



## Social Exclusion of Women in Minority Community in Sri Lanka

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research, which is based on an empirical study, was to look into the causes of the domestication and exclusion of women working in Sri Lanka's estate sector. The study examined the problem underlying the main causes of women becoming domesticated and how this eventually leads to their voices being silenced in both social and economic spheres. Using a sample of estate women in the Galle district of the Southern Province to collect data and analyse it using a mixed-methods research approach. As sample techniques, systematic random sampling and purposive sampling were used, and questionnaires and interviews served as data-gathering instruments. According to the report, voiceless estate women are unable to obtain a good education, which has led to poor literacy. They are also unable to contribute equally to the household income or stand up for their own decisions or the decisions of their children. They were imprisoned for ensuring their subsistence, carrying out home duties, and caring for children. Women who work in the estate sector are not owners or inheritors of any property. They face discrimination in society and are unable to acquire finance, go to school, make a living, or hold office in community organisations. The essay concludes with They are still awaiting an opportunity to speak out against domestication because of their domestication. The women in the estate sector understand and accept domestication as a necessity without any rejection because it is fundamentally established based on norms and culture.

**Keywords:** Domestication, Estate sector, Poverty, Tamil women, Voiceless

### Introduction

Estate Tamil's history in Sri Lanka commences with the establishment of a plantation in the Sri Lankan hill country in the 1820s by the British. The estate Tamil people were brought to the country from the South Indian villages first as migrant labourers to work on the coffee plantation and as residential labourers to work on the tea plantations

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(Kanaoathipillai, 2011: 72). After becoming citizens of Sri Lanka, Indian-origin Tamil people have been recognized as one of the minority communities of the country. Due to this reason, they had to face many difficulties and challenges below the standard, labour exploitation, poor health care and sanitary facilities and deprivation of housing and other basic facilities were most felt by these people at the time. Their political socio-vulnerability is also reflected in their problems regarding land and house ownership and proper housing and sanitary facilities. Several movements took place in Sri Lankan history to win their rights and requirements as citizens of a particular country (Jayawardena, 1972: 107). This movement was committed to getting the right franchise and permanent citizenship rights.

Previous research has found that in the estate sector, women continue to face more difficulties than men in the same sector in terms of accessing basic needs, social protection, employment opportunities, getting education and health care etc. The bitter truth of this is that they have no opportunities to maintain their lives as normal way as women who live in other sectors of the country enjoy. It is an established fact that, in general, women are more vulnerable than men, but estate sector women are more vulnerable than other women in Sri Lanka (Philip, 2003: 4). Though they play a crucial role in the national economy and contribute to foreign exchanges, they are living with very basic social conditions and are faced with severe poverty condition. Women in the plantation sector have been the main drivers of both the household and the plantation economies. They are mainly engaged in labour-intensive tasks such as tea plucking and rubber tapping (Kurian, 1998: 16). Individuals living in estate and rural communities experience a variety of economic and social constraints, including shortfalls in access to productive assets like land and water, gaps in physical infrastructures like power, transport and communications, imperfectly functioning product and input markets, inadequate technology and weak institutional arrangements (Biyawila, 2007: 68).

The domestication of women is neither a new nor a culturally specific phenomenon, which is why that scene might feel a little incongruous, even comical, in most peoples' minds. The domestication of women can be defined as a woman's place in the home (Dolan and Gitzinger, 1994: 19). However, this "women tend the home mentality" is limiting to the very potential of a family unit. By painting women as only useful at home, it devalues the level to which the man can contribute in that sphere and limits the economic effectiveness of the woman in the workplace. This mentality also puts extra pressure on women who work to not only be responsible for their occupations but be largely responsible for the running of the home as well (Dominelli, 2002: 103).

### *Statement of the Problem*

Many studies that have been conducted on the estate sector in Sri Lanka have concentrated on the upcountry estate sector, such as estates in Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Bandarawela. However, there is a niche in the other parts of the country as there were no or very few studies on estate women in the low country. Hence, the present study was conducted covering Indian-origin Tamil women in the southern part of the country. Although still a country of Indian origin, Tamil people live as a separate community; in the Southern part, they live mixing with Sinhala majorities. In this context, the study has explored the research problem of why the estate sector women have been marginalized and excluded from the mainstream social process and how they have become a voiceless community in social life.

Previous researchers' opinion was that estate sector women, who constitute a considerable number of Sri Lanka's population, continue to face more difficulties than men in the estate sector accessing basic needs, social protection, employment opportunities, getting education and health care. Further, they are owing to cultural norms and discriminate from various spheres. The bitter truth of this is they have no opportunities to continue their lives as the normal way women who live in another sector of the country. Overall, although all women are vulnerable, women in the estate sector women are more vulnerable rather than women in other sectors of Sri Lanka.

