With schools in every village traditional social frames of reference are replaced by new ones. The caste systems are giving way to modern concepts. The traditional acceptance of predestined social roles is weakening. Education has brought about new aspirations...The expectations cherished everywhere are changes in status through education. (ibid: 29)

Failure to achieve in education meant that those who did not 'make the grade' experienced 'frustration' (ibid: 29). In turn, this was said to lead to 'anxiety and, consequently...aggressiveness of one form or another' (ibid: 31). The ways in which this discourse ties-in with the social change theory of suicide and W. George Edward's critique of social change in Kachchakaduwa, presented in Chapter 4.2, are clear.

8.3. Depression: development of the medical model

Thus far I have discussed locally popular terms and phrases associated with suicidal and other 'pathological' behaviours. I have also pointed out how they resemble identically colonial and post-colonial state discourses. Within governmental institutions today, and most notably the medical community, biomedical discourses are taking a centre stage. Although clinicians recorded sudden anger and frustration in patients' histories, I have shown in Chapter 3 how they finished with a formal diagnosis of some psychiatric complaint. Often this was 'depression,' the so-called 'common cold' of the western mind (Gilbert 1992).

In Madampe, the relationship between depression and suicide is a complex one.

First, clinicians at CMHC identified depression in less than half of all patients they treated. On the other hand, many hospitals in Sri Lanka record depression in less than one-quarter of cases (Marecek, personal communication, July 2008). In this sense, rates of depression at CMHC were higher than found elsewhere on the island, but very low when compared to northern Europe and North America, where depression is diagnosed in more than 90 percent of cases (Williams 1997). Marecek (1998) has argued that the low correlation between suicide and depression represents a real difference between suicidal behaviour in Sri Lanka and that found in the West. Marecek argues that suicide in Sri Lanka 'is rarely conceptualized in terms of mental illness or deep-seated psychological disorder,' but in terms associated with mundane and everyday sociological disorders (ibid: 74). Quoting a Sri Lankan psychiatrist, Marecek (ibid: 74-75) suggests:

Suicide in the West, they say, is often indicative of depression or other serious psychopathology; suicide in Sri Lanka is not. As one Western-trained psychiatrist explained to me, 'Here, suicide is just something people do.' Another...said, 'For us, suicide is just an impulsive thing.'

However, it is clear that the clinician quoted by Marecek is echoing a view of suicidal behaviour that shares roots with the colonial model of homicide. As I have already argued, this view, while it may not be false *per se*, does at least represent a prejudicial view held by members of the Sinhalese elite about their supposedly impulsive and irrational underlings. Unfortunately, this was a very often expressed 'off the record' by CMHC clinicians. Just, then, as the post-colonial theory of frustration came to redefine

many people's understandings of anger, the globalisation of health care systems and mental health services in Sri Lanka may do the same. Despite their personal views, clinicians at CMHC had no qualms whatsoever of diagnosing depression when they recognised the symptoms, and unlike the psychiatrist quoted by Marecek they assumed that more-or-less all cases of suicidal behaviour were caused by depression in some sense. This was even though, of course, they diagnosed it formally in less than half of the patients they treated.

The medicalisation of suicidal behaviour

Psychiatry is an emerging medicine in Sri Lanka and only in the past few years has the government invested in the widespread training of general medical doctors as mental health specialists. The mental health clinic at CBH opened in 2000, and a Consultant Psychiatrist was not appointed there until January 2005. For the first five years of operation, CMHC was staffed by just one general medical officer and a few nurses. Although today CMHC clinicians routinely look for depression in their suicidal patients (and CBH ward doctors have all read Aaron Beck, the 'grandfather' of cognitive behavioural therapy), the 'medicalisation' of suicidal behaviour is very much a work in progress. In this sense, it is not unusual that clinicians do not necessarily model suicidal behaviour in terms of mental illness, let alone members of the lay public.

The lack of concern with mental health treatments in relation to suicide are in part the consequence of the legal history of suicide in Sri Lanka (outlined in Chapter 5.5). During the colonial and post-colonial period suicide attempts were considered a matter

for prosecution or social intervention rather than therapeutic consultation, and even if mental health professionals did recognise a role for themselves they were systematically denied it. The Chief Medical Officer for the Puttalam District told me that before suicide was decriminalised he would try not to involve the police but instead asked patients to plant a tree in the hospital grounds. He encouraged them to focus on the growth of the tree as an example of how things can change by their own accord.

When suicide was taken off the statute books in 1998 and the government began to take an active interest in mental health, the role of mental health professionals moved to the foreground. CMHC is a good example of how this concern manifested in practical action. In 2005, with increased funds, the new Consultant Psychiatrist initiated a community out-reach programme to improve take-up and established a weekly field surgery thirty miles north of Chilaw. She also insisted that all self-harm patients receiving first aid treatment at CBH be referred to the Clinic for risk assessment. Reflecting on these measures, the clinician who ran the office prior to the appointment of the Consultant told me:

Before we went into the villages [began the out-reach programme] the people suffered from their problems, but didn't know what caused them. They didn't come to us for help. We had to go and tell them they were depressed – now they come to our clinic!

The implications of psychiatrists actively seeking-out patients for their clinic and in so doing creating a community of the 'mentally ill' is of course revealing. The immediate

result of these measures was a huge increase in patient numbers, so that by the end of 2006 the Clinic was forced to move to offices three times its original size. A longer-term consequence may be the spread of medical ideas about individual mental health problems just as colonial and post-colonial models of anger and frustration similarly developed. Reflecting this, officers at MPS, although still using the term *mānasika asahānaya* when referring to mental health issues as a cause of suicide, have amongst themselves started using the term *mānasika awapīdanaya* (depression; also *kalakirīma*).

When CMHC clinicians diagnose depression they do so on the basis of their patients' self-reporting of certain symptoms. Although causal theories of depression vary widely in academic psychology, agreement generally exists over how it manifests in emotional and behavioural terms. For the sake of argument, the 'industry-standard' DSM-IV⁴⁰ definition provides a good overview of the kinds of problems CMHC clinicians look for. By this model, a diagnosis of depression requires an individual to have experienced at least five⁴¹ symptoms for a minimum of fourteen consecutive days (see Table 8.1; Gilbert 2006 [2000]: 390). When compared against the colonial and post-colonial models of anger and frustration, it is clear how they correspond to certain domains of depression.

Spread of the medical model

Another route by which people in Madampe might begin to use medicalised or mental

⁴⁰ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV of the American Psychological Society.

⁴¹ Individual diagnoses may vary: persistent presence of less than five could warrant a diagnosis of depression. A key symptom such as anhedonia by itself may also be enough to assume the presence of other symptoms, especially anger, shame, guilt and anxiety (Gilbert *ibid.*).

health discourses for suicidal behaviour and other psychosocial problems could be via the AGA Family Counsellor. Family Counsellors have been a feature of AGA services across Sri Lanka for several years, and were in fact established in direct response to the suicide crisis. The Madampe Family Counsellor was a middle-aged man who had undergone training in mental health and social care. The Counsellor offered a range of services, but mostly focused upon helping clients access other social support services or assisting the resolution of dispute within families. In most cases, he received clients through referral from colleagues such as the Child Probation Officer, Women’s Officer, and the Land Registration Officer. During 2004 the Counsellor dealt with 118 individual cases, details of which are reproduced in the Table 8.2.

Domain	Symptoms
Biological	Sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, loss of weight, fatigue, changes in circadian rhythms (body clock), hormones and brain chemicals
Emotional	Low mood, <i>anhedonia</i> (inability to feel pleasure), feelings of emptiness, anger or resentment, anxiety, shame, guilt
Motivation	Apathy, loss of energy and interest: things seem pointless or hopeless
Cognitive	Poor concentration and memory, commonly with worry about the experienced changes
Evaluations	Negative ideas about self, the world and the future
Behaviour	Lowered activity, social withdrawal, agitation, or retardation. Problems in social relationships are common in depression, both as cause and consequence

Table 8. 1: The major domains of depression
(After Gilbert 2006 [2000]: 390. Further citations in source text)

Problem	Percent
Self-harm/suicide attempt (client also referred to CMHC)	1.7
Land inheritance leading to dispute between family members	3.4
Assisting families with disabled child access state financial aid (LKR 50,000) to build/equip an appropriate home	3.4
Employment problems and disputes (arguments between client and work colleagues; careers advice)	5.9
Love problems (for example family conflicts over love affairs conducted by their children)	8.5
School absenteeism	10.2
Psychological problems (for example depression and schizophrenia); many other cases also involved psychological problems	14.4
Children abandoned following migration of mother and inability of father to cope, or migration of both parents	17.8
Marital disputes	34.7
Total	100.0
	(N=118)

Table 8. 2: Problems amongst clients reporting to the Madampe AGA Family Counsellor, 2004
(Source: Madampe AGA Family Counsellor, with thanks)

The spread of medicalised knowledge and discourse about mental health means that some people in Madampe weigh up the value of seeking psychiatric help compared with some other form of help. Patients presenting at CMHC told me that the clinic was just one form of assistance out of several they used to address a single complaint. One female patient, diagnosed by clinicians as suffering from post-partum depression, presented bearing the *tilak* of the Hindu Munnesaram temple at Chilaw; another female patient diagnosed with on-going manic episodes presented holding a cross made of coconut leaves she had been given at a local Catholic shrine.

Others discuss the merits of visiting the clinic altogether, and are suspicious of their tendency to prescribe medication. A young male informant at Kachchakaduwa fell ill on the Sinhalese *Alut Aruduru* (New Year). He complained of a bad headache and felt

delirious: at one point, family members heard him speaking unintelligibly in a strange voice. Friends urged that he seek medical assistance but his *massinā*, a low-rung local civil servant, prevented him from doing so. The *massinā* later told me that he did not think the sudden illness could be cured through drugs but instead advocated working through his personal problems with the local monk, in much the same way that Kumara, also a Kachchakaduwa resident, had done. Reflecting the ‘other-worldly’ nature of Kachchakaduwa Buddhism (see Chapter 4.6) the episode was not understood in terms of possession, although a non-medical and religious solution was sought.

As far as the state of mental health services at CBH and Madampe AGA reflects services across Sri Lanka, we may take it as being quite typical. Until five or ten years ago the island’s only psychiatrists and other specialists were based at major cities like Colombo and Kandy, which for residents in the Chilaw District were only a few hours journey but for others on the island anywhere up to a day. Even now the expansion of mental health services is slow, provision in its infancy, and general doctors remain under no professional obligation to refer suicidal individuals, or those experiencing other mental health problems, to psychiatrists for assessment, diagnosis, or treatment.

8.4. The lay model: suffering, frustration, and anger

The most likely route by which ‘depression’ will enter popular lexicon is via the lay model of suicide and psychopathology. The lay model may have inspired professional models during the colonial and post-colonial eras; it may in time give legitimacy to the concept of depression. Within Buddhist explanation, psychopathologies are seen at base

seen as being created by failed desires (*āśāva*) and the suffering this creates. The 'desired' usually includes material needs, wants, and expectations such as educational success, financial gain, or social prestige, but also includes affective or emotional desires such as romantic love or platonic friendship. 'Desire' is also a more generalised state, however, in that it is held that all people who hold an interest in and seek to lead fulfilling lives are bound to experience it. To this end, the theology goes, all but those who renounce the world and its attachments inevitably face disappointment and therefore *dukkha* (suffering) (Gombrich 1971; Obeyesekere 1985; Spiro 1971)

Of course, the extent to which Madampe Buddhists understand misfortune in such terms depends upon their relationship to Buddhism and other kinds of theories of causation (see Chapter 4.6 and 5.5). At Kachchakaduwa people may be more inclined to accept the normative Buddhist account; people at Suduwella perhaps seek a more supernatural explanation. Nevertheless, the concept of suffering pervades everyday speech and may be understood as a condition at least recognisable at both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, even if responses to suffering may be different.

Suffering and suicide

In Madampe suffering is used to signal some kind of psychological pain arising from a myriad of different problems. In this way suffering also related to a kind of 'sorrow' or 'hopelessness' at the ability to change things. In this sense, suffering is seen to lead to frustration and anger; and anger and frustration are seen to lead to further suffering. In May 2006, Roshan, a 22-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist male, was referred to CMHC

following a suicide attempt. In many respects, Roshan's case was a usual one: he had swallowed dozens of painkillers following a dispute with his girlfriend's uncle, who had disagreed with their love affair and insisted that it stop. The uncle had admonished his niece after finding a letter that Roshan had written to her, and also threatened him with violence.

Out of sympathy with the girl, and as a way of fighting against the uncle's stubbornness, Roshan swallowed a packet of painkillers. He took the tablets in private and did not inform anybody of his actions. Following this, Roshan went to meet his friends to play cricket for several hours. He returned home once the tablets began to take effect, and went to bed without any supper. In the early hours of the next day, family members overheard Roshan vomiting and tried to take him to hospital. He demanded to be left alone to die, but by then lacking the strength to resist was admitted to CBH 'against his will.'

Three days later, upon the eve of discharge, Roshan was referred to the psychiatric clinic for assessment. During clinical interview, Roshan suggested that the immediate precipitator of his suicide attempt was his love problem. But Roshan also suggested that an on-going family problem had contributed to his suicide attempt too. Several years previously, Roshan's mother had migrated to the Middle East for work but had not been heard from since. In the meantime, and according to Roshan because of his wife's disappearance, Roshan's father had subsequently become alcoholic and unable to care for him and his siblings. As a result, they went to live with their paternal grandmother. Roshan complained that when his father came to visit he was drunk and caused problems. The grandmother herself was ill and dying. 'I am suffering on all sides,'

Roshan told the clinician, implying that all the different stresses he was experiencing were affecting him simultaneously. He was diagnosed with depression.

Suffering and depression

In normative Buddhism the person who appreciates the emptiness of their desires can come to terms and live with suffering. But to accept that pleasure-seeking of any kind is hopeless is to live in a state of 'generalised hopelessness.' Obeyesekere (1985) has suggested that the state of generalised hopelessness is identical to certain major psychological diagnoses of depression. For this reason, Obeyesekere argues, depression cannot be a universal mental health syndrome but instead is a culture-bound syndrome particular to 'the west.' If it were not, Buddhists who held that pleasure-seeking was hopeless would warrant a diagnosis of depression, and this would lead to the absurd conclusion that all Buddhists are depressed. Thus, Buddhists cannot become depressed because for them affect is related to religious symbolism.

I submit, on the contrary, that Buddhists are perfectly able to experience depression, for three main reasons. The first is that Buddhist theories about suffering and generalised hopelessness are normative accounts, and their actual appreciation and interpretation in the everyday lives of Madampe Buddhists creates a wide variety of thoughts on the subject. To be sure, religious virtuosos may understand the implications of the Buddhist concept of *dukkha* in this way, and thus experience negative affect in terms of religious concepts. But a great many more Buddhists do not understand *dukkha* in this way, and do not consider life to be irreconcilably doomed to disappointment and hopelessness. Indeed, the Kachchakaduwa monk advised Kumara to engage with the

world as a way of overcoming his frustrations; increased attachment to, rather than complete renouncement of, the world is considered the best cure.

The second objection is that were Obeyesekere's argument correct, depression-as-illness would never be diagnosed in Buddhists because its symptoms would always be taken as an expression of religion. This is simply not the case at CMHC, where all the clinicians are Buddhist. When I put it to them that Buddhists and depressives share a view of the world, they laughed and acknowledged the similarity but also pointed out that substantial differences exist: they could, simply put, tell the difference between religious beliefs and affective experience.

Finally, Obeyesekere bases his argument on a very narrow definition of depression as generalised hopelessness. For Obeyesekere's argument to hold, Buddhism would not only have to be associated with hopelessness but also with the whole range of symptoms that the majority of mental health professionals agree constitute depression. Even if Buddhists and depressives are similar in their assumption that life is hopeless, depressives – and Buddhists who warrant a diagnosis of depression – must also demonstrate a range of other problems for a specific period of time: i.e. their beliefs should inhibit healthy functioning. As I have said, this is in fact a stark difference between Buddhists and depressives, as Buddhists generally express their religious beliefs at specific times and places, such as during religious ceremonies. Kumara, for example, expressed his frustrations through Buddhist idioms when at the temple but also, at other times and places, through the colonial and post-colonial models (anger and frustration). As such, the similarity between Buddhism and depression is only a matter of language, with (some) Buddhists subscribing to the experience of depression without living them.

8.5. Gender, self-harm, and the expression of anger

So: professional and lay models of psychopathology explain the problem of suicide in remarkably similar ways. At certain times and places and in relation to certain kinds of people, anger, frustration, and suffering/depression are preferred descriptive labels for common underlying problems. This suggests that while the terms do reflect the interests of the dominant (in the sense they 'pathologise' and thus stigmatise the subdominant and those experiencing psychological problems), a set of real complaints do exist. When young women talk about anger or men complain about frustration, they are in part repeating discourses imposed by others but at the same time drawing attention to actual concerns. In this section I will examine why it might be that suicidal women so often seem to be diagnosed and diagnose themselves as being angry. I here continue the discussion begun in Chapter 6, where I sought to understand why males and females experiencing romantic rejection and romantic loss expressed themselves through aggression and self-harm respectively.

In order to explore the relationship between gender, self-harm, and the expression of anger I administered a standardised psychological test to almost 1,000 school students in the Madampe Division. School students were selected for the study as the school population can be taken as a complete population with two sub-populations: suicidal and non-suicidal. This approach was preferable to matching a community-based population with a clinical population, as construction of a representative community sample would have been too costly in time and money for an individual ethnographer.

