

Regional deity beliefs and concepts of the Wannu Hathpattuwa

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Abstract

Wanni Hathpattuwa is located in the upper part of the Kurunegala district in the present North Eastern province, which is in the region between Deduru Oya and Kala Oya. Many unique cultural features have emerged in this village society which was created based on the "Wew gammana". Like other parts of the island, this area has many unique religious concepts. The purpose of this research was to study the reasons and their nature that influenced the creation of indigenous religious beliefs, based on it. Data for the research were collected through field exploration, participant observation, and interviews. A manuscript containing poems sung during a ritual called "Bath Malawa" was mainly used for the research. In this ritual, there are several concepts that they worship. "Ayyanayaka", "Kadawara", "Kambili", "Kalu Dewatha", "Handun Kumara" are among them. Also, there is another religious figure unique to this region called "Anguruwelle Muththa". There are many poems describing the genesis and other characteristics of that deities. For example, people believe that deities like "Aiyana", "Kadawara" and "Kambili" are not indigenous and migrated to this country from India. Among them, "Kalu Dewatha" is believed to be the son of "Walli amma" and the god "Kataragama". The other thing mentioned in these recitals is that all these gods are Buddhists. Although these religious concepts were primarily based on Tamil culture, it can be believed that people integrated these religious concepts into Buddhist culture.

Keywords - Wanni Hathpattuwa, Religious beliefs, Buddhist culture, Ayyanayaka, Bath malawa

Introduction

Although Sri Lanka is a small island in terms of land area, considering the historical background and culture, the characteristics of diversity within the unity can be identified. Within individual cultural streams, subcultural groups with diverse and mutually exclusive characteristics can be clearly seen in society. It is clear that they mainly used the land where they built their settlements. Different parts of the country have different beliefs and customs unique to each social group. Also, there are several religious beliefs and rituals unique to the "Wanni Hatpattuwa" region of the dry zone of Sri Lanka. By studying these behaviors anthropologically, a clear study can be done on how these societies were created, the reasons that influenced their creation and the environmental factors that influenced it. There is great variability among these religious beliefs and concepts, hence there are many religious beliefs that are unique from region to region. There are several such distinctive local deity concepts in the " Wanni Hatpattu" of Kurunegala district.

Research Methodology

The field observation method was used to collect the data required for this research. As the required sample for that, 'tank villages' based on the Madiyava irrigation system were used in Wanni Hatpattu in Kurunegala district. Interviews were conducted with the elderly people of this area and people involved in rituals like "Bath Malawa", "Pidilla" and "Kiri Ithuruma". In addition, participated in and observed the "Bath Malava" white magic organized in Moragaswewa Gramaniladari division of Mahawa Divisional Secretariat Division. A manuscript containing "Kolmura Kavi" sung at white magic was taken as the primary source and a library survey was carried out for further information.

The Location

Hatpattu belonged to the sub-administrative area of Sri Lanka called "Sathkoralaya" during the Kandy period. The present "Sathkoralaya" was introduced by the British in 1836.

As per the local administrative pattern, Vanni Hatpattu was a part of it. Vanni Hathpaththuwa had six divisions called "Korala".

1. Mee Oyen Egoda Korahaya
2. Hathalispae Korahaya
3. Pahala Wisideke Korahaya
4. Gam Thihe Korahaya
5. Magul Medagan Korahaya
6. Magul Othota Korahaya (Thennakon, 2015, pp.16-17)

According to the present administration system, Sathkoralays belongs to the Kurunegala district. There are three divisional secretariat divisions in the present Vanni Hatpattu region.

They are,

1. Maho Divisional Secretary Division
2. Polpithigama Divisional Secretary Division
3. Ambanpola Divisional Secretary Division (Kurunegala shasthriya sangrahaya, 2008, pp.33-35)

Regional divine concepts

After the Kandy period, Buddhism was not established as a strong religion in Sri Lankan society and the reason for this was the collapse of the Buddhist

dispensation in this country. By the time of the British, most parts of Sri Lanka had become isolated rural areas surrounded by forests, isolated from other areas. Buddhism was in decline at that time, so the Buddhist environment in these rural areas did not have a strong foundation. Because of that situation, these beliefs and concepts may have been created to overcome the threats and problems in these areas and to gain security in day-to-day life. The Tamil religious beliefs that have influenced the culture of this country may have contributed to that. The situation was the same in Wanni Hatpattu. However, the ancient people living in the Wanni Hatpattu tended to practice these beliefs and rituals in a manner unique to their region at every stage of their daily lives. Among these regional religious beliefs, there are a few deities mainly important to Wanni Hathpaththuwa.

