Journal of Visual and Performing Arts

ISSN 2651-0286

Volume 4 | Issue 1 | 2025

Published by the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka

Journal of Visual & Performing Arts
Sri Lanka
(JOVPA-SL)

UVPA 20th Anniversary Edition
July 2025

Volume 4 | Issue 1 | 2025

UVPA 20th Anniversary Edition
ISSN 2651-0286
Published by: University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Journal Aim and Scope

The Journal of Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka (JOVPA-SL) is a biannual research publication issued by the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo. The journal seeks to capture a broad spectrum of scholarly work in the fields of visual and performing arts, while also promoting multidisciplinary approaches within the humanities and social sciences. JOVPA-SL welcomes contributions from both academics and practitioner-researchers engaged in arts-based research, fostering critical dialogue and innovative perspectives on creative practice and inquiry. It serves as a platform for critical engagement, experimental methodologies, and creative pedagogy, addressing themes that are either discipline-specific such as dance, drama, performance studies, music, or visual arts or situated at the intersection of multiple disciplines. The journal invites original, rigorous, and meaningful research in creative arts and performance studies, both within and across academic boundaries. It encourages critical debate and cross-disciplinary exchange through diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to: theatre studies, performance studies, dance studies, ethnomusicology, music education, popular culture, dance and movement analysis, art history, art theory, visual and cultural studies, crafts, digital arts and design, film studies, and fine arts.

Cover Photo: Final Year Dance Production, '*Oracle'* performed in 2018 at Panibharatha Theatre. Dept. of Theatre, and Oriental Ballet and Modern Dance.

Journal Contact
Address: Editor in Chief, JOVPA-SL, 21 Albert Crescent, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka.
Email: jovpasl@vpa.ac.lk
Telephone: +94 718328086

Printed and Bound in
……
Cover Design and Page Layout:
Chamara Amarasinghe, Saumya Liyanage and Bandhuka Premawardhana
UVPA Colombo

ISSN 2651-0286

PREMAKUMARA DE SILVA
Department of Sociology
University of Colombo

'Kolamba Kattiya' or Colombo Crowd: Religiosity and Pilgrimage of 'Urban Poor' in Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

This paper explains the religiosity expressed at Sri Pāda by pilgrims from 'peasant and working class' social backgrounds as opposed to the middle class. Hence, the paper mainly focuses on the religiosity of people living in the proletariat parts of Colombo City, i.e., kolamba kattiya who annually visit Sri Pada as an 'obligatory pilgrimage' which indicates of the continuity of their traditional forms of worship to the Buddha and the guardian deity, like Saman, Pattini and Kataragama. This is built upon my earlier research on bali-tovil and the argument made that traditional forms of religiosity (bali-tovil) are not dying out due to urbanization, modernization even under the globalization instead they are but reforming and rearranging, even revitalized, albeit in rather different forms in contemporary Sri Lanka (see de Silva, 2000). It is argued that globalization and modernization forces can lead to the erosion of traditional practices and values but my limited ethnographical work shows that resilience and adaptation of traditional religiosity is quite possible while maintaining and ensuring their relevance in changing contexts. Traditional religiosity among the urban poor often manifests as a strong reliance on faith for coping with poverty and social marginalization, with religious beliefs and practices serving as a source of strength, community, and hope. This argument is further elaborated through the ethnographical material that I have collected at Sri Pada since 2001.

KEYWORDS:

