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ABSTRACTS

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At Bali Santikarmaya: Protective Ritual for Pregnant Mothers

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"At Bali Santikarmaya" or *"Atta Gaha Mathirima"* is a significant ritual performed by southern province inhabitants as a protective and benedictive ritual for pregnant mothers. Uncertainties until the birth of the child that existed in traditional society has produced numerous supernatural things thought to be associated with and surrounding the pregnancy period. To control those un-explicabilities traditional healing system consisted of many rituals and customs associated with deities' and demons or evils. *At Bali Shantikarmaya* or ritual [*Baliya* or model made of clay which is kept by the *edura* (exorcist) in his hands throughout the ritual] can be seen in Walasmulla Secretariat Division situated in Hambantota District in Southern Province. Main objective of this study was to discover valued traditional customs from an Anthropological perspective and to document it for the future generation. In-depth interviews, observations and literature survey were conducted to gather information regarding the ritual. Very little studies have been done about this ritual from an anthropological point of view. When the foetus becomes seven months old this ritual takes place with the invitation to the *edura* by the husband of the pregnant wife. First *edura* selects a favorable day and time considering the direction of the place of *maraya* (represent the evil and all the destructive powers). The day should be any day except Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and four *poya* days of the month. *Baliya* is made of clay taken from the northern direction of the particular house after lighting a lamp on that place. First a clay ball is made using *sandun* (*Chloroxylon swietenia*- Sandun kiri pan) mixed water and decorated using tender leaf of coconut (*gokkola*) to a shape of a basket. Performance of the ritual begins with the drawing of *atamagala* on the floor (figure depicting eight auspicious objects) and ends in the evening of the same day by absorbing entire inauspicious bad things and calamity into the *baliya*. The *baliya* is kept on a higher place in the house for three days and thrown into the woods where people cannot see. This *baliya* is the important figure in this ritual and the reason of having this name *At Bali* (ritual done by using a handmade clay model) to this ritual. Supernatural phenomena is no longer considered as important in the modern medical sciences and it has replaced the traditional healing systems which a very few people conduct nowadays. Descriptive and comparative studies on this kind of intangible heritage should conduct for the purpose of documenting and preserving.

Keywords: *Atamagala, Edura, Intangible Heritage, Traditional Healing System*

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