1. Ayyanayaka Deviyo
2. Kadawara Deviyo
3. Kambili Deviyo
4. Kalu Devatha Deviyo
5. Anguruwelle Muththa
6. Gale Bandara Deviyo

Ayyanayaka religious concept

Many sources can be found about this god who people believe is in charge of Wanni Hatpattu. It's important to know that some of them are different from each other. Accordingly, there are several stories about the origin of Lord Ayyanayake. Following is the origin story of the god Ayyanayaka according to the Sinhala encyclopaedia.

After achieving power through meditation one sage is chasing "Umyangana" to catch her. Also, she is running away to escape from him. The god "Wishnu" saw this and created a beautiful lady who was swinging a golden swing in the road. After seeing the lady, the sage was enchanted by her and conceived a child in her right hand. After ten months the child was named "Kayyanar" as he was born in the right hand and later "Ayyanar", "Ariyanayagam" and later changed to "Ayyanayaka" for Sinhala pronunciation (Sin.Wi.Ko - Category - 755). It is believed that Lord Aiyana is also known as "Aiyana" in Tamil Nadu and "Ariyanayagam" in Kerala. However, according to Prof. A.L. Basham, the god "Ayyanar" worshiped in Tamil areas is the son of Lord Shiva (Disanayaka,2014,20).

Like many other beliefs, God Aiyahaka is also given a Buddhist background. It is explained by mentioning in "Kolmura" poems that Lord Ayyanayake visited this country with the permission of Lord Upulvan, and when Lord Buddha visited the garden called "Malla" he took permission from him to save the world (Kariyawasam, 1991 -20). Although these religious beliefs are rooted in the Tamil people, it is clear that these religious beliefs have changed to suit the cultural life of the rural people of Sri Lanka. The belief and concept of Ayyanayake God, which the people of Wanni Hatpattu worship, is evident from the poems sung during the "Bath Malawa" white magic held for Lord Ayyanayake. It says that Lord Ayyanayake was born in a city called "Malla" in India. He has left the city of "Madura" to come to Sri Lanka. The poems mention several people who helped him. They are "Kambili", "Kadawara", "Kalu" and "Gurumal Heda". In particular, God "Kambili" made a stone ship to travel across the sea.

In "Bath Malava" ritual poems sing some special poems called Ran Neve Kavi. These stanzas tell the story of Lord Ayyanayake's visit to Sri Lanka with his followers. Lord Ayyanayake made a golden ship and started his journey toward Sri Lanka through the Milky Sea. On the way suddenly the ship froze up and didn't move. Later on, learning that this was the work of God "Kambili" he asked to take his offerings as pooja. The ship started to move and again froze up and found out that this is an act of god "Kadawara". Ayyanayaka god promised to give him some of his offerings called "Kiri Ithurum Gotu". Likewise, five gods came to this country and landed in the Jaffna region and later arrived in areas like "Eppawala", "Amulakole", and "Galagiriyagala" to help people. It is further stated that Lord Ayyanayake resides with the blessings of the Sri Lankan Lord "Saman". Lord Ayyanayake used an elephant for his travels. He always travels with other gods and the "Kalu Devatha", "Ilandari Devian", "Kambili Yakshaya" and "Kadawara" are his attendants. Even today, people offer sacrifices to Lord Ayyanayake and these five deities.

In South India, there are idols of God called "Aiyanar" riding an elephant or a horse. Many of those idols show him riding a horse (Shasthri, 1986, 232). Accordingly, how the Indian God Aiyanar and the Sri Lankan Lord Ayyanayaka were depicted is somewhat contradictory because, according to the Kolmura chant, Lord Ayyanayake is on an elephant. However, some Indian scholars consider the famous statue of a man and a horse's head in the "Isurumuniya" temple in Anuradhapura to be a statue of Lord Aiyanayak (Dissanayake, 2014, 36). Accordingly, we can think that the history of worshipping Lord Attanayake dates back to the Anuradhapura period. That is because there was a lot of South Indian political interference throughout the Anuradhapura period. We can imagine through the statues and other arts that those political interferences and Tamil culture influenced the Sri Lankan