The Achenbach Youth Self-Report (YSR)

After reviewing the possible tests available, I settled on the Achenbach (Achenbach & Rescorla 2001) *Youth Self-Report for Ages 11 to 18 Years*. The YSR is a holistic assessment tool that aims to establish the psychosocial functioning of subjects at a broad level. I preferred this test to a more specific test (for instance the *Beck Depression Inventory* or the *Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation*⁴²) as I wanted to obtain broad psychosocial information that could be more fully compared against my ethnographic evidence. The YSR comprises two parts, the first probing for 'social competencies' and the second probing for 'psychological problems.' Social competencies are measured by level of participation in and self-assessed aptitude at various social activities. These include sports, hobbies, youth clubs and youth organisations, household chores, friendships, family relationships, and schoolwork. Low participation or aptitude in any of these areas is taken to be indicative of poor social functioning.

Psychological problems are measured by presence of symptoms that cluster into syndromes (see Table 8.3). Although, then, restricted to a medical model of psychopathology, for the reasons argued above I submit that they do correspond to native categories. YSR Syndromes include 'anxiety/depression,' 'withdrawal/depression,' 'somatisation,' 'social problems,' 'thought problems,' 'attention problems,' 'rule-breaking behaviour,' and 'aggressive behaviour.' Subjects are asked if they have experienced the problem within the past six months, and if so to indicate the severity of their symptoms (0 = never; 1 = sometimes; 2 = often). Subjects who report many and/or high scores for

⁴² For more information visit: <http://www.beckinstitute.org/>. Also see: Arfa 1983.

symptoms indicative of each syndrome are diagnosed as suffering from that syndrome.

Syndromes are also grouped according to whether they are 'internalising' problems, 'externalising' problems, or problems that span both domains. Internalising problems can be defined as problems that are focused upon the self, such as anxiety, withdrawal, depression, and somatic complaints. Externalising problems are those that are focused upon others, for example rule-breaking behaviour and aggressive behaviour. Problems that focus both inward and outward include social problems, thought problems, and attention problems.

Finally, in the YSR suicidal behaviours are explored as psychological problems. The YSR contains two items that probed for evidence of suicidal behaviour, the first 'suicidal ideation' and the second 'self-harm/suicide attempt.' Suicidal ideation was probed for by the question 'I think about killing myself.' Self-harm/suicide attempt was probed for by the question 'I deliberately try to hurt or kill myself.'

<i>Internalising</i>						<i>Externalising</i>	
Anxious/ depressed	Withdrawn/ depressed	Somatic complaints⁴³	Social problems	Thought problems	Attention problems	Rule-breaking behaviour	Aggressive behaviour
Cries	Enjoys little	Nightmares	Dependent	Can't get mind	Acts young	Drinks alcohol	Argues a lot
Fears	Rather be alone	Feels dizzy	Lonely	off certain	Fails to finish	Lacks guilt	Mean
Fears school	Won't talk	Overtired	Doesn't get along	thoughts	tasks	Breaks rules	Demands
Fears doing bad	Secretive	Aches	with others	Harms self	Can't concentrate	Bad friends	attention
Must be perfect	Shy, timid	Headaches	Jealous	Hears things ⁴⁴	Can't sit still	Lies, cheats	Destroys own
Feels unloved	Lacks energy	Nausea	Others out to get	Twitching	Confused	Prefers older kids	things
Feels worthless	Sad	Eye problems	him/her	Picks skin	Daydreams	Runs away	Destroys others'
Nervous	Withdrawn	Skin problems	Accident-prone	Repeats acts	Impulsive	Sets fires ²	things
Fearful		Stomach	Gets teased	Sees things ⁴⁵	Poor schoolwork	Steals from home	Disobedient at
Feels too guilty		Vomiting	Not liked	Sleeps less	Inattentive	Steals outside	school
Self-conscious			Clumsy	Stores things		home	Gets in fights
Thinks of suicide			Prefers younger	Strange		Swearing	Attacks people
Worries			kids	behaviour		Thinks of sex too	Screams a lot
			Speech problems	Strange ideas		much	Stubborn, sullen
				Trouble sleeping		Uses tobacco	Mood changes
						Truant	Suspicious
						Uses drugs	Teases a lot
							Temper
							Threatens others
							Loud

Table 8. 3: Psychological symptoms and syndromes, YSR 11-18 (Achenbach & Rescorla 2001)

⁴³ Illness/sickness with no known medical cause.

⁴⁴ Excluded from analysis.

⁴⁵ Excluded from analysis.

Limitations of the data

The ecological validity of these social competencies and psychological problems has not been tested amongst Sinhalese. However, the YSR has been reliably tested in over eighty countries around the world. Nevertheless, caution must be exercised, especially concerning 'normal,' 'borderline,' and 'clinical' diagnostic categories. These diagnoses have been based upon a US population sample of 'normal,' 'borderline,' and 'clinical' youth, and are, as such, simply inappropriate for use in Sri Lanka (although it would be interesting to compare US scales against properly constructed Sri Lankan sample). Although youth in Madampe did have a range of social activities to engage in (for example school activities, school sports, after-school clubs, youth clubs, etc.), many, especially females, are not allowed to participate for fear of shame. Furthermore, only females are expected to engage in household chores and usually only males are allowed to socialise with friends outside of school. For these reasons I will simply divide respondents into two groups: 'suicidal' and 'non-suicidal.' Where the former is found to have significantly lower or higher ($p = <0.10$) social competency or psychological problem scores, a problem correlating with the presence of suicidal behaviour will be assumed to exist. Whether or not suicidal youth experience these problems at clinical levels will remain an unknown quantity.

Methodology

Children aged 5 to 14 years are compelled to attend school by law, and a number of state

and private establishments exist to cater for that need. In Madampe, the state provides five mixed comprehensives for Sinhalese and Tamil students and one specialist school for Muslim students. Four of these comprehensives (at Galmuruwa, Pallekale, Kakkapaliya, and Madampe New Town) offer arts-based GCE and A-level courses, and admit students from their local area. One (Central College) offers science-based courses and admits students from across the whole Division. Given that in Sri Lanka science courses are valued high above arts courses, competition for places at Central College is fierce. As such, students at Central College can be seen as 'high-achievers' while students at the four other colleges are of mixed ability. Three schools were approached, and Central College and the Herath Gunarathna Vidyalaya agreed to participate in the research.

Sinhalese translations of the YSR were commissioned and trialled on a small sample of youth aged 11 to 18 years. Further refinements were subsequently made to the translation, which was then administered under exam conditions to 181 students at Herath Gunarathna Vidyalaya and 1,123 students at Central College. Participants were issued a covering letter detailing the nature of and reason for the study, an emphasis that participation was voluntary, and guarantee that personal and identifying details would be kept confidential. By completing the YSR it was assumed that consent from individual students had been given.

Upon preliminary assessment of responses, I decided to omit three questions from the psychological problems scale due to difficulties with socio-historical/language context. These included questions probing for auditory and visual hallucinations and arson. I omitted responses relating to hallucinations because of the ambiguous nature of those experiences in contemporary Madampe. While in many cases individuals

experiencing hallucinations are admitted to hospital by relatives (I met several while working at CMHC), some are considered to be experiencing possession of one kind or another. In these cases, hallucination is not seen as psychopathological (although may still be undesirable if the spirit is malevolent), and furthermore may be 'affected' in order to fulfil a social role (Obeyesekere 1975b, 1981, 1984, 1990; Stirrat 1992). The question probing for arson was omitted because the phrasing of the question – 'I set fires' – was too ambiguous in a society where wood fires are routinely used in cooking. However, the YSR psychological problem scale remains valid with up to six non-completed question (Achenbach & Rescorla 2001). As such, these omissions do not affect the validity of findings. Full results of statistical analysis can be found in Appendix 8.

Response rate and presence of suicidal behaviour

Of the distributed forms, 123 (68.0 percent) at Herath Gunarathna and 841 (74.9 percent) at Central College were returned completed to the standard required for assessment. Of these, twenty-one (17.1 percent) at Herath Gunarathna and 145 (17.2 percent) at Central College reported some kind of suicidal behaviour (see Figure 8.1). At Herath Gunarathna females were more likely than males to report suicidal ideation (75.0 percent compared with 23.1 percent); while males were more likely to report suicidal ideation together with self-harm (46.2 percent compared with 12.5 percent) or just self-harm (30.8 percent compared with 12.5 percent). At Central College, which provided a larger and therefore more accurate picture, the reported rates of the different kinds of suicidal behaviour were about the same.

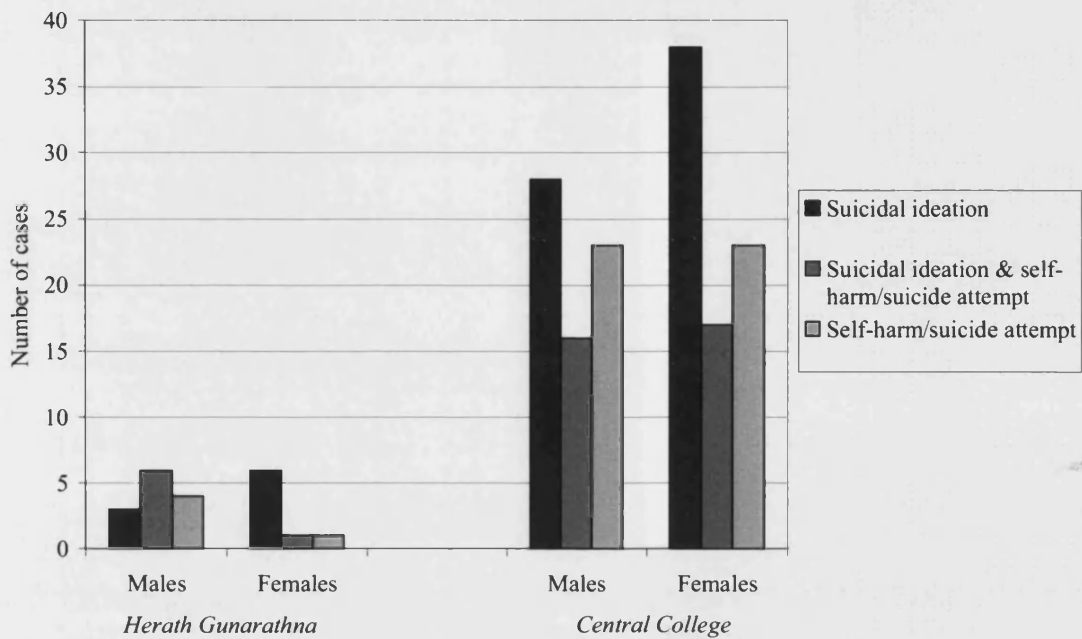


Figure 8. 1: Kinds of suicidal behaviour reported by suicidal school children at Herath Gunarathna and Central College.

Despite internal variations, overall the same numbers of students in each school reported suicidal behaviours. This suggests regardless of their academic aptitude Madampe students engaged in suicidal behaviour at the same rates and of the same kind (see Figure 8.2). The high level of suicidal behaviour involving some element of ideation – 76.2 percent at Herath Gunarathna and 77.2 percent at Central College – suggests low levels of ‘impulsive’ suicidal behaviour (behaviour including no prior thought or planning, as in the colonial model; see Figure 8.3).

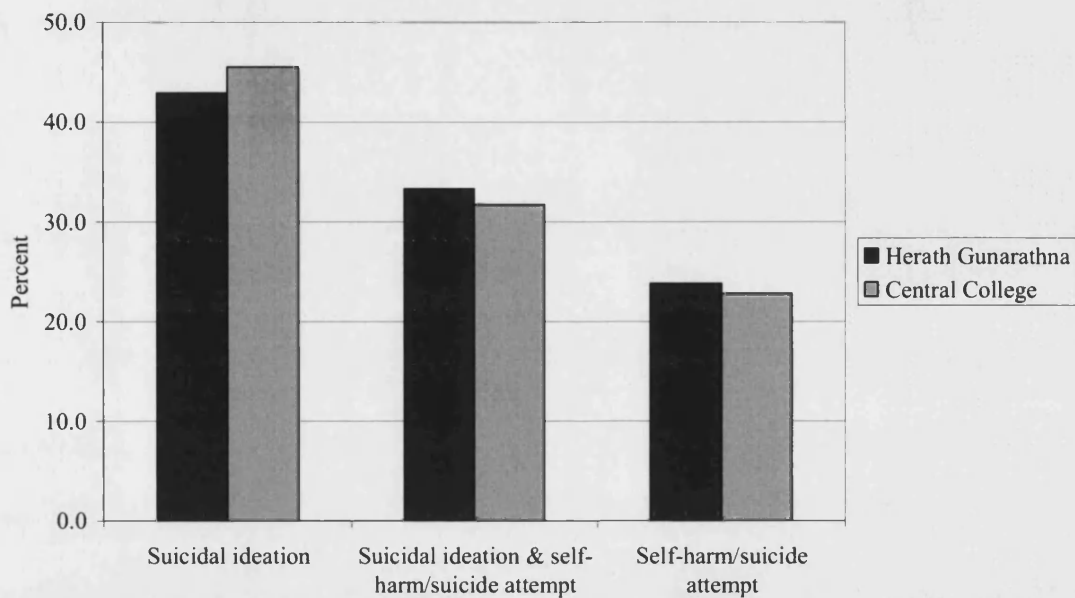


Figure 8. 2: Total kinds of suicidal behaviour reported by suicidal school children at Herath Gunarathna and Central College.

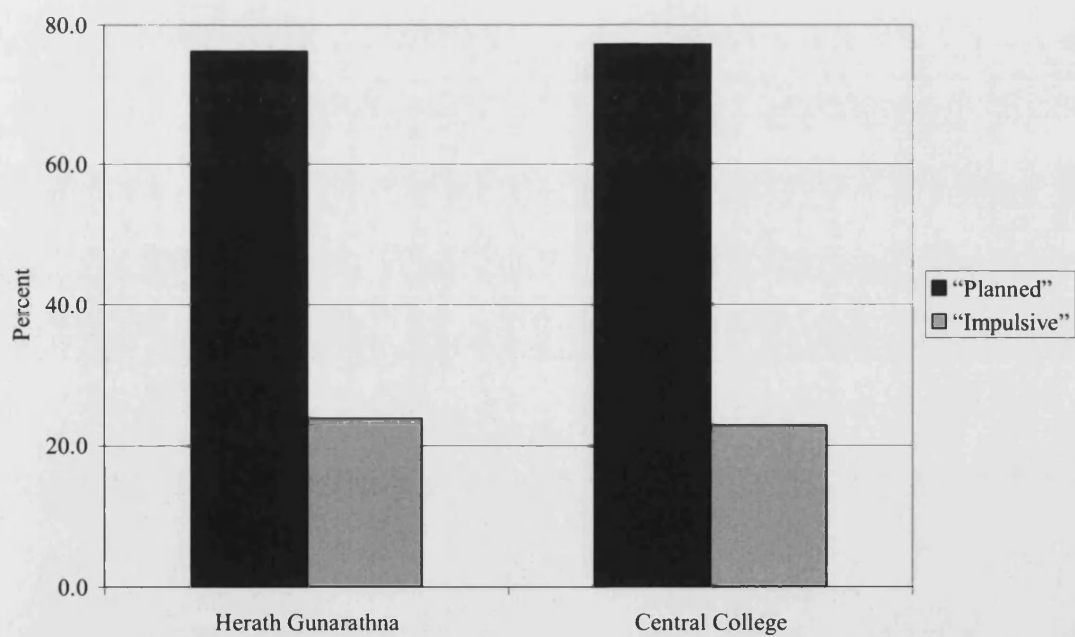


Figure 8. 3: Planned' and 'impulsive' acts of self-harm/suicide attempt reported by suicidal school children at Herath Gunarathna and Central College.

Psychosocial functioning

Social competencies

At Herath Gunarathna, social competency scores between suicidal and non-suicidal males were not found to be significantly different. Amongst females, suicidal students were found to score significantly lower at activities (sports, hobbies, and chores) than their non-suicidal counterparts (see Figure 8.4). At Central College, no difference was found between the social competency scores of suicidal and non-suicidal males or females (see Figure 8.5).

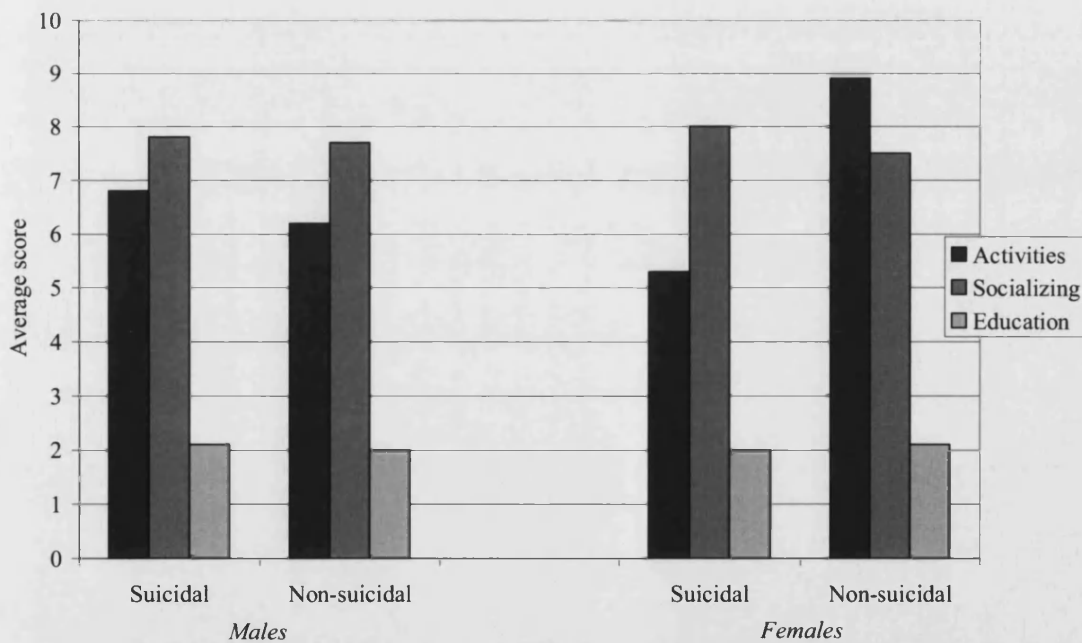


Figure 8. 4: *Herath Gunarathna* – social functioning in male and female students.

