

Abstract - (2)
local Conference

Charmalie Nahallage
Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology



**THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
OF
SRI LANKA**

8th Research Conference
26th - 28th March 2015

ABSTRACTS

Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka
96, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha
Colombo 07, Sri Lanka

The Present Status of Traditional Mahabamba Kolama in the Saparagamu Maha Saman Devala Perahara

Tharaka Ananda¹ & Charmalie Nahallage²

Saparagamu Maha Saman Devalya was known as "*Saparagrama Vihara*" until a minister of King Parakumba II (1236 - 1271 CE), Arya Kamadewa, built a "*devalaya*" to God Saman as a result of the achievement of a vow made to this temple. King Seethawaka Rajasinghe (1581-1592 CE) had started the Saman Devalaya Esala Maha Perahara which includes the Dalada Perahara, incorporating traditional cultural dances into it. One of the very attractive and significant items in this Perahara is "*Mahabamba Kolama*" also known as, Maha Bamba, Maha Baba, Baba Kolama, and Maha Pambaya. Mahabamba is a unique item in the Saman Devala Perahara carried at the head of the Perahara. It is believed to have been introduced by King Seethawaka Rajasingha to symbolize him when he could not attend the Perahara in person. Some say it depicts King Ravana's brother Kumbakarana. Despite its uniqueness, this item has spread to other Perahara in Sri Lanka without any historical meaning, instead only as a decorative item. The main objective of this study was to discover this valued cultural item which is at present merely an item bereft of traditional knowledge and customs. The intention of the study is to contribute to the development of both literature and traditional knowledge in the items of cultural significance which have not yet been studied in detail in Sri Lanka from an anthropological perspective. In depth-interviews and literature surveys were conducted to obtain information regarding this unique cultural item. The main structure of Mahabamba is about 15 feet tall, made by one bamboo plant cleaved into 7 parts and tied with strips of beli bark (*Aegle marmelos*). About 13 sarees are used to wrap the structure which are kept inside the devalaya and only given out when making the Mahabamba. Mahabamba has two faces; one is god like and the other is evil like with five cobra hoods. There is a sword in one hand signifying ferociousness; the other hand is kept on the hip with a bunch of flowers signifying virtuousness. "*Kolakkara Lineage*" in "*Colombugama*" (Village near Nivithigala in Rathnapura District) was granted land "*nindagam*" by the king to create the Mahabamba and to keep up the tradition. However, at present, these "*nindagam*" had been sold to businessmen and the generations of people who made them were not in the villages anymore. Therefore, the businessmen pay money to labourers to make this structure without any traditional practices. In earlier times, two Mahabamba items were carried in the Perahara instead of the current single Mahabamba which takes about ten days labour for a cheaper price.

Keywords: Mahabamba, God Saman, Esala, Saparagamuwa

1 Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura
tharakaananda@hotmail.com

2 Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

D
Wi

The
cost:
Maha
conce
were
for Jo
Time
on de
and fo
per m
Travel
Regres
objecti
The stu
deman
show a
travel c
park vis
This rec
but also

Keywo

1 Lecture
Science