culture. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that South Indian gods and religious concepts did not influence Sri Lankan culture. However, there are no sources to confirm the actual period when the concepts of Lord Ayyanayake came to Sri Lanka. Some "Sandeshas Kawya" written in the eras of Gampola Kotte mention that there were temples to worship Lord Ayyanayake. It is mentioned in the book "Kokila Sanendeshaya" that there was such a place near the city called "Mawatu Patuna" during the Kotte era (Gunawardana, 205.206 poems). The worship of these gods in the Vanni must have spread since those periods. In the 20th century, Mr. Wimalaratne Kumaragama, while working as a revenue controller in areas such as Vanni Hatpattu Mahawa, Navagathandagama, wrote a poem called "Ayyanayake" about deity worship and an Ayyanayake temple in that area (Wijesinghe, 2017). It shows that people had a strong faith in Lord Ayyanayake even then.

Lord Ayyanayake is the presiding deity of the annual "Kiri Ithurum" ritual held near the Madiyava tank in Mahawa Divisional Secretariat Division in Vanni Hatpattuwa. In that ritual, the priest who conducts sacrifices goes to this reservoir and offers a few special sacrifices to Lord Ayyanayake. Success in agriculture and rain at the right time is the main expectation of doing this ritual. Therefore, it is shown that the concept of the god Ayyanayake was formed based on the agricultural economy of Vanni Hatpattu.

Due to the lack of evidence, it is not clear in what period this concept of Ayyanayake Deva with Indian roots became popular among the people of the Vanni Hatpattu area. The upper part of the Puttalam district and Kurunegala district of the North Western Province were frequently attacked by the South Indian Dravidians during the medieval period. However, the people of Vanni Hatpattu worship these deities with great respect. Even now, people passing

by the Ayyanayake temple near "Deduru Oya", park their vehicles and offer tribute to the temple next to the river and receive blessings by beating coconut. There used to be a small fane there. And that time, the carters and the passengers hang leaves and branches in this temple. This was done because the villagers believe that the area around Deduru Oya and Mee Oya is the site of Lord Ayyanayake.

The concept of the god Ayyanayake, inspired by the Indian Tamils, has been adopted by the villagers to suit the Sri Lankan culture. A good example of this concept being rooted in Sri Lankan culture is the praise of God Ayyanayake as a follower of Lord Buddha in Kolmura poems and the mention of him as one who received the blessings of Lord Buddha. Also, even in the idols in the fanes of Wannī Hatpattu, Lord Ayyanayake is depicted as a Sinhalese deity. He is depicted as an elderly man with a long beard and holding a long cane in his left hand and a "talipot" book in his right. He is also known as "Ayyanayake Mutta". This shows how close this god is to the people of Wannī Hatpattu.

Kadawara Religious concept

Lord Kadavara, who is worshiped by the people of Wannī Hatpattu, is considered to be a half-god because he is considered both a god and a demon. The god Kadawara is popular among the people in Wannī Hathpaththuwa as well as the god Ayyanayaka.

There are several Genesis stories of Lord Kadavara. The main one is the story that he is considered a god born in Sri Lanka. However, according to Kolmura chants, he is an Indian god who came to Sri Lanka.

Once upon a time, there was a powerful baron in the central country. He had a son with all kinds of bad traits. For that very reason, he was banished from the palace. Living with wild animals, he lost the ability to speak because he lived in the jungle with wild animals for a long time. After a long time, some servants who worked for the baron saw him in the forest with the animals, tracked him down, and brought him back to the palace. Because of the life in the castle, he was able to talk again. Then the baron came to the prince and asked what the largest thing was seen in the forest. And he replied that he saw a large creeper. The master asked him to show where it was located. The Lord built a giant reservoir around that place, which was later known as 'Kala Wewa'.

