

© The United Nations University, 1980
Printed in Japan

ISBN 92-808-0132-5
ISSN 0379-5764

HSDRGPID-21/UNUP-132

**NEEDS – THEIR PERCEPTION AND EXPRESSION:
THE SRI LANKA EXPERIENCE**

E.L. Wijemanne and Earl Wanigasekera

Marga Institute
Colombo 5
Sri Lanka



CONTENTS

1. The Concept of Needs, Wants and Desires	1
2. Needs as Expressed by the People	4
3. A General Overview of Needs Perceptions	6
4. Needs as Expressed by Six Case-Study Communities	10
5. Needs and the Processes of Development	25
6. Dialogue as a Methodology for the Investigation of Needs	29

This paper by E.L. Wijemanne and Earl Wanigasekera was first presented at the GPID II and GPID III meetings, Geneva, 9-14 January 1978 and 2-8 October 1979. It can be considered as a contribution to the Needs sub-project of the GPID Project.

Geneva, January 1980

Johan Galtung

It is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

NEEDS
THEIR PERCEPTION
AND EXPRESSION - THE
SRI LANKA EXPERIENCE

1. THE CONCEPT OF NEEDS, WANTS AND DESIRES

In Sri Lanka today the perceptions of needs have been shaped by three factors:-

- (a) the abiding influence of Buddhist culture;
- (b) exposure to western influences and life-styles during a four-hundred year period when first the south-western maritime belt and then the whole country were subject to colonial domination; and
- (c) the post-independence social-welfare policies.

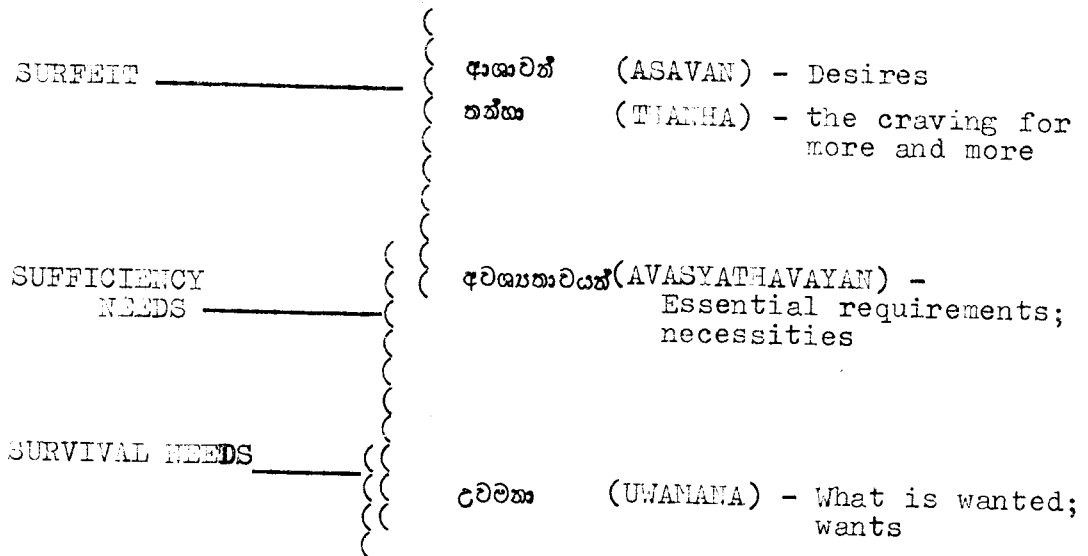
Traditionally the needs of the people were determined by a socio-cultural environment influenced by Buddhism and the need for the Buddhist way of life. It was a philosophy of life based on truth (SATYA), non-violence (AHIMSA) and self-denial (ATMAHARANAYA) and the linked concepts of loving kindness to all living beings (METTA), compassion or feeling of sympathy for the suffering of others (KARUNA), altruistic joy or the joy in the happiness of others (MUDITA) and equanimity or a dispassionate attitude to the vicissitudes of life (UPPEKHA). The 'good life' meant the operationalisation of these concepts in one's day to day existence, both as an individual and as a member of society, through the pursuit of a 'middle path' (MAJJIMA PATIPADA). Such an ideology frowned on the pursuit of anything other than 'real' needs and circumscribed the human needs range to actual wants (UWAMANA) and needs (AVASHYATHAVAYAN). Desire (ASAWA) and over-indulgence, greed, lust and material accumulation (THANHA) were obstacles and anathema to the 'good life'.

The beginning of the sixteenth century witnessed the onset of colonialism, with first the maritime zone and then the whole country coming under the yoke of Western powers. At first colonial interests were confined to the West and Southern coastal regions, but later spread to the interior with the establishment of a flourishing export-oriented plantation economy. In the urbanised coastal areas which were directly exposed to the Western influences inroads were gradually made into the socio-cultural set-up of the people who began to imbibe the way of life, the religious beliefs and the value systems of the West and to cultivate a taste for the imported consumer goods which were made available. Their needs range began to expand and concepts such as competition, exploitation, accumulation and even violence began to be woven into the socio-cultural fabric and cease to be the things that were alien to the traditional culture. In the hinterland, however, of these urbanised and semi-urbanised areas, which lay outside the pale of direct western influence and where therefore the impact of materialistic culture and the new religious indoctrination was marginal, the traditional way of life (except among the few rural elites who took their urban counterparts as their reference group) continued to prevail with a few modifications.

In the interior rural areas where colonial interests were confined only to marginal administrative and fiscal control, the traditional ideology and way of life continued more or less uninterrupted. The temples and the priests, though isolated from the new regime but not from the villagers they served, kept the torch of Buddhist culture burning. This factor helped considerably in the re-establishment and consolidation of the Buddhist way of life after the ruling foreigner had pulled off from the shores of the country.