Most previous studies on the estate sector have concentrated upcountry estate sector, such as Nuwara Eliya, Badulla and Bandarawela. As a result, there is a gap in studies on the low country or southern province estate sector. Therefore, the present study finds its niche in the geographic locations as well. Although, originally, a large amount of estate Tamils were residents of the upcountry estates, later on, especially after the independence in Sri Lanka, Indian-origin Tamils moved to the southern part of the country due to expanding the tea, and rubber plantations into these areas. Still, of Indian origin, Tamil people live as a separate community; in the Southern part, they live in mixing with Sinhala majorities. This study focuses on finding out the reasons behind the domestication of estate women and how they have become a voiceless community in social life.

### *Research Methodology*

The study has used mixed methods in data collection and analysis. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected and analysed. Questionnaires, interviews, observation and key informant interviews were employed as techniques of data collection. Semi-structured interviews and key informant interviews were used to collect qualitative data, and a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. Respondents

to the qualitative data collection were selected purposively to represent various segments of society, such as the elders, the young generation, women and key informants. Respondents to the quantitative data collection methods were selected through a simple random method and represented 30% of the total families of the study location. Primary data was collected from the Thalgaswala estate in the Galle district in southern Sri Lanka. Thalgaswala Estate is one of the large estates in the Nagoda divisional secretariat office area. Mainly the estate belongs to the Nagoda and Niyagama Divisional Secretariat office area. A large portion of the state belongs to the Nagoda divisional secretariat area. Thalgaswala estate lies between two divisional secretariat office areas in Galle district and has a land area of 600 acres. Thalgaswala estate is located in the Galle district. Tamils are the majority people of the state, and Sinhalese are getting second place. Many people in the state are Hindus. However, Buddhist and Christian people are here too. In this area, there is a very specific characteristic. That is, some people follow more than one religion. Some people follow Hinduism and Buddhism, and also some people follow Christianity and Buddhism. Reasons for the selection of this location include high unemployment, illiteracy rate and level of mixing with the majority Sinhalese. The livelihoods of the vast majority of the people in the estate are labour activities in the estate. Among people, 80% depend on the plantation of the estate. When their livelihoods break down in the estate, they try to search for alternative livelihoods outside of the estate. The following table shows the whole picture of the estate population.

**Table 1: Division-wise Population Density**

<i>Division</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Worker Popu.</i>	<i>Staff Popu</i>	<i>N/w Popu</i>	<i>Total by Ethnicity</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
<b>Lower</b>	Sinhala	10	30	40	80	623
	Tamil	269	07	267	543	
<b>Upper</b>	Sinhala	00	01	04	05	608
	Tamil	367	00	236	603	
<b>Middle</b>	Sinhala	04	00	00	04	151
	Tamil	111	00	36	147	
<b>Upper Middle</b>	Sinhala	74	04	75	153	305
	Tamil	53	00	99	152	
<b>North</b>	Sinhala	04	01	07	12	66
	Tamil	40	00	14	54	
<b>South</b>	Sinhala	04	00	07	11	17
	Tamil	04	00	02	06	
<b>Total</b>		940	43	787	1770	1770

Source: Estate Administration Office

**Table 2: Sample of the Study**

<i>Name of the division</i>	<i>Sample and Methods</i>	
	<i>Questionnaire Survey (50%)</i>	<i>Interviews</i>
Upper	41	05
Middle	51	06
Lower	18	02
Gallinda	11	01
North	11	01
South	01	
Total	<b>133</b>	15

15 women were purposively sampled for interviews. Before the data analysis, gathered data was recorded, and transcription categorization and thematization were done.

**Table 3: Nature of the interviewed population of the study**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Number</i>
Young 18-30	03
Mother 31- 45	03
Middle Age 46 - 55	03
Old Age 56 - 65	03
66 >	03

Before the data analysis, gathered data was recorded, transcription categorised and thematized. Before beginning the relatively arduous process of empirical data collection, it was necessary to consider alternative data collection methods, including finding the information in existing texts and literature and interviewing participants who have the required data.

Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research. Data were categorized into four themes.

- Personal data
- The economic condition of these women
- The social condition of these women
- The political condition of these women

## Results and Discussion

The analysis of data involved a process of transforming and modelling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting results, and supporting decision-making. The following four themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaires with the various respondents: poverty, lack of skills and ability, community/society participation and representation, decision-making

**The poverty condition of women in minority ethnic groups in the Estate Sector:** In the past, poverty was understood as an economic weakness, but now it has changed and another perception has emerged regarding poverty. There are several aspects in terms of poverty. Poverty is mainly viewed as an indicator of a lack of access to resources and income opportunities. However, it has other aspects of social positioning such as geographical location, age, gender, class, ethnicity, community structure, community decision-making process, and political issues that determine poor people's vulnerability (Adger, et al., 2006). According to the gathered data, there are many reasons for poverty in the study location. These reasons are described as follows:

**Low Income:** The main reason for the economic poverty among these women is low income. The status of monthly income has been depicted using the following chart: Paralleling the living costs of the country, the monthly income level of these women is not enough to even fulfil their daily needs.

