



The Review of Chronological Interpretation on Vadda Community in Sri Lanka

Dr. R.A.D. Priyanka Weerasekara

Abstract --- The existence of an indigenous people in Sri Lanka called the Vedda has been recorded in the ancient palm leaf chronicle Mahavamsa. In Pali 'Viyaadha' means: hunter with bow and arrow' and it is considered to be the word from which the Sinhala term Vedda is derived. The people refer to themselves as Vanniyaletto which means; forest or nature dwellers. Vanniyaletto believe that their clan existed even before the era of Lord Buddha and they belong to a clan called 'Yakkha'. According to archaeological evidences, the Veddas in Sri Lanka have been regarded as the indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka who preserved a direct line of descent from the island's original Neolithic Community titled 'The Balangoda Man' dating from before 16,000 BC. In relation to the anthropological view on the life style of the Veddas in Sri Lanka and 'Balangoda Man' could not have been too different. The genetic analysis and the anthropometric studies claimed that today's Vedda is a hybrid of the 'Balangodese' and Sinhalese. According to these evidences show that the Veddas were living in most parts of the island before arrival of the Aryans in Sri Lanka. The aim of this paper is to review the chronological interpretation on Vadda community in Sri Lanka with reference to archaeological, historical and anthropological views.

Index terms --- Balangoda Man, Mesolithic culture, Modern human, South Asian hunter gathers, Vanniyaletto, Vedda community, Yakkhas clan

1 INTRODUCTION

The principal of historical chronicle of the Sinhalese, the Mahavamsa, written around the 6th century A.D., can be seen the Veddas as a part of the historical background in the well-known foundation myth of Sri Lanka. The seventeenth chapter of Mahavamsa mentions that Vijaya who married Kuveni the princess of 'Ykkhas' arrived in Ceylon, B.C. 543 and took measures to destroy a great number of her people with her own assistance in establishing the earliest Sinhalese Kingdom. The Mahavamsa relates that following the repudiation of Kuveni by Vijaya, in favour of 'Kshatriya' princess from the 'Pandya' country, their two children, a boy and a girl, departed to the region of 'Sumanakuta' (Adams Peak in the

Ratnapura District) where they multiplied giving rise to the Pullindas.

Among the scholars, there are debates on the crucial word 'Pulindas'. The question is whether it refers to the Veddas or to some other group. The editor of the Mahavamsa, Wilhelm Geiger adds in a footnote that it is a designation of barbarous tribes and is here evidently a name of the Veddas. But another important question arises here, whether there is any evidence of such a foundation myth in the folk memory of Veddas? The Seligmanns (1911) have noted during their field work among the Veddas that the Vijaya - Kuveni legend was absolutely unknown to the Veddas at present. The current chief of the clan Veddas, Vanniyaletto also completely rejected this myth and he

believed, Vedda has long history and they live in Sri Lanka before arrival of Ariyans.

The Sinhalese history contains several references to the Veddas, that they are descended from the ancient tribal called 'Yakkhas'. When we turn from the recent past to ancient times and to the principal historical chronicle of Sinhalese, the Mahavamsa relates the story of how Vijaya lived with Kuveni, the Yakkhas princess who give birth to a son and daughter. The Seligmannns (1911) also claimed that there is no reasonable doubt that the Veddas are identical with the 'Yakkhas' of the Mahavamsa and of the other native chronicles. James Brow (1978) has also given an account of Yakkhas, or demons in the Mahavamsa. The other ancient texts have commonly been taken to describe the ancestors of the Veddas, and the myth of their royal and demonic descent given in the Mahavamsa still serves to validate their position in the caste hierarchy. But Parker has expounded in his book Ancient Ceylon (1909), that most of the early writers the Pali expressions 'Yakkhas' was wrongly applied to the Veddas, because its resemblance to a title to which is supposed to have been given to them as descriptive of them being called as hunters. He further said that it is believed these writers that they were known as 'Arrow person'; this would be expressed by the word 'Iya'; arrow', plus the personal suffix 'ka' forming the word 'Iyaka' which in sound is sufficiently close to Yakkhas for such a confusion to arise.