The perceptions of needs have been also significantly influenced by the national social welfare policies after Independence. The policies of successive post-Independence governments have been heavily welfare-oriented, even at the expense of economic growth. These welfare services have been progressively improved and extended even to remote rural areas. Even more than the basic requirements in health and education are provided free. Where food needs are concerned, members of families earning less than US \$ 20 per month are issued a free ration of rice every week. In addition essential food items such as flour, sugar and children's milk foods are heavily subsidised. Other basic requirements such as transport, cloth, building materials, etc. are also subsidised to some extent. This process of providing basic needs at a level higher than the minimum has been responsible for a sharp drop in the death rate, a spectacular improvement in life expectancy and a rise in the overall standards of living. It has also raised aspirations for a further improvement in the quality of life.

The sufficiency level of needs is determined more or less by the continuing traditional socio-cultural matrix with variations induced by racial, religious, spatial, occupational, educational and status factors, etc. Socio-cultural biases, however, which stem from the Buddhist way of life have the tendency to contain the sufficiency level within a 'moderation' which is in accord with the MIDDLE PATH. To understand why this is so, it is necessary to examine the hierarchical ordering of 'needs' perceptions which has prevailed from the dawn of the Buddhistic era in Sri Lanka during the third century B.C. From the 'survival needs' level upwards the hierarchy takes the following form:-



According to this hierarchical classification, there can be a continuum of styles of living with austerity at one end and over-indulgence at the other. But the 'good life' is determined by the satisfaction of three inter-related sets of needs (viz. biological, psychological and spiritual) to a level consonant with the pursuit of the 'middle path'.

2. NEEDS AS EXPRESSED BY THE PEOPLE

During the case studies, particularly in the dialogues, the spectrum of needs articulated was wide, as one would expect. Whilst there was more or less general consensus that the ultimate objective of the needs/satisfaction process is material (biological) well-being, psychological (mental) well-being and (for a large number) spiritual, religious fulfilment, definitions of the terms 'basic' and 'minimum' proved to be invariably elusive. This is because of the obvious problem of the upward shift in the definitions both of "basic" and "minimum" in the needs/satisfaction/needs continuum. Needs which are termed 'basic' are those where satisfaction is, in effect, indispensable. But once these needs are met they are replaced by new needs also perceived as indispensable.

Similarly the definition of the 'minimum' varies according to who perceives it :-

the individual (subjective)
society (objective or normative)
planners and policy-makers
(development imperative?)

When one considers the three dimensions of need fulfilment one sees that the sense of well-being which is derived from the satisfaction of the three biological needs (food, clothing, shelter) as well as of non-material needs (education) is always associated with the satisfaction of the psychological need. Apart from the satisfaction of needs such as these, man can also gain mental satisfaction by performing acts of charity, by improving his status in the community or by even denying himself of the full satisfaction of biological needs. It may be argued that spiritual well-being is broadly subsumed by the term 'psychological or mental' well-being, but in the Sri Lankan religio-cultural context they are best treated as separate.

In terms of the above reflections one could attempt a definition of 'human development' in terms of

"a continuous dynamic process of the satisfaction of the needs of the people for the well-being (of the people) by the people (planners and policy-makers and implementors in accordance with the objective/normative perceptions of society)".

It is now proposed to first present an overview of the general views on needs as expressed by the cross-section of persons ranging from policy-makers, planners, administrators and professionals to peasants, ordinary workmen and trade unionists with whom the research staff entered into discussions and dialogues and then to look at six specific case-studies (one in a shanty community in the city of Colombo engaged in informal sector activities,

one in the plantation sector where Indian immigrant labour predominates, one in the commuter belt of the city and three in typical rural settings in the different cultural-ecological zones of the country). One point, however, needs clarification regarding the needs - content expressed. If the three-fold Trinity of 'ultimate' needs is accepted as 'the end', its reflections in the discussions and views of the participants in the dialogues took the form, for the most part, of the expression of tangible/perceptible means or 'satisfiers'.

3. A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF NEEDS PERCEPTIONS

(a) Food

Among the large majority of persons, both in the rural and urban areas, especially among the farmers and manual workers in towns, the stress was on quantity in the intake of food whilst the white-collar workers and the rural well-to-do expressed the need for quality in food. Among the latter a few mentioned a preference for imported foods and foods which did not constitute part of the traditional diet. There was however considerable consensus of the need to be self-sufficient in food and eat only the produce of the country.

Water was rarely mentioned. This is not surprising in a country blessed with good and natural sources of fresh drinking water. In some of the coastal areas however where there is a high degree of salinity, there was a felt need for good drinking water. Tea appears to be a must among almost all categories and in almost all areas.

Certain categories of workers such as the coastal fishermen, the conservancy labourers, persons engaged in hard manual work in the towns and the workers of Indian origin in the plantation sector expressed the need for alcoholic beverages, but over-indulgence in liquor was condemned on physical, social and religious grounds.

(b) Clothing

The type and the quality of the clothing required are determined by several factors of which the most significant appear to be occupational, class, ethnic and climatic considerations. Whilst Western dress was favoured in elite and urban circles, the general emphasis was on the traditional way of dressing. To some the 'national dress' was a symbol of national identity. The wearing of a particular type of dress was also regarded as an acknowledgement of the significance or gravity of various occasions such as weddings, funerals, visits to patrons and to places of worship, celebrations of festivals etc. There was also the usual distinction between 'work' clothes and 'home' clothes.

(c) Shelter

The traditional need of a 'Geyak-dorak' or house for every family is still most compelling, especially in the rural areas. Apart from the shelter and the privacy it affords, a house has come to be regarded by the villager as a 'sine qua non' for his membership in the village, his identity with the community and his position in society. The need for a house of one's own was also articulated at all levels in the urban sector. It is only among the Indian immigrant labour population in the plantation sectors that the possession of a house is not considered something essential.

During the study it transpired that whilst the need for improved housing was generally expressed, satisfaction of housing requirements was most stressed in the coastal fishing villages and in the estate plantation sector.