Religiosity,
Pilgrimage,
Continuity and Change,
Urban Poor

INTRODUCTION

On January 20th 2002, I was sitting in a teashop at Sri Pada, one of the popular pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka. As an ethnographer, while imbibing a cup of tea prepared by a shop-owner, I directed a casual question that most Sri Lankans would ask in an ordinary chat with a trader. "How is business these days?" He said that it was not good but things would be better when *Kolamba kattiya avama* (when the Colombo crowd arrives) in March. I was curious to know who this crowd was. He said 'you wait and see' who this *Kolamba kattiya* (lit. contingent of Colombo), Colombo crowd is. So, in this paper I am going to investigate this special category of pilgrims who visit the Sri Pada temple in large numbers during the month of March every year and how they express their religiosity at this pilgrimage centre. Most of this special category of pilgrims belong to deprived social classes of the capital city[1] of Sri Lanka and inhabited in the most deprived Under Served Settlements (USS) in the city. There are currently 64 such settlements within the municipal limits of Colombo which accommodates half of Colombo's population. Generally speaking, Sri Pada attracts a large number of urban poor and 'peasant and working class' pilgrims compared to 'middle class' Sri Lankans. The absence of middle- class individuals such as big businessmen, wealthy lawyers, doctors and politicians, senior government officers and major landowners is, in my view, a recent phenomenon at Sri Pada. The middle class involvement at Sri Pada is quite minimal when comparing their involvement with other major pilgrimage sites like Kataragama, Anuradhapura and Kandy. Instead, we see Sri Pada as a major sacred site of predominantly representing 'peasant and working classes' characters. This is a quite unique situation when compared with the other national pilgrimage sites like Kataragama; as Gananath Obeyesekere explains, 'people of all social classes and all nominal religious affiliations' (1988: 163) visit Kataragama throughout the year. He specifies the social position of pilgrims at Kataragama as the unemployed educated sons of peasants, politicians, businessmen and big-time crooks in the city of Colombo (1977: 388-389), urban proletariat, mainly 'from the slums of Colombo…without strong

[1] Colombo, the largest city and financial hub of Sri Lanka, occupying an area of 37 km2, and home to an estimated 612,535 inhabitants (2020) and nearly another 500,000 daily floating population.

kinship ties, and …cut off almost totally from traditional peasant society'" (1978: 472). Obeyesekere was quite interested in explaining new forms of religious expression developing amongst 'urban' Buddhists in Sri Lanka. The reasons for development of new religiosity are that of the 'stresses and strains of modern society' or 'social disintegration' that links with the rise of pilgrimage sites like Kataragama. He recognised this new trend as '*bhakti* religiosity'. He explained this new religiosity by focusing on groups of people who display strongly externalised ecstatic religiosity: on those who walk the fire (Obeyesekere 1978) or become priests or priestesses with hair in matted locks (1981); on those who hang on hooks, roll on hot sand, or *kavadi* dance. These ecstatic forms of religious behaviour are highly visible during the festival at Kataragama. This (ecstatic) Hindu-type devotional religiosity among Buddhists, he argues (ibid), was initially popular among the urban poor and then taken up by the middle-classes to fulfil their need for an outlet for the frustrations with economic hardships, with delaying marriage, and high expectation of life (1978). Unlike Sri Pada, Kataragama is not exclusively for the urban poor and peasant social classes, and there is a large contingent of middle-class people attend its festivities. As Obeyesekere reported, 'people of all social classes and all nominal religious affiliations' visit Kataragama. (1988: 163)

Rohan Bastin (2002), has explored similar class relations at Munnesvaram, a popular Tamil Saivite temple with a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist patronage, near the north-west coastal town of Chilaw. He identifies Munnesvaram as a site of not simply attended by the poor, either urban or rural, but by large segment of Middle class Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Saivites (2002: 26-34).[2] Though Kataragama and Munnesvaram attract large number of middle-class pilgrims, Sri Pāda remains a site for pilgrims from the lower social classes. This paper explains the religiosity expressed by urban poor visiting Sri Pada which is quite different from Kataragama and Munneswarm.

Bruce Kapferer (1983) has explored a similar class dynamic when he discusses "A Celebration of Demons" among 'urban' Sinhala Buddhists in and around the southern port city of Galle. Kapferer argues that "demonic practices" in contemporary Sri Lanka have become predominantly peasant and working-class phenomenon. Middle

[2] Bastin (2002) has moved from single class analysis and tries to incorporate other social categories and contrasts such as caste, ethnicity and even locality of the worshippers (insider/outsider).

class Sinhala Buddhists, according to him, distinguish such practices of the working class and peasantry from "true" Buddhism (1983:31). However, he shows that despite the disapproval of deity worship among the middle class, appeal to the deities is a more apparent middle-class practice than a working class or peasant practice (ibid. 32). Increasing middle class worship of the deities, Kapferer explains, they rejected "demonic practices" and "negatively oriented to demon exorcism" (ibid.). This negative orientation, he argues, is a product of a historical process and is reproduced in the tautology of a cultural logic of a class discourse, which has been instrumental in further creating exorcism as a working class and peasant practice (ibid. 34).[3]

