

# **Background of the island-dwellers in Sri Lanka, and their propensity towards Criminality**

*(In reference with Delft Island)*

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## **Abstract**

Neduntheevu or Nedunthivy (Tamil), Delft (Sinhala and also known by Dutch ) is an island situated in the Palk Strait of Northern Sri Lanka. Delft is a flat island surrounded by shallow waters and beaches of coral chunks and sand. Delft is one of about 17 islands situated in a close proximity to Jaffna peninsula in Sri Lanka. Delft is the largest island out of the 17 islands also the furthest located island from the main land. There are identifiable significances of the communities living in islands and the related socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in comparison to the same of the people living in the main land. The key objective of this research paper is to identify the socio-economic, cultural and the geographical environment and to pursue the studies further to analysis the attributed tendency on criminal actions in particular within the aforementioned background. Generally, the public opinion is that those families living with lesser privileges and with the strident lifestyles show higher propensities to embrace in frequent crimes. Based on such phenomenon, further diagnosis to be endeavored through this study to substantiate whether the inferior life styles of island-dwellers which are much adverse compared to the families living in the main land, are factors affecting for higher rate of crimes or not. Therein, the study was focused directly on 25 families living in Delft island as a random sample, did discussions, observations, case studies, focused group discussions and the chain of discussions as well evolved in the study. The methodical analysis evolved on the data confirmed that the tendency of island-dwellers to involve in crimes represented rather low indicator of 6 % despites, the fact that their living in an adverse condition in comparison to those living in the main land. The above reported percentage of crimes too, were related to credit transactions, defaulted borrowers, stealing cattle, goats etc.

**Key Words:** Crime, Delft, Island-dwellers, socio-economic, culture, tourism

## **1. Introduction :**

Many records indicate that tendency towards criminal action was a generic feature prevailed since the humanitarian history. Typically, the competitiveness becomes the root cause for varied clashes whereas the emergence of clashes transpires due to other diverse reasons too. As per different theoretical perspectives, certain key factors are there to usher clashes such as; the disputes of the shared resources, land acquisition, private conflicts, psychological motivations and the surrounding factors of same such as, environmental discrepancies linked with the zonal attributes also allied with social, economic and geographical factors.

The scope of this research paper is to study the tendencies of island-dwellers to involve in criminal actions based on the analytical assessment of varied socio economic backgrounds of the people living in islands located at a distance from the main land.

When the basic information of the communities living in Delft Island is concerned, the total population represented the ethnic group of Tamil, and religious-wise there are Hindus as well as Christians. There are 25 villages and the total number of families living in Delft Island was 1,328. Gender-wise, there were 2,214 male and 2,316 female out of which 1,071 were school children (Ekanayaka 2014).

At present Delft is the largest island amongst the 17 islands in the Northern region also known as Neduntheevu and the extent of the island is 47.5 sq.km. The length of Delft Island is 9km. whereas, the width is 6 km. There are 35 km. on the land to reach the jetty named Kurikadduwan along the E-35 main road and to pass 13 km. to reach Delft island from the jetty of 1 hour sail in the sea.

A detailed analytical overview of the socio economic, cultural, religious and the geographical surrounding as well as the nature of criminal actions, and also the reasons and causes affected such criminal acts are the defined information illustrated in this research paper.

## **2. Research Problem**

Diverse revelations are imparted through wide-ranging researches and in line with the theoretical perspectives. It is apparent that specific propensities are there that communities living in poor economic, social and cultural environments and also those groups emerged through assorted sub cultures do have specific inclinations to criminal actions. The research problem of this research is to analyze in which way the criminal actions are influenced

island-dwellers when certain deprivations are encountered by them along with their socio-cultural, economical and geographical factors, in relation to the main land situations.

### **3. Objectives of the Research**

The analytical order of this Research Paper is based on the following Objectives

- To study the socio-economic, cultural and geographical surroundings of the community living in the island.
- To identify the life style of the above said community in relation to the aforementioned surroundings.
- To diagnose inheritable and varied habits including their predispositions of those living in the island.
- To identify the propensity of their social background on criminal actions
- To usher in potential series of actions to provide much advantageous living status for the communities living in the Delft island.

