

The East Coast Veddas are one of the three major groups of indigenous people in Sri Lanka. A chena cultivating and hunter gathering type of lifestyle has changed due to various factors. Most of the present Veddas are agricultural laborours and seasonal fisherfolk. The objective of the study was to evaluate empirically the general belief that the Veddas are inferior in economic position. Data were collected from four villages: Kuluvenkerny, Parakaimadu, Nasiventivu and Mankerny, which still retain a Vedda identity. All families in the villages were interviewed and a questionnaire survey was also conducted.

Percentages of permanent houses in Kuluvenkeny and Parankaimadu were fifty and seventy six, respectively. These figures are high when compared with the district average of thirty six percent. In contrast, Nasiventivu and Manketrny reported lesser values as twenty-five and thirteen, respectively. Twenty five percent of households in Kuluvenkerny had pit latrines. Other villages had no reports on any type of latrines. Kuluvenkerny also reported a higher literacy rate than the district average while that in other villages was less. People in Kulvenkerny had higher in comes than other three villages.

Kulvekerny is situated close to the sea and the close proximity of the village to the main road facilitates fish marketing. Lifestyle in this relatively less disturbed when compared to that of villages that dominated chena cultivation this leads to higher and stable household incomes, which is followed by higher socio-economic status. A non-governmental organization is the causal agent for high percentage of permanent houses in Parankaimadu.

Results show that some vedda communities have higher socioeconomic status thus the general belief of low socioeconomic status of East Coast Vedddas cannot be generalized all communities.