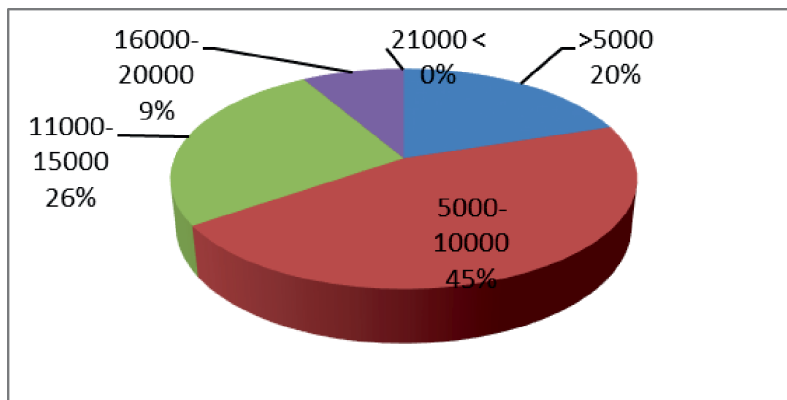


Chart No. 1: Monthly income level of the respondents

According to the above table, we can identify the nature of the monthly income level. A large number of women belong to the 5000 LKR–10000 LKR monthly income category. As a percentage, it was 45%. The reason behind it was that they are daily wage holders. Respondents who were under the category of 21000 LKR,

workers in garment industries, do not earn more than 2100 per month. According to their occupation status table, we can see this situation. Most of the women in these minority communities have engaged in unstable sectors. Due to the instability of their livelihood, they have no proper income to fulfil their daily needs.

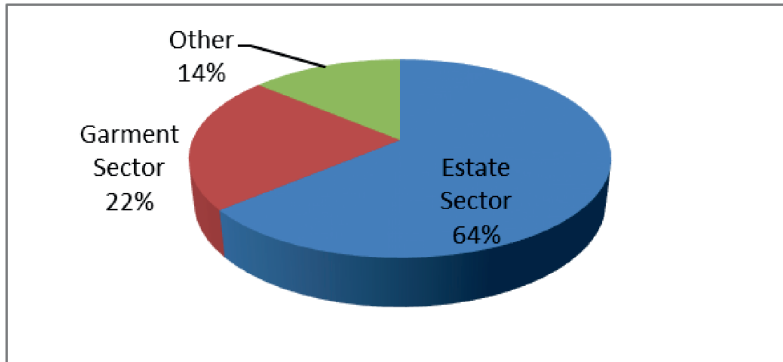


Chart No. 2: Unstable Livelihoods

According to the chart, a large number of women are employed in the estate sector. As a percentage, it is 64%. Altogether, garment sectors and other categories account for 36%. Women, who are engaged in the estate sector, get a low salary scale. According to their opinions, they said that it is not enough even to fulfil their daily basic needs.

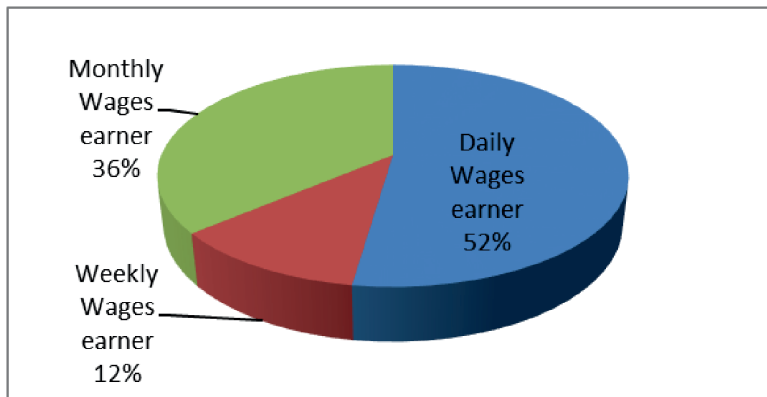


Chart No. 3: Irregular Wage Earning

The daily wage category had the highest number of women, and the percentage was 52%. The monthly wage category was 36%. Daily and weekly wages were paid to labourers for irregular work on the estate and outside the estate. Monthly wage labourers were regular workers in the estate. Labourers in the garment sector also belong to the

“monthly wage labourers category. Tea pluckers are bound to a minimum daily norm, and it determines the eligibility of a worker for a particular day’s payment of wages. If a worker fails to fulfil the daily norm, she becomes automatically disqualified for her daily wage. If a worker plucks above the daily norm, she will be paid an additional payment calculated by the number of kilogrammes above the norm.

And female headship also paves the way for poverty. Especially, they have been unable to access their property, such as the houses that their husbands built. More specifically, it can be seen the difference between female-headed households and male-headed households. Female-headed households, as well as households led by widows, single women, and women whose husbands are absent. Female-headed households in the estate deserve special attention since they are typically disadvantaged regarding access to land, labour, credit, and insurance markets, discriminated against by cultural norms, and suffer from, among others, high dependency burdens, economic immobility, and the “double day burden” of their heads. Although it is commonly stated that female-headed households are more vulnerable than households headed by men in terms of shocks and downside risks, little is known empirically about this issue. Despite the abundance of reasons why female-headed households may suffer more from deprivation, empirical evidence on how they translate into, as well as the gender dimensions of, poverty is ambiguous (Chant, 2008: 182).