The significance of the almost unanimous expression of a need for land becomes clear in the light of these observations on housing. Land is the base not only for the satisfaction of the material needs for food and shelter but it also provides the psychological satisfaction of non-material needs such as identity, security and individual freedom.

(d) Education

Education is regarded as the means for the 'derived need' of an income to satisfy the ultimate needs of biological and psychological well-being in addition to being a more or less direct means for the achievement of spiritual fulfilment. While its need is felt most in the tertiary sector of the economy and, in its vocational orientation, in the primary and secondary sectors, in what Yona Friedman refers to as the quaternary sector the attitude to education is somewhat ambivalent. While the need for education as a means of upgrading levels of literacy is unequivocally accepted, schooling which purveys it is regarded as a means of keeping 'the urchins out of harm's way' whilst the parents are engaged in their daily occupations or as a compulsory national requirement which deprives the quaternary sector of a useful asset. These perceptions will be clarified in the discussion of the case-studies which follow.

(e) Religious (spiritual) fulfilment

Apart from the Buddhists who comprise 67 percent of the population, there are adherents of three other major religions - Hindus (18%), Christians (8%) and Muslims (7%), the large majority of whom are practising adherents of the faiths they profess. It is no overstatement to say that religious ideologies and a desire for religious fulfilment have proved to be an abiding and pervasive influence in shaping the aspirations and way of life of the large majority of the people.

Several of the discussants and participants in the dialogues stressed the need for a religious education from a very early age and a religious way of life towards the achievement of which the example of the elders could contribute in large measure.

After Independence successive national governments have been alive to the aspirations of the people for the Buddhist way of life and have responded by making Buddhism the state religion whilst at the same time safeguarding the interests of all other religions, and by extending the patronage and protection of the state to Buddhist institutions. The present government which came into power in mid-1977 has pledged itself to the pursuit of a 'Dharmistic Society' - a free and righteous society founded and maintained on the teachings of the Buddha contained in the 'Dharma' (Doctrine). In a nutshell it is a commitment to the development of all human beings, the rule of social equity and justice, the guarantee of fundamental freedoms and rights and the preservation of racial and religious amity.

(f) Security, Identity and Freedom

According to the traditional concepts and way of life which still prevail in the large majority of Sri Lankan villages the three non-material needs of security, identity and freedom are closely interwoven and dependent for their satisfaction on material factors such as land, shelter and family. This is also the area where satisfaction of the needs of the individual gets merged with that of the family and vice versa. It is something inherent in the ethos of the community.

Individual security is tied up with that of the family whether in the case of children or adults. The individual relies on the wide web of security which the family builds for itself. This explains the reluctance of persons, even though unemployed, to leave their homes and seek employment elsewhere in far off places if the advantages to be so derived are little more than marginal and do not adequately compensate for the loss of the protection and the social security which the family affords.

What has been said of security is equally applicable to identity. In the villages identity is closely identified with 'status'. The individual's status stems from that of the family and in like manner the status acquired by the individual in his own capacity, for example by becoming a member of the local government body or an official in a government department, not only redounds to his own credit but also adds to and further enhances the social standing of the family. Families of very high standing in some of the villages studied have attained their present position through such a process of re-inforcement.

The concept of freedom of the individual vis-a-vis his family and the immediate society is a relative one. The need to enjoy freedom to that extent prescribed by the social code and the family ethos is generally acknowledged, except among a section of the products of the existing education system. The head of the family by virtue of his position is considered entitled, in the exercise of his control over the family, to act with a free hand, untrammelled by recently emergent considerations of women's lib and children's rights.

4. NEEDS AS EXPRESSED BY SIX CASE-STUDY COMMUNITIES

Six communities in which case-studies have been conducted will now be looked at in terms of the 'needs' expressed by discussants and participants to the dialogues, with a view to hopefully obtaining insights into the socio-cultural specificity of needs. The communities selected are:-

- (a) a shanty-community in the city of Colombo engaged mainly in informal sector activities;
- (b) an Indian Tamil immigrant community working as labourers in an up-country tea plantation;
- (c) a village community in the commuter belt of the city of Colombo;
- (d) a fishing village in the southern coastal belt;
- (e) a rural community in the low-country Wet Zone; and
- (f) a rural community in the up-country Wet Zone.

(a) Case-study of a shanty community

Shanties and tenements are a post-World War II phenomenon brought about by the need to provide housing for the large number of manual workers who came to the city to provide essential services.

The informal sector in Colombo, as in other large Asian cities, owes its emergence and existence to a 'felt' need. It was a response to the need felt by low-income and lower middle-class persons for essential consumer and other goods at prices within their income range and lower than what prevailed in the formal business sector. Besides, the sprawling configuration of the sector makes it more readily accessible to the residents of areas remote from the business complexes. As a result it now receives the patronage of all classes. The law however does not recognise the informal sector which nevertheless continues to exist because of what, in the absence of a better term, may be referred to as legal and administrative 'connivance'.

The need most pressing for satisfaction is better housing with its attendant amenities. The large majority reside in tenements and shanties in virtual slum conditions where privacy is at a minimum and physical mobility restricted to the confines of the dwelling, where electricity is non-existent and water has to be obtained from communal stand-pipes, where 'calls of nature' have to be satisfied in common toilets or on canal banks and where, in abject instances, the major domestic operations of cooking, eating and sleeping have to be performed in the same room. But proposals for schemes of rehabilitation in more amenable surroundings with better amenities have more often than not not met with the favourable response one would expect. The main reason given is that economic operations are either conducted in the residences or in very close proximity to them and a shift would entail re-establishment of operations in a new environment which would require not only time but luck. But it may well be that there is a certain camaraderie built up which makes them reluctant to change residence.