Throughout the ages of the ancient kingdoms from Anuradhapura to the Kandyan rules, the Vedda were highly appreciated and respected as members of the royal court. Their responsibility to the state included the heraldry to the ritual Perahera (procession), honoring Buddhist shrines in procession, such as the Temple of Tooth (Dalada Maligawa) in Kandy and supplying the essence of the natural land to the nobility (Obyesekara, 2002).

The 'Mahiyangana Perahera' or procession, the Vedda folk still participates, speaks of the event where Lord Buddha on his first visit to the Island contain the 'Yakkhas' and defeated them, and how the 'Yakkhas' in turn displayed their protest against Lord Buddha. This is also clue that the Vedda believe themselves to be the descendants of the 'Yakkhas' and they lived in Sri Lanka even prior to the arrival of the Aryans.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are innumerable references in ancient and medieval Pali and Sinhalese literature to link the Veddas and the Sinhalese. The story of the King Dutugemunu (161- 137 BC) in the chapter 28 of the Mahavamsa regarded that the 'sunakha - luddo' provided some construction materials and helped to build the Mahathupa (Ruvanveli Dageba). According to historical chronicle of the Sinhalese Culavamsa, 'Vyaadha' has supported o the King Parakramabahu 1 (1153 - 1186) to establish his control over Plonnaruwa. Throughout the ages of the ancient kingdoms from Anuradhapura to the Kandyan rulers, the Vedda was treated as highly appreciated and respected members of the royal court.

In Dambadeni Asna of the 13th century, specifically in the history of the reign of the king Parakramabahu (1236 - 1270), the Veddas are mentioned among the officers as part of the king's retinue. The well-known ritual Kohobakankariya, compiled between the 15th - 18th centuries, contains significant references to Veddas in Sri Lanka (Godakumbure, 1963).

Robert Knox, the most famous writer among all early European writers confined about Sri Lanka, wrote his comprehensive 'Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon' (1681) based largely on his own experiences. He was able to visit several parts of the island and to investigate and participate in many aspects of Kandyan culture. Thus, his account of the Veddas introduced a number of themes that

were to occupy the attention of later researchers. He divided Vedda in to two varieties; the tamer and the wilder. Knox has a wonderful picture captioned as 'a Vedda' with his bow and arrow and dagger, smoking a hug pipe and wearing a thick loin cloth. He then goes on to describe the 'Tame Veddas' who owe service obligation to the king, especially tusks, honey, and wax and deer's flesh which they bring to the 'Gabadage' or Royal Store - house.

The significant classical anthropological study of 'the Veddas' by C.G. Seligmann and B.Z. Seligmann (1911) has a three-fold classification of Veddas; the pure Veddas, the Village Veddas and the Coast Veddas. They made actual observations on Veddas region and Seligmanns too were paradoxically caught in the dilemma of representing the true, pure or genuine ancient Veddas in Sri Lanka. According to this important research the Seligmanns are concerned with pure Veddas defined in the terms of three criteria namely; physical appearance, blood and cultural integrity. Selligmanns pointed out, this type of Veddas are the true or pure Veddas and the Coastal Veddas are the least interesting because they have much Tamil blood in their veins, and though often taller than pure Veddas. The Selligmanns reported these evidences after visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities and he found pure or true Veddas living in 'Seethala Vanniya' (far most in dense jungle). According to the Selligmanns, unfortunately there were only four families left who represented both physical and cultural integrity. Most of the early British sources refer to the Veddas living in the forests currently called the Eastern Province, which includes part of the Uva Province. The Seligmanns also claimed that, formally the Vedda community is known to have embraced the whole area of the Uva Province, and much of the Central and North Central Provinces. Moreover, the Seligmannns considered the Veddas are descendants of the late Stone Age Cave Dwellers.

R.L.Spittle, the Sri Lankan surgeon has made a life-long study of the Veddas. He has written four works of fictions and two works of nonfictions by his firsthand accounts on Veddas lifestyle. 'Far of Things' (1933) and 'Vanished Trails' (1944) two books about the social lives and described three generations of Vedda at that time. 'Wild Ceylon' (1924) and 'Far of Things' are two books written on vistas of hidden customs beliefs and folklores existed in the jangle habits. Each book by R.L.Spittle was a saga of meticulous research, the result of countless visits to the jungle. His writings reflect his deep and intimate knowledge of jungle and his profound interest in Veddas. Spittle was one of the few besides the Veddas themselves who would claim to have travelled into their domain. As an anthropologist he had become an authority on Veddas and was accustomed to every aspect of their lives.