### **4. Literature Review**

Fajemirokun O. Adewale Timothy, Idowu Abimbola Oyewusi and Babajide Maiyegun, in Nigeria have done a research called *A GIS Approach to Crime Mapping and Management in Nigeria: A Case Study of Victoria Island Lagos* and through this paper authors analyzed on the utilization of GIS in the mapping and management of crimes in Nigeria using Victoria Island, an area in urban Lagos, as a case study ( Fajemirokun and at all ,2006). The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology to map crime is a rapidly expanding field that is, as this paper explained, still in a developmental stage, and a number of technical and ethical issues remain to be resolved. This paper has only given an overview of how GIS can be used as a potential analytical tool to reduce crime rate in Nigeria, using Victoria Island as a case study.

According to the report on *Violence against women in Solomon Islands Translating research into policy and action on the social determinants of health, done by World Health Organization 2013* they explained gender base harassment in Islands. This report says, one of the most significant consequences of gender inequality in Solomon Islands is the high level of gender-based violence women face, ranging from sexual violence, coercion, emotional and/or physical violence perpetrated by intimate and non-partners. Violence against women “reflects and reinforces inequality between men and women ... [compromising] the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its survivors.”(2) Violence against women has been largely normalized in the country: 73% of men and 73% of women believe violence against women is justifiable, especially for infidelity and “disobedience”, when

women do “not live up to the gender roles that society imposes”.(2) A total of 64% of women aged 15–49 who had ever been in a relationship reported having experienced some form of violence(emotional, physical and/or sexual) from an intimate partner, and 56% had experienced controlling behaviour. Women who believed they could occasionally refuse sex were four times more likely to experience violence from an intimate partner than those who did not. The research to disseminate results and work to develop responsive policies. Based on study findings, and capitalizing on political momentum, the Government further developed a national policy on the elimination of violence against women as well as a 10-year national action plan to guide its implementation (World Health Organization 2013).This research has discussed gender base violence and the disturbance factors that they faced from the island egs transportation, logistics and meals, language problems etc. In Sri Lanka number of studies explained criminality and victimization in unburn and rural context. One study done by the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages (2017) report named on “ People of Sri Lanka” has only explained all the ethnicities and characteristics belong to them(Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages (2017).There is no considerable research or studies in Islands In Sri Lanka and Ekanayake who worked delft police as the inspector of the police has done a book called *soduru paaradeesaya and its discussed all the cultural, social , legal information related to Delft Island*( Ekanayake, N,2013).Through this paper author seeks to develop research experience related to islands such as Delft in Sri Lanka.

## **5. Research Methodology**

### **• The field of Study**

Delft Island also named as Nedunthivy is the largest island in the Jaffna peninsula in the Northern region of Sri Lanka. There are 25 villages in this island and the land area is 47.5 Sq.km, To reach Delft island from the jetty named Kurikadduwan in Jaffna must sail one hour to pass 13 km. and the families living herein are only Tamils. Altogether 1,328 families are living in the island representing both religions of Hindu and Christian. The said families represented by 2,214 male and 2,316 female while 1,071 are schooling children. Fishing industry, Livestock farming, and varied industries attended through Palmyra were the main livelihoods. Delft island is in possession of varied constructions done by Fortugees, Dutch and UK nationals. At-a-glance, these constructions are visible as ruins to some extent yet, at present needed reconstructions are done by using calc-gneisses, limestone, coral and also

using Palmyra timber etc., Wild horses are roaming around whereas, horses had been originally brought to Delft from foreign countries during colonial periods.

In reference to the ruling system prevailed in the history, a regional administrator named Udayar Koddivelim had been there to administer the island prior to 1948. In the year 1950, the regional authorities had taken action to establish 3 Grama Niladhari divisions namely; East, West and Middle and the administration had been pursued under the leadership of 3 *Vidane* officials. Further advanced system is in prevalence that in the year 1979, Delft island had been re-demarcated into 6 Grama Niladhari divisions having entrusted all administrative functions to the Divisional Secretariat office. When the study is concerned, the Data gathering was proceeded based on this geographical neighborhood which is encompassed with the institutions of; Police, Hospital, School, Post office, Banks and several other Government institutions.

