

### **F-33: Sri Lankan deaf culture**

A G Richard Perera<sup>1</sup>, G Kodituwakku<sup>2</sup>

*(<sup>1</sup>Dept of Special Education, National Institute of Education, <sup>2</sup>Dept of Educational Research, National Institute of Education)*

The educational policy of Sri Lanka with regard to deaf children is to integrate them with normal children. Specific nature of deaf culture has to be identified before deaf children are integrated into the normal culture. It is a prerequisite in the successful implementation of the policy of integration. Hence identification of the nature of deaf culture was the major aim of this qualitative research.

Seven research assistants who had the ability to communicate in the sign language were employed to collect qualitative data. They lived with 7 families who had deaf members for a minimum of 10 days during day time. They also visited 3 deaf schools and took down field notes in field diaries. Further a group of deaf people was interviewed by the researchers and consultants to the project. Data were classified into 10 categories representing different aspects of the culture. They are: Language, Belief, Custom, Taboo, Religion, Law, Institutions, Employment, Art and Day to day life.

Major findings of the study are: the use of different signs by deaf people with different socio-economic backgrounds, the insufficiency of technical methods and institutional apparatus/practices in fulfilling needs of the deaf people, the existence of dire need for communication, the devotion to the laws of the society and suspicion towards people and government institutions.

Recommendations of the study are establishment of a Sign Language Interpretation Service, erection of podia at playgrounds, assembly halls etc. to be used by sign language interpreters, reading news bulletin via electronic

media in sign language, introduction of writing, telephone to government institutions, preparation of a syllabus to impart knowledge and skills in sign language to teacher trainers, and revision of text books in accordance with deaf culture.