The paper presented by Anthropologist Roger Blench (2006) at the 18th Congress of the Indo- Pacific Prehistory Association, 'The Pleistocene Settlement of the Rim of the Indian Ocean' has given a comprehensive study on linguistic, cultural and genetic evidence that links together relic populations throughout the area of South Asia. The paper proposes that Malagasy Vazimba, Sri Lankan Vedda, the Andamanese, the Shom Pen of the Nicobar Islands, The Negritos of South East Asia all provide evidence for this early expansion. This paper collates evidence on the status and likely genetic heritage of these populations as well as their languages or former languages.

Jay T. Stock, Marazon Lahr and Samanthi Kulatilake (2009) have done a research on genetic and origin of South Asian population including hunter gathers of late Stone Age cave dwellers. The research topic is, 'Cranial Diversity in South Asian Relatives to Modern Human Dispersals and Global Patterns Human Variation'. It has provided a better understanding of relationships between archeological and more recent population, the process of morphological adaptation among south Asian population and the

relationship between morphology and polygenetic relationships between populations.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on Qualitative Research Methodology. The textual analysis and the interviews were used to data collection for the research. Qualitative Content Analysis is used to identify and analyze occurrences of specific characteristics embedded in the texts. The selected texts, article and records were used as the secondary data for the research.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the Descent of Man, Charles Darwin was one of the first to proposed common decent of living organisms. According to his theory he suggested that all humans had common ancestors who lived in Africa. Darwin has presented the 'out of Africa' hypothesis after studying the behavior of African apes which was displayed at the London Zoo. The anatomist Thomas Huxley also had supported to this hypothesis and suggested that African apes have a close evolutionary relationship with humans. In the Descent of Man, Charles Darwin speculated that the human had descended from apes which still brain but walked upright, feelings their hands for uses which favored intelligence and he assumed such apes were African (Stringer, and Clives, 1993).

Genetic and fossil evidence is also interpreted to show that archaic Homo-sapiens evolved to anatomically modern humans solely in Africa, between 200,000 and 150,000 years ago, that members of one branch of Homo-sapiens left Africa by between 125,000 and 60,000 years ago and that these humans replaced earlier human population such as Neanderthals and Homo-erectus (Weber, 1998).

According to Blench (2008) the following table shows the population reflecting hypothetically initial dispersal of modern humans out of Africa.

Table 1
The Population Reflecting Initial Dispersal of Modern Humans

Name	Locations
None-Khoesan Africans	Africa
Vazimba/Mikea	Madagascar
Vanniyaleththo (Vedda)	Sri Lanka
Andamanese	Andaman islands
Shom Pen	Nicobar Island
Orang Asli	Malay Peninsula
Papuans	PNG Indonesia
Australians	Australia
Tasmanians	Tasmania
Agata / Aeta	Philippines

Source: Blench, 2008, p.128

The source for modern Asians may well have included the South Asian region, or it may have acted as a geographic crossroad for replacement of regional archaic population by anatomically modern Homo-sapiens. South Asia's prehistory has been based on stone tool and pottery typology, because there is a lack of skeletal remains until the Middle Pleistocene and only fragmentary specimens until 37,000 years ago. Hence the prehistoric cultural divisions cannot always be accurately corrected with a distinct chronology in South Asia, KAR Kennedy suggested temporal divisions modern Asians based on their subsistence life ways (Kennedy, 2000) ;

- Pleistocene hunter- gathers.
- Post- Pleistocene hunter- gathers.
- Early farming and herding population.
- Mature agricultural/pastoral population.
- Iron- using communities.

South Asian hunter-gathers' migration would have been a continual process, involving small numbers of kin-based

group, moving short distances of probably less than 500 kilometers. These hunter-gathers tend to migrate and separate from parental populations along family lineages. If this pattern holds true for early South Asian, the genetic pattern found among modern population of India and Sri Lanka may be the result of fission of kin-based groups and eventual mixture with other migrant family groups. In addition, late Pleistocene hunter-gathers movements may have also been influenced by monsoon weather. By the end of the Pleistocene, the monsoon pattern had reversed, with stronger winter and relatively weaker summer rains. The effect monsoonal patterns may have had on cultural and biological contact between early populations is unknown. Mesolithic artwork in the central Indian caves of 'Bhimbetka' depicts small groups of people who appear to be engaged in ceremonial activities or seasonal gatherings during the rain (Ghosh, 1989).