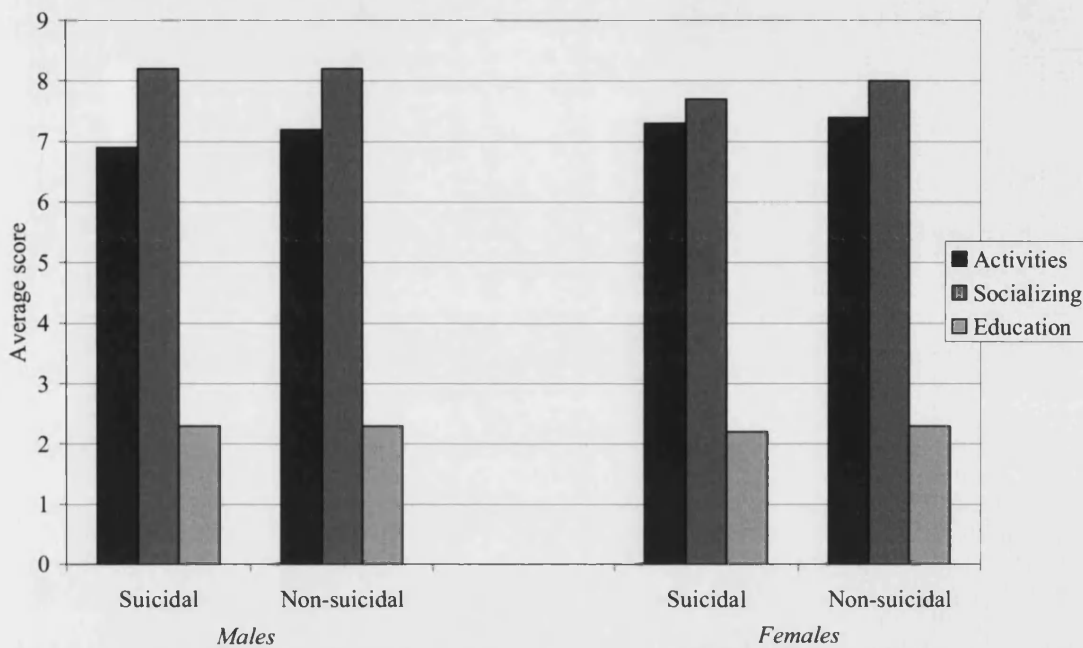


Figure 8. 5: Central College – social functioning in male and female students

From these data, and contradicting my argument thus far (!), it would appear that social problems are not strongly associated with the presence of suicidal behaviour. However, it is highly likely that social competencies investigated by the YSR are not those that often cause Madampe youth to commit acts of suicidal behaviour. Rather, it is problems that revolve around disputes within the *gē*, and especially those that threaten moral standing (*tattvaya*) through blame and shame, that lead to acts of self-harm and suicide attempt. It is the *doing* that leads to problems, not one's *overall level* of participation or aptitude.

Psychological problems (syndromes)

At Herath Gunarathna, suicidal males scored significantly higher than non-suicidal males on all but two problems (withdrawal/depression and social problems). Suicidal males also scored significantly higher for internalising and externalising problems. Suicidal females scored significantly higher in relation to *just* two problems (anxiety/depression and

withdrawal/depression) (see Figure 8.6). Moreover, suicidal females *only* scored higher in relation to internalising problems. Although suicidal males and females scored the same on internalising problems, suicidal males scored significantly higher on externalising problems (see Figure 8.8). Put another way, female students at Herath Gunarathna were ‘less’ depressed and ‘less’ prone to rule-breaking and aggressive behaviour than their male counterparts.

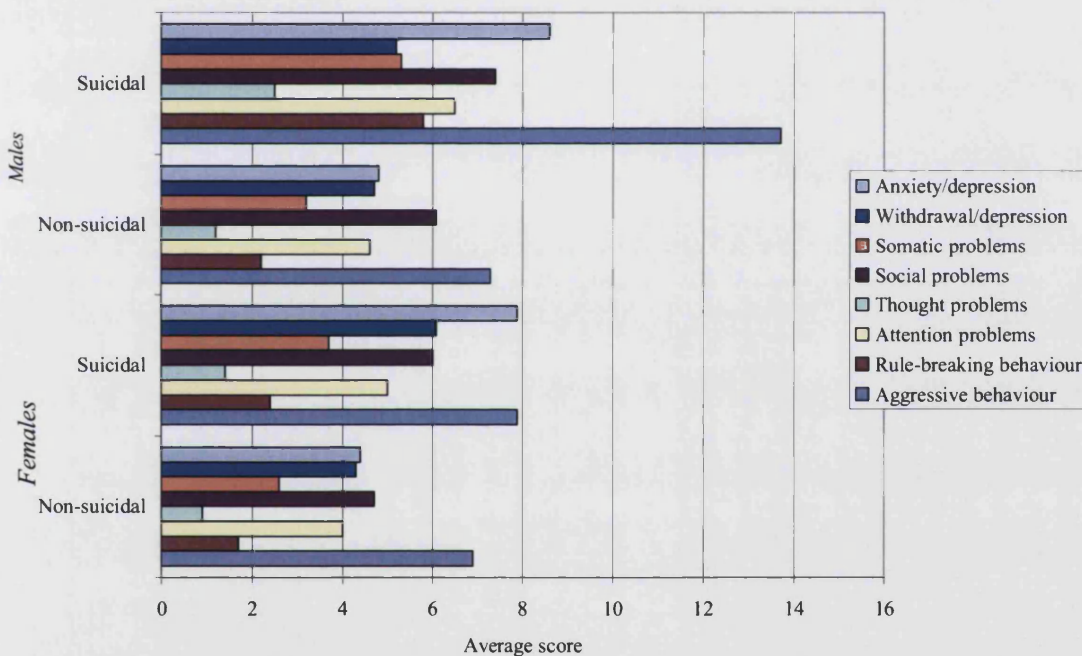


Figure 8. 6: Herath Gunarathna – psychological problems in suicidal and non-suicidal students

At Central College, suicidal males scored significantly higher than non-suicidal males on all problems. Suicidal males also scored higher on internalising and externalising problems. Suicidal females scored significantly higher than non-suicidal females on all problems (see Figure 8.7). Suicidal females also scored higher on internalising and externalising problems. Suicidal males and females scored the same on internalising

problems, but males scored higher than females on externalising problems (see Figure 8.8). *Contra* Herath Gunarathna, then, Central College females were ‘just as likely’ to be depressed as their male counterparts, and although were also ‘prone’ to rule-breaking and aggressive behaviour, were less likely to externalise their problems than males.

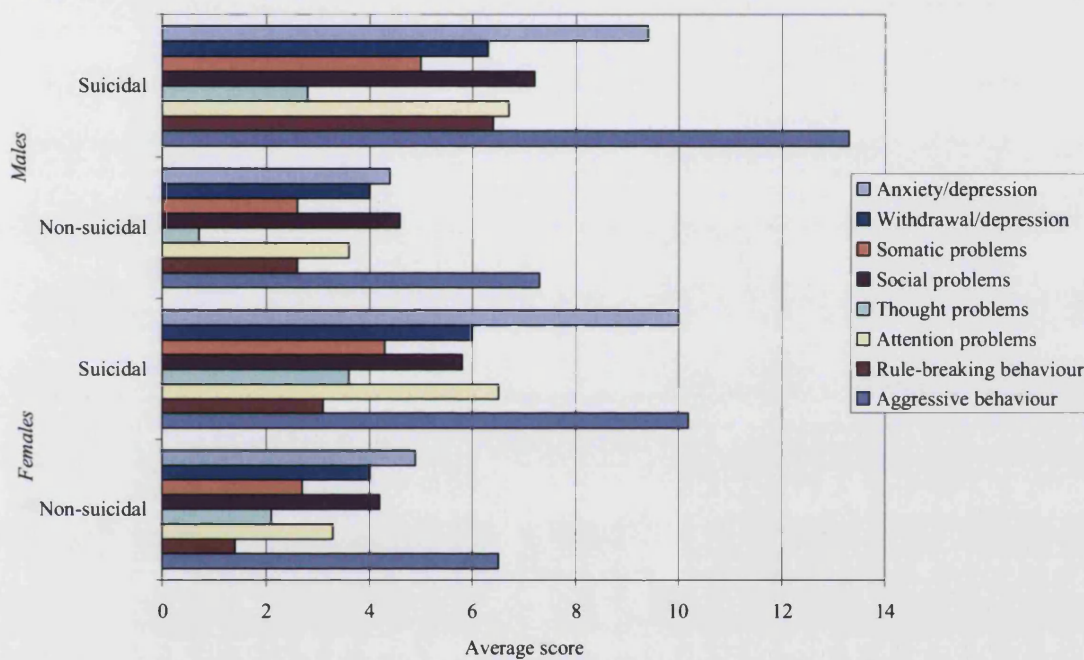


Figure 8. 7: *Central College* – psychological problems in suicidal and non-suicidal students

YSR questions that probed for psychological problems appear to have produced more revealing results than those probing for social competencies. Overall, suicidal males and females at both schools were as likely as each other to report problems towards the suffering/depression (internalising) end of the behavioural scale. However, only males were more likely to report problems towards the aggression (externalising) end. In this sense, the findings clearly correspond with the ethnographic evidence presented in Chapter 6, which suggested that males externalise their problems through engaging in

socially deviant behaviours, while females internalise their problems and suffer ‘quietly.’

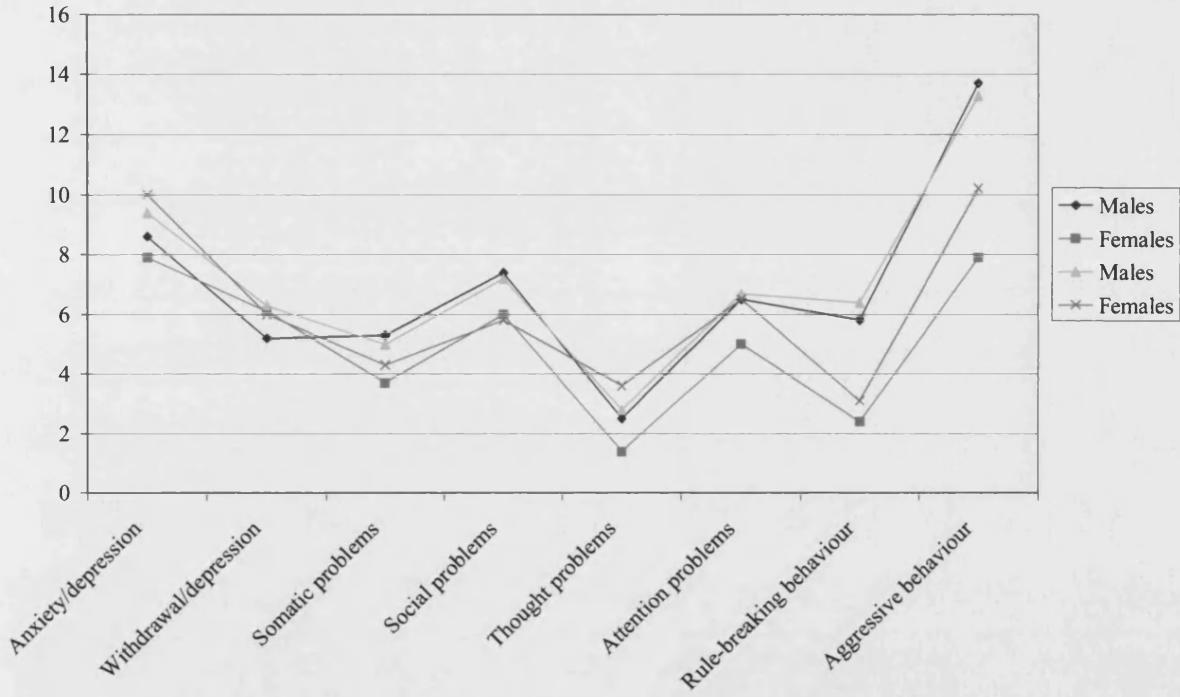


Figure 8. 8: Psychological problems amongst suicidal Heath Gunarathna (dark blue and red) and Central College (yellow and light blue) students

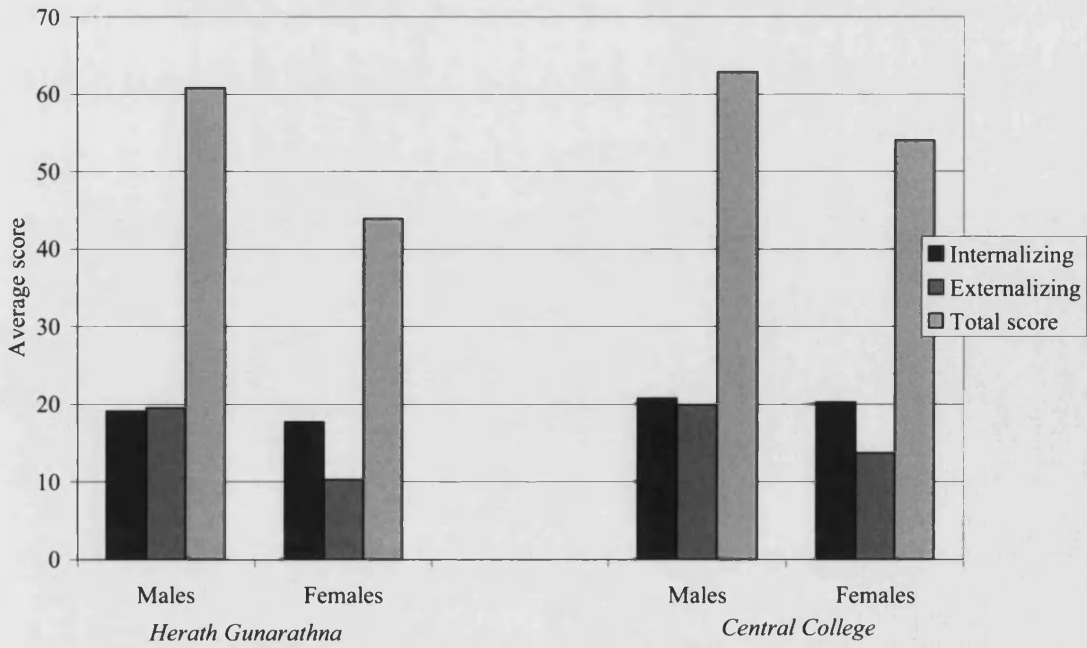


Figure 8. 9: Internalising, externalising, and total problem scores.

Labelling and self-reporting of anger

It would appear that males are more likely than females to externalise their problems in the form of aggression. Yet in the clinic, anger is diagnosed in, and reported by, women more often than men. It would seem, then, that women are not getting angry yet being labelled as angry, while men are getting angry but not being labelled as angry. So, are women's self-definitions of being angry wrong? Are they merely reproducing the discourses of the dominant in Madampe society and thus legitimating their own subdominant position in society, as impulsive and irrational beings?

Throughout this thesis I have provided case-study evidence and consistently argued that when women commit acts of suicidal behaviour they are in effect fighting back against their subdominant position within the *gē*, and thus challenging and claiming power for themselves. In this way, the initial classification of suicidal behaviour within the YSR as internalising and intermediate problems is probably wrong. Amongst Madampe women, suicidal behaviour is better classified as an externalisation of problems, in the sense that acts of self-harm are directed towards significant others as part of on-going disputes within the *gē*: self-harm is perhaps better understood as an act of 'other-harm.' Similarly, their status as women prevents the expression of complaint through other, more obviously 'aggressive' means. They have, as I have argued, fewer alternative responses to self-harm.

This leaves the high externalising scores of men to explain. Of course, men just as much as women may use self-harm as an expression of anger and aggression in response to shame and blame. But by their status they may, as argued in Chapter 6, use rule-

breaking and more obviously aggressive behaviours, for example when dealing with romantic rejection and loss. Thus, suicidal behaviours may arise in addition to, rather than instead of, externalising behaviours.

8.6. Summary: psychology and society

In this chapter I have explored discourses of suicidal behaviour that imply negative affect such as anger, frustration, and suffering. I have argued that each phrase, commonly used today, has a specific history that shapes its meaning and application. Within each phrase two general histories can be found: one, the product of colonial, post-colonial, and globalising medical models of thought; the second, lay interpretations of normative Buddhism. Only the medical model expressly relates suicidal behaviour to psychopathology, but this is simply because 'depression' is itself a normative label, and part of another Great Tradition. If lay people in Madampe do not talk about suicidal behaviour using languages that are recognisable to the psychologist, it does not mean that no psychopathology exists. In fact, I argue, everyday Sinhalese terms such as anger, frustration, and suffering are perfectly translatable into formal psychological language.

The application of and identification with certain vernacular terms and phrases is not arbitrary but related to wider systems of status and power. In both colonial and post-colonial periods the terms *kopēya* and *ikman kopēya* were and are used derogatorily, at least when employed by one individual to explain the behaviour of another. When individuals use the terms to describe their own behaviour, they may be understood as associating to some degree with their lower status vis-à-vis those who *do not* become

angry. But at the same time, the terms do express some kind of negative psychological or sociological affect. Data obtained from youth self-report forms completed by Madampe school children suggests that while amongst females a lower social status means problems associated with 'anger' may be externalised through suicidal behaviour that resembles a kind of 'self/other-harm,' similar kinds of problems may be externalised as expressly 'outward' aggressive behaviour amongst males.