When compared to the sociological background of pilgrims visiting national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda, Kapferer's formulation is problematic. It is because, as I explain below, the religiosity expressed at Sri Pāda attracts many pilgrims from 'peasant and working class' social backgrounds rather than the middle class. Hence, this paper focuses on the religiosity of people living in the proletariat parts of Colombo City, i.e., *kolamba kattiya*[4] who annually visit Sri Pada as an 'obligatory pilgrimage' which indicates the continuity of their traditional forms of worship of the Buddha and the guardian deity, Saman, Pattini and Kataragama. This is built upon my earlier research on bali-tovil and the argument made that traditional forms of religiosity (planetary rituals [bali-tovil]) are not dying out due to urbanization, modernization even under the globalization but reforming and rearranging, even revitalized, albeit in rather different forms in contemporary Sri Lanka (see de Silva, 2000). It is argued that globalization and modernization forces can lead to the erosion of traditional practices and values, but my limited ethnographical work shows that resilience and adaptation of traditional religiosity is quite possible while maintaining and ensuring their relevance in changing contexts. Traditional religiosity among the urban poor often manifests as a strong reliance on faith for coping with poverty and social marginalization, with religious beliefs and practices serving as a source of strength, community, and hope. This can include participation in traditional religious activities, strong belief in supernatural forces, and reliance on religious leaders and communities for support. Further research is needed to fully understand

[3] I have challenged this view (see De Silva 2000).

[4] This area contains large congested slums and shanties in which the poor, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim live in dreadful conditions. It also has areas inhabited by people with regular employment but low income, as well as a few better-off people in government and business. These urban communities became more geographically concentrated, culturally isolated, and pushed to the margins of social and institutional life. Soon after the war as a part of massive redevelopment projects in Colombo the government

the complex relationship between traditional religiosity, poverty, and social change in urban contexts. This paper attempts to explain how traditional ritual journeys like pilgrimages are still popular and strong among urban poor in the city of Colombo, and I will demonstrate the continuity of such religiosity through one of their popular sacred sites, Sri Pada. Between August 2001 and September 2002, and briefly again in February 2006 and April 2017, I carried out ethno-historical research on Sri Pāda and in addition to that I am following up its activities via digital and social media platforms as well. This paper focuses on a section of larger contingent of pilgrims visiting Sri Pada annually that is of Colombo urban poor.

launched a special project to relocate urban poor by stating it's for improving the living conditions of them but it was backlashed and created new issues of living (see Amarasuriya and Spencer, 2015). As far as their religiosity is concerned, Obeyesekere and Gombrich (1988) pointed out that the most popular deities among the urban proletariats are the newly emerging god Suniyam and goddess Kali and they are well represented in the shrines dedicated to them in this part of Colombo. For them, this new religiosity is mostly sprung from lower-class urban roots (1988: chapters 03 and 04). But in their formulation they have failed to understand the continuation of traditional form of religiosity among urban poor in the city of Colombo.

BACKGROUND

Sri Pāda is a pilgrimage site that has been held sacred by the devotees of four religions namely Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Islamists. While the Buddhist believe that the Buddha left a trace of his left footprint at the summit on a gemstone, while to Hindus it is the Footprint of Lord Siva, hence, called Sivan Adipadham or Sivanolipatha Malai, while some of Sri Lanka's Muslims call it the Footprint of Al-Rohun (Soul) or Adam, a prophet according to Islamic beliefs. Some Christians say the "footprint" in the rock atop the rustred peak is that of Adam when he set foot on earth after being exiled from Eden. Hence it is called Adam's Peak. Other Christians say it is the Footprint of St. Thomas, who brought Christianity to Southern India in the first century AD, in the succeeding centuries not only the royalty with their court retinue, but the ordinary pilgrims had paid homage to the sacred footprint at the mountain top sacred site. The kings, in their devotion and persistence made the peak accessible to crowds of devotees who annually trickled up the mountain at least from the 11th century. This tropical forest mountain territory or Samanala adaviya comes under the jurisdiction of the guardian deity Saman who is venerated along with the sacred footprint at this remote jungle temple. The Sri Pāda temple can be approached through two different pilgrimage footpaths: the southern path from the direction of Ratnapura, the main town in Sabaragamuva; and the northern path which approaches via the hill town Hatton, in Central Province.