According to pre-historic evidences, for the first million years or more of hominid history the human ancestors live in hunting and gathering societies. These first modern humans were more intelligent and probably better able to communicate among themselves than their hominid forebears, although they inherited a number of valuable customs and technologies from them. Moreover the rate of innovation was slow, hominids accumulate a number of useful tools and practice in the nearly five million years that had elapsed between the time our ancestors diverged from the domestication of fire.

Contemporary hunting, gathering groups in the world often come together, occupying a limited number of rock shelters when food is abandoned. When resources become scarce, they split into smaller family units, and increase their geographical range, moving from cave to cave. Yet, the archeological evidence may actually reflect increased movement of population rather than increased size. Moreover gene flow among South Asian population may have been limited by both geographic and climatic factors.

Modern inter-group genetic heterogeneity suggests a long history of isolation, perhaps even biological factors, in which the processes of genetic drift, kin-based fission and fusion patterns, and natural selection may have helped to create the pattern of genetic variation found in South Asia today (Allchin, 1959).

Anthropologically, modern human remains have been found which have been dated back to the subsequent culture of the second stone-period which appears to have endured until about 1000 BCE in Sri Lanka with the transition to iron working. This Mesolithic culture was known as the 'Balangoda Culture'. They have been identified as a group of Mesolithic hunter gathers who lived in caves. The term Mesolithic was used from the late 19th century to define the transition period from hunting and gathering to food producing society.

According to Archeological evidences, the Veddas in Sri Lanka have been regarded as indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka and preserved a direct line of descent from the island's original Neolithic community dating from at least 16,000 BC and probably far earlier. Kennedy, K. A. R (2000) , a well-known bio anthropologist who has a publication record spanning more than 35 years, has done a great service to the anthropological and archeological community by writing an authoritative and accessible book on 'God-apes and Fossil Men, Pale Anthropology of South Asia'. After highlighting the geology and geography of South Asia in an introductory chapter, he dedicates the other seventeen chapters to the pale anthropological and prehistoric evidence found across a vast geographic area encompassed by Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka.

The recent genetic study of Negrito tribe done by George Weber (1998) has claimed that the Veddas of Sri Lanka have the genetic and possible relations with the world most ancient isolated population of Andamanese Negritos tribes. The Negritos are numerically and physically among the

smallest (for the use of the term 'Pigmy') as well as among the least-known of all living human race. He illustrated his result through the map and the Veddas of Sri Lanka have been categorized in to the Indian subcontinent related to the Negritos group. Further, he expounded that among surviving groups that may be related to the Negritos are the Veddas of Sri Lanka and the Veddooids (Vedda-like people) living in tiny groups all over Sothern India and South-east Asia. Among the Islands of Indonesia and Papua-New Guinea there are many groups of people living secretive in remote mountainous areas or jangled interiors of islands. About some of them, it is known little more than that they exist and some have died out during the 20th century while of others nothing has been heard for decades. Many of these groups have short stature, dark skin colour and technological primitive hunting-gathering way of life. They are all shy and highly suspicious of outsiders, tending to keep very much to themselves maintain little direct contact even with their closest neighbors. These characteristics have allowed them to survive until today, but they also make it very difficult for anthropologists to approach and study. The primitive communities mentioned above, like Veddas of Sri Lanka, can be found in several parts of the world: in Arctic, Asia and Africa, South America and Australia. They face an imminent threat of extinction as a consequence of contact with more advanced society. The relationship of the primitive people in the Asian Pacific region is a source of special interest to human population genetics and anthropologists. Therefore, an attempt was made by George Weber (1998) to establish the relationship between the Veddas in Sri Lanka with Negritos tribes and their relatives found in all over the world and this type of research is very important, because it will help to understand the expansion of the Vaddas and their history.

