

## **Misery in spite of happiness: critical problems of poverty alleviation programmes in Sri Lanka**

**K.A.S. Udayanga**\*

*Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*  
*\*senithsrisami@gmail.com*

Welfarism, has long been considered as a major political ideology of administrative programs in the so called Third World societies. Regardless of the political dimensions used, the welfare approach must be perpetuated to ensure social development in these countries. However, social protection and security policies intended to alleviate poverty in Sri Lanka that were introduced with highly administered government interventions were questioned since interests of some societal segments were not addressed satisfactorily.

The objective of the study is to understand some culturally defined socio economic and political problems relevant to specific social segments (such as estate sector) when poverty alleviation social policy programs (here “Divineguma Programme” is concerned) are carried out with the intention of social development in Sri Lanka. In order to address the research problem specified, phenomenology was employed in accordance with the grounded theory approach. “Labukele Estate” in Nuwaraeliya District was selected as the research area. Accordingly, using unstructured interview guideline, 20 respondents were interviewed and 2 case studies were conducted. Collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Poverty alleviation programs initiated as a social welfare policy program in Sri Lanka have encountered several complications for many years without any appropriate and pragmatic solution. Resource leakages due to complex bureaucracy and inappropriate targeting with controversial conditionality are uppermost of the critical problems. So far these problems have been identified in an economic and administrative sphere; but this study asserts that these problems are amalgamated with rigorous cultural determinants. On the other hand, intergenerational dependence of family members, government policy changes and cultural resistance, widely targeted policy approach followed by the neglecting of specific cultural pockets, lack of administrative interventions due to culturally defined presumptions, deeply rooted cultural barriers, protracted poverty trap can be considered as major problems of social welfare policies in Sri Lanka.

It is not an easy task to compile social policies aiming at alleviating poverty since expected social development get subsided due to unexpected problems specific to the culturally defined Third World societies. Therefore, administratively programmed and culturally specified welfare policy programme would be the best possible approach to address the above problems.