Like other major pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka thousands of pilgrims annually make the journey to Sri Pāda to worship the sacred footprint. The Sri Pāda pilgrimage season begins from *Unduvap Poya* (Full moon day in December) to *Vesak Poya* in May. In the past, pilgrims climbed there with the intention of acquiring religious merit and indeed today they visit for many reasons. The contemporary journey to Sri Pāda equally stresses what Morinis calls both "devotional" and "instrumental" aspects of pilgrimage (1992:10-11). For him (1992) pilgrimage is important both to collective ideals and as personal experience. To support study of pilgrimage as structure and experience he defined six types of pilgrimage: (1) devotional, (2) instrumental, (3) normative, (4) obligatory, (5) wandering, and (6) initiatory; all consisting of journey and goal. The goal of the journey is to move from the familiar to the Other, or from home to the place of the ideal, thus locating Otherness outside time and space. The ultimate goal of the pilgrim is salvation, either as transformation /transcendence into the ideal, or acquiring solutions to life's afflictions.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

The sociology of Sinhala Buddhist religion and the direction of its change has been debated and well documented through both anthropological and sociological perspectives. Most studies focus on how Sinhala Buddhism has changed along with social change in the Sinhala society in general, and have concentrated on a number of interrelated themes: the nature of "orthodoxy" in contemporary Sinhala Buddhism (e.g., Gombrich: 1971,1990; Southwold: 1983; Carrithers: 1983), the relationship between Buddhism and ritual practices (Leach: 1962; Yalman: 1962; Ames: 1963; Obeyesekere: 1963,1966,1968,1978; Kapferer: 1983,1998; Seneviratne: 1978; Scott: 1994; De Silva: 2000), and the transformation of traditional Sinhala Buddhism over the last century (Malalgoda: 1976; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988; Seneviratne 1999). Some of them have argued, (e.g., Obeyesekere 1970, 1975, 1978; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988 and Kapferer 1983, 1997) that a range of "radical" changes has taken place in the religious practices among Sinhala Buddhists over the last few decades. In other words, these studies

show how changes in popular religion reflected changes in society at large (Spencer 1990). Nihal Perera addresses the spatialization of the protestantization and the socialization of Buddhism in colonial urban spaces and further builds on his argument in People's Spaces (2016). These significant changes have heightened psychological tensions among the masses particularly the urban poor and the middle class and, as Obeyesekere argues, both alone and in association with Richard Gombrich, one way of relieving such tensions is to rely on new forms of religious expression (Obeyesekere 1975, 1977, 1978, 1981; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988). The growing propitiation of gods such as Kataragama, Huniyam, and goddesses such as Kali [who is replacing Pattini as the main goddess of Sinhala Buddhism], and acts of devotion to the Bo-tree (known as the *bodhi pūjā*) and to figures like Sai Baba, have been the result of a collapse of "traditional order" and the resultant lack of coherence and order in social life. The key to all these developments is 'urbanization', consisting primarily of a 'breakdown of traditional structures of authority and meaning' (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 53). Obeyesekere & Gombrich have viewed recent religious changes in terms of class structure. On the broadest level, new religious practices have been explained in relation to 'the emergence of a large bourgeoisie and an urban proletariat' classes. They characterise differences between these two classes as follows:

> The religious values and ethos that spring from the bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat are not only different from one another but also contrast with traditional village Buddhism. Historically viewed, the crucial components of bourgeois religious values come from Protestant Christianity, especially its Victorian forms. Proletarian religious values [….] go counter to the puritan ethos of the bourgeoisie and find their primary expression in an emotional religiosity derived from Hinduism [*bhakti* devotionalism] (1988: 11).

The former has largely, according to Gombrich & Obeyesekere, concerned more protestant type religious innovation among the bourgeoisie/middle class and the latter innovations affecting the lower-class/urban poor people based on the Hindu *bhakti* devotionalism. For example, the rise of lay Buddhist meditation is popular among the middle class, whereas the new deity cults are more popular among the urban poor. Contrary to this formulation, Gombrich & Obeyesekere record among the urban middle class an increase in the popularity of worshipping at the shrines to the deities (Obeyesekere 1970, 1977, Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988) and in the practice of sorcery (Obeyesekere 1975). The Sinhala urban middle class is the main group that visits the main shrine of the god Kataragama to ask for his aid and protection before travelling overseas, in business, at times of personal or family misfortune, or before an examination (Obeyesekere 1970: 59). Obeyesekere (1981) argues that middle class anxiety, frustration, and tension in their daily lives motivate members to the worship of deities. He describes the emergence of deity worship among the urban middle class as symptomatic of the changes in 'Protestant Buddhism' and continued under 'Post-protestant Buddhism' as well (see de Silva, 2006).