### **Lack of Skills and Ability**

**Lack of Education:** Education is the most powerful instrument for empowering women. Women who have a good education are straightforward and always try to empower their families and children as well. The education level of rural women is low, particularly among estate sector women. The women of the estate have not completed regular education. Poverty is the main reason for a lack of education. And also, this society also favoured male education. The following table indicates the education level of the respondents women. Poverty is not restricted to one dimension, e.g., income, but manifests itself in all domains of life, such as housing, education, and health (Barry, 2001: 138). It means to alleviate poverty, it should empower people through education. Then only they can understand their poverty trap. Without the ability to read, write, and do basic arithmetic, rural women are going to be forever trapped in very low-skilled jobs, if they can find employment at all (Peters, 2001: 64). According to the chart, it can be mentioned that a large number of women belong to the category of ‘not attending school’. Only a very small percentage of women have completed



primary education. In fact, only 10 per cent of respondents have passed the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of school education.

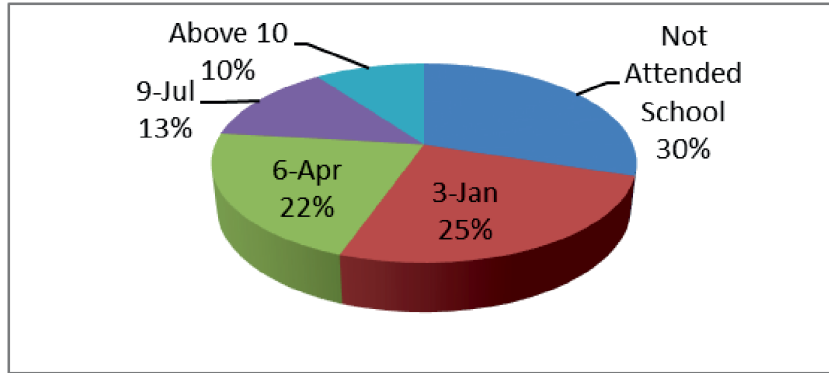


Chart No. 4: Education Level of the Respondents

Liberal feminists are particular about equal opportunity for education for both genders, but radical feminists question the quantity and quality of education that is accessible to both genders. They believe gender bias in education is the cause of the perpetuation of female oppression (Mannathoko, 1992: 163). They make the case for women's empowerment through education and think that it will lead to gender parity and dispel societal expectations of women's roles.

Lack of education is another part of their domestication. Uneducation paves the way for a lack of skills. This condition is a barrier to getting proper livestock and continuing it. Due to this reason, they are unable to go beyond the estate to find livestock. If they find out about the livestock, they are unable to do that regularly due to a lack of skills. Therefore, they had to limit their lives to the estate. Also, their lack of education and dropping out of school led to early marriages (Philips, 2003: 17). According to the European Institute of Gender Equality, early marriages are marriages of individuals whose level of physical, emotional, sexual, and psychosocial development makes them unable to freely consent to marriage. There is a tendency for girls to marry early in the estate sector. They drop out of school beyond the proper age, and then they join the labour force in the estate sector. Early marriages may be a burden for them because they have less experience in their lives and society. Early marriages further caused their domestication. One of the respondents has revealed this idea, and according to this statement, it could be identified that the domestication of girls started when they were in childhood. After leaving their education, they had to look after their siblings, or else they had to work in the estate.

*“I did not go to school. My parents could not spend money on our studies. Although I had a desire to go to school, my father said that there was no need to go to school, and when you are 10 to 12 years old, you can go to work and earn money. After I left the school, I had to look after my younger siblings”.*

For several generations, they have been poor, and due to this, they have continued their lives, fulfilling only their daily needs. Parents were daily wage labourers, and they were unable to provide a proper education for their children. Because of their poverty, many of them had to give up their education. When they left school, these girls had to help maintain and improve the economic condition of the family. Though they have no experience taking care of children, they have survived in this context. According to the following statement, further evidence can be seen of this condition.

*“I studied for up to 2 years. My parents then stopped funding my studies. I had to look after my younger siblings. When I was 13 years old, I started to work in the estate sector”.*

Because of poverty, not only did they have to lose their formal education, but they also had to sacrifice their desires in order to contribute to their family's income. Although they do not contribute to the family's income in a direct way, indirectly they have contributed to it. This is the pioneering reason and first step in the domestication of women in the estate sector. Mainly, the eldest daughter of a family has to face this condition. The following statement from the interview indicates this scenario:

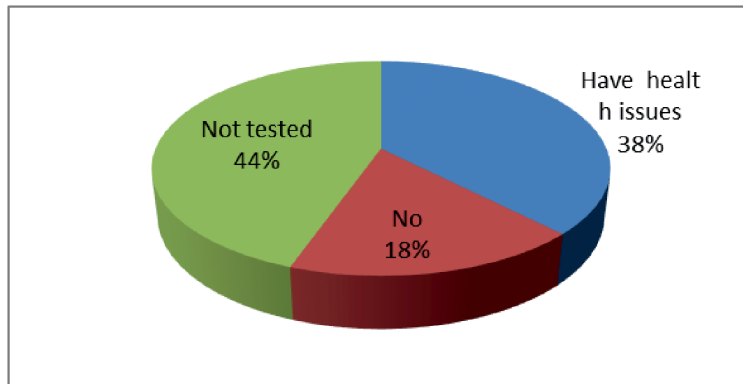
*“Though I worked the whole day, I got less salary than my husband. My older daughter looked after her younger siblings. Otherwise, I can't go to work. She sacrificed her life on behalf of her siblings.”*

