



‘KEM’ FOR PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT: A CASE STUDY IN HENAWATTA GND, PANAGODA

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Abstract

From the ancient time Sri Lankans have practiced ‘kem’ methods which are very elementary rituals. Even though ‘kem’ has been practiced in both negative and positive manners, most probably it has been practiced as a positive method in agricultural society. Especially these rituals have been used to protect paddy and other cereals from insects and other animals. In the modern society, ‘kem’ methods are accepted as indigenous knowledge. As an agricultural society, various types of ‘kem’ methods and rituals can be identified in Sri Lanka. At present, even international bodies like UNESCO have recognized ‘kem’ as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The main objective of this research is to identify how to protect the environment by using ‘kem’ methods. Henawatta GND, Panagoda in Homagama was selected as the study area. When conducting this research both primary and secondary sources were used. As secondary sources, relevant documents were referred. Observation and interview methods were employed to collect primary data. According to the research findings, ‘Akusāththuva’, ‘Alusāththuva’, ‘Pahan ugul’, ‘Batalee gēma’, ‘Pelali gēma’ Danda adīma’, ‘Boku gēma’, ‘Lanu adīma’, ‘Lēn adīma’ and ‘Paskiri gēma’, ‘Bera gasīma’, ‘Tati gasīma’, ‘Raban gasīma’, ‘Garā yakum yāgaya’, ‘Irimā pidīma’, ‘Abhimānā pidīma’ and various types of yagas, ‘Gokkola diviya’, ‘Diya takaya’, ‘Diya holmana’, ‘Diya yakā’, ‘Sulan holmana’ and ‘Sulan bambara’ etc. were identified as rituals, ‘kem’ and social practices. Almost every peasant and other knowledgeable individuals have deep knowledge about this concept and vastly practiced by the older generation. Even though these rituals have been practiced very rarely, they have faced many difficulties and obstacles when practicing these methods. Practices such as drum beating, traditional ritual Gammaduwa, scarecrow and starting almost every agricultural activity in the auspicious time can be observed even today. Therefore, these ‘kem’ methods and rituals should be safeguarded as ICH as these methods are not harmful for the health of the environment and human beings.

Keywords: *Kem, Natural environment, Paddy cultivation, White magic, Ritual*