

Exploring the Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Livelihood of the Up-country Tamils (Malaiyah Tamils) in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

“Malaiyaha Tamils” are also known as Hill Country Tamils, Up-Country Tamils or simply Indian Tamils. They predominantly descend from workers sent from Southern India to Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries to work in coffee, tea and rubber plantations. Since their ancestors’ arrival on the island in the nineteenth century, Up-country Tamils have lived at the margins of Sri Lankan society and politics, while being an integral part of the country’s import-export economy. The community has existed in Sri Lanka for more than 200 years without Sri Lankan citizenship and discriminated for decades. While all the communities in Sri Lanka are suffering from the economic crisis, it is question to know, how the ongoing economic crisis has affected the already discriminated Malaiyaha Tamil community. Malaiyaha Tamil population in Uva province is 154,252. In order to understand the nature of the impact of the economic crisis on the Malaya Tamil people, this study has been conducted using convenience random sampling method by adopting qualitative research sampling strategies and 50 civilians of Uva province belonging to the Malaya Tamil community were interviewed for the study. Semi structured interview method has been used to gather the data and qualitative content analysis method has been utilized for data analysis. According to the study, 95 percent of the community is suffering from malnutrition, 20 percent of families reported school drop outs, 65 percent families reported early marriages. Women in 30 percent of families work as house maids in Middle Eastern countries, 80 percent of the community does not have permanent jobs. Based on the study it can be concluded that the economic crisis has severely affected the livelihood of the Malayan Tamil people. Further research could be done on the livelihood of the Malaiyaha Tamil community, Nature of the prolonged struggles encountered by the Malaiyaha Tamil community, nature of the modern struggles face by the Malaiyaha community due to economic crisis, Nature of the criminality within the Malaiyaha community during the economic crisis.

Keywords: *Economic Crisis, Malaiyaha Tamils, Up-Country Tamils, Discrimination, Malnutrition, School drop outs, Early Marriages*