An Explanation for Frequently used Terminologies used in the Pilgrimage to Sri Pada in Sri Lanka: A Lexical Explanation

Abeyweera, G.H., T.M.P.S. I. Tennakoon, M. Rubavathanan

1 Department of English Language Teaching of Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka
2, 3 Department of Public Administration of Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka

Abstract: Sripada also known as Samanala Kanda which is at a height of 7359 feet is the third highest mountain in Sri Lanka where Buddhists believe that the Gautama Buddha placed his left foot-print on the peak of the mountain on the invitation of God Sumana who is considered to be the guardian of the Samanala Kanda (mountain). A large number of devotees including the majority of Buddhists embracing different regions strenuously climb the mountain annually during the Sripada season which is from Duruthu (December) full moon poya day to Vesak (May) full moon poya day the following year. In the language of the laymen, the Sripada pilgrimage starts in December and ends in May in the following year and the rest of the period is considered as off-season which is particularly set aside for celestial beings especially for God Sumana Saman. Most of the devotees in their pilgrimage to Sripada used to use a particular set of terminology peculiar to Sripada pilgrimage. These terminologies are not used any other context in Sri Lanka either in a pilgrimage or any other excursion. Thus, this paper attempts to provide explanations to the most frequently used lexis in the context of Sripada pilgrimage in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: pilgrimage, terminology, Sripada season, devotees, Buddhists

I. INTRODUCTION

Sripada which is also known as Samanala Kanda enriched with biodiversity is virtually surrounded by forest and hills. These massifs which are in the vicinity are not as tall as Sripada. The area covering the Horton Plains national park and the Knuckles range in the central highlands was identified as a world heritage site in Sri Lanka in the year 2011. Environmentally, Sripada is also crucial as a watershed where four main rivers of Sri Lanka, Mahaweli, Kelani, Kalu and Walawe originate from Sripada. In folklore, the following poem shall bear the evidence for originating four rivers in Sri Lanka.

The area to the south and east of this mountain called Ratnapura yields for precious stones (gems) – emeralds, rubies and sapphires for which the island is famous for.

Gautama Buddha’s third visit to Sri Lanka is of more significant in relation to history of Sripada. During the eight year after the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha visited Sri Lanka for the third occasion where God Sumana Saman had invited Gautama Buddha to visit his abode at Samanala Kanda. According to Mahawansa, Gautama Buddha had gone to Samanala Kanda and had engraved his left foot-print with his super natural power acquired through meditation. It is also believed that the Samanala Kanda or Samanthakuta is protected by the God Sumana Saman together with the devotees who used to go on the pilgrimage to worship the foot-print of the Gautama Buddha.

It is also worth to mention little about history of Sripada. The Sripada is first referred to as Samanthalakuta in Deepawansa chronicle during the fourth century and in Mahawansa in the fifth century. According to Mahawansa Chronicle, King Valagamba and King Vijayaba had visited Sripada during the fourth century. Event Italian traveler Marco Polo had noted Sripada as a significant place although he had not mentioned of the foot-print of the Buddha. People from all walks of life used to climb the Sripada to worship the sacred foot-print of the Gautama Buddha.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For reference, some of the materials were taken from Chronicles like Mahawansa and Deepawansa in tracing out the historical significance. In addition, folklore literature also was referred to in gathering information about the pilgrimage to Sripada. The participatory observation was employed in accumulating more and more information. Frequent discussions were held while climbing up and climbing down the Samanala Kanda particularly with the older generations (age group 65s and above) as they were more towards spiritual life than that of younger generations. The observers’ collections of lexis were given explanations and interpretations after clarifying the denotative and connotative values of the list of terminologies collected through participatory observation.
The provision of explanation for terminology was arranged according to the order of the places we find on our way to the peak of the Samanala Kanda for the convenience of both visitors and researchers for further exploration.

Hatton

Hatton is a town which serves as a gateway to Sripada. Pilgrims who used to travel by trains to visit Sripasa have to get down at this town and get public transport service to reach the beginning of the excursion to Samanala Kanda where pilgrims start using some of the lexis peculiar to Sripada holy trip.