- **Sample and it's consistency**

At the inception of the study 25 families were selected from the Delft Island as a random sample and the analytical study is pursued in focus of these 25 families in reference to the prevailed socio-economic, cultural environment. A multi-dimensional approach was spread in respect of data collection such as; informal discussions, chains of discussions, focused group discussions while also, relating observations, and case studies. In this regard, the traders living in Delft, hotel owners, fishermen, community involved in Palmyra related actions and relevant Government officials too, were acted as interviewees. Out of 10 police officers involved on duties in the Delft police, 04 of them were contacted for discussions to collect data. Consequently, the overall sample of data providers was as follows.

1. Families living in Delft island	- 25
2. Members involved in varied LHs actions	- 10
3. Police Officers	- 04
4. Others	- 06
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>= 45</b>

- **Data Collection :**

In the process of Data Collection the initial process adopted was to proceed with face-to-face discussions (informal). Besides, a questionnaire was applied to gather live-data. Subsequently, the chain of discussions including focused group discussions were convened with police officers including other data providers having conversations separate with female and male officials.

- **Secondary data revelation ::**

It was divulged that accessing historically written sources on Delft Island was extremely tenuous. However, after a successful effort the desired secondary data could be collected by accessing divisional secretariat, police, hospital etc., while also using historic name boards.

- **Data Analysis**

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were procured, while more qualitative data were recorded and brought under analysis than the statistical data.

## 6. Findings

In the sphere of Research, studies were performed in pertinent to Livelihoods, socio-economic background of 25 families, the below mentioned details of data providers are presented for the convenience of data analysis.

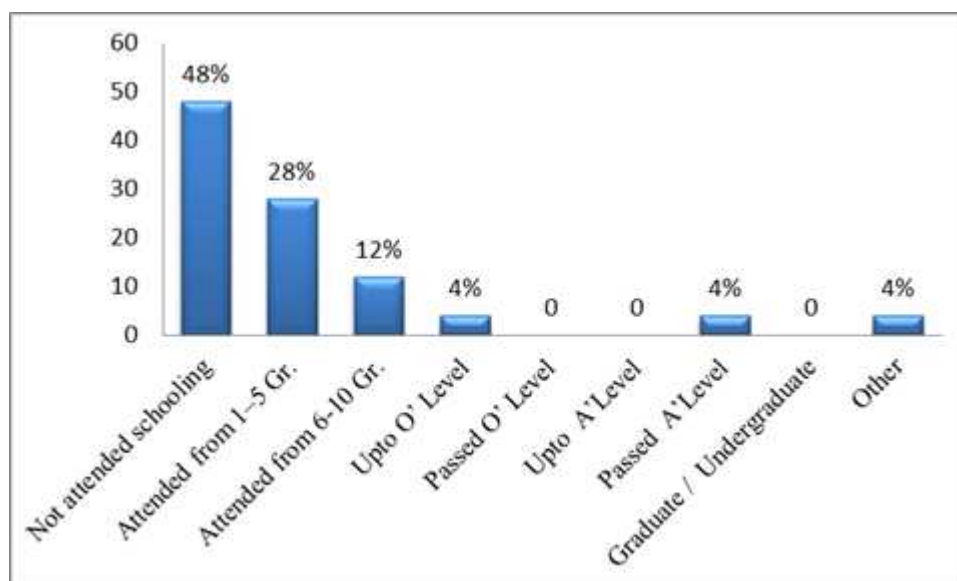
**Table – 1 : Classified Data of the data providers**

Classification	Number(s)	Percentage
Female	11	44%
Male	14	56%
Age Distribution		
Between 18 to 24	04	16 %
Between 25 to 34	07	28 %
Between 35 to 44	06	24 %
Between 45 to 54	02	08 %
Above < 55	06	24 %
Academic Levels		
Not attended schooling	12	48 %
1 <sup>st</sup> grade – 5 <sup>th</sup> . grade	07	28 %