The terms *mānasika asahānaya* and *lingika asahānaya* may be understood as the psychological consequences of social change. In this way, *asahānaya* was more often associated with men and women suffering under economic and social post-colonial conditions, including migration and the rise of love marriage. As such, to apply or identify with *asahānaya* was as much a way of passing commentary on the perceived 'state of society' today, as it was to complain about personal problems. In this way, *asahānaya* was more 'status-neutral,' in the sense that it arose not as a consequence of 'bad character' but impersonal social forces. Finally, *dukkha* and depression tend to exist as two general terms that can be used to identify a range of psychological and social problems, and from which specific experiences of anger and frustration might originate.

Thus, the terms and phrases used by people in Madampe to refer to psychological problems associated with suicidal behaviour have a complex relationship with social structure. They are at once an expression of inequalities within the *gē*, system of kinship, and society at large, as well as being a way of talking about such inequalities, and of operating within and demonstrating against such inequalities. In this chapter I have attempted to provide a sketch of how these separate issues interrelate, and what such links mean for understanding how suicidal behaviour may be associated with

psychopathology. This sketch is by no means complete, but does suggest the extent of work that can be carried out in this intriguing problem.

9.

Conclusion: the processual nature of the suicide event

I began this thesis with a set of simple questions: *How does suicidal behaviour come about? Why do some people deliberately try to kill or harm themselves for 'social' ends? What does it mean for relationships when they do?* Throughout the thesis I have tried to answer these questions through locating patterns and cases of suicidal behaviour in the Madampe Division, northwest Sri Lanka, within their immediate relational and wider political-economic contexts. My intention was to show how acts of suicidal behaviour could be understood as forming a social relationship in their own right, especially when, to borrow from Jeanne Marecek, they had dialogic aims. However, the recognition and use of suicidal behaviour in this way was shaped by a system of social status relationships which themselves derived meaning from the history of economic and political life in the Madampe Division.

Thus, patterns of suicidal behaviour, like any other form of human action, reflected material relations and their idealisations. Analysis and comparison of key forms of social interaction (caste, occupational class, marriage, kinship, moral personhood, and religion) in two communities helped to shed light on such relations and idealisations. While at the broad level social change was undoubtedly a key factor, there could be no simple model of anomy based upon a view of Madampe passing from a 'traditional' into a 'modern' age. In fact, both 'traditional' and 'modern' forms arose and combined together, in sometimes surprising ways. Suduwella, a modern colony, had a kinship system remarkably similar to the traditional Kandyan type, while Kachchakaduwa, an

ancient village, was strongly patrilineal. The crucial factor was found to be landholdings. Material interests in inheritance versus meritocracy determined how residents in either community viewed the importance of kin relationships. In this chapter, and by way of conclusion, I will summary the argument of the thesis and present a model of the processual nature of the suicide event in Madampe. In so doing, I will highlight how the complexity of cause and outcome of each event helped to create authoritative versions of such events that spoke to these idealisations and prejudices.

Review of the argument

In the Introduction I reviewed anthropological and psychological theories that suggested suicidal behaviours had an identifiable function. Tracing a line of ethnographic evidence beginning with Malinowski, I described how across societies this function related to individual action in the face of social constraints, so that in reaction to certain problem situations suicidal behaviour became a legitimated and even expected response. Subsequently drawing from Raymond Firth and a central strand in psychology, I argued that in addition to often being a reaction to separation, suicidal behaviour could be viewed as a form of separation in its own right. At both social and psychological levels, suicidal behaviour as a denial of sociality caused some third party negative affect, in the sense that they were publically blamed for causing a suicide and also experienced guilt, shame, fear, abuse, and so on, as a result of their perceived culpability. I have followed this double-edged view of suicidal behaviour throughout the thesis, reading self-harm and suicide cases in Madampe as both a reaction to separation and a form of separation.

In the first half of the thesis I presented patterns of suicidal behaviour local to the Madampe Division and contextualised them within political economy and the kinship system. Epidemiological data drawn from across the area consistently suggested that acts of suicidal behaviour occurred most frequently within the context of disputes between immediate family members, and beyond the *gē* with specific other relatives or romantic partners. The perceived inevitability of such relationships was argued to be a driving factor behind suicidal responses under such circumstances. Conversely, non-moral and evitable relationships such as those between more distant kin, friends, and business partners were found to rarely encourage suicidal behaviour. When what I glossed as ‘occupational problems’ did lead to suicidal behaviour, it was usually due to increased tensions within *gē* and kin relationships rather than the experience of educational or economic failure *per se*.

In this way, suicidal behaviour was seen to arise as a form of redress or escape when individuals were subject to blame and shame, or when the intent was to cause blame and shame for another party. In Chapter 5 I suggested that twin factors of social status and relational power regulated the functional utility of suicidal behaviour in any event. Focusing upon the differential rates of self-harm and self-inflicted death amongst and between young women and middle-aged men, I suggested that the ability to act in response to accusations or experiences of shame helped to determine the ‘choice’ to commit suicidal behaviour by individuals within either group.

Beyond the immediate contexts of suicidal behaviour, which were largely multifarious, acts of self-harm and self-inflicted death related to, and were understood in terms of, wider social issues. Thus, following directions set by my informants, the thesis

spoke to a range of wider problems relevant to the anthropology of Sri Lanka. I identified two central trends for further discussion: romantic rejection and loss on the one hand, and the effects of female labour migration upon practices and notions of masculinity on the other. As with kinship, the practice and meaning of romance and migration were assumed to be related to political economic context and the structures of social status specific to different communities. While there was little reason to think that suicidal behaviour in response to such problems would not arise at both Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, the specific reasons for it and the kinds of implications such behaviour were regarded as being likely to be different. This was not simply because material conditions were different in each community, but also because they predisposed residents to hold different concepts of causation and, beyond that, understandings of the efficacy and legitimacy of suicidal behaviour opposed to other kinds of response.

Finally, I dealt with the relationship between psychological problems and suicidal behaviour. Like social problems, the experience and meaning of psychopathologies were found to be related to political economy and social status. However, in this regard a particular difficulty was found to exist, insofar as the terms people in Madampe used to describe problematic psychological and behavioural states – anger, frustration, and suffering – were tied to what I called colonial, post-colonial, medical, and lay/Buddhist models of explanation for homicide, suicide, and other psychological and social pathologies. In particular, young women in the contemporary period appear to label themselves as prone to sudden anger in the face of problems, while in the colonial period British colonialists and their native aides attributed sudden anger to lower-class Sinhalese. Analysis of psychometric data relating to suicidal and non-suicidal school

children in the Madampe Division suggested that despite their self-reported anger, young women were less likely to act aggressively. Young men, meanwhile, who reported anger to a lesser degree, were more likely to act aggressively. It was suggested that young women direct their anger inwardly through acts of self-harm, while young men externalise through overt aggression. This tendency was attributed to the social status of young women and men respectively, in which women were inhibited by fear of shame in their actions and men less encumbered.

At the core of suicidal behaviour in Madampe is a concern with the inevitability of kinship: when it is lost, when one's commitment to it is challenged, and when it makes unreasonable demands upon the self. As a response to real, threatened, or perceived kin separation, suicidal behaviour served to expose the taken-for-granted nature of kinship, or as a means to escape it altogether. While reported and elicited causes of self-harm and self-inflicted death pointed towards the importance of kin and *gē* relationships, such explanations were also found to reflect popular assumptions about the importance of *gē* relationships and, ultimately, of failing kinship and kin separation as the basis of misfortune. Similarly, romantic rejection and loss, migration, sudden anger, frustration, and suffering each reflected broader assumptions that 'tangled up' individual cases of suicidal behaviour with wider concerns about, ultimately, 'the way things work,' or 'the way things should be,' or 'what happens when things aren't as they should be.'

In this way, suicidal individuals' own assumptions about how their personal narratives related to wider narratives of why people harm or kill themselves came to explain their own behaviour. As a result, often multifarious causes became 'stereotyped' in order to 'fit' with prevailing attitudes. This limitation, if that is what it is, also applies

to statements taken from witnesses of a suicide event, and my own objective accounts of suicidal behaviour in Madampe. Although in this sense all reports of suicidal behaviour represent often conflicting interpretations within a discursive field, I do not consider all explanations within that field to hold equally objective (that is logical or rational) appeal.

Process and meaning

When suicidal acts become stereotyped in this manner, it occurs post the suicidal event. In this sense, the process by which suicidal acts come to hold social meaning for *all* actors involved (including the anthropologist) exists as part of the suicide event itself. In order to understand the processual nature of the suicide event and the means by which suicidal acts come to have meaning, I find it useful to think about Victor Turner's (1957: 91-93) concept of the social drama, outlined in his *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. This model, I submit, helps observers reconcile the fact that they are in part responsible for the creation of the problem they are studying, yet also can retain confidence that an objective reality independent of their interference nevertheless exists.⁴⁶

Turner described social dramas as sudden disputes occurring between groups or individuals that had a 'processual form' constituted of four stages. The first stage, *breach*,

⁴⁶ I do not have space to counter the solipsistic argument that reality can never certainly be called objective. However, I think that, if we take Dr Johnson's maxim that objective reality can be measured by its ability to respond to our interference with it (Johnson refuted solipsism by kicking a bolder, arguing that the theory that the bolder did not exist was incompatible with his experience of his foot rebounding off it), then the fact that our research subjects change as we interact with them, proves their autonomous existence. For further general discussions about the fabric of reality, see: Deutsch 1997, especially Chapter 4.

was characterised by the failure of 'norm-governed relations' between individuals or groups. The second stage, *crisis*, was characterised by mounting tensions and troubles between the two sides that, if went unchecked, tended to eventually encompass 'the widest set of relevant social relations to which the conflicting parties belong.' Within this stage, the fundamental structural bases of society, normally invisible in the course of stable everyday relations, became exposed. The third stage, *redressive action*, witnessed the intervention by high-status members of the group who implemented a set of informal or formal mechanisms responsive to the problem at hand. This led to the fourth stage, *reintegration or recognition*. The first was characterised by the reunification of the disputing parties and continuation of pre-breach social norms, and the second by an adjusted set of social norms encompassing the demands of the breach.

With some modification, Turner's model can be usefully applied to suicidal behaviour.⁴⁷ Here, I will provide a sketch of how I envisage such an application. Like social dramas, suicide events in Madampe followed a processual form stemming from a breach of social norms, a second stage of mounting crisis, a third stage of redress through suicidal behaviour, and, at times, a fourth stage of reintegration or recognition. In addition, all suicidal events were themselves a breach, in the sense that to attempt or commit suicide was contrary to crucial social norms. Although suicidal behaviour was considered a legitimate response under certain circumstances, it was nevertheless

⁴⁷ It should be noted that Roland Littlewood (2002) uses Turner's model of liminality to explain the social potency of suicide amongst the socially subdominant, for example young women. I am here suggesting a different model based on Turner's theory of the social drama. Although I recognise the value of Turner's model of liminality for certain kinds of suicidal behaviour (for example, that of subdominant young women), it cannot provide an explanation of the suicidal behaviour of the socially dominant (for example, that of middle-aged men).

effective as a form of redress only because it exposed the taken-for-granted nature of sociality, most importantly the bonds of close kinship. Moreover, suicidal behaviour subverted normative power structures. Thus, as a denial of sociality, the act required its own redress through a 'pacification' of its implications for the social, which reasserted the taken-for-granted nature of the social (that is, the inevitability of the ultimately evitable).

In this way every suicide event followed two trajectories. In the first, the suicide event arose in the third stage of a social drama; in the second, the suicide event triggered the first stage of its own 'suicide drama.' I will refer to these different trajectories as 'primary social dramas' and 'secondary suicide dramas' respectively.

As stated, the primary social drama was usually sparked by a breach of some rule or norm of kinship governing relations between members of the household and its immediate surroundings. Such a breach was often 'closed' in the sense that it took place within a particularistic setting and had multifarious causes, and indeed was private in that only a few individuals were involved with or knew about it. At this stage the primary social drama was largely formless, and did not correspond directly with wider social concerns and meanings (recall the list of complaints recorded at CHMC in Appendix 5). That is: the concerns of those involved were often highly personal and context dependent.

The second stage of the primary social drama was defined by a tightening and normalisation of the breach, so that it conformed to wider social issues. Diverse problems were stereotyped and encompassed by popular moral discourse, usually focusing on one 'kind' of causality: be it social, psychological, or whatever. However, and somewhat complicating the linearity of the process, this did not only occur before the act of suicidal

behaviour had taken place, but also during the second stage of the secondary suicide drama, through a *post hoc* rationalisation of events leading up to a suicidal act. It is during this stage that the interference of observers whose theories of suicidal behaviour have an authoritative appeal (for example police officers, coroners, and clinicians) come to help individuals define their own or others' behaviours. Through it, a normative version of events is established. While in this stage the fundamentals of social relations did become exposed, then, it was also true that the breach was transformed into a kind of commentary about, to put it broadly, 'the state of society' today.

The third stage of the primary social drama was defined by the act of suicidal behaviour itself. In Madampe, the redressive functions of self-harm and self-inflicted death operated to deflect accusations of shame, and in some cases to cause shame for others by exposing the evitability of the inevitable. Monologic acts of suicidal behaviour more simply tried to remove the individual from problem situations. As a form of redress or escape, the potency of the act laid in the way that death by self-inflicted means symbolised a voluntary detachment from significant others. It reminded people that through death more than by any other means of separation, human relationships must undeniably come to an end (Stafford 2000). In Tikopia, Firth's descriptions of suicidal behaviour lay stress on suicide itself as a breach that exposed the taken-for-granted nature of social relations (which causes the ensuing crisis), and which only pacification of the cause of the breach (redressive action) could sedate: this was achieved through either the reintegration of the individual or the recognition of their complaint (assuming they lived). The same consequences could be observed in Madampe, and indeed it was through the denial of sociality that shame could be avoided and brought to bear upon others.

Thus, the secondary suicide drama was triggered. The significance of the breach as a denial of sociality demanded a form of redress equal to it. If suicidal behaviour exposed the impermanence of sociality, it was quickly 'covered up' by a broader and less contentious form of reasoning. Given the use of suicidal behaviour as a weapon within interpersonal disputes in Madampe, it is not surprising that people sought to rationalise suicidal behaviour in such ways: that is, look for 'grand theories' that absolve specific individuals of responsibility, just as suicidal individuals sought to implicate them. As I have shown, the most popular theories that people used to accomplish this were the social change theory, the romantic problems theory, and the moral outcry about female labour migration. Yet, too, these theories did have an objective basis.

The different trajectories of the primary social drama and secondary suicide drama came together in the fourth stage of each: reintegration, recognition or, of course, death and removal of the self from social relations altogether. Regardless of the nature of the fourth stage, it was more difficult to capture ethnographically. The public nature of the first three stages was undeniable; often, disputes between significant others led to suicide threats widely announced and suicide attempts accomplished in their presence. Indeed, suicidal behaviour as a form of redress only functioned *because* it was so well advertised. The fourth stage, however, was by its nature private: the resolution of problems implied the withdrawal of complaints against others from public view. In this sense, perhaps the most successful kinds of suicidal behaviour as means to an end were those that left little evidence of their occurrence, as individuals and families resolved their problems quite literally in the quiet of their own homes.

Primary social drama		Secondary suicide drama	
<i>Breach</i>	Breaking social norms. Problems interpersonal and context dependent. Little or no wider social appeal or meaning.		
<i>Crisis</i>	Escalation of dispute. Third parties become involved. Breach formalised and stereotyped in terms of original causes. Social meaning acquired.		
<i>Redress</i>	Suicidal behaviour as means of redress of escape.	<i>Breach</i>	Suicidal behaviour draws attention to fundamentals of sociality and questions inevitability of social relations.
		<i>Crisis</i>	Breach formalised and stereotyped in terms of original causes. Taken-for-granted nature of social relations threatened. Social meaning acquired.
		<i>Redress</i>	Stereotyping of causes leads to 'depersonalisation' of suicide event.
<i>Reintegration, recognition, death</i>	Dispute overcome, changes made, or individual departs through self-inflicted death.	<i>Reintegration, recognition, death</i>	Dispute overcome, changes made, or individual departs through self-inflicted death.

Table 9. 1: Processual stages of the primary social drama and secondary suicide drama

Last words

In this thesis I have presented the results of social research that I conducted between 2004 and 2006. During my time in Sri Lanka, people often asked me if my subject matter got me down. I was, after all, asking on a daily basis why people wanted to kill themselves, and I often came up with harrowing answers. But at the same time, the anthropological study of suicidal behaviour, as I have shown in this thesis, leads inextricably back to a

study of life and living. Much of my time was in fact spent investigating kinship, family relationships, and so on. This provided a much needed respite from the research I conducted at GPU, CMHC, MPS, and KMC.

More than that, however, was the wonderful generosity and friendship that Madampe people displayed towards me. Every day I would cycle around Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa, and people would call out customary greetings: 'Mr Tom, *koheda yanne?*' ('Mr Tom, where are you going?'). I would be invited to have tea, rice and curry, or attend their weddings and funerals. In some ways, then, I cannot help but feel a little guilty that I have painted a fairly bad image of the Division and its inhabitants in this thesis. Although Sri Lanka's social, economic, and political problems are undeniable, there is another side to the island that can too easily be missed. That is the side that welcomes strangers into the home night or day, sings spontaneously on buses and trains, lazes comfortably on front porches watching the world slowly pass by, joyously celebrates the New Year with ridiculous games, drinks excessively into the night, and with a mischievous wit misdirects inquiries after truth. My twenty-one months' of fieldwork, put simply, were a lot of fun.