'CLASS'[5] AFFILIATION IN SRI PĀDA PILGRIMAGE

Let me now explain why I claim that Sri Pāda attracts large numbers of pilgrims belonging to lower social positions of Sri Lankan society. My argument here is mainly based on the statistical information that I gathered through a simple survey at the Sri Pāda temple, supplemented by ethnographical information. The social class of the pilgrims can be mainly identified through their occupational affiliation, and the nature of the personal problems that they brought to Sri Pāda seeking 'divine' help (*pihita*). The class affiliation of the Sri Pāda pilgrims will be further discussed through two distinctive sociological categories, namely "youth pilgrims" and "Colombo Crowd" present among pilgrims to Sri Pāda. Such a distinction is highlighted to point out the variation evident in pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. Though many youth pilgrims seem to come from a lower social background, there is a considerable number of 'lower middle class' youth[6] also present

[5] Most sociologists agree that society is stratified, to some extent, into social classes but they often disagree on how we should define, measure, and deal with issues related to social class. It is difficult to give a single, all-encompassing definition for 'social class', as what it means and how it's measured has been widely contested over the years. In general terms, social classes are said to be the particular divisions that society is separated into, based on socioeconomic status.

[6] Given the limited space of the paper I would like to direct my readers for a comprehensive analysis of youth religiosity at Sri Pada (de Silva, 2022: 139-156).

(e.g., sons and daughters of teachers, traders and clerical workers)[7]. Interestingly, however, "Colombo crowd" basically comes from the proletarian parts of the capital city of Colombo. In the hands of such "urban poor", according to Gombrich and Obeyesekere "the [urban] spirit religion" has changed its character (1988: 09) and the values of these people, they assert, are different from those of the urban middle class and traditional village Buddhism (1988:11). But my ethnographical information about Sri Pāda does not substantiate this formulation of the "urban poor" as total adherents of urban-based "new spirit cults," because, as I illustrate later, this so-called "urban poor" are not completely cut off from some of their "traditional religious practices", (though they practice them in rather different forms today) For example; going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda, as they describe it, is a continuous practice of generation after generation which can be traced back to their "village roots". I argue that "urban poor" are not necessarily adherents of "new spirit cults" but also frequent visitors to a "traditional pilgrimage site" like Sri Pāda.

Let me now present some figures from the survey that I carried out during my fieldwork in 2002. If we consider the regional and occupational affiliations of the pilgrims, as table 1.1 shows, over 55 per cent of the pilgrims came to Sri Pāda from the Western, Southern and Sabaragamuwa provinces, the densest and urbanized provinces of the country. Interestingly, most claimed to come from 'villages' rather than towns, but this should not be taken at face value for when one looks at occupation, the pilgrims were in general not agriculturists or fisher folk, the archetypal 'village' occupations, rather the majority were involved in skilled non-agricultural occupations such as drivers, masons, carpenters, mechanics, factory workers, printers, vendors, security services and as unskilled non-agricultural labourers. Also, a small number are involved in white-collar jobs such as teachers, clerks and sales representatives.

[7] I have also noticed small number of environmentally concern English speaking urban middle class youth operate at Sri Pāda under their respective NGOs. They basically there for conducting range of environment awareness programs for pilgrims rather than having any devotion to the sacred centre. In addition to that the contingent of foreign tourists are also attracted to Sri Pada sacred mountain.

