

A study of blessings (*sethkam*) composed to preserve water in Nuwarakalawiya

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The ‘Nuwarakalawiya’ (area bounded by Nuwara tank, Kala tank, and Padawiya tank) in Sri Lanka is widely popular for farming and agricultural activities. Those agricultural activities are mainly undertaken during the two rainy seasons, namely the ‘Yala’ and ‘Maha’. However, there is no certainty that sufficient rain water will be received during these seasons to engage in their agri based livelihood. At times of such dry periods, they used to pray for preserving water and such mechanisms are known as ‘Sethkam’. This study was aimed at identifying four such mechanisms, methods of performing them and people’s beliefs related to them. Data was collected through a review of literature and interviews and analysed qualitatively. Twenty interviewees (Two bikkus, ten farmers, and eight female villagers) with knowledge and experience in using such mechanisms were interviewed. The findings reveal that there are four popular mechanisms (types of sethkam) used to pray for preserving water by the people in the Nuwarakalawiya. They are; Hunnakada mangallya (Puja Wedilla, Ayyanamune), Mutti mangallya, Mutti mangallya with procession held on royal tanks and Mutti mangallya held on village tanks. The four ‘Sethkam’, methods of performing them and people’s beliefs were identified. Moreover, it was identified that those mechanisms play a significant role in people’s lives of Nuwarakalawiya. However, there is a growing tendency to neglect those mechanisms by the younger generation in the region, hence there is an essential and urgent need to protect those mechanisms, in order to preserve the indigenous features of the Sri Lankan culture and to ensure the sustainability of the community.

Keywords: Nuwarakalawiya, Sethkam, Hunnakada mangallya Mutti mangallya