The liberal perspective is also concerned with women's liberation. Whatever the case, their aim is for women to have equal positions as men in education, be liberated from men's suppression, and be involved in decision-making and activities that will be in favour of their word choice. However, these women have no equal right to education. Many factors have contributed to the low education level of these women. Among them, external factors are the main causes, such as poverty, a lack of resources and shortcomings in the school. Interview number 4 further explains how these external factors contribute to the lack of education in this sector.

*“In the school, there were many shortcomings. Teachers came, and within a short period, they transferred. So they couldn't continue their education. Then they also engaged in estate work. My daughters help me with household chores. My daughter got married when she was 15 years old”* (Interview 04).

**Poor Health Condition:** Being healthy is very important for everyone who engages in hard work. Health is not only about physical well-being but also mental

well-being. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as ‘an idyllic blend of mental, physical, and social well-being’. According to this definition, it could be identified that these women have a low level of well-being. The following chart depicts the health condition of the women workers.



**Chart No. 5: Health Condition of the Respondents**

According to the above chart, we can identify that many women among the respondents are suffering from at least one of the health issues. Respondents who mentioned that they were suffering from health issues were 38%. Some of them were suffering from cancer, some of them were suffering from diabetes and some of them were suffering from low blood pressure or high blood pressure. All of these are non-communicable diseases. A significant number of women respondents were patients of non-communicable diseases. Because they have no good dietary system and they also can't access good health facilities. Even when they are suffering from serious health issues, they are unable to access proper treatment because of their economic condition. Though they use government hospitals for health facilities, they finally have to buy medicine from the private sector. It was difficult for them to spend money due to a lack of income. The poor health condition of these women paved the way for their domestication and they are not actively participating in work either.

These patients should go to medical clinics weekly or monthly. Though they participate in the medical clinics of the government hospitals, those are rural hospitals. And they also have to buy medicine prescribed by doctors. They have to have money in hand to buy it from pharmacies. For this reason, they normally don't participate in medical clinics. So they have to work despite serious health issues. This condition can further be identified by the following statement: In this way, they had to have struggled to survive and continue their lives.

*“I am a cancer patient. Though I am suffering from cancer, we can't stay at home. If we stay at home, where can we find money or who will give us money? I must participate in the medical clinic. But how can I participate in it? If I participate in the medical clinic, I can't find money to spend tomorrow. Though I participate in clinics, they ask us to buy medicine from private pharmacies. How can I buy medicine from it?”*

**Lack of Land and House Ownership:** In this society, men and women have to struggle to live without separation. On the estate, the Tamil female community has many problems in relation to basic needs. If they want to survive, they should have basic needs such as food, water, sanitation, shelter, and protection. However, they are at a low level of fulfilment of basic needs. If they want to fulfil their basic needs, they have to struggle for them. As an example, they have no proper shelters. They are living in separate rooms. If the estate authority forces them to leave those line rooms, they have no option in relation to shelters. To build a new house, they have no extra land or ownership of land.

**Land Ownership:** The land is the most valuable natural resource for the people. Although these women have lived on this estate for several generations, there is no ownership of the land. It is a very tragic situation for them. Because they do not have ownership, they have been unable to build their homes in a sustainable way. Still, they live in small-scale line rooms that are owned by the estate authority. Though authority is given to them, the authority of the line room is inherited only by men. The following chart depicts the nature of land and housing ownership.

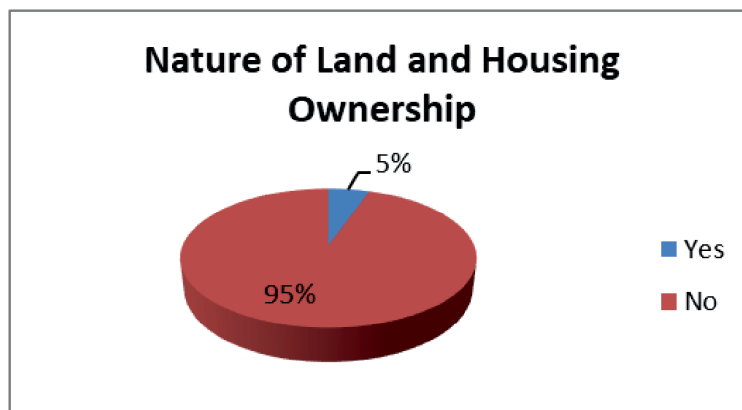


Chart No. 6: Nature of women's land ownership

Only 5% of respondents own a house or property. The ownership was inherited by their husband. After the death of their husbands, these women have taken ownership, and when their sons are grown, they have to delegate their lineage to the son. The

ownership of the line rooms belongs to men as the head of the home, and they keep authority over the women. Even these women cannot raise their voices, even at home. According to some respondents, when they raised their voices on behalf of their rights in the home, the man who owned the house retaliated against them and used physical power to control them.