They are aware that their activities are looked upon as falling outside the pale of legally recognised business operations and in such a situation they may feel that social cohesion among "birds of a feather" is the best social insurance possible, with the tacit support of the patrons to whom their extra-legal and illegal activities cater. As such where the pressing need for improved housing is concerned, their preference is for the satisfaction of their needs in either the same location or a transplant of the community on a site in close proximity to the present area of operations where they could enjoy the patronage of their present 'clientele'. It is only those individual operators whose activities are above board and who have insulated themselves from the 'hazards' of a new life in a different location, either through the attainment of economic stability or through their children having obtained employment in the stable and recognized formal sector, both government and non-government, who would opt for a shift.

Government subsidies on food, clothing and transport and the provision of free educational and medical facilities have considerably lightened the burden on bread-winners in the families but there are still several households who find it difficult to make ends meet. A recent study undertaken by the Marga Institute on "An analytical description of poverty in Sri Lanka" has revealed the low nutritive content of the food intake among the low-income groups in the city of Colombo.

Formal education is for the most part considered useful only in so far as it provides a functional level of literacy to enable children to help parents in their informal sector activities. Emphasis is mostly on vocationally-oriented education, work apprenticeship and on-the-job training which can build up the skills required for skilled and semi-skilled employment in the mechanical,

engineering and building construction trades. The more well-to-do opt for a standard of education for their children which will enable them to compete for and obtain white-collar jobs in the government, corporation and mercantile sectors and thereby enhance their standing in the community, with the possible hope of moving into a better residential neighbourhood with higher standards of housing.

The level of political awareness and the consciousness of workers' rights are comparatively high with almost 100% of the wage earners in the community being enrolled as members of various trade unions.

(b) Case-study of an Indian Tamil Estate Community

As in the shanty settlements in the city of Colombo the pressing need is for adequate and suitable housing facilities with privacy both within and between housing units. This community which is almost entirely composed of labourers on the Tea Estate is housed in rows of lines divided into housing units by common walls. Each unit comprises an open verandah, a living-cum-dining room and a small kitchenette. Sometimes as many as twelve to fifteen persons live in such a unit.

Water is drawn from common stand-pipes for purposes of drinking and cooking. Bodily ablutions are generally performed in the closest stream or rivulet. There is no provision for toilets and the residents do not consider it a need because for generations they have been accustomed to satisfying their basic need for excretion in the privacy of the tea bushes or on the sheltered banks of streams. The management however perceived toilets as a need and provided some in close proximity to the line-rooms. But these have been seldom or never used because they are located too close to the line-rooms where the cooking is done and because the toilets, being common, can be used by any resident, irrespective of caste. The toilets now are used as shelter for cattle at night and for the stacking of firewood.

The concept of ownership of land and housing in this community is somewhat peculiar. This is because occupation of residential quarters and the right to cultivate the land adjoining is guaranteed as long as any single member of the family is employed on the Estate. As there are invariably two (husband and wife) or more members of the household in employment tenancy continues uninterrupted and accordingly the concept of ownership has taken the form of uninterrupted tenancy rather than in terms of a legal private ownership.

Objections to the present system of housing were also voiced for another reason. When weddings, funerals and ceremonies concerned with the crises of life (birth, intake of the first morsel of solid food, attainment of puberty, etc.) took place, there was considerable intrusion on privacy because of this cluster-configuration of housing units.

The need for housing, as almost unanimously articulated, took the form of separate detached units with a minimum of garden-space required for the cultivation of food crops for domestic consumption and for dairy activities on a modest scale, with an adequate supply of water for domestic use. Some expressed the need for toilets on the basis of one per family unit and situated some distance away from the residential units.

As the largest slice of the combined family budget was spent on food, the need in regard to food took the form of an easily accessible supply through more efficient channels of distribution and outlets than now existed. In food the stress was on quantity rather than on quality and on the ease of preparation. During the day-time when the elders are at work, the onus of preparing a substantial mid-day meal and taking it to the work-site falls on the bigger children. As such the meal that is generally favoured is 'rotti' (rice or flour-cake) with 'pol sambol' (scraped coconut mixed with chili and onions). Such a meal is easy for children to prepare and carry. The night meal which the adults can prepare themselves is more diversified and consists invariably of rice and curry.

Liquor was mentioned as a must, especially during festivals and ceremonies and on weekly visits to town. The older folk regarded it as more or less an essential after a hard day's work in the field and during cold and rainy spells of weather.

The attitude to clothing is utilitarian. Normally one set of clothes suffices for both work and relaxation at home. For protection against the cold blankets and 'cumblies' are used. On festive occasions and on visits to town and to relatives clothes of a better quality are worn. Women especially like to sport shiny, attractively coloured silks on such occasions.

Education is generally considered useful up to the point where it satisfies the need for a functional level of literacy. Younger children are sent to the estate school to keep them out of harm's way while the older children attend to domestic chores. As children can be registered for employment when they reach the age of fourteen, education after that point is usually not sought after. It is only the better-off, who are engaged in duties of a supervisory nature, who think in terms of a higher level of education for their children with the intention of securing for them white-collar employment either on the estate or outside.

There is a seeming lack of adequate perceptions of health needs. Health appears to pose few problems and the attitude towards it is one which is somewhat fatalistic although health standards are below average, with the children especially being malnourished and subject to various bowel-diseases. Minor ailments are treated at the Estate Dispensary but more serious cases have to be taken to the nearest government hospital. There is an obvious reluctance on the part of the community to ward patients in the Hospital as there is a belief that such treatments ends in death. This is perhaps because patients are admitted to the government hospital only at the critical stages.