The "Kala Wewa" enabled the farmers to successfully carry on their agricultural activities, but during the dry season, it dried up and destroyed all the fields. Baron was saddened by this and invited the Buddhist monks to chant "Pirith". Then the rains started, and the "Kala Wewa" was once again filled with water and farming was successful. As time passed and a long drought came, the "Kala Wewa" dried up completely. Once again, the baron invited sixty monks to recite the Pirith. Then it started raining. There was a pot that indicated the water level in the Kala Wewa. The baron checked the pot from time to time. At last, the tank was full, so the pot was also full. Seeing this action of the baron, a monk pierced the pot with his walking stick. When the pot was pierced, a sound like a gunshot was heard. Along with the rupture of the pot, the embankment of the Kala Wewa also broke, and the area was flooded. Later, the baron came to know that it was a monk who pierced the pot. The baron was enraged and beheaded all the monks, putting the heads in the hole in the wall of the "Kala Wewa", after which he also jumped into the tank and killed himself. While jumping to the broken place in the "Kala

Wewa", the king said that he would die after drinking the blood of the monks. He was born in that damaged place (Kadawala) so he was called "Kadawala" and later "Kadawara" (Disanayaka,2014,41).

Kadwara mentioned in the custom of "Kohoba Yak Kankariya" in the Udarata region is also from India (Disanayaka,2014,46). In the 'Ran Nawe' poems sung during the "Bath Malawa" ritual of Wanni Hatpattu, it is mentioned that god Kadavara came from the city called "Madura" in India along with the god Ayyanayake. With the permission of Lord Ayyanayake, milk rice can be obtained from the offerings made by people to god Kadawara. Therefore, people often make a separate offering to this god in rituals like "Bath Malawa". According to the recitals of "Bath Malawa" the god Kadawara is in charge of areas like "Kala Rata", Trincomalee, Mannar, Chilaw, and "Pahalospaththuwa". People also call him the protector of sacred places like "Sripada", "Diwa Guhawa", "Jaya Sri Ma Bodhi", "Temple of the Tooth" etc. It shows that people tried to bring these gods and other beliefs into the Buddhist culture which was the main culture among the people. The god Kadawara holds in one hand the object called the gem anklet (Mini Salamba) and on the other hand the giant farming implement called 'hoe' made of twelve thousand pieces of iron. According to the Kolmura chants, Lord Kadavara always carries these when he moves around the Wanni Hatpattu. The fact that the main weapon of God Kadawara is a hoe shows that this concept of God was created based on the agricultural economic background of this area. However, people have more faith and respect for this deity as they believe that this deity is in charge of all the tanks in the area. Wanni Hatpattuwa is a society based on agriculture. Therefore, every village remained as lake village. Therefore, people have offered sacrifices to this god for success in agriculture.

Rituals such as "Bath Malawa", "Pidilla", "Yahan Deema", "Lake-side Milk Festival", and "Kadawara Yak Kankariya" have been performed by the villagers of Wannī Hatpattuwa for God Kadwara. Nowadays these rituals are very rare. Since there is no mention of this concept of God in Indian sources, it can be concluded that this concept of God was created in Sri Lanka. Since the concept of this god was more widespread in the areas where agricultural activities were common, it can be concluded that the villagers believed and worshiped this god in anticipation of the prosperity and development of the society.

Kambili Religious concept

The people of Wannī Hatpattu respect the gods "Kambili" above all other gods. Therefore, Kambili gods can be called as a major belief among the people of Vanni Hatpattu. In the interview with Mr. KM Ukkubanda, a seventy-three-year-old resident of "Ambagaswewa" village in Vanni Hatpattu, he mentioned that these gods often provide help and protection to the people of Vanni Hatpattu. He annually performs the traditional ritual called "Bath Malava" to these deities. It is a custom of his lineage. The purpose of these rituals is to ensure agricultural success throughout the year and to protect these agricultural practices. According to their beliefs, these gods are quite harsh. There are three Kambili gods.

1. Kalu Kambili
2. Heda Kambili
3. Rathna Kambili

The Kolmura poetry manuscript belonging to Mr. KM Ukkubanda mentions the origin of the Kambili gods and their arrival in Sri Lanka. According to

these chants, these deities have come in a golden boat accompanied by the god Ayyanayake who has a red cloth. Acting as a follower of Lord Ayyanayake, Lord Kambili went to the village of "Pimburuvella" in Anuradhapura to protect the people. According to people's belief, the main place where this deity resides is "Pimbuwelle Devalaya". Lord Kambili is worshiped by the people in Wanni Hatpattu as one of the five gods who came from India, including "Aiyanaayaka", "Kadawara", and "Kalu Devatha". As there are several legends about Lord Kambili, he seems to be very close to people. Most of these stories are based on the incidents between Lord Kambili and a doctor (Veda Mahaththaya) who lived in the village called "Kandubadagama" near "Yapahuwa" in the Vanni Hatpattuwa area. This is mentioned in several Kolmura poems sung during the "Bath Malava" ritual. These legends are confirmed by those poems. Among those poems, some poems have recently been added to the offering. According to these stories, the doctor used the Kambili devil for his work. Because of that, he had to face many troubles. However, from these legends and the Kolmura chant, it can be concluded that Lord Kambili was worshiped by the people as a special deity.