**Community and Society Participation and Representation:** Community participation means participation in common, community, or social organisations. In other words, community participation is the involvement of people in a community in projects or associations to solve their own problems. Women in many patriarchal societies have to live in subordination, and due to the subordination, their social participation is also subordinate. Women in minority groups face the same scenario when they engage with the community and participate in social activities. According to their responses, the following information could emerge regarding social and community participation: According to them, it could be identified that they are not very interested in the participation of community associations for various reasons. The following chart shows how they participate in the workers association in the estate. It could be depicted that although membership in the workers' association is compulsory for workers of the estate, many women do not participate in the workers association, or at least they have no desire to join those associations. Among these respondents, 21% of women have membership in the community (workers) association. 72% of women respondents have no membership in the workers association.

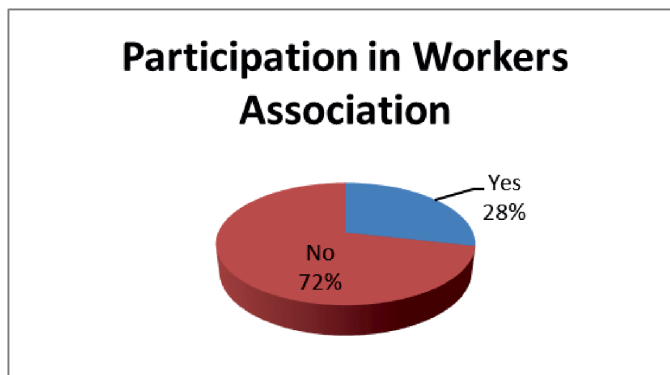
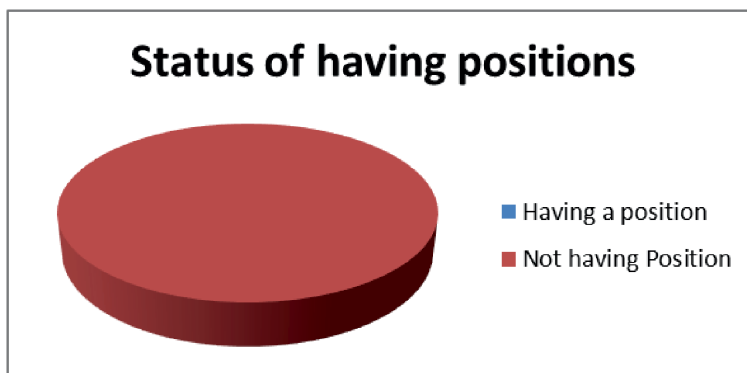


Chart No. 7: Participation in the Workers Association

Though there are no community organisations on the estate, there are worker organisations. According to their statements, it can be shown how the situation can be faced with difficulties without the participation of workers' organisations.

Collective representation is very important when the particular group is a minority community or marginalised group. Though it is very important, collective representation is very low among these women. It has been discouraged by the estate authority. If these people are collectively represented, it might be an issue for authority when they are going to win their rights in the working field and also in the domestic field. Due to this reason, they had to become passive communities in both the public and domestic domains.

Although the women participate in the workers' association of the estate, they are unable to get leadership even at the grass-roots level. The plantation's social structure is completely patriarchal. The lack of inclusion of women in decision-making is a big challenge in the estate sector. This situation has paved the way for women to become part of this voiceless community.



**Chart No. 8: Status of having positions in workers' organizations or community organizations**

The table has shown that these women have a considerable position in the organisation. In fact, they have no positions in the associations. The answer to "no" was no from everybody. It means even one woman has no considerable position. When the researcher asked about participation in the decision-making process in the association, they said that the majority of Sinhala people make the decisions, and they are supposed to accept those decisions.

*"We don't participate in community organisations." There are no community organisations among us. But it is compulsory to participate in the worker's organisation. Once a month, it is conducted."*

Though there are no community organisations on the estate, there are worker organisations. According to their statements, it can be shown how vulnerable situations can be without the participation of workers' organisations.

*“Without participation from the organisation, we can’t go or work the next day. Though we participated continuously, we didn’t get any benefit from it”*

Participation in decision-making is very important to overcome vulnerable conditions. In the majority and minority contexts, the majority community plays a powerful role in the common ground. This condition is the same for these women. Sinhala and Tamil workers work together on the estate. And also, the workers association also gathered with those two communities. According to their statements, we can identify the nature of their positions within the worker’s organisation.