Up to quite recently these Indian immigrant communities gave no thought to concepts such as freedom and identity, but the penetration of the Trade Union movement into the plantation sector has resulted in these people being made aware of their rights as human beings, citizens and workers. There is still however a general preference for the continuance of the present system of management which serves them as a protective umbrella, as it were, under whose shelter their needs can be satisfied. This may perhaps be prompted by the latent fear that with the nationalisation of the plantations there would be an infiltration of the peasant population into plantation jobs, thereby depriving their children of a guaranteed source of employment. In fact some of the older inhabitants appear to yearn for the past and spoke nostalgically of the days of the colonial white master who though firm, dominant, and arrogant, nevertheless looked after their basic needs, in search of whose satisfaction their ancestors left their native land and migrated to the Sri Lankan plantations.

(c) Case-study of a Community in
the commuter belt of the city

The village in the commuter belt of the metropolis is about a square mile in extent and just $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles away from Colombo. There are about 550 households and a population of about 2,780. The village has 95 acres of paddy land, all of which, however, is not cultivable because of poor drainage. The rest of the land is used for residences and homesteads with their few farm animals and crops.

More than 90% of the households depend on employment, mainly in Colombo, for their subsistence. Being on the fringe of the city of Colombo, the community exploits to the full the employment opportunities available in the city. The villagers have benefited in varying degrees from the educational facilities available to them and as a result they have been able to secure suitable employment.

More than 80% of the land is held in small parcels and so with the monthly wages from employment most villagers are able to live satisfactorily, making use of their land for residences and for small-scale cultivation of food crops.

The villagers have exploited the proximity to Colombo by making available residences to outsiders. At present 46% of the population comprises migrants (or those who have come into the village for a few years only). Giving extra houses on rent has brought in an additional income to those villagers who were enterprising enough to put up more than just one house. The vast majority of the people are Buddhists by religion and Sinhalese by ethnicity. The village has managed to preserve some traditional Buddhist values inspite of the onslaught of urbanisation with its attendant modes of competitive life which emphasises consumerism.

The people are vocal in matters political and are well experienced in trade union activity. They are outspoken about community needs and capable of exerting pressure on the Member for Parliament for better facilities in the village.

The migrant population is better educated and better employed than the villagers but most of them play only a marginal role in the affairs of the village as the villagers tend to maintain power in their own hands and resent outsiders becoming too important in the village. There are virtually no open conflicts between migrants and villagers as they are aware of the need for a peaceful co-existence in the situation of mutual dependence in which they are placed.

The people with whom dialogues were conducted comprised a fair cross-section of the village in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, occupation and education. All the participants were agreed on the need to have basic needs satisfied, i.e. food, clothing and shelter. Education, health, employment, religion and freedom were deemed the

next most important. As regards food, clothing and shelter, the emphasis on the part of the low-income earners was on wholesome food - rice, vegetables, fruit, milk, pulses (a few mentioned fish or meat). Some were emphatic that items of food such as imported tinned foods, ham, bacon, etc. were luxuries. The need for clothing was expressed in terms of garments of decent, durable material which are also presentable but unostentatious. On housing, all participants stressed the need to own one's own house and plot of land. Next in the needs hierarchy were listed employment and education. Education is necessarily linked to employment which besides providing a livelihood does also, according to a few, satisfy and enrich personality. Health is another vital need which requires satisfaction through curative and preventive services. The importance of religion for character formation was accepted by the vast majority. Amenities such as the availability of electricity, roads and transport services, public libraries, playgrounds and public wells (for bathing) were also generally felt to be community needs. Political freedom was stressed by a few along with the freedom of movement, religion etc.

A significant feature of the dialogues was that the poorer participants stressed the importance of what they lacked or missed most i.e. food, clothing and shelter and did not focus their attention sufficiently on other needs, whilst those whose basic needs had already been satisfied were conscious of other needs whose satisfaction was equally vital to them.

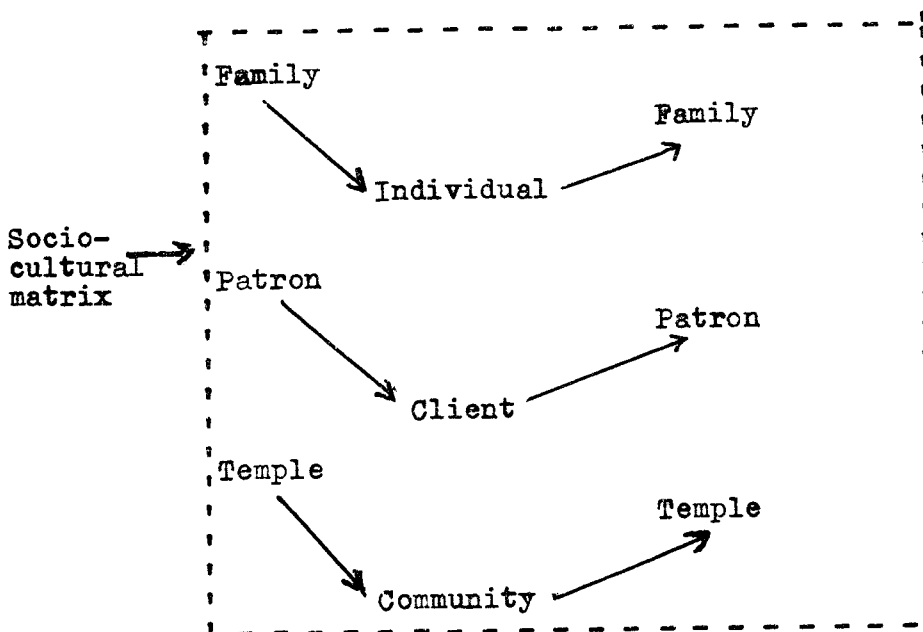
(d) Case-studies of the three rural communities
on the South Coast and in the Low-country
Wet Zone and the Up-country Wet Zone

The three case-study locations - the fishing village on the south coast and the two villages situated in the low-country Wet Zone and the up-country Wet Zone respectively, possess certain similar socio-cultural characteristics. They are all typical rural areas with the Sinhalese Buddhists predominating. The socio-cultural matrix in each case comprises three elements within which needs arise and are satisfied:-

- (1) The family - individual relationship;
- (2) The patron - client relationship; and
- (3) The temple - community relationship.