6 <sup>th</sup> grade – 10 <sup>th</sup> grade	03	12 %
Upto O Level	01	04 %
O' Level Succeeded	00	00 %
Upto A' Level	00	00 %
A' Level succeeded	01	04 %
Graduates / Undergraduates	00	00 %
Other	01	04 %
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	12	48 %
Unmarried	04	16 %
Married/Living Separately	01	04 %
Divorced	01	04 %
Widow	07	28 %
Other	00	00 %
<b>Religions</b>		
Hindu	19	76 %
Christian	06	24 %
Other	00	00 %
<b>Employment / Livelihoods</b>		
Fishery	07	28 %
Livestock Farming	04	16 %
Palmyra Related occupations	06	24 %
Self-employments	02	08 %
Trade	02	08 %
Government employments	01	04 %
Safari Jeep Drivers	01	04 %
Other	02	08 %
<b>Number of Children (n=21) are unmarried)</b>		
No children	03	12 %
One Child	02	08 %
Between 2 – 4 Children	18	72 %
Above 5 Children	02	08 %

Nature of residence in the Delft Island		
From the Birth	14	56 %
After the marriage	05	20 %
Due to the employment	04	16 %
Other reasons	02	08 %
Duration of living in the Delft island		
Less than 10 Years	01	04 %
Between 10 – 20 years	05	20 %
Between 21 – 30 years	08	32 %
Between 31 – 40 years	07	28 %
Between 41 – 50 years	01	04 %
Between 51 – 60 years	02	08 %
Above 61 years	01	04 %