According to Sri Lankan archeologist S.U. Deraniyagala, the evidence at Iranamadu indicate that there were Paleolithic people (*Homo-erectus*) in Sri Lanka about 300, 000 BP and possibly even as early as 500,000 BP. There is strong

evidence of prehistoric settlements in Sri Lanka by about 125,000 BP. Further he has expounded that Sri Lanka has been inhabited by Mesolithic societies for about 34,000 years with evidence discovered in Fa-hien Cave at Pahiyangala. Fa-hien cave has yielded the earliest evidence (at c. 4,000BP) of anatomically modern humans in South Asia. Several of these caves including the well-known Batadomba Lena and Fa-hien cave have yielded many artifacts that point to them being the first modern inhabitants of the island. There is evidence from Beli Lena that salt had been brought in from the coast earlier than 27,000BP (Deraniyagala, 1992). Further, Deraniyagala claimed that the Fa-hien Cave has yielded the earliest evidence of anatomically modern man in South Asia and these anatomically modern prehistoric human in Sri Lanka is referred to as 'Balangoda Man' in popular parlance. They have been identified as a group of Mesolithic Hunter-gathers who lived in caves. The information stems from series of cave excavations in the lowland Wet Zone: Fa-hien Lena near Bulathsinhala (34,000- 5400C14BP), Batadomba Lena near Kuruwita (28,500-11,500C14BP), Beli Lena at Kitulgala (over 27,000-3500C14BP), Alu Lena at Attanagoda near Kegall (10,500C14BP) and open-air site of Bellan-bandi Palassa (Deraniyagala, 1996). According to Deraniyagala's view, the life style of 'Balangoda Man' could not have been too different from the Veddas of Sri Lanka, the Kadar, Malapantaram and Chenchus of India, the Andaman islanders and the Semang of Malaysia. He further said that these prehistoric humans appear to have settled practically in every nook and corner of Sri Lanka ranging from the dump and cold high Plains such as Maha Elliya (Horton Plains) to the arid lowlands of Mannar and Vilpattu, to the steamy equatorial rainforests of Sabaragamuwa. They have been moving from place to place on an annual cycle searching for food. The well preserved evidence from the caves and Bellan-bandi Palassa indicates that the very wide range of food- plants and animals were exploited. Kennedy (2000) and Deraniyagala (1989) claimed these remains are

generally similar to other early hunter gatherer sites in Monsoon Asia. Moreover, Deraniyagala (1992) claimed that historically and epistemologically the term 'Vedda' refers to a hunting group from the Sanskrit 'Viyadha' and has been applied to various tribes in South Asia, including Borneo and Sumatra and this forest- resource gatherers live in group of about one to five families. These Archeological evidences are important to understand such a rich and ancient past in the context of the historic era and also it has given some important idea of origin of Veddas.

Deraniyagala claimed that the Stone Age Prehistoric man would have preferred to migrate to certain areas in peninsula India where food was more abundant, compelling the weaker groups to enter Sri Lanka. In fact, Archeological evidence on 'carrying capacity' indicates that the stone age communities who remained in some parts of the Indian sub-continent were more numerous in number than those who inhabited in Sri Lanka.

Kennedy made an exhaustive study of the fossilized human skeletal forms of the 'Balangoda Man' both anthropologically and biochemically and the results of the uranium and radiocarbon as says indicated that there had been a group of people in Sri Lanka around 114 B.C. Further, he claimed that their closest phenotype affinities were with the Veddas. Through Aryans arrival on the Island, the Veddas were gradually pushed to relic status. Later hunting-gathering dependents of the Mesolithic culture at the site of Bellanbandi Pallassa may have been displaced by the Aryans; Buddhist inscriptions from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD occur within 16 kilometers of the site, because no Veddas live in this area today.

Deraniyagala and Kennedy (1972) proposed that the original inhabitant survived in Binthenne in Uva Province and the hilly forested region of Sabaragamuwa Province. Finally, Deraniyagala claimed that the Veddas are racially

akin to Balangoda Man, although the former show racial fusion with the early Sinhalese and Tamil groups.