Glossary & abbreviations

AGA	Assistant Government Agent
<i>alangkara</i>	Beautiful
<i>apāya</i>	Hell
<i>aphalē</i>	An astrologically inauspicious period of time
AR	Administration Report of the Ceylon Government
<i>ardari kasādaya; ardari bāñda</i>	Love marriage
<i>asahānaya</i>	Frustration; discontent; hopelessness
<i>avamañgula</i>	Funeral
<i>asanipaya</i>	Physical illness; sickness; ailment
<i>asaraṇa</i>	Helplessness
<i>āśāva</i>	Desire
<i>ayiyā/malli</i>	Older/younger brother. <i>Ayiyā</i> is also used as a term of respect between male friends regardless of age difference
<i>baṇa</i>	Buddhist preaching; sermon
<i>baṇina</i>	Blame; scolding
<i>baya</i>	Fear; afraid
<i>bebaḍa; beer-baḍa</i>	Alcoholic; drunkard
<i>bhāvanā</i>	Meditation
<i>binna</i>	Matrilocal marriage
CBH	Chilaw Base Hospital
CMHC	Chilaw Mental Health Clinic
<i>dānē</i>	Alms-giving
<i>data gallonava</i>	‘extracting teeth’: to take advantage of someone’s good nature for financial gain
<i>dāvudda</i>	Dowry
<i>dīga</i>	Patrilocal marriage
<i>dukkha</i>	Suffering; also ‘unsatisfactoriness, pain, ill-being; the first of the Four Noble Truths, and one of the three basic

	characteristics of phenomenal existence’ (Gombrich 1971: 398)
<i>durāva</i>	Sinhalese caste of toddy tappers
<i>ekayi jeevati, ekayi ardari</i>	‘One life, one love’
GA	Government Agent
<i>gē</i>	Household; nuclear family unit
<i>gedara</i>	House; home; household
<i>goyigama</i>	Sinhalese caste of cultivators; the highest and largest in the hierarchy
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GPU	Galmuruwa Peripheral Unit
<i>holman</i>	Apparition
<i>ikman kopēya</i>	Sudden anger
<i>irisiyāva</i>	Jealousy
<i>kānēru</i>	Yellow oleander plant, the seeds of which are commonly swallowed in order to commit self-harm or suicide
<i>karāva</i>	Sinhalese caste of fisher folk
KSD	<i>karāva, salāgama, and durāva</i>
<i>katarkarani kasādaya;</i> <i>katarkarani bāñda</i>	Proposal (arranged) marriage
<i>killā</i>	Dirt; pollution
KMC	Kuliapitiya Magistrates’ Court
<i>kopēya</i>	Anger
<i>lājja</i>	Shame
<i>lājja-baya</i>	Fear of shame
LDO	Land Development Ordinance (1935)
<i>machang</i>	Informal and friendly term for <i>massinā</i> ; normally used to refer to a close male friend rather than a male cross cousin
<i>māha</i>	Large; great
<i>māhapa/bāppa</i>	Father’s older/younger brother
<i>maḷa</i>	Death

<i>maḷa kañḍa</i>	Corpse; dead body
<i>māmā</i>	Mother's brother
<i>mānasika asahānaya</i>	Mental frustration
<i>mānasika awapidanaya;</i> <i>kalakirīma</i>	Depression
<i>massinā</i>	Male cross cousin, brother-in-law
MPS	Madampe Police Station
<i>nāna</i>	Female cross cousin, sister-in-law; also used by some young women to refer to women they desire, in order to signal a romantic interest
<i>naraka</i>	Bad; also used to convey a sense of immorality
<i>nāyō</i>	Kin
<i>pahata</i>	Low, below
<i>paramparā</i>	Formally ancestor; also refers to one's unilineal descent group, usually the patriline
<i>pin</i>	Moral good; merit
<i>purāṇa</i>	Old; ancient
<i>radā</i>	Sinhalese caste of washers (ritually to the <i>goyigama</i>)
<i>sahānaya</i>	Free from frustration; contentment; feelings of hope
<i>salāgama</i>	Sinhalese caste of cinnamon-peelers
<i>Sangha</i>	The Buddhist monastic order
<i>sarala</i>	Simple
<i>siya diivināsā ganimā</i>	Suicide' to take one's own life
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archives
<i>tattvaya</i>	Social (and moral) standing; status
<i>vasa; wāha</i>	Poison
<i>vāsagama</i>	Patronymic; patriline
<i>wāha bonnāva</i>	Drinking poison; 'self-harm,' not necessarily any intent to commit suicide
<i>yakā</i> (sing.); <i>yakku</i> (plur.)	Demon

Appendix 1:

Statistical data and tests

Throughout this thesis I have used a range of simple statistical tests in order to establish the validity of my quantitative data. Statistics, and indeed numerical material of any kind, are not often used in anthropology, and as such some of my findings may appear confusing to anthropological readers. Although I do not intend to provide any kind of training in how to read the statistical data and tests, I will at least define the various tests that I have used. For further information I recommend Bernard's (2002) *Research Methods in Anthropology* and Healey's (2002) *Statistics. A Tool for Social Research*.

Random and non-random samples and populations

Strictly speaking, statistical tests should only be used with data obtained from random, ideally representative, samples. In this thesis, none of the data has been obtained from random samples; moreover, much of it (for example that obtained from GPU, CMHC, and MPS, and my household surveys) in fact constitutes population data. However, it is common practice to use statistical tests to look for significant differences within non-random data, and also to establish an agreed level upon which differences between two variables might be said to be insignificant or significant (Healey 2002).

p-value

Throughout this thesis I have set p and <0.10 . This means that when I conduct my statistical tests, I am unwilling to be any less than 90 percent sure that the variations found are significant: that is, that they are not the result of random interference. When the p value is given in the text, I have recorded it at the highest value at which the data has been found to be significant. A p value of 0.10 indicates that findings are more likely to be the result of random interference than a p value of, say, 0.05 or 0.01. In those cases, I am 95 percent or 99 percent sure that the statistical variations found are significant and not the result of random interference. In social science, it is common to set p to 0.10 or

0.05; in medical research, at 0.001. While social scientists can afford to be a little more relaxed with their conclusions, medical researchers testing new drugs want to be 99.9 percent sure their findings are correct!

Chi square (χ^2)

Chi square is the most commonly used test in this thesis. Like the other tests I have used, chi square is a bivariate statistical test, which means that it measures the level of variance between two variables. For example, in Table A3.1, Appendix 3, a chi square test was used to measure the level of variance between two variables, 'sex' and 'age,' amongst self-harm patients presenting at GPU. Sex, the independent variable, was assumed to affect age, the dependent variable. As can be seen, the relationship between sex and age was indeed found to be significant, and the p value was 0.01. This means that I can be 99 percent sure that the differences found between male and female age groups that commit self-harm are in fact significant.

V & ϕ

But how *strong* is the association between the two variables that vary? We can be 99 percent sure that the differences observed in Table A3.1 are significant, but to what extent? Is the relationship between strong or weak? In Table A3.1 and A6.1 (in Appendix 6), I have also shown the values of V and ϕ (phi) respectively. V , or Cramer's V , and phi, are two measures of association that are used with chi square. They perform exactly the same function, but V is used when tables extend beyond a simple 2-way table (such as Table A3.1) and phi is used when tables are 2-way (such as Table A6.1). Both V and phi range from 0.0 to 1.0, with 0.0 indicating no association and 1.0 indicating a very strong association. When variance is found to be significant, we can be sure that V and phi will show some kind of association. In Table A3.1, V is valued at 0.29. This suggests that the relationship between the two variables is weak to moderate. As such, we can say that the age of males and females is significantly associated with self-harm, at a weak to moderate level.

Z-scores

Like chi square, *Z* scores measure for significance of variation between two variables. *Z* can be used in relation to two kinds of statistical data: frequencies and averages. When used with frequencies, *Z* measures the level of variation between sample frequencies and population frequencies. In Table A3.5, *Z* is used to compare the frequency at which unmarried, married, and separated or divorced males present at CMHC, with their overall presence in the population of the Puttalam District. With that data, I am seeking to find out whether unmarried, married, or separated or divorced males present at CMHC following self-harm at a rate more or less than would be expected from their overall presence in the population. As can be seen, 38.2 percent of male patients were unmarried, while 53.2 percent of males in the District population were unmarried. This intuitively seems to be a large difference, and indeed the results obtained suggested that we can be 95 percent sure that the variation is significant.

Z can also be used to measure variance between two averages, when the number of total cases exceeds 100 (smaller samples are tested using Student's *t*, which I shall come to). In Table A8.4, the results of Central College students' social competencies scores are presented. These are average scores, representing suicidal and non-suicidal students respectively. Ignore the other symbols contained in the table: they are not essential for understanding its basic conclusions. As can be seen, no significant difference was found between suicidal students' social competencies and those of non-suicidal students.

Student's t

Student's *t* is used in much the same way as *Z*. In this thesis, I have applied *t* when I have sought to test variation between two average scores based on less than 100 cases. In Table A8.2, the results of Herath Gunarathna male students' competencies scores are presented. Like their counterparts at Central College, suicide and non-suicidal male students scored no different on social competencies.

Appendix 2:
Social survey forms

1. Household survey used in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa

Saved as _____ Date & assistant _____

Address _____

Household head

Name & Age _____

Ethnicity & Religion _____

Occupation _____

Partner

Name & Age _____

Ethnicity & Religion _____

Occupation _____

Date & type of marriage _____

Dowry/land inheritance _____

Other ge members

Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
------------	--------------	------------

Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
------------	--------------	------------

Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
------------	--------------	------------

Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
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Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
------------	--------------	------------

Name & Age	Relationship	Occupation
------------	--------------	------------

Family history

Head

Father's name, age & occupation _____

Village _____

Mother's name, age & occupation _____

Village _____

Date & type of marriage _____

Dowry/land inheritance _____

Partner

Father's name, age & occupation _____

Village _____

Mother's name, age & occupation _____

Village _____

Date & type of marriage _____

Dowry/land inheritance _____

Details of relatives in the area

Name Relationship

Name Relationship

Name Relationship

Name Relationship

2. Village satisfaction interview checklist

Making a living and experience of work

1. Is it difficult for people to earn enough money to live?
2. What difficulties do they have?
3. Have you personally experienced any difficulties in earning enough money?
4. How much money do you think you need to earn to live comfortably?

5. Have you experienced difficulties at work?
6. What were these difficulties?
7. When you were growing up do you think you would be doing the job you do now?
8. Are you happy with your job?

Relationships between villagers

1. Has anyone ever done a serious injustice to you?
2. What did he/she do to you?
3. What did you do about it?

View of the village

1. If you had the choice, would you continue living in this village?
2. If yes, why would you like to leave?
3. Do people suffer from asahanaya?
4. Which type of people are more likely to suffer from asahanaya?
5. How many people do you know who have tried to kill themselves?
6. How many people do you know who have killed themselves?
7. Why did these people try to kill themselves or did kill themselves?
8. Do you think they could have solved their problem in any other way?

Religion

1. What is the purpose of religion for you?
2. Has your religion helped you in life?
3. Please give a specific example
4. How often do you visit the temple/church

3. Suduwella colonisation interview checklist

A. Suduwella land was distributed to landless or land poor families by the government under the 1935 Land Development Ordinance (LDO). According to records held at Madampe AG office, Suduwella was colonised during the 1950s.

1. Do you know how your ancestors came to receive Suduwella land?
2. Do you know how they came to be eligible for Suduwella LDO land?
3. Do you know when your ancestors took up the grant of land?
4. Do you know of any problems your ancestors encountered when they applied for the land or when they took up their land?

B. The Ordinance stipulated that colonists had to build their own house and fence around the land. If they failed to comply, the government could take the land away from them.

1. Do you know how your ancestors built their house? What kind of house was it? (cadjun, brick, wood?)
2. Do you know of any problems your ancestors encountered when building their house?

C. The Ordinance also required colonists to grow some crops and cultivate coconut trees. Again, failure to comply could mean losing the land.

1. Do you know how your ancestors did this? What crops did they grow? Did they sell them at market or use them at home?
2. Do you still grow crops on your land? If yes why, if no why not? When did the terms of the contract change so you did not have to grow crops?

D. Your ancestors who settled in Suduwella had to pay the AGA Rs. 1 per year rent for the land.

1. Do you pay rent to the government for this land?
2. If not, when did you/your ancestors stop paying rent and why?
3. Do you pay rent to anybody else?

E. The terms of the LDO contract restricted the land to one owner at any one time. It could not be divided between sons and daughters, for any reason.

1. How did your ancestors cope with this restriction? What did their children say about it?
2. What did your ancestors give as inheritance or dowry instead of land?
3. Or did they divide the land anyway? – if there is more than one house on this land, has the land been divided informally? What did the Grama Seevaka/AGA say about that? Was it a problem?
4. What problems arose from the restriction on land division? Did children fight with their parents? Did you argue with your parents or your brothers and sisters over inheritance rights?
5. Did the restriction on land division affect marriages? Could daughters have good marriages if they could not use land as a dowry?
6. Has the law now changed? Was it a good law? What were its problems?

F. What is your opinion of the LDO?

1. Do you think you, your ancestors and your descendents have benefited from the colony scheme or has it caused more problems?
2. Do you think governments since 1935 have successfully dealt with problems related to colonies and the LDO?
3. What is your experience of living in Suduwella? Is the village better or worse than others in the Madampe division or is there no difference? What are other Suduwella people like?
4. What can the government do to improve Suduwella?

Appendix 3:
Epidemiology of suicidal behaviour

Sex and age

Table A3.1: Sex and age of self-harm/suicide attempts at GPU (%)

Age	Males	Females
10 to 14	6.0	6.6
15 to 24	36.8	58.4
25 to 34	18.8	19.7
35 to 44	21.8	11.7
45 to 54	12.0	2.2
55 to 64	3.0	0.7
65 to 74	1.5	0.7
Totals	100.0 (N=133)	100.0 (N=137)

$P = <0.01; \chi^2$ (obtained) = 22.315; $V = 0.29$

Table A3.2: Sex and age of self-harm/suicide attempts at CMHC (%)

Age	Males	Females
10 to 14	2.9	3.8
15 to 24	39.4	55.6
25 to 34	25.9	25.0
35 to 44	13.5	5.6
45 to 54	10.6	6.9
55 to 64	5.9	2.5
65 to 74	1.8	0.6
Totals	100.0 (N=170)	100.0 (N=160)

$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (obtained) = 14.480; $V = 0.21$

Table A3.3: Sex and age of self-harm/suicide attempts at MPS (%)

Age	Males	Females
15 to 24	4.2	53.8
25 to 34	10.4	7.7
35 to 44	33.3	7.7
45 to 54	31.3	15.4
55 to 64	8.3	7.7
65 to 74	12.5	7.7
Totals	100.0 (N=48)	100.0 (N=13)

$P = <0.001; \chi^2(\text{obtained}) = 20.737; V = 0.58$

Table A3.4: Sex and age of self-harm/suicide attempts at KMC (%)

Age	Males	Females
15 to 24	8.9	16.7
25 to 34	10.7	33.3
35 to 44	28.6	8.3
45 to 54	17.9	8.3
55 to 64	12.5	8.3
65 to 74	16.1	16.7
75 +	5.4	8.3
Totals	100.0 (N=56)	100.0 (N=12)

$P = <0.10; \chi^2(\text{obtained}) = \text{not significant}$

Marital status

Table A3.5: Sex and marital status of self-harm/suicide attempt male patients at CMHC (%)

Marital status	Male patients	All males in Puttalam District	Z P
Unmarried	38.2	53.2	Z = -2.42 p = 0.05
Married (inc. remarried)	43.6	44.4	Z = -0.14 p = ns
Separated/divorced	8.8	0.8	Z = +9.47 p = 0.001
Widowed	0.6	1.1	Z = -0.05 p = ns
Not stated	8.8	0.6	n/a
Total	100.0 (N=170)	100.0 (N=348,080)	

Table A3.6: Sex and marital status of self-harm/suicide attempt female patients at CMHC (%)

Marital status	Female patients	All females in Puttalam District	Z P
Unmarried	41.3	45.0	Z = -0.60 P = ns
Married (inc. remarried)	50.1	45.8	Z = +0.77 p = ns
Separated/divorced	6.9	1.3	Z = +1.63 P = ns
Widowed	0.6	6.8	Z = -0.25 p = ns
Not stated	1.1	1.1	n/a
Total	100.0 (N=160)	100.0 (N=357,262)	

Religious belief

Table A3.7: Religious belief of self-harm/suicide attempt patients at GPU (%)

Religious belief	Patient body	All residents in Madampe Division	Z P
Buddhist	95.2	74.1	Z = +7.71 P = 0.001
Roman Catholic	2.2	17.2	n/a
Protestant Christian	0.3	1.6	n/a
Hindu	2.3	1.6	n/a
Muslim	0	5.5	n/a
Other	0	0.03	n/a
Total	100.0 (N=270)	100.0 (N=43,411)	

Table A3.8: Religious belief of suicide deaths recorded at MPS (%)

Religious belief	Patient body	All residents in Madampe Division	Z P
Buddhist	85.3	74.1	Z = +1.84 p = 0.10
Roman Catholic	11.5	17.2	Z = -0.40 p = ns
Protestant Christian	0	1.6	n/a
Hindu	0	1.6	n/a
Muslim	0	5.5	n/a
Other	3.2	0.03	n/a
Total	100.0 (N=61)	100.0 (N=43,411)	

Causes elicited/reported

Sex

Table A3.9: Sex and causes of self-harm/suicide attempt elicited/reported at CMHC (%)