Kalu Devathava

"Kalu Devatha" is another religious concept unique to Wanni Hatpattu. This deity is also worshiped during rituals like "Bath Malava". In the hymns sung during this ritual, it is mentioned that this god along with "Aiyanaayaka" also came from India. His origin is defined by a Buddhist background. In the "Vidura Jataka" among the Jataka stories, Kalu Devatha is introduced as the son of the demon Purnaka and the serpent princess Erandati. After he came to this country, he made "Nuwara Kalaviya" and "Wanni Hatpattu" his home. People believe that this god belongs to the cowherds. He is the lord of cows and protects cows. According to the "Kolmura" poems, he is also in charge of

the cattle herd of the God "Kataragama". Because of that, people worship him with more respect. Another conclusion can be drawn that he is the god based on the agricultural and economic society of this area.

Handun Kumara Deviyen

Another deity worshiped by the people of Vanni Hatpattu is "Handhun Kumara". He is quite special because he is of local origin by birth. As this god was born from a Sandal flower, he got the name "Sandun Kumara". It is mentioned in the poems that "Valli Amma" belonging to the "Vedi" tribe, who was the wife of the god "Kataragama", adopted and nursed this god. This deity resides in the area called "Pimburuvella" and according to the beliefs of the people of the Wanni Hatpattu area, he provides shelter to the people of Satkorala.

Anguruwelle Muththa

There is also a deity called "Anguruwelle Mutta" in this area. This God is unique only to the Wanni Hatpattu region. This is the origin story of this god.

When the "Mee oya" stream flowing through Wanni Hatpattu dried up during the dry season, people used to fish in the few waterholes left in the river. There was an old man (mutta) who used to go there every day to collect fish as ransom from these fishing holes. Enraged by the daily extortion, the men dug a pit in the ground, filled it with logs, and burned it until it turned into hot coals. After that, they covered the pit with sand. Mutta came to get the fish as usual and sat down where they had set the trap. He fell into the pit and burned to death. After this tragic event, he died and was born as a demon.

However, the people of Vanni Hatpattu believe that he provides protection to the people living on both sides of the river. Villagers believe that for the protection of the harvest, when lost in the forest or when afraid, break a leaf

branch and remember the "Anguruwelle Muththa" and the fear will disappear. "Anguruwelle Muththa" is sometimes called "Mee Mutta" by the villagers.

Reasons for the popularity of these religious beliefs among the people of the Wannu Hatpattuwa area

Considering the history of religious beliefs in Sri Lanka, it is clear that the belief in God was mixed with Buddhism and Hinduism and gradually developed. Later, many gods spread throughout this country. It has been revealed above how religious concepts arose in the Wannu Hatpattu area. It can be concluded that most of them are created according to social and environmental conditions. A harsh, dry, and forested agricultural society existed in the Wannu Hatpattu area. Therefore, people had to face many challenges in their daily life. It can be believed that people developed these religious beliefs to overcome these challenges and threats. They created conceptual things like gods and other invisible forces and worshiped them hoping that their wishes would be fulfilled. All these gods help people. These gods protect the crops, give rain, protect people from diseases, help to overcome fear, and help people when they are lost in the forest. Considering the origin of these deities some of them are given as deities with Indian roots but who took refuge with the Buddha. Other deities are created according to certain historical stories of that area. The people of Wannu Hatpattu worshiped those deities according to Buddhist culture. It shows that people created these gods according to their cultural background as well as answers to their real-life problems. Moreover, many of these gods bless their agricultural activities and protect their crops. Hence, the concept of God influenced the agricultural economy of the area. A study of religious beliefs around the world shows that the religious beliefs of many societies are shaped by their local productions. For example, many of the religious beliefs of the "Vedi" people of Sri Lanka

are based on their hunting lifestyle. Many of the gods of Greek civilization were based on agriculture, trade, war, etc., which were part of their society. Thus, several examples can be identified by studying the characteristics of societies around the world.

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