*“They forced us to participate in that meeting and discuss some difficulties, but we never solved those problems and couldn’t find answers for those difficulties. Without that association, we would not have participated in or engaged with other associations. Sinhala workers are leaders of these associations; they only hope for our participation.*

## **Decision Making**

**Decision-making and power relations within the family:** Participation in decision-making is very important to overcome vulnerable conditions and gather voices. Being an active member in society or in-house makes that particular member a strong member and well aware of those decisions. In the minority context, the majority community plays a powerful role in the common ground, and the minority community has to follow and adhere to their decisions. This condition is the same for these women. Sinhala and Tamil workers work together on the estate. And also, the workers association also gathered with those two communities. According to their statements, there are no opportunities to get a position in the association of women or workers. According to the following statement, it can be understood how this condition prevails in this estate.

*“They forced us to participate in that meeting and discuss some difficulties, but we never solved those problems and couldn’t find answers for those difficulties. Without that association, we would not have participated in other associations. Sinhala workers are leaders of these associations; they expect our participation only.”*

The constitution has set the minimum legal age of marriage in Sri Lanka at 18 years. Sexual relations with a girl under 18 years of age, known as ‘defilement’, are illegal and punishable by law, whether or not the sexual union was consensual. Nevertheless, despite national legislation that would seem to protect girls and women from structural gender-based violence, sexual violence occurs at an alarming rate in Sri Lanka. In fact, decisions regarding their lives cannot be taken by these women. Many of the respondents revealed that they were unable to make decisions regarding life events such as marriage and the partner they selected to marry. The following

statement has revealed the real scenario for them regarding decision-making in their private spheres.

*“My husband was drunker. And he was also a gambler. He used to spend every cent on alcohol and gambling. I had to face many difficulties in raising my children. My husband always disturbed me and hit me. We got married when I was 14 years old. Now I realise that it is a very small time period in our lives. Many girls get married when they are in their teens. Though it is prohibited, they do it secretly.”*

In *The Woman in the Body*, Emily Martin (1989) documented the alienation that many women experience when confronted with their own bodies. Menstruation is seen as something that happens to women and not as something that is a part of them. The feeling of not being in control of the body was a traumatic experience for some women. The radical feminist theories have a good argument against the marginalisation and suppression of women by male-dominated societies and cultural norms. They thought that women were suppressed by a male-dominated culture. These women also have to depend on a male-dominated culture (Martin, 1989: 308).

Widowers have restrictions on going to Kovil, and widows don't have any restrictions on it. And they also can't wear ornaments after the death of their husband. But they should wear “thali” to symbolise whether she has gotten married.

Marriage is a personal phenomenon. For several centuries, the marriage of a woman has been decided by her parents or an outsider in her life. In the estate sector, this condition has become common among many women. If a woman gets married according to her opinion, she has to face many difficulties. If not, she leaves home, giving up every relationship with family members. Sometimes her husband, who is found out by her parents, is a strange person to her. When they do not understand each other properly, family problems will arise.

*“That was a proposed marriage. When they proposed to me, I opposed it. But my parents forced me to get married. Until I got married to him, I hadn't seen him. He was 14 years older than me.”*

Normally, women depend on men in the South Asian region. When they are in childhood, they depend on their father. When they are growing up, they become lovers, and at that time, they depend on their male partners. After getting married, they have to depend on their husbands, and when they are getting old, women depend on their elder son or sons. In this way, women depend on the superiority of men in their lives. Male dominance is crucial in Tamil culture. Many women in this field have been alienated from their daily activities and from what they had. Because of this alienation, they have been unable to control their money and what they earn. Due to this, they are domesticated and become voiceless.



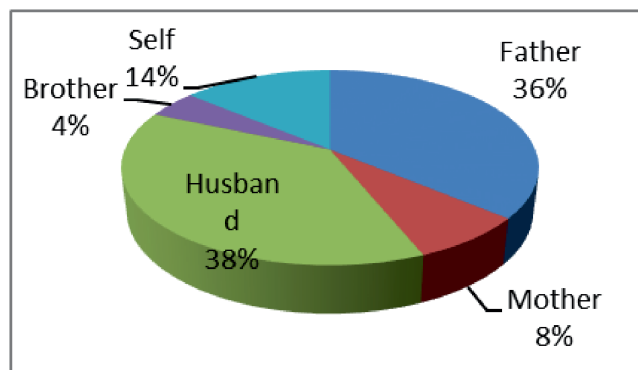
*“He controlled and used money at home and even money that I earned; when I wanted money, I had to request it from him. Sometimes he hits me at that time. Although I think that I don’t give money that I earn, he took money forcefully in the evening”.*

Every person has a right to education. It has been certified by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. Though it is a universal right, the rights of women have been violated by outsiders. The right to education for girls is controlled and decided by their fathers or brothers. These two people have decided whether she wants to get an education or not. According to interview number 4, she has explained her experience with regard to her education. Many girls have sacrificed their desire for an education in order to support their families and their income. Whether it is liked or disliked, she stopped her education on the wellbeing of the family. Finally, she had to have obeyed these decisions.