**Graph 01 : Educational levels of the people living in Delft island**

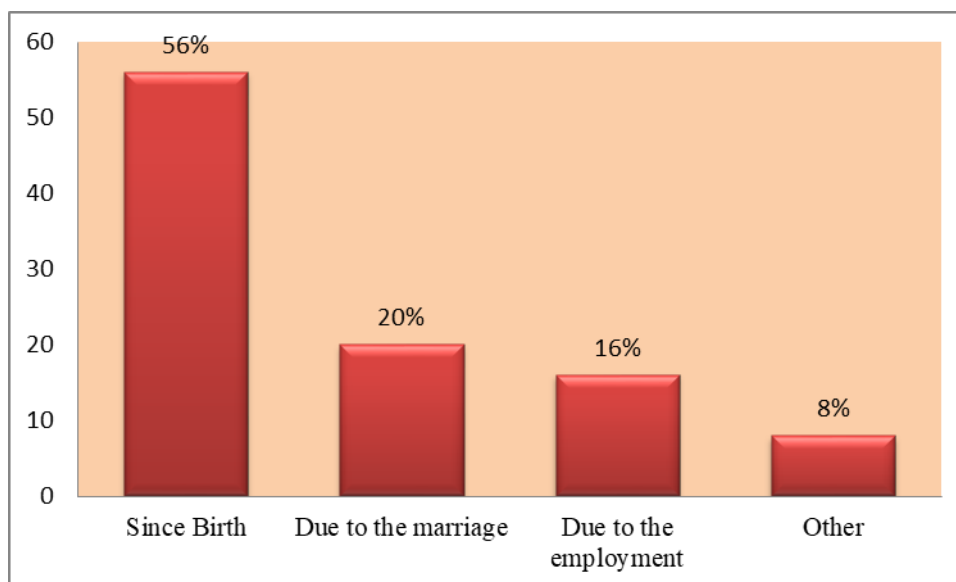


*Source :: Field Research /2019*



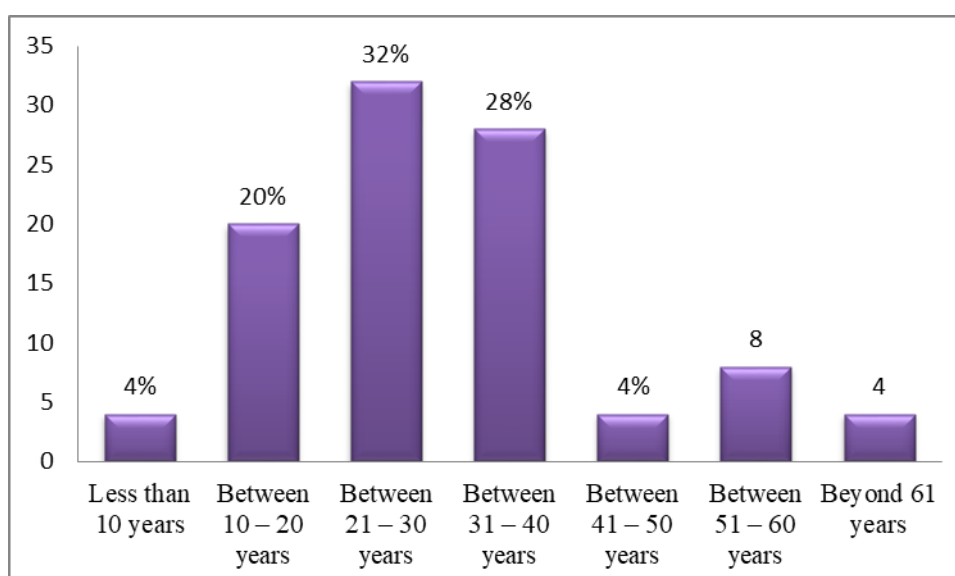
The summarized data on residencies and the duration of living in Delft island is stated below.

**Graph No. 2: Disposition of the residencies in the Delft island**



*Source :: Field Research/2019*

**Graph No. 3 : Residential duration of interviewees in Delft Island**



*Source :: Field Research/2019*

## 7. Discussion :

In the midst of varied repercussions such as extremely limited avenues towards livelihoods, the lessening opportunities for Agriculture is a burning issue. Inaccessibility for irrigable water facilities had created deficiency of stable income of the majority of families. Hence, people moved their livelihoods for avenues such as fishery, Palmyra industry, animal husbandry being alternative options.

*“ .....We are fishermen. What we do to catch Prawns, Crabs and Cuttlefish is that we use structured weir with the coverage of nettings and we use small boats on shallow sea to reach the weirs.” ..... 29 years old Fisherman.*

*“ .....Palmyra Tree is the heart of people living in Delft. The houses we live and the basic furniture we use are made out of the Palmyra tree. Most of our colleagues involved in extracting toddy from Palmyra trees. Once a sufficient stock of Toddy is extracted we need to deliver the stock to the collecting center. The staff of collecting center set off our payments therein. We are not permitted to sell our product to the private buyers. If we do that, we are to be charged by police. We can sell Palmyra fruit for visitors touring at Delft. It is a good source of income. “.....52 years old person involved in Palmyra industry”*

*“ .....Fisheries industry is one of the leading activities here. There are 5 Fisheries Associations here to oversee the fisheries industry. As a whole 1,300 fishermen are in this island. There are 55 rafters including 100 floats and 420 Motor Boats available for fishing. When the daily schedules are concerned the fishermen here are busy in catching Crabs in 2 days per week, 03 days in a week to catch other varieties of fish and to rest in 2 days, each week. There are fixed rates for the catch, in which a kilo of Crabs be sold at Rs. 650/=, Prawns at the rate of Rs. 550/= , and the selling rate of a kilo of Lobster is Rs. 450/=. Government provides monthly subsidy of the cost of kerosene oil. Stock of fish is to sell to the buyers in Jaffna. The financial turn over of this industry is sufficient for the living of those engaged in.” ...Uttered by a 50 years old Administrator of the Fisheries Association.*

- **Educational Background of Delft Island**

*“..... There are few approved schools. Out of 08 schools 03 schools are upto A' level and 05 are primary level schools. It is noticeable that schooling children here do not show higher advertency to continue education. Majority of them having completed up to a marginal level of education leave for overseas and help the Delft Island.” .....A 36 year old female teacher in Delft.*

- **Social background prevailed in the Delft Island**

It is observable that the community in this island follows simple life style. The daily income is spent on day to day needs.

