

Rites of Passages among Meemure Inhabitants Living in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

D. T. H. Ananda^{1*}, C. A. D. Nahallage²

Meemure village, situated in the Kandy District of Sri Lanka 229 Km away from Colombo city is famous for its unique culture. Isolation from the main society and adaptation to the environment together has made their culture a specific one. 'Rites of passages' perform in the significant transition periods of individuals' life; can be considered as one of the distinctive feature of their traditional cultural system. These rites highlight and validate changes in a person's status, particularly on the occasion of such life-transforming events as birth, puberty, marriage and death. The present study was aimed to discover their unique rites of passages and its significant characteristics in the balancing of their social and cultural organization as well as its function in the socialization process. Ten interviews were carried out with purposively selected individuals who belonged to the Meemure village from the distant past and who were knowledgeable about their culture. Childbirth is considered as a dangerous transitional period of life, surrounded by supernatural entities. Corner room in the house is prepared with a rope (labour cord) hang on the joist, above a mat, thereby providing support to the parturient mother in her effort of child delivery. More rites are performed until the weaning ceremony of the child. Different puberty rituals are practiced by Meemure villagers from the segregation period to the reintroducing of a girl with a new status in to the society. Rites associated with Atamagala (represent eight auspicious signs) and Malabulath Thattuwa (decorated betel-tray) etc., contribute to the proper socialization. Wedding rites are representations of valued traditional customs which are performed with the participation of special person called Danamuthu Rala. Methods they use in the preservation and purification of the body are particular to them as well the associated rites with the death. Mechanisms of culture change have affected badly on these valued cultural system which no longer accepted by the youngsters. Therefore, these types of studies are significant in preserving and in reconsidering the importance of these forgotten rites.

Keywords: Birth, Cultural Change, Death, Puberty, Wedding

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka
*tharakaananda@sjp.ac.lk

² Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka