



# Department of Sociology

## Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo

### MONTHLY SEMINAR SERIES

### MARCH 2022

16<sup>th</sup>

March

2022

3.00 p.m. -

4.00 p.m.

Via



<https://learn.zoom.us/j/65185378767?pwd=akxVaDBWdlV5Ryt2MDVoQS80K3Q3QT09>

Meeting ID : 651 8537 8767

Passcode : h803!JdJ

### “Water Politics in Sri Lanka: A Sociological Analysis of Rathupaswala Mass Protest against Contamination of Drinking Water”

Water is perceived by different people or by the same people in different contexts in different ways. There are many conflicts and issues all over the world related to water projects and developmental politics. According to the political ecological perspective, the crisis in the drinking water sector has created new water politics and grassroots environmentalism in many parts of the world. This study is based on the protest started by the villagers in Weliveriya in Gampaha District against the water contamination caused by Dipped Products PLC. This crisis became a national level political issue and it reached Geneva as a human right matter. The main objective of this study is to investigate the factors that influenced the collective mass protest against the crisis related to drinking water in Sri Lanka. This is an exploratory and qualitative research based on the case study method of mass movements against the contamination of drinking water at Rathupaswala area in Gampaha. The data collection tools were hundred questionnaire surveys, twenty in-depth interviews and newspaper content analysis. Although the related factory was beneficial to people at individual levels in terms of providing employment opportunities, most people in the area believe that the factory is responsible for water pollution. The key driving force of Rathupaswala protest was middleclass environmentalism based on ecological democracy of villagers. The educated middle class with support of the business community mobilized the movement against politically strong force. It was the political ecology of the area that determined the existence of a mass protest as identified in environmentalism of Sri Lanka.

## Dr. M.T.M. Mahees

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts,  
University of Colombo

*Dr. MTM Mahees is currently employed as a Senior Lecturer Gr 1 in Sociology, University of Colombo. He earned his B.A. Hons Degree in Sociology from University of Peradeniya (1999), M.A. Research Degree in Environmental Sociology from University of Colombo (2007), PhD in Water Resource Management from Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya in affiliation with Crossing Boundaries project of Netherlands (2011) and Postgraduate Diploma in Counseling (2017) from Faculty of Education university of Colombo. Dr. Mahees has published books of Environmental movements in Sri Lanka in 2010, Development Sociology; an introduction in 2020, Environmental Politics in 2020, Sociology of social issues (edited) in 2021 and Sociological Theory in 2022.*

