

Ab153

Alaththi Bama :Traditional Ritual Performed by Vedda Woman for Katharagama Deity

Tharaka Ananda , Charmalie Nahallage¹

Ruhunu Maha Katharagama Devalaya is a multi-ethnic and religious place dedicated to Katharagama deity who is also considered as a one of greatest spiritual ancestor) *Na Yaka* (worshiped by Vedda people. His second wife was Valli Amma believed to be an adopted daughter of a Vedda Chief; Nanda .Alaththi Bama ritual is performed by 12 Vedda women descended by Valli Amma lineage as for blessing of Katharagama deity .This study was aimed to discover the present status of this ritualistic performance .Data was gathered through interviews conducted with 6 Alaththi Ammawaru)Alaththi Mothers .(Alththi ritual is perjured before the Muruthan offering)Rice made with pumpkin, honey etc- . Muruthan offering is done for three times in a day at 4.30 am, 10.30 am, and at 6.30 pm except Saturdays .(On Saturdays Alaththi Mothers bring water for)*Nanumura Mangalyaya* (a wishig ceremony in Devalaya from Manik River and withal traditionally they have assigned to participate to devala processions .*King Dutugamunu*) 1st century BC (has assigned 8 Alaththi mothers to pound paddy to get rice for Muruthan offering .Eight of them accompanying for paddy pounding, around a stone mortar with pestle, called *wata wee ketima* .Before the Muruthan offering Alaththi mothers enter in to the devalaya from the right side door holding an unlighted oil lamp which was kept on the stairs of the devalaya by kapumahaththaya) Priest .(Then Alaththi mothers worship Katharagama deity and light the oil lamp and perform their ritual while murmuring their secret blessing stanza .Next they perform this ritual again in the Wata Pila)In the back side of the Devalaya .(They dressed up with special traditional dress called kambaya)camboy(which is represented there Vedda lineage .The leader of Alaththi Mothers is called as Gurunnanse) Teacher(and their duty is matrilineally descended) goes from mother to daughter .(King Dutugamunu's period they have given rice for their duty .Later Rs. 2.85 and at present as a common allowance they receive Rs.5000 per month .Apart from their ritualistic life they are having social and family life differing from the Hindu devadasi concept)Female servant of the deity /Nautch girl .(Their monthly income is less than Rs.10000 which is not enough to maintain their families .Differing from early days at present they have confronted many social and economic problems .Eldest Alaththi mother have been performing this ritual for 50 years which she has started it in her 20's .Though she has devoted her entire life for the Katharagama deity still she have not given considerable gratitude from deities as well as from responsible governing bodies .Even though they are having difficulties at present, faithfulness to the Katharagama deity has been the major reason of continuation their duty as Alaththi Mothers.

Key Words: (*Alaththi Ritual, Alaththi Amma, Katharagama Deity, Vedda*) *Indigenous People*

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