

Religious Practices Performed by Meemure Villagers in Kandy District Sri Lanka

Tharaka Ananda

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

Dr Charmalie Nahallage

Department of sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Sri Lanka is a country with diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and social groups. Some of these minority groups have distinctive religious practices and belief systems due to being isolated from the main society for a long period throughout their history. *Meemure* village is one such specific village that has a distinctive and unique culture which cannot be seen in the main society. The main objective of this research was to discover their valued religious and cultural practices including religious performances, rituals and belief systems. According to the census in 2011, population of the Meemure village is 331 including 115 families and out of this fifteen families were randomly selected for the study and questionnaires were filled in by the information taken from one member of each family. In-depth interviews were done with five people who were knowledgeable about religious practices to acquire more information. According to the results of this study Meemure villagers are believed to be descendants of king Rawana and his Yaksha Gothra (Tribe) and the principle deity of the village is Bandara deity, considered as the grandfather of the king Rawana (Saint Pulathishi). Many of their folktales are based on the stories of king Rawana. Yakkama and Adukku rituals and are religious performances which are distinctive among the Meemure villagers and these are carried out according to their traditional beliefs to pay respect to the village deities. Integration of the younger generation with the main society has resulted in these groups tending to irrationally refuse the traditional and religious views and belief system of their elders and this in turn has had a negative effect on the valued traditional religious performances. Thus these distinctive belief systems and performances are at risk of disappearing and therefore must be studied and documented for the future generation as a means of preservation.

Key Words: Adukku Pujawa, Belief Systems, Meemure, Religious practises, Yakkama