Causes elicited/reported	Males	Females
Romantic problems/loss	8.9 (16.5)	5.1 (13.8)
Disputes with spouses	20.4 (37.6)	32.0 (86.9)
Disputes with other household members	16.2 (30.0)	25.1 (68.1)
Disputes with other relatives	3.8 (7.1)	5.3 (14.4)
Disputes with unrelated persons	0.6 (1.2)	1.1 (3.1)
Subject to domestic violence	0.6 (1.2)	5.7 (15.6)
Subject to sexual violence	0.6 (1.2)	1.1 (3.1)
Occupational problems (Education / employment / financial / legal)	11.8 (21.8)	2.5 (6.9)
Somatic complaints	1.9 (3.5)	1.1 (3.1)
Depression	22.6 (41.8)	15.9 (43.1)
Other psychological illness	4.1 (7.6)	1.4 (3.8)
Other causes	8.3 (15.3)	3.7 (1.0)
Total	100.0 (N=314) (N=170)	100.0 (N=435) (N=160)
<i>P</i> = <0.001; χ^2 (obtained) = 76.692; <i>V</i> = 0.32		

Marital status

Table A3.10: Marital status and causes of self-harm/suicide attempt elicited/reported by male patients at CMHC (%)

Causes elicited/reported by male patients	Unmarried	Married	Separated
Romantic problems/loss	28.0 (46.2)	0.7 (1.4)	0.0 (0.0)
Disputes with spouses	n/a	43.4 (79.7)	36.1 (81.3)
Disputes with other household members	22.4 (36.9)	1.5 (2.7)	8.3 (18.8)
Disputes with other relatives	5.6 (9.2)	8.8 (16.2)	16.7 (37.5)
Disputes with unrelated persons	0.9 (1.5)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
Subject to domestic violence	0.9 (1.5)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
Subject to sexual violence	1.9 (3.1)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
Occupational problems (Education / employment / financial / legal)	10.3 (16.9)	12.5 (23.0)	5.6 (12.5)
Somatic complaints	2.8 (4.6)	1.5 (2.7)	2.8 (6.3)
Depression	20.6 (33.8)	25.0 (45.9)	22.2 (50.0)
Other psychological illness	2.8 (4.6)	2.2 (4.1)	5.6 (12.5)
Other causes	3.7 (6.2)	4.4 (8.1)	2.8 (6.3)
Total	100.0 (N=107)	100.0 (N=136)	100.0 (N=36)

$P = <0.001$; χ^2 (obtained) = 129.628; $V = 0.48$

Table A3.11: Marital status and causes of self-harm/suicide attempt elicited/reported by female patients at CMHC (%)

Causes elicited/reported by female patients	Unmarried	Married	Separated
Romantic problems/loss	24.3 (42.4)	0.0 (0.0)	3.2 (8.3)
Disputes with spouses	n/a	41.0 (80.0)	38.7 (100.0)
Disputes with other household members	34.8 (60.6)	4.5 (8.8)	9.7 (25.0)
Disputes with other relatives	3.5 (6.1)	5.1 (10.0)	9.7 (25.0)
Disputes with unrelated persons	2.6 (4.5)	0.6 (1.3)	3.2 (8.3)
Subject to domestic violence	5.2 (9.1)	12.8 (25.0)	3.2 (8.3)
Subject to sexual violence	2.6 (4.5)	1.9 (3.8)	0.0 (0.0)
Occupational problems (Education / employment / financial / legal)	2.6 (4.5)	3.2 (6.3)	3.2 (8.3)
Somatic complaints	2.6 (4.5)	0.6 (1.3)	3.2 (8.3)
Depression	19.1 (33.3)	26.9 (52.5)	25.8 (66.7)
Other psychological illness	0.9 (1.5)	1.3 (2.5)	0.0 (0.0)
Other causes	1.7 (3.0)	1.9 (3.8)	0.0 (0.0)
Total	100.0 (N=115)	100.0 (N=156)	100.0 (N=31)

$P = <0.001$; χ^2 (obtained) = 142.096; $V = 0.49$

Other factors

Methods

Table A3.12: Sex and method used in self-harm/suicide attempt at GPU (%)

Method used	Males	Females
Poison	87.2	97.1
Hanging/cutting	10.5	0.0
Other	2.3	2.9
Totals	100.0 (N=133)	100.0 (N=137)

$P = <0.01$; χ^2 (obtained) = 15.248; $V = 0.24$

Table A3.13: Sex and kind of poison used in self-harm/suicide attempt at GPU (%)

Kind of poison	Males	Females
Natural poisons (<i>kaneru</i> , <i>niyangala</i> , other)	39.8	11.7
Agricultural chemicals (<i>organophosphates</i> etc)	8.3	11.7
Household chemicals (cleaning agents, rat poisons, etc)	39.1	73.7
Other (unknown, unstated)	12.8	2.9
Totals	100.0 (N=133)	100.0 (N=137)

$P = <0.001; \chi^2$ (obtained) = 44.457; $V = 0.41$

Table A3.14: Sex and method used in suicide at MPS (%)

Method used	Males	Females
Poison	47.9	53.8
Hanging	45.8	46.2
Other	6.3	0.0
Totals	100.0 (N=48)	100.0 (N=12)

$P = <0.10; \chi^2$ (obtained) = not significant

Place of suicide

Table A3.15: Place of suicide (public or private) in cases recorded at KMC (%)

Place of suicide	Males	Females
Public – third party present	17.9	25.0
Private – suicide alone at time	73.2	66.7
No information	8.9	8.3
Totals	100.0 (N=56)	100.0 (N=12)

$P = <0.10; \chi^2$ (obtained) = not significant

CMHC risk assessments

Table A3.16: Clinicians' risk assessment at CMHC (%)

Risk assessment	Males	Females
None	6.8	3.9
Low	25.0	34.2
Medium	27.3	28.9
High	40.9	32.9
Totals	100.0 (N=88)	100.0 (N=76)

P = <0.10; χ^2 (obtained) = not significant

Appendix 4:

Origins of the Kachchakaduwa Herath Mudiyansele

Members of the H.M. *parampara* are keen on their ancestral history. During research at Kachchakaduwa, several of the H.M. *parampara* tried to impress upon me the importance of their lineage. They claimed that they had once been in service to King Parākramabāhu II, who had ruled the Polonnaruva kingdom from 1236 until 1270. He had bestowed the H.M. patronymic upon them, and granted extensive lands in and around Kachchakaduwa. Although such claims are common amongst *goyigama* (Robinson 1968), two members of the H.M. *parampara* have unearthed a script at the SLNA apparently dated to the late thirteenth-century that appears to support their claims.

The script suggests Parākramabāhu II recognised the ancestors of the Herath Mudiyansele (H.M.) *parampara* when its founding fathers saved the life of his son, Vijayabahu. Vijayabahu had been injured in battle and possessed by a demon. On the orders of the King, three men – Katugampala Rala, Delana Herath Hami, and Gonnave Rajaguru Brahmana Mudiyanse – travelled to India in order to enlist the help of 19 Brahmin chaplains.

Upon returning to Sri Lanka, the brother of Delana Herath Hami met the party with a stone canoe covered by a silken canopy, and laid carpets before them to mark their passage. Arriving at the place Vijayabahu lay, the chaplains exorcised the demon and saved his life. Parākramabāhu then bestowed the land from where the stone canoe had been dug and the place the silken canopy had been weaved to the families of Herath Hami and Brahmana Mudiyanse (which at some point joined forces to become ‘Herath Mudiyansele’) ‘until the sun and the moon set’: which is to say, for the rest of time. The full script reads:

Hail! Prosperity! Our Noble Majesty...Parākramabāhu, the great King of Kings, born of the spotless clan of Prince Sumitra, sprung from the race of the Sun in lineal descent from Manu Vaivasvata, sovereign of Tri Simhala and Lord of the Nine Gems...sent for Brahmin chaplains in order to perform sacrificial rites for the purpose of warding off of evil influences which had descended on the

Prince of Dambadeniya [Vijayabahu], of the Great and Noble Solar Race.

[In compliance with this command] Katugampala Rala, Delana Herath Hami and Gonnave Rajaguru Brahmana Mudiyanse set sail from Kaputota for India and returned with nineteen chaplains...At the time of their disembarkation the younger brother of Delana Herath Hami appeared with a stone-canoe...; [the chaplains] were [seated] on the stone-canoe; over their heads was a silken canopy, thirty cubits long; [when they were carried along] eight thousand, four hundred carpets were unrolled before them. [Arriving at the place Vijayabahu stayed, the chaplains] destroyed the devils by performing the necessary rites and named that spot Sarappu-kanda.

His Great Majesty the Compassionate, endowed with clairvoyance, having observed [everything] gave the name Galmuruwa [to the spot] wherein was wrought the stone-canoe. [As a reward] for him who caused to be held the silken canopy, the honorific title Kacca-Kaduve [Kachchakaduwa] Patirajamudali was conferred. The two villages, to the east of which is the rocky hill, to the south the streamlet, to the west the hill and the Bak-mi [tree], to the north the Bodi-vehera, are gifted as Nindagam [land for which no service to the king is due] to...Herath Hami and [Brahmana Mudiyanse]. [They are] for their maintenance as well as of their succeeding generations of sons and grandsons till the Sun and Moon last.

The described location of the granted land in the script – ‘to the east of which is the rocky hill, to the south the streamlet, to the west the hill and the Bak-mi tree, to the north the Bodi-vehera’ – is a perfect description of the location of Kachchakaduwa today. Then called Galmuruwa, the title Kacca-Kaduve seems to have been applied to some segment of that land and eventually corrupted to Kachchakaduwa. Today the name ‘Galmuruwa’ designates the whole area of Kachchakaduwa and Kudirippuwa, and is the name of the second village mentioned in the script.

Appendix 5:
Precipitators elicited/recorded at CMHC

Precipitators amongst unmarried males

Dispute with a relative; drunk at time of self-harm/suicide attempt

Break-up of love affair with his cousin

Dispute with his mother; suicidal ideation when quarrels with family members

Break-up of his love affair; break-up of parents marriage after mother had an extra-marital affair

Not specific: history of sexual abuse; easily angry

Scolded by mother for disobeying grandfather

Dispute with brother over land issue

Dispute with family over work issue

Not specific: history of depressive features; family conflicts

Dispute with family members regarding love affair

Discovered he was adopted and subsequent land dispute

Scolded by elder brother for being unemployed; intoxicated at time

Break-up of love affair with his cousin at her request; family also opposed it

Aunt says that it followed a dispute with his brother over a trivial issue

Dispute with his father regarding a love affair with a 16 year-old girl

Problems with his girlfriend of 4 years after her father told him some lies/gossip about her

Family do not allow him to study in peace (the television is always on and this disturbs him); mother very critical

Break-up of a love affair against a background of severe family losses; he lives with grandparents; feels he's neglected by family

Dispute with sister

Dispute with sister; severe financial problems: forced him to give up schooling; denies love problems

Scolded by mother for getting in from school late; parents separated

Dispute with sister: severe sibling rivalry

Verbally abused by father for being unemployed

Scolding by family for allegedly stealing

Father dead; living with mother who always scolds him

Inability to get a job; conflicts with girlfriends' family

Conflicts between brothers and grandmother; abused

Dispute with brother regarding a trivial issue; felt unwanted in family; "copycat" act of self-harm [i.e. saw someone doing the same]

Girlfriend's uncle's opposition to their love affair; uncle assaulting girlfriend; threats made to patient

by uncle; broken home; father alcoholic

Blamed by family members after road-traffic accident when drunk; his engagement was annulled following family opposition; drunk at time of self-harm/suicide attempt

Precipitators amongst unmarried females

Dispute between parents led to mother working abroad for past 8 years and no chance of reconciliation; psychically abused by brother when staying with him; received a letter from her mother scolding her for living with a sister

Scolded by mother

Father hit her when discovered her writing a letter to a boy

Followed argument with sister; mother working in Middle East

Dispute with aunt whom she lives with; mother works away (in Sri Lanka)

Dispute with father: he is having an extra-marital affair; mother works abroad

Sadness at her mother who works in Colombo not visiting her this month

Sexual abuse by a boy aged 17 with whom she had an affair; told father about it then immediately took poison; feels humiliated and let down; sadness, anger, shame

Break-up of love affair of 4 months following family pressure

Her boyfriend had been told she was having an affair which she denies; her parents want her to marry another but she's unwilling

Break-up of a love affair she had when living with her parents in Italy; family over-protective

Father argued with mother; father alcoholic; thought her act of self-harm suicide attempt would affect reconciliation

Blamed by villagers for a crime she didn't commit; subsequent fear; disputes with family members

Disputes with family members

Father accused mother of extra-marital affair, mother then took poison; patient took poison when heard what happened

Sexual abuse by cousin; fear of telling father

Dispute with father; father physically abused her

Scolded by father; he's an alcoholic and frequently physically and verbally abuses her mother

Not being allowed to go to musical show/stay at boyfriend's house

Mother returned from Middle East and since then bad relationship between patient and mother

Feels her parents don't love her; thinks herself as ugly

Opposition from her family regarding a love affair with a Muslim boy: her mother totally opposed

Her mother told her to stop a love affair

Dispute with mother against a background of conflicts; mother overprotective and critical

Marital problems between parents: thought her act of self-harm suicide attempt would affect reconciliation

Dispute with and beaten by mother following her visit to a neighbour's house at night; low self-esteem; depression; feels no-one at home loves her

Dispute with mother over a trivial issue; brother also committed self-harm/suicide attempt a few days previously

Family opposition to love affair

Depression following failure to elope with boyfriend after family's strong opposition to the affair meant they could not marry

A love letter had been discovered; scolded by uncle and aunt (father dead, mother remarried)

Father is an alcoholic and has psychological problems but won't stop drinking; verbal and physically abuses her

Family opposition to her lover of over 1 year; boyfriend threatened suicide over the problem, patient committed self-harm/suicide attempt in solidarity

Scolded by aunt for neglecting duties to grandmother because she fears not enough time to also complete school work

Abused by mother for arguing with sister; disputes between parents; father alcoholic

Scolded by mother for not going to school due to bullying

Issues related to father's alcoholism

Conflicts between the parents; thought her act of self-harm suicide attempt would affect reconciliation

Visited school friend without telling family, afraid father would beat her after grandmother threatened to tell him

Father went back on his word to go a trip and patient committed self-harm/suicide attempt to scare him

Precipitators amongst married, separated, and divorced males

Claims accidental but son says conflicts at home due to his drinking; drunk at time

Severe marital problems: when wife was abroad he had an extra-marital affair which she recently discovered; threats of divorce

Followed argument with wife regarding his drinking; drunk at time

Argument with his wife regarding financial problems; drunk at time

Wife wants to go to Middle East; frequent conflicts with wife before and after this even; unhappy about *binna* marriage; low self-esteem

Grief at son going abroad, wife & daughters already abroad; debt of LKR 20 lakh, problems with loan sharks; alcohol abuse

Dispute with the wife regarding how best to bring up the children
Acute stress reaction; suspicious his daughter talks about him in derogatory manner
Gossip that his wife is having an extra-marital affair; wife has been working abroad for 2 months;
drunk at time
Disputes with siblings; separated from wife and no access to daughters; committed self-harm/suicide
attempt when someone told him they saw his wife in the village
Marital problems; claims amnesia
Dispute with wife
Dispute with wife: accuses her of extra-marital affair, his sister also agrees; admits to physically
abusing his wife
Assaulted wife and she left home, taking their daughter; he then took the daughter back but wife's
family assaulted him and retook the child; wife planning to work in the Middle East
Death of son in road traffic accident 4 years ago led to increased drinking and disputes with his wife
Followed family conflicts; drunk at time
Disputes with family
Manic episode; frequent family conflicts regarding his drinking
Dispute with relatives
Dispute with wife after he accused her of having an extra-marital affair
Isolation following migration of wife and daughters abroad to work
Depression following unsuccessful medical surgery
Dispute with wife; financial problems
Returned from abroad and argued with his *massina* regarding excessive spending; family problems
Dispute with wife; denies major marital problems
Dispute with wife regarding her excessive spending
Marriage problems
Grief at death of son
Wife suspects him of having an extra-marital affair; committed self-harm/suicide attempt in protest
Disputes with spouse, siblings, other relatives; financial problems
Disputes with wife and her sisters
Disputes with wife and her family; immediate precipitator was receiving second divorce summons
Suspects wife of having an extra-marital affair
He regularly physically abuses wife and children; now wife wants divorce
Family dispute; depression
Ex-wife remarried; new husband taunting him
Financial problems; not satisfied with new wife and job
Dispute with this mother and wanted to scare her: wanted mother to lend him the money to buy a new
tractor

Dispute with wife; drunk at time

Family dispute

Dispute with wife regarding a financial problem

Dispute with wife regarding his drinking

Discovered his wife been having an extra-marital affair and now she wants to leave him

Wife was planning to go abroad without his consent; no other marital problems

Dispute with family; drunk at time

Marital problem stemming from wife's previous extra-marital affair and a telephone call from her lover

Dispute with mother

Patient claims accident; son says followed dispute with wife

While in police custody after breaking window during fight with wife

Severe conflict with first wife who had been working in the Middle East for 2 ½ years

Dispute with wife over trivial issue; wife says because his bike was stolen and he got angry; drunk at time

Family conflict; returned from abroad last month, wants to return next month

Injured so couldn't work and became dependent on /burden to wife

Depression; economic problems; wife blaming him; no plans about how to live

Marital problems: wife planning to get a divorce

Scolded by mother; alcohol abuse

After discovering his wife was having an extra-marital affair

Grief following wife's death 2 years previously

Son crashed his bus when drunk; loss of income and has to pay LKR 25,000 per month to debt collector

Elder son and wife are divorcing; upset about the D-in-L's behaviour and losing access to granddaughter

Precipitators amongst married, separated, and divorced females

Scolded for spending too much on her grandchildren; financial problems

Depression; disputes with husband; fearful husband will be unfaithful

Scolded by daughter; history of sexual abuse; post-traumatic stress disorder

Husband took LKR 400 from her savings; history of emotional/physical abuse; husband alcoholic

Disputes between husband and patients mother; he now lives away

Husband suspects her of extra-marital affair; domestic violence

Multiple family problems: husband left; daughter abroad; son heroine addict

Multiple stressors: husband/child left; EMA?; stressed since going to Colombo for overseas training
Husband alcoholic; she tried to separate from him twice due to issue but failed both times (nowhere to go, no financial support)
Husband abusive and critical of her over trivial issues
Wanted to frighten husband
Disputes with husband and her siblings; financial problems; concerned about children's futures
Break-up of marriage initiated by husband; now she can't see her son
Wanted to frighten husband after argument with him; husband had an extra-marital affair when she was working in the Middle East, and which he is still pursuing
Domestic violence; husband chronic alcoholic
Disputes with husband; domestic violence
Grief over husband and children who neglect to visit her
Following disputes with the family of a married man, with whom she had been having an affair; the man committed suicide after his wife discovered the affair; the family of the man threatened the patient
Husband accuses her of having an extra-marital affair and claims that she admitted to it to him, she denies this; history of domestic violence; family have pressured her into seeking reconciliation with her husband
Husband alcoholic and physically abuses her; frequent problems with husband's family
Husband having an extra-marital affair; husband alcoholic
Somatic problems; undefined marital problems
Dispute with husband
Husband having an extra-marital affair with his wife's (the patient's) sister
Dispute with husband: he suspects her of having an extra-marital affair
Disputes with and scolding by daughter
Marital problems
Dispute with husband; husband suspects her of having an extra-marital affair
Wanted to frighten son
Dispute with husband; husband suspects her of having an extra-marital affair
Discovered husband was having an extra-marital affair
Husband accused her of having an extra-marital affair
Dispute with husband; physical abuse by husband
Marital problems
Husband discovered she was having an extra marital affair and his subsequent violence
Husband's physical and verbal abuse
Dispute with father after mother left home to work abroad
Dispute with husband; husband's physical abuse; financial problems

Dispute with husband regarding his smoking
Husband possessive/controlling of her; physical abuse
Husband abusive
Dispute with husband; evidence of schizophrenia
Nothing specific but seems to be unhappy living at home with her children
Dispute with husband: she wants to leave but he wants her to stay; now she will stay
Abused by husband after he accuses her of having extra-marital affairs when he's drunk; prior attempts to leave him were unsuccessful; in later interview insists on going back to husband
Dispute with husband over missing LKR 50,000; denies marital problems
Husband was accused of rape; dispute with husband about his drinking
Husband discovered she was having an extra-marital affair with a distant uncle
Husband lives with her sister (this precipitated previous act of self-harm); now husband wants the house she lives in; financial problems; poor family support
Dispute with mother-in-law in context of *diga* marriage; husband suspects her of having an extra-marital affair
Dispute with husband regarding his drug and alcohol problems; marital problems
Disputes with husband and family members following her return from the Middle East
Sister-in-law accused her of having an extra-marital affair after which husband physically abused her
A neighbour told her that her husband was having an extra-marital affair; she confronted him and physically abused her
Marriage of her younger son to the daughter of a man she does not like
Frequent conflicts with adopted son: he's always demanding money to go abroad
Scolded by husband but denies regular marital conflicts
Frequent marital problems due to problem between patient and mother-in-law for many years; husband unsupportive; physical abuse
Discovered her husband was having an extra-marital affair
Dispute with neighbours: accusing them of wanting to kill her and family
Verbally and physically abused by husband when he was drunk
Physical violence; husband alcoholic and suspects her of having an extra-marital affair; following act of self-harm husband wants reconciliation
Dispute with father
Problems with alcoholic husband
Grief at death of her father with whom she was very close; mother also died two months previously
Following verbal abuse by her husband during argument over a trivial issue; denies regular marital problems
Husband accused her of having an extra-marital affair
Argument with husband who was drunk at the time; domestic abuse

'Mental problem'; husband and children believe she had an extra-marital affair when she worked abroad for 5 years

Verbally abused by son and wanted to make him afraid

Mother accused her of having an extra-marital affair

Husband suspects her of having an extra-marital affair; husband controlling and does not allow her to associate with her relatives; there is also a problem relating to the division of land in husband's family

Husband is alcoholic and frequently beats her

Evasive about cause: appears to have been an argument with husband

Dispute with husband: he's a soldier and was posted to Jaffna, she wanted him to leave the army as a result

Family problem; 1 month previously tried to hang daughter and herself; marital problems for 8 years

Husband a heavy alcoholic and abuses her

Returned from abroad to live in *diga*; husband had an extra-marital affair when she was away; husband and M-in-L always scolding her

(Source: Data obtained from CMHC, January 2005 to June 2006)

Appendix 6:

Love and marriage attitudes survey

In 2005 I decided to conduct a survey of attitudes towards romantic love marriage, proposal marriage, and cousin marriage in Suduwella and Kachchakaduwa. This was in response to the confused picture that I obtained when I compared the results of my household census, which suggested the majority of marriages today follow romantic relationships, with my informants' ongoing insistence that such marriages were rare and unsuitable. I hoped that a survey would broaden my perspective on the issue, and capture the views of people I had not so far had a chance to interview.

The survey was inspired by a survey developed by Chris Fuller (2005, unpublished), which was aimed at exploring the apparent decline of cross-cousin marriage across South Asia. I incorporated some of Chris' questions alongside my own that dealt with romantic love marriage, proposal marriage, and other issues relevant to the Sri Lankan context. The survey was translated by an English teacher in Madampe, and a small sample of respondents of mixed age, sex, and social background were subsequently asked to complete it. Following this further refinements were made to both the questions and the translation.

Methodology

I decided that the survey would best be completed if a researcher read the questions aloud to participants in their own homes. This was preferable to asking participants to complete the form themselves, due to low literacy levels in some sections of the population and also a likely low response rate overall. On the other hand, it risked participants' restricting their responses for fear of social disapproval or social expectation. As such, I employed ten research assistants in both communities and provided them with one morning's instruction on basic social science research skills. Some of these individuals were university graduates and had conducted survey research themselves; others had been employed in 2001 by the Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics, as census takers. In addition to my own training, then, the research team had an already good level

of experience in survey research and those with such experience helped to guide those who did not.

The survey was conducted in both communities on the same day. I moved between each community throughout the day, randomly accompanying researchers as they visited each house. I had previously decided that the construction of a stratified, random sample was not possible, due to the fact that I had not had a chance to fully analyse my household census data (and would not until I returned to the UK). As such, I directed each researcher to interview two members of each household, one married and one unmarried (aged 16 or above), and one male and one female, whenever possible. Although the survey was conducted on a Sunday thus providing the best chance that all family members would be at home at the time of the research, it was of course the case that only very few households offered this opportunity. Therefore, the sample is defined as a convenience sample. No post-stratification weights have been applied.

Sample characteristics

At Suduwella, 161 residents were interviewed, or 20.3 percent of the total population. Of these, 51.6 percent were male and 48.4 percent were female; 21.7 percent were unmarried and 78.3 percent were married. At Kachchakaduwa, 119 residents were interviewed, representing 19.6 percent of the population. Males constituted 54.6 percent of the sample, and females 45.4 percent. Of all participants, 23.7 percent were unmarried and 76.3 percent were married.

Limitations of the data

The results presented are straightforward aggregate statistics defined by marital status and village of residence. Due to space limitations I have not included analyses by sex, age, caste, class, or religion. The sample is unrepresentative of the populations of Kachchakaduwa and Suduwella, although to what extent is unknown. As such, findings represent the views of respondents only, and do not accurately portray attitudes for each group overall.

Results

Table A6.1: Kachchakaduwa – Are romantic love marriages more desirable than proposal marriages? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	82.1	54.5
No	17.9	45.5
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=88)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 6.813; $\phi = 0.24$		

Table A6.2: Suduwella – Are romantic love marriages more desirable than proposal marriages? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	58.8	48.8
No	41.2	51.2
Totals	100.0 (N=34)	100.0 (N=123)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 1.075; $\phi = n/a$		

Table A6.3: Kachchakaduwa – Is romantic love a Western imposition? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	75.0	69.0
No	22.0	31.0
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=87)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.370; $\phi = n/a$		

Table A6.4: Suduwella – Is romantic love a Western imposition? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	53.1	61.3
No	46.9	38.7
Totals	100.0 (N=32)	100.0 (N=111)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.682; $\phi = n/a$		

Table A6.5: Unmarried – Is romantic love a Western imposition? (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Yes	75.0	53.1
No	25.0	46.9
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=32)
$P = <0.10; \chi^2$ (critical) = 2.706; χ^2 (obtained) = 3.077; $\phi = 0.23$		

Table A6.6: Married – Is romantic love a Western imposition? (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Yes	69.0	60.0
No	31.0	40.0
Totals	100.0 (N=87)	100.0 (N=110)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 1.694; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.7: Married – The ‘open economy’ made romantic love more popular? (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Yes	89.8	49.5
No	10.2	50.5
Totals	100.0 (N=88)	100.0 (N=111)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 36.110; $\phi = 0.43$

Table A6.8: Kachchakaduwa – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	25.0	34.1
No	75.0	65.9
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=88)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.808; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.9: Suduwella – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture? (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Yes	34.2	35.5
No	61.8	64.5
Totals	100.0 (N=34)	100.0 (N=110)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.087; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.10: Unmarried – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture? (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Yes	75.0	38.2
No	25.0	61.8
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=34)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 8.380; $\phi = 0.37$

Table A6.11: Married – Is romantic love suitable in Sinhalese culture? (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Yes	65.9	34.9
No	34.1	65.1
Totals	100.0 (N=88)	100.0 (N=109)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.841; χ^2 (obtained) = 18.785; $\phi = 0.31$		

Table A6.12: Kachchakaduwa – What youth look for in a romantic partner(%)

	Males	Females
A similar educational level	19.4	15.4
A good job	20.8	23.1
A good character	23.6	34.6
An equal caste status	16.7	7.7
Physical attractiveness	19.4	19.2
Totals	100.0 (N=72)	100.0 (N=26)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 9.488; χ^2 (obtained) = 7.321; $\phi = n/a$		

Table A6.13: Suduwella – What youth look for in a romantic partner (%)

	Males	Females
A similar educational level	22.0	22.8
A good job	12.0	28.1
A good character	32.0	29.8
An equal caste status	12.0	10.5
Physical attractiveness	22.0	8.8
Totals	100.0 (N=50)	100.0 (N=57)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 9.488; χ^2 (obtained) = 17.433; $\phi = 0.40$		

Table A6.14: Kachchakaduwa – Support for a ‘good character’ (%)

	Males	Females
Agree	89.5	90.0
Disagree	10.5	10.0
Totals	100.0 (N=19)	100.0 (N=10)
$P = <0.05; \chi^2$ (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.002; $\phi = n/a$		

Table A6.15: Suduwella – Support for a ‘good character’ (%)

	Males	Females
Disagree	88.9	94.4
	11.1	5.6
Totals	100.0 (N=18)	100.0 (N=18)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.364; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.16: Kachchakaduwa – The kind of marriage youth prefer (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Arranged	17.9	18.0
Love	82.1	82.0
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=89)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.000; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.17: Kachchakaduwa – The kind of marriage parents prefer (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Arranged	82.1	69.7
Love	17.9	30.3
Totals	100.0 (N=28)	100.0 (N=89)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 1.670; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.18: Suduwella – The kind of marriage youth prefer (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Arranged	0.0	12.6
Love	100.0	87.4
Totals	100.0 (N=33)	100.0 (N=119)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 4.620; $\phi = 0.17$

Table A6.19: Suduwella – The kind of marriage parents prefer (%)

	Unmarried	Married
Arranged	64.5	62.1
Love	35.5	37.9
Totals	100.0 (N=31)	100.0 (N=116)

$P = <0.05$; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 0.063; $\phi = n/a$

Table A6.20: Reasons for the disapproval of love marriage (%)

Reasons for disapproval of love marriage	Kach (%)	Sudu (%)	P
Parents know who would make better marriage partners	58.0	63.2	0.590 ($\varphi=n/a$)
Issues of caste or class are not taken into account	71.9	71.8	0.000 ($\varphi=n/a$)
The character of spouses might turn out different after marriage	43.8	42.9	0.020 ($\varphi=n/a$)
The spouses family is unknown	54.8	39.2	4.479** ($\varphi=0.160$)
They suffer more problems b/c parents do not support them	64.0	43.3	8.310** ($\varphi=0.21$)
They are irresponsible – family concerns are not considered	41.2	28.7	3.288* ($\varphi=0.13$)
They are based on lust, not love	48.3	31.8	5.620** ($\varphi=0.17$)

** = <0.05; * = <0.10

Table A6.21: Kachchakaduwa - reasons for the disapproval of love marriage (%)

Reasons for disapproval of love marriage	Unmarried (%)	Married (%)	P
Parents know who would make better marriage partners	64.3	58.0	0.350 ($\varphi=n/a$)
Issues of caste or class are not taken into account	71.4	71.9	0.002 ($\varphi=n/a$)
The character of spouses might turn out different after marriage	46.4	43.8	0.060 ($\varphi=n/a$)
The spouses family is unknown	63.0	54.8	0.560 ($\varphi=n/a$)
They suffer more problems b/c parents do not support them	78.6	64.0	2.050 ($\varphi=n/a$)
They are irresponsible – family concerns are not considered	25.0	41.2	2.360 ($\varphi=n/a$)
They are based on lust, not love	50.0	48.3	0.020 ($\varphi=n/a$)

** = <0.05; * = <0.10

Table A6.22: Suduwella - reasons for the disapproval of love marriage (%)

Reasons for disapproval of love marriage	Unmarried (%)	Married (%)	<i>P</i>
Parents know who would make better marriage partners	57.1	70.2	2.060 ($\phi=n/a$)
Issues of caste or class are not taken into account	79.4	72.1	0.725 ($\phi=n/a$)
The character of spouses might turn out different after marriage	42.4	43.4	0.010 ($\phi=n/a$)
The spouses family is unknown	36.1	40.8	0.164 ($\phi=n/a$)
They suffer more problems b/c parents do not support them	32.4	45.4	1.800 ($\phi=n/a$)
They are irresponsible – family concerns are not considered	21.2	29.4	0.844 ($\phi=n/a$)
They are based on lust, not love	24.2	31.5	0.650 ($\phi=n/a$)

** = <0.05; * = <0.10

Table A6.23: Preference for cousin marriage today (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Preference	13.3	7.6
No preference	86.7	92.4
Totals	100.0 (<i>N</i> =31)	100.0 (<i>N</i> =116)

P = <0.05; χ^2 (critical) = 3.481; χ^2 (obtained) = 1.888; ϕ = n/a

Table A6.24: Preference for cousin marriage in the past (%)

	Kachchakaduwa	Suduwella
Preference	30.0	20.0
No preference	70.0	80.0
Totals	100.0 (<i>N</i> =31)	100.0 (<i>N</i> =116)

P = <0.10; χ^2 (critical) = 2.706; χ^2 (obtained) = 2.950; ϕ = n/a

Table A6.25: Reasons for the approval of cousin marriage (%)

Reasons for approval of cousin marriage	Kach (%)	Sudu (%)	P
It is good for children who grew up together to marry	57.3	34.4	9.974** ($\phi=0.23$)
It is good for families already related to marry again	52.3	41.8	2.030 ($\phi=n/a$)
Relatives are more trustworthy than strangers	54.8	61.2	0.152 ($\phi=n/a$)
Family problems are less likely	60.7	56.7	0.300 ($\phi=n/a$)
Spouses are treated better by their in-laws	62.5	64.3	0.064 ($\phi=n/a$)
Land, business assets, and property are kept within the family	65.2	80.6	5.680** ($\phi=0.18$)
Marriage expenses are lower	40.2	46.8	0.417 ($\phi=n/a$)

** = <0.05

Table A6.26: Reasons for the disapproval of cousin marriage (%)

Reasons for disapproval of cousin marriage	Kach (%)	Sudu (%)	P
Cousin marriages are immoral	81.4	69.1	3.679* ($\phi=0.14$)
Children who grew up together should not marry	77.9	74.0	0.380 ($\phi=n/a$)
There is a high risk of disability or illness in children	86.2	90.6	0.899 ($\phi=n/a$)
Marital disputes are more likely	51.2	67.0	4.750** ($\phi=0.16$)
Cousin marriages make no sense if there is no land etc. within the family	72.9	68.7	0.424 ($\phi=n/a$)

** = <0.05; * = <0.10

Appendix 7:

The use of standardised psychological tests in ethnography

Experimental research is not common in anthropology, especially research based on standardised psychological testing. Although there is a great amount of distrust around such methods in social science, particularly anthropology, I will not dwell too much on the extreme sides of those arguments here. To those who deny any validity of experimental research, or research based on standardised testing, I can say very little. I can similarly say little to those in psychology who deny the influence of socio-cultural context on the affective experience – and especially reporting – of psychopathology. I suspect an unbridgeable gap lies between us! To those who are open to the idea, however, but who might be rightly cautious, I have a lot to say, and perhaps can persuade them to entertain the approach, even if only in the context of this thesis.

Standardised psychological testing, also known as psychometric testing, is based on the assumption that certain identifiable behavioural, cognitive, and emotional ‘symptoms’ co-occur or cluster to form discrete ‘syndromes.’ A great deal of research and debate exists within psychology concerning the reliable identification of such clusters or syndromes, and several sophisticated statistical tests, including factor analysis, have been developed to explore them. Although in the beginning factor analysis was used to test clusters already assumed to comprise syndromes in themselves (Bentall 2004), increasingly researchers have sought to identify symptoms and clusters without resorting to untested assumptions and models (or, rather, have sought to test their assumptions first). As a result of these tests, certain behavioural, cognitive, and emotional problems have consistently been found to co-occur, and thus assumed to form empirically identifiable syndromes that for convenience have been labelled ‘depression,’ ‘anxiety,’ and so on.