Within these sets there is a reciprocity in the satisfaction of needs with each partner to the relationship satisfying the needs of the other. Thus the family provides security and identity for the individual and the individual on his part can contribute to the 'status' of the family through his achievements. Similarly the patron looks after his client and the client in turn satisfies some of the needs of the patron, mainly in the area of material needs. Finally, the temple looks after the spiritual needs of the community and the community on its part ensures the satisfaction of the basic needs of the priesthood in the temple.

It should, however, be noted that in each of these sets of relationships one partner is in a super-ordinate position to the other in the reciprocal process of needs satisfaction. This can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:-



At this point it would be interesting to examine, in relation to this matrix, the intervention of government in its role as the chief 'needs satisfier' through its continuing social welfare policies. However well-intentioned a policy aimed at the satisfaction of needs may be, serious disequilibria can be created in the matrix or policy can be frustrated, if the process of satisfaction runs counter to the existing ethos in the matrix. The introduction of toilets in the up-country Indian community already referred to, the reference which follows to the introduction of fishing boats in the south coast village and the examples which are given in the subsequent section on 'The discrepancy between needs and the development process' all serve to illustrate this point.

These observations underscore the need for participation at all relevant levels in the formulation and implementation of development policies.^{1/}

With these comments on needs and the processes for their satisfaction which are applicable to all these three rural communities, we shall proceed to examine briefly the specific needs in each location as expressed by discussants and participants in the dialogues during the case-studies.

In the fishing village on the southern coastal belt the main needs enumerated were fresh water, land, housing and fishing equipment.

As the village is situated on the coast there is a high degree of salinity in the water. Fresh water especially for drinking is available only in a few wells and these have become more or less communal wells owing to the demand for their use.

^{1/} During the 1979 phase of the GPID project the Marga Institute will concentrate on the theme - 'The Need for participation in development'.

The fishing population in the village can be broadly divided into two categories - the well-to-do fishermen who are owners of mechanised boats or shares in 'madel' (beach-seines) and the active fishermen who operate at a low level of technology. While the former live in permanent and semi-permanent housing structures towards the interior, the latter reside on the beach in temporary huts with their boats beached in close proximity. These residents on the beach do not have any proper toilet or sanitary facilities and they are compelled to use the beaches for this purpose. Among them there, however, is a pressing demand for land for the construction of permanent houses with the necessary facilities.

The increase in the numbers of the unemployed has created a demand for more boats. The unemployment problem has arisen not only because of the natural increase in the workforce but has also been caused by the displacement of persons from the occupations ancillary to traditional fishing, such as net-making, boat repairing etc., as a result of the introduction of mechanised boats and nylon nets.

The government's fisheries development programme aimed at the modernisation of coastal fishing through the introduction of mechanised boats and nylon nets has, apart from being responsible for the displacement of persons from the traditional occupations referred to above, also caused a certain disequilibrium in the existing social structure through the shift of power from the traditional beach-seine operators to the owners and operators of mechanized boats, who were earlier mostly crewmen in the 'maha oru' (the long boats) and occupied a comparatively insignificant position in the power-hierarchy. What, one may be prompted to ask, is the relevance of such a phenomenon to a discussion of needs and needs satisfaction? In a socio-cultural set-up where patron-client relationships are a predominant feature and where there is a patron-client reciprocity in the satisfaction of needs, the shift of power which in such a set-up implies a virtual shift of patronage, can, in addition to a disequilibrium in the overall social structure, lead to serious disruption in the processes of needs satisfaction. The experience of those displaced from the

jobs ancillary to the traditional fishing operations is graphically illustrative of such a process in this particular location.

This community is located in the hinterland of the south-west coastal belt in the low-country Wet Zone in a region indirectly exposed to Western colonising influences. It has nevertheless continued to retain its traditional socio-cultural characteristics. The villages in this region are hemmed in by the commercial tea and rubber plantations and in the village itself there is a tea estate, once privately owned but now nationalised and run as a cooperative estate. The presence of this estate has of late somewhat influenced the aspirations of the villagers in regard to land and employment. In the domestic agricultural sector there are owners of large-sized holdings, medium-sized holdings and small fragmented holdings in addition to a fair number of landless peasants. The level of political consciousness and Trade Union activity is comparatively high. This is not surprising as this village falls within the Parliamentary constituency which up till the last election in 1977 returned as its representative the leader of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka. This village is blessed with a copious supply of fresh water and a fertile soil on which a variety of food crops including fruits is grown.

The main needs of the community, particularly among the poorer low-income groups, were stated as land and employment. A few even bluntly asserted that money was the most important need. As in the other locations studied, land for the purposes of both residence and cultivation appeared to take precedence in the needs hierarchy, closely followed by employment. When government announced its intention to nationalise large Estates, hopes were entertained that not only would the cultivated extents in the Estate be distributed among deserving villagers but that employment would be available for the large majority of the unemployed. When these expectations were ultimately not realised frustration began to set in and, in certain instances, resulted in an out-migration from the community.

A fair number representative of most sections of the community voiced the sentiment that human development is closely linked with and in fact dependent on community development. From the welter of views expressed on what exactly constituted community development it is possible to generalise on the following contextually determined components:-

- reader access to basic and essential commodities through locally-sited and more efficient channels of distribution (than the existing cooperatives) and a regular fair (periodic market);
- on the spot disposal of local produce through the setting up of marketing facilities at the local level and also through a regular fair, without recourse to the neighbouring market towns involving productive time and transport costs;
- closer to home medical, educational and communication facilities;
- small-scale industrial activities to generate employment; and
- readily accessible sources of credit for investment on productive enterprises.