*“..... We do purchase our commodities from the Co-operative shop and also from few other private shops. Prices of goods selling here are similar to the prices prevailing in Jaffna. No higher prices being levied here. Most of the travel is managed through push cycles and Motor cycles. The sole expectancy is to live with managed daily meals.” ..... 24 year old Youth.*

- **Communal facilities available in the Delft Island**

The most prominent public services available in Delft and the respective institutions providing needed services are as follows. Provincial council, Bowser trucks for delivery of water, Two SLTB Buses, Electricity Board equipped with 03 power generating engines to provide electricity, Post Office, Multi-Purpose Co-operative shop, Bank Of Ceylon, Samurdhi Bank, Police Station, Hospital.

Also discernible that in current context, a number of commercially driven avenues such as; businesses, Hotel industry, Safari cab services Etc., are flourishing due to the attractiveness of tourists to visit Delft Island. There are more than 15 important site seeing places available in the Island whereas, the youth involved in transporting visitors are struggling to load more visitors to own vehicles of those arriving at the jetty and in a short time of 2 hours the entire site seeing is completed. Per a single travel the charges being levied are above Rs. 5,000/=. Per person.

Those involved in tourism activities earn the said amount by taking visitor to observe lot of attractive sites such as; Ruins of Buddhist temples and Hindu shrines, historical stable of

Horses, Ruined stronghold sites of Dutch, cemetery (Graveyard), Baobab Tree, Dove cote, Court Complex, Tanks, site of Adam's foot, Old hospital built by Dutch people to take care sick horses are some of the attractive sites.

*“..... My. Name is Gamage. I am from Galle. I entered into my marriage in Delft. My father is a Sinhalese and my mother is Tamil. My profession is driving. When I drive this vehicle for 2 hours the charge to be levied is Rs. 5,000/= Out of same Rs. 4,500/= to be set off to the owner keeping Rs. 500/= being cost of mine. I can cover 3 trips a day. Accordingly my daily earning is Rs. 1,500/= through which I take care my family. My expenses are lesser than the earning. There are no other expenses here. In the evening I join the gang of youth and sing song after enjoying with drinks of Palmyra toddy. This is my hobby.”..... 28 years old married youth.*

The main objective of this research was to study the tendency towards possible illegitimate or immoral actions that could happen within a community living in the above stated socio-economic background as elaborated very clearly by the respondents.

- **Role of the Police in Delft Island.**

The Police Station in the services in Delft Island has an history of 45 years since it has been established in the year 1967. There are 10 police officers on duties in this unit particularly to attend regular services yet, officers are delegated externally for special duties. Since Delft island is a favorite tourism site specific protective measures seemed necessary to avoid possible criminal actions. Accordingly, a police communication office is established at the Mavalthurai Naval jetty. There is a procedure of registering the entrance of outsiders to the island at this office with an added service to do follow up monitoring of such outsiders. This action has satisfactorily reduced the tendency to do criminal actions in respect of tourists.

The below Table discloses criminal actions reported in the recent past in Delft island.

**Table No. 2 : Reported criminal actions from 2017 to 2019**

Category of the offences reported	No. of incidences reported 2017	No. of incidences reported 2018	No. of incidences reported in 2019
Burglary	01	00	00
Stealing Animals	04	06	02
Illegal removal of property (Fishing boats / vehicles)	01	04	02
Complains on Alcohol related incidences	02	01	01
Assaulting	00	01	00
Other	01	02	01

The above occurrences and the data therein reflects that crimes Inherited to the geographical surrounding in the area of living is in an extremely lower scale.

*“..... It looks like that there are no offensive actions happening here. Those minor aggressive actions happenings are; the theft of items belong to fishing vessels; selling toddy without license; robbing cattle /goats etc. Normally there can be higher scale of thefts such as stealing goats/cattle but it happens seldom.’*

(Discussions held with the Police officers in Delft Police Station.)

Unlike in the main land there are no diverse happenings here. At present the tourism shows increasing trend yet, they do not stay here since the time to visit tourism sites takes only 2 hours so, the majority of travelers leave back to main land just after 2 hours of visit. There are residential facilities in hotels here but the rates are somewhat expensive. Those able tourists are used to stay overnight here and leave back following day. Thereby, the inclinations for crimes are fewer. Also noticeable that the motivation of children here to continue education is minimal. Nevertheless they don't join gangs here, but they use time to help parents. Other important attribute is that no illegal and harmful stuffs of drugs etc. other than Toddy. Here the majority are Hindus. No one is working in all 7 days a week. Usually, the problems are irrupted among the fishing groups. But no such situation in prevalence here. All required controlling systems of fisheries activities are administered by Fisheries Associations. Even in the dealings of

Toddy, there is a collection center and selling toddy is allowed only for this center. Based on these structural patterns the occurrence of problems are minimal.