	Frequency	Percent
Western	399	43
Southern	110	12
Central	66	7
Sabaragamuwa	239	26
Uva	40	4
North central	27	3
North western	34	4
Eastern	9	1
Total	924	100

Table 1.1 Origin of pilgrims at Sri Pāda by province

	Frequency	Percent
Dependent	277	30
Vendors	99	11
Wage labourers	85	9
Cultivators	70	8
Mechanical work	52	6
Mason/Carpenter/Contractor	44	5
Plantation Small holders	43	5
Drivers and conductors	42	5
Clerical	42	5
Garment Factory workers	41	4
Sales assistants	32	4
Security service	22	2
Administrative work	20	2
Teachers and instructors	19	2
Buddhist monks	19	2
Retired from government service	10	1
Middle-East	4	0.4
Self employment	3	0.3
Total	924	100

Table 1.2 Occupation of pilgrims at Sri Pāda

If we consider the overall occupational background of the pilgrims, 'traditional' occupations are under-represented whilst 'modern' occupations are over-represented. The picture that emerges is that most pilgrims to Sri Pāda are wage and salary earners; most of those who do not live in towns, are also not 'traditional peasants'. For example, as Obeyesekere explains most of the pilgrims visiting Kataragama are 'cut off almost totally [from] traditional peasant society' (1978: 472). The occupational affiliation of the pilgrims to Sri Pāda is a clear indication of a significant departure from the so called "traditional peasant society". It is clear by now that many of the pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda are engaged in non-agricultural occupations as well as majority of them being Sinhala Buddhists who belong to the lower social classes of the Sri Lankan society. Compare to lower social classes it is a smaller number of pilgrims from the so called 'middle-class background' visit to Sri Pāda. Even the Temple authority is well aware about the absentee of middle-class pilgrims and as the former Trustee monk of the temple explained to me that it has considerably affected the temple income and he revealed his future plan how he wants to overcome the issue by introducing electric cable car system which he believes attract the large number of "high income groups".

Some 'professional middle class' people told me they were reluctant to visit Sri Pāda, not because they do not have any faith in the 'sacred footprints', but because of the 'difficulties' of the journey. Unlike Kataragama, Kandy or Anuradhapura, where vehicles can be taken close to the sacred grounds, reaching Sri Pāda in order to tap its sacredness requires physical and mental stamina, which might not be found among the 'busy' middle class people in contemporary Sri Lanka. However, the absence of middle-class individuals such as big businessmen, wealthy lawyers, doctors and politicians, senior government officers and major landowners is, in my view, a recent phenomenon.[8] Prior to the colonial regimes, and even well into the colonial period, going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda was probably common among all ranks and the sections of Sri Lankan society. For example, as I have shown elsewhere, Sri Pāda always was an important site for "royal pilgrimage", and even in the British colonial period, the landed local elite groups particularly those of

[8] The absence of middle class representation at contemporary Sri Pāda cannot be further explained because limited information on that particular aspect. Hence, one needs further research on this important aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrimage.

Sabaragamuva, were closely connected to Sri Pāda temple (see de Silva, 2018).

Moreover, the present class affiliation of Sri Pāda pilgrims can also be demonstrated through the social background of the temple patrons, particularly the patrons of *pinkama*s (the merit making rituals). Some patrons began to sponsor rather than organise the full moon day *pinkama* way back in the 1970s and some of them even continue to do so until the present time. Remarkably, almost all of them come from lower social backgrounds other than the so-called 'middle class'. Similarly, most *pinkamas* are sponsored by people who come from less educated and non-professionals social backgrounds. For example: carpenters, vegetable cultivators, and vendors. This is quite contrary to the situation of even a village temple, where such *pinkama* is usually dominated by the leading Buddhist families or the *dāyaka sabhava* (lay temple association), which is again normally controlled by the same people. This is quite clear in the urban areas, as Kapferer shows 'it is the middle class [throughout the southern capital city of Galle] who control the lay Buddhist temple associations, who are involved in the appointment of new monks, and who are concerned with the morality of monks, with the organization of temple donations, with improvements and additions to temple structures, and with the organization of major Buddhist calendar of events centred on the temple' (1983: 25-26). And Kapferer concludes, 'the temples have become a largely middle class preserve" (ibid.). I agree with his point but such formulation does not explain the situation of the national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda where temple patrons largely come from the non-middle-class backgrounds even though unlike middle class patrons, they are incapable of challenging or gaining control over the temple authorities.