The discussions and dialogues on 'what is the good life?' surfaced views ranging from the purely materialistic to the moderately spiritual. According to a few, drawn from the poorer sections of the community (with reason for embitterment owing to frustrations), a good life was not possible without money. Money held the key to the satisfaction of all needs which resulted in happiness. To a few others 'the good life' meant a life devoid of problems. Such problems could be solved through the acquisition of land and satisfactory employment which provided the wherewithal for the satisfaction of needs which resulted in happiness. A third category held that the satisfaction of material needs alone did not conduce to a good life unless there was also disciplined conduct and a certain level of achievement of spiritual realisation.

The village in the up-country Wet Zone is populated almost entirely by Kandyan (up-country) Sinhalese Buddhists. The majority of these residents once belonged to the leading 'Govigama' (farmer caste) but outmigration for reasons of marriage

and employment has thinned their ranks and the lower-caste groups now predominate numerically and enjoy a virtual monopoly in the control of the affairs of the village-level institutions. The main avenues of employment are paddy-farming in highly fragmented plots of land, highland cultivation especially of minor export crops, white-collar jobs in the neighbouring towns and labour-grade occupations in the surrounding tea estates.

Dialogues were conducted with persons representative of the high and low castes and of well-to-do, middle-level and low-income groups. Whilst those who have obtained a satisfactory level of living stressed the need for food, clothing and shelter of a certain quality, the poorer folk appeared to be satisfied with quantity and availability of basic requirements. Everyone articulated the need for social security and family and community solidarity, but whereas the more affluent and influential regarded it as a means of enhancing prestige, political power and status, those lower-placed stressed its importance as an insurance in times of social and financial need.

One of the participants in the dialogues who, though belonging to a lower class, was nevertheless one of the richest members of the community decried the need for a prestigious life-style. To use his own words:

"What is required in a village is a simpler way of life which by its very example will win the confidence of the entire community and act as an incentive in the promotion of good social relationships and communal cordiality. In this way there will be greater participation by all in the activities of the village which is the greatest requisite for its true development."

There was a variety of views on the need for education. To some a basic education appeared to be sufficient, whilst others stressed the need for a higher education as it was the key to prestigious positions in the public and mercantile sectors.

Still others expressed the view that no human or community development was possible without a good education. A section emphasized that what was required for the village was a vocational education, especially in crafts.

To the marginal agricultural operators who had to make-do with fragmented plots of land and to the landless agricultural labourers land was the most pressing need. They stated that today there is a great demand for minor export produce such as spices, coffee, betel etc. and if every peasant was given a modest extent of land, the village as a whole could attain a high degree of economic viability and whatever manifestations of poverty that still lurked among the poorer sections of the community would be soon eradicated.

Two persons who belonged to the 'Govigama' or farmer caste consider the caste system as a social need to maintain the social balance in a village community like theirs. They contend that its persistence for over two centuries is an acknowledgement by society over the ages of its usefulness in the socio-economic functioning of rural communities.

5. NEEDS AND THE PROCESSES OF DEVELOPMENT

Goals are value-oriented, and if development means the development of human beings, human needs must necessarily determine these values.

Goals, in other words, are the satisfaction of needs.

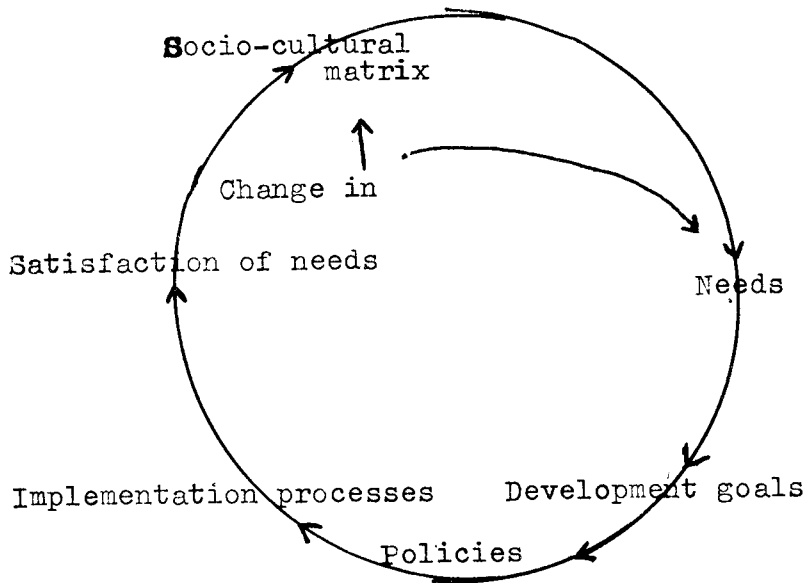
This satisfaction is attained through the process which supplies the satisfier of the need.

There are three simple but important assumptions in the concept of needs in relation to satisfaction (or the process that brings about satisfaction). A need not only exists but there has to be a consciousness of its existence and, if satisfaction is sought, such existence and consciousness have to be expressed or articulated for the provision of satisfaction either by the individual or by an outside source (invariably the social group or the nation or larger community). For example, when an infant is hungry, it cries in a distinctive manner to indicate its need for food. An adult is in a position to satisfy his needs himself or seek satisfaction with the help of others. It is when needs cannot be met through a process of self-satisfaction, that the intervention of society or the larger community has to come in.

It is this larger range within which human needs can be satisfied that makes human development to be seen as development of people in society. This in turn connotes satisfaction and further development of human needs. Thus the relationship between needs and the development process is not a static one. As a result of the development process changes occur in the socio-cultural matrix which give rise to new needs and new levels of consciousness. (Apart from the satisfaction of individual needs of which there is consciousness, there is also the satisfaction of needs of which there is no consciousness in some individuals.) This in turn has an impact on policy and its implementation processes. Therefore the linkage between human needs and the goals and processes of development has to be seen not as a linear phenomenon such as

Socio-cultural matrix → Needs → Goals → Processes → Satisfaction of needs

but as a circular phenomenon such as :-



The linkage is thus seen not as one of direct causality but as one of dialectical interaction.