The book name; *The Peopling of South Asia: Evidence for Affinities and Microevolution of Prehistoric Populations of India and Sri Lanka* written by Anthropologist Diane Hawkey (2002) has given the comprehensive accounted of the prehistoric relationship between Sri Lankan, South India, and Sunda Shelf populations. The main objective of this study involves use of dental morphological traits to examine the relationship between South Asian populations and other late Pleistocene / Holocene world populations. Dental morphology is considered a credible technique, along with analysis of GM and HLA blood systems, mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome DNA. Dental anthropology is primarily concerned on describing and explaining human physical variation both in temporal and spatial realms. More specifically, study of dental morphology traits in both extant and skeletal populations can provide information essential to understanding change and variation at the macro-species, meso- geographic population, and micro-land demographic population evolutionary levels. Such methods should be used concurrently with archeological, natural historical / environmental and linguistics studies. This approach would lead to a more reliable reconstruction of the origin and evolution of the different population in the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka (Hawkey, 2002). American anthropologist Dr. Dane Hawkey used this new technique of dental morphological analysis to reach the astounding conclusion of her thesis and the thesis is titled, 'Out of Asia: Dental Evidence for affinities and Microevolution of Early Population from India / Sri Lanka (Hawkey, 2002). Present day there are few skeletal remained in South Asia and based on available skeletal collections and according to findings of the Hawkey's, early South Asian seem to have diverged into three patterns as;

- Sri Lanka hunting/gathering.

- India hunting/gathering.
- Northwest farming/ herding by Holocene times.

Further, Hawkey states that, the creation of the 'Thar Desert' in the Middle Pleistocene may have served initially to isolate early hunter-gather population to some extent. But similarities in dental traits suggest a common ancestor for the Early South Asian, probably of great antiquity. If further sampling conforms a South Asian sheared dental characteristics, the dental pattern may be termed 'Early Endodontic'. It is proposed that Sri Lanka hunting/gathering represents the oldest evidence (ca.37,000 BP) for the ancestral dental pattern in South Asian Modern Homo-sapiens, although India hunting/gathering most closely approximates the modern South Asian dentition. Thus, Sri Lanka hunting/gathering population, somewhat geographically isolated from the mainland, may have had at least limited genetic contact with the people from the Deccan region or may share a common ancestry. Further, Hawkey claimed that according to dental morphological data, almost all population is more similar to Indian hunting-gathering than to Sri Lankan hunting-gathering. Yet, she suggests that the exception is mainly the Nicobar, who are very unlike most early and later South Asians, and thus do not appear to be part of the proposed 'Veddoid' population substratum. Finally Hawkey (2002) claimed that the non-cast population of South India and Andaman (also believed to be within the genetic parameters of the Veddoid group) appear dentally closest to Sri Lanka hunting-gathering and without prototyped data, almost all modern population are similar to Sri Lanka hunting-gathering, with the exception of the tribal groups of the northwest (Afghanistan, Pakistan), and lower cast population (Bengal) of the Indo- Genetic region. To draw her conclusion, Hawkey had compared the teeth of pre-historic and early Iron Age groups of Sri Lanka with the present communities as well as ancient and modern population in India, Southeast Asia, Australia and Middle

East. The ultimate objective of her study is to involve use of dental morphological traits to examine the relation between South Asian population and other late Pleistocene/Holocene population. The findings could show the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization of Harappa had dental traits resembling Sinhalese much more closely than Tamils or Dravidian speaking population. According to her findings, dental morphology shows a close affinity between the Sinhalese and the Austro-Asiatic people of Eastern and North Eastern India. This implies they are of common stock. Her findings show that the Harappa and East Indian Austro-Asiatic resemble Sinhalese in dental traits much more than Sri Lankan Tamils, Peninsular Indians or South Indian tribal groups.

The recent findings of Hawkey also contribute to a new theory that the anatomically modern human originated in South and Southeast Asia. This stands as a rival to the 'Out of Africa' theory that held they evolved in the Dark Continent, which went unchallenged until recently. According to Hawkey's findings, there are no dental similarities between Africans and Early modern South Asians. Indeed, prehistoric South Asians resemble the present day population more closely than any other people in the world, indicating overall homogeneity. It also believed that an ancient group of humans evolved in South and Southeast Asia and later migrated elsewhere. In fact, dental traits similar to Balangoda Man have been found in specimens from Ukraine. This suggests about a dental pattern which at one time prevailed in South Asia, Southeast Asia and South east Europe. Another important finding by Hawkey is that the Balangoda Man shows stronger dental similarities to the Melanesians in the Pacific region than to the Australian aborigines. Veddas are racially akin to Balangoda Man, although the former show racial fusion with early Sinhalese and Tamil groups. It is however noteworthy that Veddoid tooth bears closer resemblance to the Balangoda Man than Sinhalese or Tamil. Another significance of this study is that those communities