(Views of a Police Officer)

*‘ ..... No incidences of rapes or murdering transpiring here. Nonetheless, the houses are located at distances women are to travel certain distances to bring water and there is no anxiety or diffidence occurred. This is an astounding primacy. This can be due to the absence of the access for Television, Internet or the super market culture. ..’*

(Articulation of a female Police Officer)

There are extensive analysis on the tendencies for offensive actions within communities living with lowest facilities such as those living in slums and shanties. In contrary, it is noticeable that a segment of communities living in this island under extremely low facilities and maintaining their living by means of physical environment yet, involved in minimum offences. Also revealed through information shared by the island dwellers that police officers in one occasion, had taken actions to deliver horses to this land illegally, but island dwellers had rejected that action contemptibly.

*‘ .....People’s affection for this island is high. We live by means of the resources available in this island. It is true that we don’t have resources here equal to the main land but we live happily. .’*

.... Uttered by a 29 year old woman.

*‘ ..... We follow distant visits to collect water. There are only Palmyra trees we can see on our way. Some used to ask whether we are not anxious to do such visits alone. Infact we haven’t frightened so far. Even girls used to walk alone to bring water. People in this island are genuine, they are willing to help each other.’*

.....A 40 years old woman

**Table No. 3 : Summary of the inheritable features those are conventional to the Delft Island and the related significant.**

Economic Environment Fisheries Industry Livestock Farming Other	Administered by the Fisheries Association. Dealing with Toddy is controlled through collecting centers.	Lesser conflicts due to methodical control Rather low conflicts related to illegal alcohol.
Religious Background	Attained through Hindu Kovils and Christian church.	
Educational Background	8 Functional Schools No. of students 1,071 A Girls' college is being implemented by Roman Catholic Church	Somewhat low readiness on education
Social Background	Contextual Living means are facilitated through below mentioned services namely; Public markets, Sports facilities, 3 Wheelers, Hand tractors, Motor cycles, Minor scales of Lorries, Provincial council, Govt. Institutions, Hospital, Bowsers distributing water, Post Offices	Simple catenary living structure
Background of criminal Actions	Other than stealing animals, problems related to properties etc., violation of law and order is marginal.	Act in Collaboration with Police.

## 8. Conclusions :

The analyzed details stated above proclaim that the communities living in the study area managing day to day affaires through an extremely simple life style and friendly relationships though, their residencies are far and apart from each other. This is an intellectual community which could utilize limited resources available within their physical environment to fulfil their essentials in a feasible manner. One other advantage is that rather low negative impacts can be assumable due to the tourism, for the reason that visitors spend only two to three hours to visit all the sites and they want to return to the main land in a short while.

Whereas, proving the positive realities of simple living, people wish to spend their leisure times inside their houses which are built using parts of the palm trees added with Corel blocks. Their main consolation is that the speedy wind blows exhaust the weariness caused due to the heavy dry weather. There is no competitive attitudes or the mentalities to override each other. There are no absolutely any conflicts or disagreements based on properties. The current dwellings are built based on the deeds and the hereditary inheritance. Communities living in the island has strong feelings that Police is the institution to provide safety for the villagers while intermediating on the misdeeds related to the industry of Palm Toddy. People maintain closer association with the Police.

Island-dwellers do not find difficulties to understand common matters through Sinhala or Tamil. Yet, their focal communication is handled through Tamil and use Sinhala occasionally. Also noticed that Police officials handle Tamil fluently having built smooth relationship between Police and the Community.

## **9. Recommendations**

- Provision of needed facilities to advance the living status of the communities living in the Delft Island.
- To develop and amplify the education
- To further advance the identities of island based living, it would be better to establish people based voluntary organizations to ensure outcomes such as effective integration within communities.

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