From this starting point, psychologists have developed clinical and population tests in order to explore the presence of symptoms and syndromes in individual subjects and samples. A wealth of such tests now exists, ranging from personality scales through IQ tests to suicidality scales. The feature that all these have tests have in common is a pre-established body of empirical data that supports the grouping of certain behavioural,

cognitive, and emotional symptoms into pre-identified syndromes. More problematically, they also offer an established level of symptom reporting (in terms of both frequency and intensity of experience) upon which to classify subjects into 'normal,' 'borderline,' and 'clinical' ranges.

In psychometric testing, subjects respond to questions that probe for the presence or absence of certain traits and the intensity of those traits (usually 'never,' 'sometimes,' 'often,' or similar). Based on the answers given, the subject is diagnosed (or not) with the related syndrome. For example, when completing a depression scale, subjects might respond positively to a group of questions probing for evidence of symptoms associated with depression (loss of interest, loss of appetite, loss of energy, feelings of hopelessness/helplessness, suicidal ideation, etc.). If the subject reports several such symptoms and/or indicates intensity of experience in a few or several of them, he or she may be diagnosed as suffering from some depressive disorder. Finally, some individual problems (for example suicidal ideation, self-harm/suicide attempt, auditory hallucination, visual hallucination, etc.) are taken as signs of serious psychosocial disturbance in their own right, and a clinical diagnosis can be made upon them alone.

Several benefits and drawbacks exist in relation to standardised testing. The main benefits of using such tests are that clinicians and researchers can test for problems in individual subjects or samples using the same criteria once or several times, and can more or less reliably compare individuals within the sample or between samples. The main drawbacks are that not all subjects respond honestly or consistently to questions, and questions may be worded inappropriately so that subjects misreport or over-/under-emphasise the presence or absence of symptoms. Finally and importantly, symptoms may also be wrongly clustered into syndromes.

Further drawbacks arise when standardised tests are applied outside the cultural/language context in and for which they were developed. First, direct translations of questions probing for symptoms might produce misreporting if the connotations of such questions are not relevant and/or misunderstood in the new cultural/language context. This might produce over- or under-reporting that produces false results and diagnoses. For example, in Sri Lanka positive responses to questions probing for lack of self-esteem might not indicate depression or anxiety as they might in Europe or America,

but instead indicate socially desirable and expected traits of *lajja-baya*, or fear of shame (see Chapter 5.3). This would especially be the case if young females report low self-esteem. (On the other hand, 'socially desirable' – from one person's point of view – traits of low self-esteem might in themselves lead to undesirable psychological and social consequences in those expected to display them: see Chapter 5.)

A more profound problem may stem from the fact that standardised tests pre-cluster symptoms into syndromes. The cultural context of illness undoubtedly affects which, as well as how, symptoms are reported, with certain social groups and societies more likely to report certain problems over others. In Sri Lanka, this has been observed in the shifting preference for descriptions of anger, frustration, and suffering, over time (see Chapter 8). Although this does not amount, I suggest, to the creation of entirely new illnesses in some societies, reporting biased by socio-cultural context certainly raises the question of how reliable self-report tests may be when people may give preference to the reporting of certain symptoms over others.

It remains the fact that without proper trials of standardised tests in each context they are used, it cannot be assumed that certain symptoms and/or intensity of symptoms best describe certain syndromes. It may be, in fact, that symptoms associated with depression in Northern Europe and America may be more readily associated with aggression elsewhere, as it might in fact be the case in Sri Lanka (see Chapter 8: however, the relationship between depression and aggression is once again being recognised in psychology, Gilbert 1992).

Ideally, anthropologists interested in applying standardised psychological tests should trial existing tests or create new tests to suit the socio-cultural/language context at hand. However, this approach would not be possible for most social anthropologists, as indeed it was not for me. As such, anthropologists must rely on their colleagues in psychology to design and conduct the best trials for tests in order to reduce the effects of such problems. As long as no specifically developed test exists, the benefits of exploring Sinhalese psychosocial functioning using a standardised, repeatable test is worthwhile as an exploratory exercise that sheds a different light onto the ethnographic evidence collected.

Appendix 8:
Results of the YSR survey

Distribution of suicidal behaviour

Table A8.1: Kinds of suicidal behaviour reported by students at Herath Gunarathna and Central College (%)

Suicidal Behaviour	Herath Gunarathna	Central College
Suicidal ideation	42.9	45.5
Suicidal ideation and self-harm/suicide attempt	33.3	31.7
Self-harm/suicide attempt	23.8	22.8
Totals	100.0 (N=21)	100.0 (N=145)
<i>P</i> = <0.10; χ^2 (obtained) = not significant		

Social competencies of suicidal and non-suicidal students

Table A8.2: Social competencies of suicidal and non-suicidal male students at Herath Gunarathna

Males competencies scores	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	<i>T</i> <i>DF</i> = 49
Activities	6.8 <i>s</i> = 2.6	6.2 <i>s</i> = 2.8	σ_{x-x} = 1.09	<i>t</i> = 0.55 <i>p</i> = ns
Socialising	7.8 <i>s</i> = 1.9	7.7 <i>s</i> = 2.0	σ_{x-x} = 1.05	<i>t</i> = 0.10 <i>p</i> = ns
Education	2.1 <i>s</i> = 0.5	2.0 <i>s</i> = 0.6	σ_{x-x} = 0.23	<i>t</i> = 0.43 <i>p</i> = ns
Total score	16.7 <i>s</i> = 2.5	15.8 <i>s</i> = 3.9	σ_{x-x} = 1.46	<i>t</i> = 0.62 <i>p</i> = ns
	(N = 8)	(N = 41)		

Table A8.3: Social competencies of suicidal and non-suicidal female students at Herath Gunarathna

Females competencies scores	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	T $DF = 59$
Activities	5.3 $s = 1.5$	8.9 $s = 2.8$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 1.18$	$t = -3.05$ $p = 0.01$
Socialising	8.0 $s = 0.2$	7.5 $s = 2.0$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.83$	$t = 0.60$ $p = ns$
Education	2.0 $s = 0.4$	2.1 $s = 0.4$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.10$	$t = -1.00$ $p = ns$
Total score	15.2 $s = 1.5$	17.7 $s = 3.7$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 1.55$	$t = 1.61$ $p = ns$
	(N = 6)	(N = 55)		

Table A8.4: Social competencies of suicidal and non-suicidal male students at Central College

Males competencies scores	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	Z
Activities	6.9 $s = 3.0$	7.2 $s = 2.5$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.53$	$Z = -0.99$ $p = ns$
Socialising	8.2 $s = 2.2$	8.2 $s = 2.1$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.40$	$Z = 0.00$ $p = ns$
Education	2.3 $s = 0.4$	2.3 $s = 0.4$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.07$	$Z = 0.00$ $p = ns$
Total score	17.4 $s = 4.2$	17.6 $s = 3.7$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.75$	$Z = -0.27$ $p = ns$
	(N = 62)	(N = 312)		

Table A8.5: Social competencies of suicidal and non-suicidal female students at Central College

Females competencies scores	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	Z
Activities	7.3 $s = 3.0$	7.4 $s = 2.6$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.16$	$Z = -0.63$ $p = ns$
Socialising	7.7 $s = 2.1$	8.0 $s = 2.0$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.36$	$Z = -0.83$ $p = ns$
Education	2.2 $s = 0.4$	2.3 $s = 0.4$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.07$	$Z = -1.43$ $p = ns$
Total score	17.1 $s = 4.2$	17.7 $s = 3.8$	$\sigma_{x-x} = 0.71$	$Z = -0.85$ $p = ns$
	(N = 69)	(N = 354)		

Table A8.6: Psychological problems (syndromes) of suicidal and non-suicidal male students at Herath Gunarathna

Male psychological problems (syndromes)	Suicide status		
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	<i>T</i> <i>DF</i> = 46
<i>Internalising</i>	Anxiety/depression <i>s</i> = 2.4 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 1.18$)	4.8 <i>s</i> = 3.4	<i>t</i> = +3.22 <i>p</i> = 0.01
	Withdrawal/depression <i>s</i> = 2.8 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 1.03$)	4.7 <i>s</i> = 2.8	<i>t</i> = +0.49 <i>p</i> = ns
	Somatic problems <i>s</i> = 3.7 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 1.12$)	3.2 <i>s</i> = 2.8	<i>t</i> = +1.88 <i>p</i> = 0.10
<i>Externalising</i>	Social problems <i>s</i> = 2.8 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 1.15$)	6.1 <i>s</i> = 3.2	<i>t</i> = +1.13 <i>p</i> = ns
	Thought problems <i>s</i> = 1.4 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 0.43$)	1.2 <i>s</i> = 1.1	<i>t</i> = +3.02 <i>p</i> = 0.01
	Attention problems <i>s</i> = 2.2 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 0.99$)	4.6 <i>s</i> = 2.8	<i>t</i> = +1.92 <i>p</i> = 0.10
<i>Externalising</i>	Rule-breaking behaviour <i>s</i> = 2.5 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 0.86$)	2.2 <i>s</i> = 2.3	<i>t</i> = +4.19 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Aggressive behaviour <i>s</i> = 4.4 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 1.68$)	7.3 <i>s</i> = 4.6	<i>t</i> = +3.81 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Internalising	19.1 <i>s</i> = 5.3 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 2.67$)	12.7 <i>s</i> = 7.7	<i>t</i> = +2.40 <i>p</i> = 0.05
Externalising	19.5 <i>s</i> = 5.9 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 2.20$)	9.2 <i>s</i> = 6.0	<i>t</i> = +4.68 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Total score	60.8 <i>s</i> = 15.3 ($\sigma_{x-x} = 6.76$)	37.2 <i>s</i> = 19.1	<i>t</i> = +3.49 <i>p</i> = 0.01
	(<i>N</i> = 10)	(<i>N</i> = 38)	

Table A8.7: Psychological problems (syndromes) of suicidal and non-suicidal female students at Herath Gunarathna

Female psychological problems (syndromes)	Suicide status		
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	<i>T</i> <i>DF</i> = 60
<i>Internalising</i>	Anxiety/depression <i>s</i> = 3.3 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.30$)	4.4 <i>s</i> = 3.2 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.30$)	<i>t</i> = +2.69 <i>p</i> = 0.01
	Withdrawal/depression <i>s</i> = 1.4 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.01$)	4.3 <i>s</i> = 2.6 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.01$)	<i>t</i> = +1.78 <i>p</i> = 0.10
	Somatic problems <i>s</i> = 1.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.78$)	2.6 <i>s</i> = 2.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.78$)	<i>t</i> = +1.41 <i>p</i> = ns
<i>Externalising</i>	Social problems <i>s</i> = 2.6 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.88$)	4.7 <i>s</i> = 2.1 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.88$)	<i>t</i> = +1.48 <i>p</i> = ns
	Thought problems <i>s</i> = 1.3 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.06$)	0.9 <i>s</i> = 1.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.06$)	<i>t</i> = +0.47 <i>p</i> = ns
	Attention problems <i>s</i> = 3.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.04$)	4.0 <i>s</i> = 2.5 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.04$)	<i>t</i> = +0.96 <i>p</i> = ns
<i>Externalising</i>	Rule-breaking behaviour <i>s</i> = 2.6 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.88$)	1.7 <i>s</i> = 2.1 ($\sigma_{xx} = 0.88$)	<i>t</i> = +0.80 <i>p</i> = ns
	Aggressive behaviour <i>s</i> = 4.3 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.82$)	6.9 <i>s</i> = 4.5 ($\sigma_{xx} = 1.82$)	<i>t</i> = +0.55 <i>p</i> = ns
Internalising	17.7 <i>s</i> = 5.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 2.36$)	11.3 <i>s</i> = 5.9 ($\sigma_{xx} = 2.36$)	<i>t</i> = + 2.71 <i>p</i> = 0.01
Externalising	10.3 <i>s</i> = 6.5 ($\sigma_{xx} = 2.46$)	8.6 <i>s</i> = 6.0 ($\sigma_{xx} = 2.46$)	<i>t</i> = +0.72 <i>p</i> = ns
Total score	43.9 <i>s</i> = 17.1 ($\sigma_{xx} = 6.63$)	32.3 <i>s</i> = 16.2 ($\sigma_{xx} = 6.63$)	<i>t</i> = +1.75 <i>p</i> = 0.10
	(<i>N</i> = 7)	(<i>N</i> = 55)	

Table A8.8: Psychological problems (syndromes) in suicidal male and female students at Herath Gunarathna

Herath Gunarathna students	Sex		<i>T</i> <i>DF = 15</i>
	Males	Females	
Internalising	19.1 <i>s = 5.3</i> ($\sigma_{x-x} = 2.70$)	17.7 <i>s = 5.0</i>	<i>t = +0.52</i> <i>p = ns</i>
Externalising	19.5 <i>s = 5.9</i> ($\sigma_{x-x} = 3.23$)	10.3 <i>s = 6.5</i>	<i>t = +2.85</i> <i>p = 0.02</i>
Total score	60.8 <i>s = 15.3</i> ($\sigma_{x-x} = 8.38$)	43.9 <i>s = 17.1</i>	<i>t = +2.02</i> <i>p = 0.10</i>
	(<i>N = 10</i>)	(<i>N = 7</i>)	

Table A8.9: Psychological problems (syndromes) of suicidal and non-suicidal male students at Central College

Male psychological problems (syndromes)	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	Z
<i>Internalising</i>	Anxiety/depression <i>s</i> = 4.8	4.4 <i>s</i> = 2.7	0.63	Z = +7.94 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Withdrawal/depression <i>s</i> = 3.1	4.0 <i>s</i> = 2.2	0.42	Z = +5.48 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Somatic problems <i>s</i> = 4.0	2.6 <i>s</i> = 2.6	0.53	Z = +4.53 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Social problems <i>s</i> = 3.6	4.6 <i>s</i> = 2.4	0.48	Z = +5.42 <i>p</i> = 0.001	
Thought problems <i>s</i> = 2.1	0.7 <i>s</i> = 0.9	0.27	Z = +7.77 <i>p</i> = 0.001	
Attention problems <i>s</i> = 3.5	3.6 <i>s</i> = 2.6	0.47	Z = +6.60 <i>p</i> = 0.001	
<i>Externalising</i>	Rule-breaking behaviour <i>s</i> = 4.6	2.6 <i>s</i> = 2.8	0.62	Z = +6.13 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Aggressive behaviour <i>s</i> = 5.2	7.3 <i>s</i> = 3.9	0.70	Z = +8.57 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Internalising	20.7 <i>s</i> = 10.0	11.0 <i>s</i> = 5.8	1.32	Z = +7.35 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Externalising	19.9 <i>s</i> = 9.0	10.0 <i>s</i> = 6.3	1.21	Z = +8.18 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Total score	62.8 <i>s</i> = 26.7	32.9 <i>s</i> = 15.5	3.53	Z = +8.47 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	(N = 62)	(N = 309)		

Table A8.10: Psychological problems (syndromes) of suicidal and non-suicidal female students at Central College

Female psychological problems (syndromes)	Suicide status			
	Suicidal	Non-suicidal	σ_{x-x}	Z
<i>Internalising</i>	Anxiety/depression <i>s</i> = 3.7	4.9 <i>s</i> = 2.9	0.46	Z = +11.10 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Withdrawal/depression <i>s</i> = 2.6	4.0 <i>s</i> = 2.2	0.32	Z = +6.25 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Somatic problems <i>s</i> = 2.5	2.7 <i>s</i> = 2.2	0.32	Z = +5.00 <i>p</i> = 0.001
<i>Externalising</i>	Social problems <i>s</i> = 2.7	4.2 <i>s</i> = 1.9	0.33	Z = +4.85 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Thought problems <i>s</i> = 2.8	2.1 <i>s</i> = 2.2	0.35	Z = +4.57 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Attention problems <i>s</i> = 3.2	3.3 <i>s</i> = 2.4	0.40	Z = +8.00 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Rule-breaking behaviour <i>s</i> = 2.8	1.4 <i>s</i> = 1.5	0.33	Z = +5.15 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	Aggressive behaviour <i>s</i> = 4.5	6.5 <i>s</i> = 3.6	0.57	Z = +6.49 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Internalising	20.2 <i>s</i> = 6.9	11.6 <i>s</i> = 5.6	0.87	Z = +9.89 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Externalising	13.7 <i>s</i> = 6.8	7.9 <i>s</i> = 4.7	0.84	Z = +6.90 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Total score	54.0 <i>s</i> = 19.3	31.9 <i>s</i> = 14.3	2.40	Z = +9.21 <i>p</i> = 0.001
	(<i>N</i> = 73)	(<i>N</i> = 343)		

Table A8.11: Psychological problems (syndromes) in suicidal male and female students at Central College

Central College Students	Sex		σ_{x-x}	Z
	Males	Females		
Internalising	20.7 <i>s</i> = 10.0	20.2 <i>s</i> = 6.9	$\sigma_{x-x} = 1.52$	Z = +0.33 <i>p</i> = ns
Externalising	19.9 <i>s</i> = 9.0	13.7 <i>s</i> = 6.8	$\sigma_{x-x} = 1.47$	Z = +4.22 <i>p</i> = 0.001
Total score	62.8 <i>s</i> = 26.7	54.0 <i>s</i> = 19.3	$\sigma_{x-x} = 4.11$	Z = +2.14 <i>p</i> = 0.05
	(<i>N</i> = 62)	(<i>N</i> = 73)		

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