1. නියත අංගයක් මෙහෙයක් කරවා ගතියක් දාන්තුවන්: those who are going to worship, please get on to this bus. Here the word ‘නියත අංගයක් මෙහෙයක් දාන්තුවන්’ means to go with spiritual piety. It is not used in any other context.

2. මෙහෙයක් දාන්තුවන්: Before they embark on the journey, everyone start saying “sa’duh, sa’dhu” three times or more meaning good, excellent or auspicious.

3. අන්න උපාදානය දියනාවේවීම: Everyone wishes each other as ‘May God Sumana Saman protect us all from all evils.

Nallathanniya (මල්ලතන්නිය)

This is a place situated en-route to Sripada. The meaning of Nallathanniya is ‘good water’ pure water for drinking. From this place onwards, pilgrims have to walk to the peak of the Samanala Kanda.

4. නැමුණන්කීර්තී: required apparatus for the pilgrimage

5. ආහාර කාඩය: types of cloths prepared from polythene for protection from rain

6. සාමාඩි: flowers and clay-lams and joysticks for offering

7. නාමඩි: offerings for the Lord Buddha

8. කාඩේවරභුමි: people who visit first time to Sripada

9. වැංග්‍රාමෝ: people who visit to worship

10. වැංග්‍රාමෝ වැංග්‍රාමෝ: observe five precepts such as I refrain from killing living beings, refrain from stealing things which belong to others, refrain from illegal sexual enjoyment, refrain from lying and refrain from consuming liquor

11. පුදු සාමාඩි: make vows for specially to God Sumana Saman invoking blessing for protection

12. අණ්ඩමල අපැක්ෂීම: receiving blessing from Sangha (monks)

13. බිමුල: herbal drinks given free for all devotees

Saama Pagoda (සුමනසමන්වදවිපිහිටලබනවා)

Pilgrims find this peace pagoda before Sheetha Gangula. This pagoda was built by the famous Buddhist monk Nichi Fugi in 1976 and it is now maintained by several Buddhist monks. Pilgrims shall also be able to hear some of the words being used at this place.

14. මෙහෙයක් දාන්තුවන්: place where herbal drinks are being offered for the devotees

15. පුදු සාමාඩි: worshipping the peace pagoda

16. අංගල ආහාර: taking rest after a long walk

17. සමනලක්කන්ද අංගල ආහාර: place where rice and curry are being offered for the devotees who visit Samanala Kanda

Seetha Gangula (සූතා ආසන්න)

Seetha Gangula is a popular stream one would undoubtedly find on our way to Sripada. For devotees, it is customary to have a bath from this cooling spring-water before climbing Samanala Kanda. The very name ‘Seetha Gangula’ suggests that the water is very cold at these heights. It is at present too, the devotees who visit for the first time to Sripada used to have a bath at the spring. Others who have visited several times earlier also used to have baths at this place.

Those who trail via Hatton, Nallathanniya route, the Seetha Gangula has become a resting place where devotees used to have a bath, purify themselves, have their vegetarian meals or their tea and start their trail. This is the exact place where devotees clean a few coins with a piece of lime and saffron and wrap in a piece of white cloth and tie in a tree or perhaps in their hands invoking blessings particularly from God Sumana Saman. Some of the terminologies used by devotees from Seetha Gangula onwards are,

18. අංගල ආහාර: getting a rest after miles of walking

19. සාමාඩි: having bath and cleaning oneself

20. වැංග්‍රාමෝ ආහාර: clad in white cloths

21. මෙහෙයක් දාන්තුවන්: cleaning a few coins with lime and saffron and washing them

22. අණ්ඩමල: wrapping the cleaned coins with a piece of white cloth and tying it in a tree