The relationship between human needs and the development process can be looked at in terms of a demand and supply bond, with the former being articulated and the latter providing the satisfaction. The way in which supply operates in relation to demand may be said to be determined by the factors of consciousness or unconsciousness. On the demand side needs are determined by consciousness which can take one of four forms:-

- (1) The consciousness of BN
- (2) The lack of consciousness of BN
- (3) The consciousness of non-BN
- (4) The lack of consciousness of non-BN.

On the supply side policy can reflect:-

1. Consciousness of (1)
2. Lack of consciousness of (1)
3. Consciousness of (2)
4. Lack of consciousness of (2)
5.)
6.)
7.) etc.
8.)

If there is no proper congruence between the two ends (supply and demand) ill-matching results and causes discrepancies between goals and needs. Discrepancies between goal-fixation and need satisfaction also arise from a failure on the part of policy-makers to study the socio-cultural context in which needs exist.

Congruence between needs and satisfaction is possible where there is consciousness on the part of policy of the consciousness/unconsciousness of BN and non-BN. Where there is however unconsciousness of the four types of needs consciousness/unconsciousness, the development process can be retarded. It is also possible for policy-makers to sometimes overlook the priority claim for the satisfaction of a basic need and lay greater emphasis on policies that cater to non-basic needs.

When needs and their satisfaction are looked at in terms of a demand and supply situation the concept of 'needs' is invested with a dualism that brings sharply into focus the emphasis placed by policy-makers and others on the supply component (of the provision of goods and services) rather than on the demands of the 'demands' component in terms of a proper understanding of the reality of needs and the socio-cultural context in which they arise.

6. DIALOGUE AS A METHODOLOGY FOR
THE INVESTIGATION OF NEEDS

Dialogue was the main method resorted to in the investigation of needs. In the rural areas and the urban shanty locations most of the dialogues were conducted in the homes of the participants in an atmosphere familiar to them and conducive to frank and relaxed conversation. As the locations selected were venues of earlier Marga research studies, the participants were familiar with the researchers and as such the establishment of the necessary rapport and the setting of the stage for satisfactory dialogues did not present any difficulties.

The purpose of the dialogue, its scope etc. were first explained to the participants with an observation that so far planners and administrators had more or less arrogated to themselves the responsibility for formulating development plans without a proper awareness of popular perceptions of needs. There was a certain amount of feedback from the people through the politicians to the government and planners but this was almost negligible. Dialogue was an attempt to ascertain what/how the people themselves thought of their needs and goals in life.

The participants were given an opportunity to express their thoughts freely. They were left undisturbed to go on with their thoughts. When deviations from the main topic were made, they had to be discreetly brought back to the track. At times questions or a request for clarification were made by the researcher.

Symmetry suffered to a great extent in many of the dialogues. This was unavoidable as any attempt at real dialoguing would have confused the participant or made him agree with the researcher without critically examining the issues. In certain cases where the participant was more educated and conversant with development, needs etc. symmetry was significantly achieved.

In these dialogues emphasis was placed on eliciting the perceptions of the participants on their needs and not so much on the mutually educative aspect of dialogue which is related to symmetry.

The mutual educative element which features prominently in the dialogue method is not always an essential component of social science inquiry. For instance, if a social scientist inquires into the expenditure pattern of a certain individual, social group or community, the element of mutual education need not feature at all. This particular inquiry can very well be undertaken with the help of the Interview method.

Thus it would seem that the Dialogue method is most suitable for inquiry into such social realities as aspirations, values, attitudes and ideology. This method may not be the best suited for inquiry into realities which by nature are more quantitative than qualitative. The existing tools of social-science inquiry are more than adequate to explore social realities which are more quantitative than qualitative.

When surveys, questionnaires or depth interviews are resorted to, the researcher, a priori, fixes certain limits and bounds to his field of inquiry as he is actually looking out for explanations, clarifications and answers to certain issues with which he has to deal. On the contrary in the Dialogue method the researcher makes no attempt at focusing attention only on certain areas; he does not restrict the range of inquiry and so he is capable of obtaining a more comprehensive picture of the social reality under scrutiny. This is a significant merit of the Dialogue method in comparison with the other conventional tools of social science inquiry.

The Dialogical approach has been instrumental in revealing a rich variety of thinking on goals, processes and indicators of development. Several participants reflected on the traditional Buddhistic values - a simple life unencumbered with the gadgetery that modern civilization and technology offer; a non-competitive and non-acquisitive mode of life which regards craving (Thanha) or acquisitiveness as the root cause of all suffering in human beings. This outlook on life though professed by many is not always reflected in actual living. Such views could also have been elicited by using the depth interview. The difference between depth interview and the Dialogical method would be the mutually educative element.

Consciousness-raising of the participants would be a consequence of the mutual educative aspect of the Dialogue method. In using the Dialogue method, it was necessary to soft pedal the educative aspect as almost all the participants felt that they were not **on** a par with the researchers. It was felt that any attempt to educate or enrich the participant would confuse the participant and not prove productive. With a few more educated participants the mutually educative aspect was present and in that sense the whole exercise was different from the orthodox interview.

The untapped potential in the Dialogue method in our experience would appear to lie in its educative aspect but as long as dialogue is caught up in the traditional attitude to methods of social science inquiry where the researcher is looked upon as a superior being, symmetry and especially the element of mutual education **which** constitute the essence of the exercise will be difficult to achieve. Much would depend on the researcher in the attempt to break down this barrier. For the desired benefits of dialogue to be reaped the researcher must be prepared to learn by experience and adjust his techniques as often as necessary. He must possess the ability to understand people, make them relaxed in his presence and win their confidence. Above all, he must develop a competence to induce a spirit of inquisitiveness in the participant and stimulate in him a critical rather than a compliant and submissive attitude.