of Balangoda Man living in Sri Lanka less than 10,000 years ago possessed more primitive dental morphological traits than contemporary Indian groups. This indicates that although the two countries were then connected by the land link known as Adam's Bridge, the gene flow between its people during that period was not significant. These findings lend support to Dr. Siran Deraniyagala's view that the Island may have been a 'clu-de -sac' where weaker communities sought refuge.

S.B. Ellepola (1990) presents the result of a genetic study of the Veddas and he found that there is a considerable genetic distance between the Sinhalese and the Vedda. After genetic analyzing of the Veddas in details he concludes that the Vedda and the Sinhalese are not identical but that the Veddas of today have inherited genetic characters from the Sinhalese as well as from another source. Further, he said that the discoveries of skeletons at Bellan-bandi palassa, fossilized human and skeletal forms of the Balangoda Man show that there is a close relationship with the Veddas and 'Balangoda Man' and also he found that there is a considerable genetic distance between the Sinhala and the Veddas, thus implying that the latter have had primitive ancestors not connected to Sinhalese. Finally, he claimed that the evidence of the genetic analysis and the anthropometric studies evidenced that today's Vedda is a hybrid of the 'Balangodese' and the Sinhalese because the present day Vedda in Sri Lanka is one such community which is being gradually assimilated in to the more advanced society of Sinhala.

5 CONCLUSION

According to chronological interpretation on Veddas in Sri Lanka has been regarded as the indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka who preserved a direct line of descent from the island's original Neolithic Community titled 'The Balangoda Man' dating from at least 16,000 BC. Vanniyaletto believe that their clan existed even before the

era of Lord Buddha and they belong to the clan called 'Yakkha'. Further they believed that after the entering of prince Vijaya into this island, he massacred Vedda and one of their great grandfathers named god 'Kalubandara' escaped and hid in the forest and their generation descended from him. Hence The Vedda believe themselves to be the descendants of the 'Yakkhas' and they lived in Sri Lanka even prior to the arrival of the Aryans.

In relation to pre-historic evidences, for the first million years or more of hominid history our ancestors live in hunting and gathering societies. The relationship of the primitive people in the Asian Pacific region is a source of special interest to human population genetics and anthropologists. The earliest classification of human races was based on racial characteristics like skin color, hair type, the appearance of the nose and the stature of the individual. However, such a classification did not indicate whether the similarity of an individual's appearance reflects a hereditary relationship or an adaptation to similar environmental factors. The study of human population has developed rapidly over the last two decades with the development of techniques of genetic analysis. Therefore the research based on genetic analysis is very important, because it will help to understand the expansion and the history of the Vaddas and the other ancient tribal groups in the world.

The resent genetic investigation has claimed that the Veddas in Sri Lanka have the genetic and possible relations with the world most ancient hunter gathers. The tribal like Veddas of Sri Lanka, can be found in several parts of the world. They face an imminent threat of extinction as a consequence of contact with more advanced society. Veddas or Vanniyaletto; an aboriginal group of Sri Lanka have survived for several millennia by adapting and coping with internal and external stress imposed on them. These aboriginal inhabitants in Sri Lanka are rich in many cultural values. They lived a simple life having cordial inter-

relationships with nature. The modern communities have much to learn from Vedda tribal community who lived a life close to nature. This includes their language, rituals, indigenous knowledge and tradition. They had all this knowledge verbally transmitted from generation to generation. Currently, only a few Vedda families preserve in Sri Lanka with their ancestral identity in the face of ambitious plans to assimilate and integrate them into the mainstream society. However the impending extinction of Vedda's culture, Sri Lanka and the world stand to lose a rich body of indigenous lore and living ecological wisdom that is urgently needed for the sustainable future of the rest of mankind.

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- *Dr R. A. D. Priyanka Weerasekara is currently working as a senior lecturer
in the Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.
E-mail: priyanka@ssl.sab.ac.lk*

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