*“Though I had the desire to go to school, my father said that there was no need to go to school, and when you are in 8 or 9 years, you can go to earn money”*

The working environment of these women and their working conditions are also decided by men or estate authorities. They have to obey the decisions they make. Though there is the freedom to make working decisions for people outside the estate, these women are unable to make working decisions. Although they face financial and other problems when they are working on the estate, they have to adapt to and survive this condition. Interview number 02 explains this in the following way:

*“When we worked on the estate, we couldn’t work anywhere outside of the estate. We had to survive our lives using that small amount of money”.*



**Chart No. 9: Money Controlling Power in the Family**

The above chart shows the person who controls family finances. Father, husband, and brother control money in many families. According to the questionnaire survey,

it could be identified that money is controlled by the husband in a large number of families in the study sample. As a percentage, it was 38% of the total respondent families. The second highest percentage was held by fathers, and the percentage was 36%. Income was controlled by the mother or a particular woman who held the financial power in only 28 families out of the total households, and as a percentage, it was 22%.

According to the above data, it has shown how family finance is controlled. It shows how financial power is distributed in a male-dominated society. The priority revolves around male members of the family. Accordingly, the father and husband always lead the list, and then it goes to the brother and son.

## Findings

According to data, estate workers face prejudice in accessing assets and resources and are more likely to be involved in unpaid family-related tasks or low-paying work. They continue to rank near the bottom of every economic, social, and political indicator, from income, education, and health to political involvement. Domestication of women in the estate sector was discovered to be committed for a variety of reasons, including poverty, a lack of skills and competence to represent them and continue proper livestock, poor decision-making, and a lack of representation in society or the community. It was discovered that poverty prevailed in this study for their upbringing, family, age of marriage, education and schooling, and age of employment. These factors have had a significant impact on household mobility.

Issues about a family member's illness were substantially more important at the household level than at the community level. More precisely, the study discovered that women in the estate sector perform the majority of unpaid and low-wage housework, unskilled labour, and care labour in rural areas. Domestication was primarily facilitated by these women's lack of property and house ownership rights, as well as access to health care and education. Raising voices is critical for social and communal representation. When a group is a minority community or a marginalised group, collective representation is critical. Collective representation will help to raise voices, and if they do not have collective representation, they will remain voiceless.

Even though it is critical, these women have no opportunity to express their individuality in public. Furthermore, women in the estate sector continue to be underrepresented in decision-making in all domains, both at home and in the public realm. For some women, the struggle to raise their voices began at home. In other cases, women were fairly direct about their feelings about becoming involved in social and

community associations and societal initiatives. The cultural devaluation of females follows, with males having greater status, power, and independence than females. Women have accepted their inherent inadequacy as well as the low value placed on them. Gender was more prominent in female domestication and their exclusion from voices. Marital status was supposed to be more prominent in the context of women's domestication and voiceless condition. Despite progress, failure to marry or failure in marriage is a total failure for many women, and this circumstance has opened the path to being domestic and mute. Parental status is another important motivation for being domestic, and motherhood allows depressed women to speak out against unfair family or public-sector conditions. Children are the mother's special responsibility in this community.

In comparison to men, women are not socially protected in their daily activities. In any case, the woman has engaged in several activities that may have outweighed her personal interests, yet the guy is the one who obtains statutory social support. The lack of social protection for daily activities also contributes to these women's domestication. The plantation structure, as well as the limits imposed by the industry as a whole, all have a direct impact on the domestication of women, and poverty has become a critical factor for exclusion from voices.

The customary authority of male dominance and the cult of domesticity of estate sector women are primarily responsible for the domestication of these women. Poverty and a lack of skills and aptitude, as well as a lack of decision-making power, have caused these women to be excluded from the public and private spheres, as well as from communal and social representation. Meanwhile, discriminatory practices towards women, such as inheritance laws that give land ownership primarily to men or the prioritisation of boys over girls in education, may also contribute to women's lower status, which is influenced by domestication. Women in the estate sector are seen as a voiceless pillar of the Sri Lankan economy.

## Conclusion

The lack of adequate social protection for women in the estate sector has made them vulnerable. Their frailty has restricted their creative output to the domestic sphere. The community in the estate sector has consistently associated women's roles with those in the home. All the activities that are considered as work and performed by the women are connoted as part of the domestic role. In certain situations, women may undertake public activities, but this activity is still perceived as a domestic role. They are still waiting to speak out against domestication because of their domestication. The women

in the estate sector understand and accept domestication as an obligation without any rejection because it is fundamentally established based on norms and culture. Later the administrative structure.

## Recommendations

Based on the above findings, it could be recommended that the estate authority should encourage these workers to do extra work outside the estate. It is a better pathway to ensure the reduction of risk associated with estate employment and low wages. These women should be aware of their rights, possibilities and their capability. Awareness programs are essential for young women to be aware of their capabilities and rights. Education is very important to the diversification of their skills and livelihood. Although the education level is not a significant factor in favour of diversification, the education facilities and access to other infrastructure facilities should be improved to harvest the fruit of income diversification and skill diversification. If human capital and human capability are improved through improving education facilities, these women would get skills and find better livelihood activities from outside the estates. Therefore, it may lead to a reduction in their poverty status as well. The findings also suggest that female household heads tend more towards income diversification. This is an indication that their bargaining power within the household has increased and therefore, women should be empowered more towards diversification strategies and more studies towards this aspect are highly essential in the future.

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