23. ආහාර ප්‍රශ්ණය: making a vow particularly pleading from God for protection

24. වැංග්‍රාමෝ: tying a cleaned coin with a vow

25. මෙහෙයක් දාන්තුවන්: getting the blessings from God Sumana Saman

26. වැංග්‍රාමෝ ආහර: receiving blessings from God Sumana Saman

27. කාමගේවරභුමි: Mountain of butterflies or butterfly mountain

28. අටහාදියන්: Another huge mountain but not taller than Samanala Kanda
29. හිමය: Another mountain but not taller than the Samanala Kanda
30. නිවැසක්: huge gathering or crowd
31. නිවැසක: devotees
32. ගතුෂරණ: reciting virtues of Lord Buddha a series of melodious stanzas
33. කොටස්: with a religious mind and be pleased with kindness
34. සිරිපාකරුණාකිරීම: walking towards or climbing the Samanala Kanda
35. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: May God Sumana Saman protect the group climbing the Samanala Kanda for worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha
36. හඬුවකෝඩුකාරය: May God Sumana Saman protect the group climbing down the Samanala Kanda after worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha
37. මහාවසනග (නිවැසක්): Leader of the group
38. නවේගුරා: Groups of devotees climbing the Samanala Kanda for worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha

Geththam Pana (වන්දනානඩ)

When Lord Buddha visited Samanala Kanda, he had to mend his Chivaraya (robe) at this place and as a result the place where Lord Buddha used to mend his robe is called as Geththam Pana. As a custom, devotees at present do not forget to weave with a roll of cotton thread and a needle. From this place onwards, the difficult selection of the climbs encounters. In order to avoid tediousness, devotees used to recite thunsarana (virtues of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha). Weaving

39. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: Weaving
40. නිකාෂ: customs
41. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: virtues of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha

Mahagiri Dambaya (ධර්මරජගල)

The final set of steps railings leading up to the summit is called Mahagiri Dambaya. The wind is very strong and rough at this place. The steps and rails provide protection at this place. Sometimes people call it ahasagawa or himaya (අහස්ගේව හිමය) as the devotees can feel that they are almost touching the sky. The only protection for the devotees is the blessing of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha and God Saman.

After Mahagiri Dambaya, devotees reach fist the lower compound where most of the devotees worshipping chanting Stanzas and then take their rest. Then they climb to the upper compound for worshipping the Foot-Print of the Lord Buddha with their spiritual flavor with piety. Then they come down to the lower compound and rest to their satisfaction. Here, devotees used to consume what they have brought to quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger.

42. යොදුමුදු: the place before reaching the summit
43. දඬුවකෝඩු: upper compound
44. දඬුවකෝඩු: lower compound
45. නිවැසකද: Foot-Print
46. නිවැසක: devotees attribute the foot-print to be of gold
47. කුරා: devotees attribute the foot-print to be of gem
48. නිවැසක: worship
49. නිවැසක: taking rest
50. නිවැසක්: offer flowers and worship
51. නවේගුරා: Place where the statue of God Saman is kept for worshipping
52. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: the devotee who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
53. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: the youngest female one who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
54. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: the youngest male one who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
55. නිවැසක: have mercy from God Saman
56. නිවැසක: taking rest for a while at the compound
57. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: a type of sweet made of rice-flour ball-shaped. This sweet is famous and significant at the Sripada pilgrimage
58. නිවැසක: drinking tea
59. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: climbing down the steps after worshipping the Foot-Print of Lord Buddha
60. පුෂ්වපෝහාරදක්වනවා: wishing for another trip to Sripada the following year
61. නිවැසක: returning to their villages

III. LIMITATION

Most of the information was gathered during researchers’ observation to Sripada via Hatton Nallathanni route. It is believed that this particular route is the shortest way to reach the summit of the Samanala Kanda. However, the other route Ratnapura via Palabadda is the longest and oldest route to Sripada. It is certain: some of the significant places were missing out since researchers did not observe the other route. Some places like Dharmaraja Gala (ඩාරමරාජගල), Lihinihela Ambalama (ලිහිනිලා මාබලම) and some interesting folk stories are missing out in this study. In addition to this, literature written around the Sripada is also missing out since this is a participatory observation research. Therefore, this research is open for further exploration to nourish with ample information.
REFERENCE