The situation in Sri Pāda is quite different from that in other national pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka. Elizabeth Nissan shows that the major *pinkamas* at the national pilgrimage site of Anuradhapura are always sponsored or organised by middle class dominated lay Buddhist associations found around the 1930s and 1950s but those associations differ from a *dayaka sabhava* because they are not attached any particular temple. She describes the activities of two

of those associations, (The *Pushapadāna Sāmitiya* and the *Bauddha Mandalaya*), which have separate branches to organise such major *pinkama*s at the other major pilgrimage sites in the island (1985: Chapter 2). The absence of such associations, and of middle-class operation at Sri Pāda is further confirmed that the even high-level major Buddhist calendrical events centred at this temple are predominantly organised by pilgrims of non-middle class.[9] However, during my recent visit to Sri Pada I found that major ceremonies of the ritual calendar of the temple including annual motorized procession of escorting sacred paraphernalia are being taking over by affluent middle-class sponsors.

The class affiliation of the pilgrims visiting Sri Pāda temple can be further explained by analysing the personal problems that they brought to Sri Pāda for help from the 'divine power' attached to the temple. Among those, issues related to employment, education, marriage and health were important. Pilgrims do not come to Sri Pāda to take revenge or harm enemies through sorcery or to perform curse-removing rituals, entering into trance and possession, more commonly found among the lower strata of the Sri Lankan society (see Obeyesekere 1981, Kapferer 1997). In my view, the issues that they brought into the Sri Pāda temple are strongly related to the central value of the temple and it benevolent nature. From a Buddhist point of view, Sri Pāda is a religious site, emphasising the highest Buddhist value of "*karünava*" or "compassion" ("kindness"). Such value is mainly represented through the qualities of its guardian deity Saman to whom some pilgrims direct the problems to be solved. Karuniava in the context of Sri Pāda would be understood as the most intrinsic quality of the god Saman. That is why we do not hear this word in other major Buddhist sites where the god Saman is not so powerfully represented. The moral quality of the god Saman is constantly expressed through the devotional language and restrained behaviour of pilgrims and it also plays a vital role to attract a large number of under privilege Buddhist subjects to the temple. Noticeably, these are the class of people who do not get much attention or any sort of a 'kindness' from the ruling and the privilege classes of Sri Lankan society.

This distinction can be further elaborated through a particular

[9] This is not true for the major temple festival of March (*mädin pinkama*), the sponsors of such *pinkama* have recently been taken over by some influential middle-class families and organizations. In post war situation as Alex McKinley (2024) explained there are moments of elite Buddhists exercising over other Buddhists even non-Buddhists on the summit while organizing infrastructure development projects at the temple with the involvement of Sri Lankan military, corporate world and the government.

example of the professional trance consultants or spirit mediums of whom the vast majority are Sinhala Buddhist women popularly known as *mäniyo* (mothers). Obeyesekere (1981) describes *mäniyo* as strongly independent women who, through their ability to enter trance, operate as private religious consultants. Kapferer also provides more information on *mäniyo* as a group that often comes from the urban poor (1997: 247). This is also true in Obeyesekere's analysis of those trance specialists at Kataragama (1981). But Bastin reports that, at Munnesvaram, there are some *mäniyo* whose social background is not urban poor, but middle class (2002: 71). However, all are in agreement that most *mäniyo* are devotees of new urban deities such as Kataragama, Kali and Huniyam.

I met several of these *mäniyo* at the Sri Pāda temple and almost all of them belonged to underprivileged social classes, either urban or rural. Also, nearly all of them were unmarried or no longer married. Surprisingly, at Sri Pāda, their religious behaviour is completely different from the situation described by Obeyesekere at Kataragama (1981) and Bastin at Munnesvaram (2002: 70-72). The strongly externalised devotional and ecstatic behaviours (dance, trance and possess) of those *mäniyo* are completely absent when they present themselves at the Sri Pāda temple. The central quality of the temple is clearly undermined the ecstatic form of religiosity that is practiced by similar groups of *mäniyo* in other pilgrimage sites. The religious behaviour of *mäniyo* at Sri Pāda clearly indicated the complexity of lower-class religiosity in contemporary Sri Lanka. So, labelling them as strong adherents of new urban deities, as Obeyesekere and Kapferer claim, must be treated with scepticism.

In Sri Pāda, the element of expressive emotion can be found in devotional songs and friendly greeting (even modified versions of them) which have a different tone of collective devotion (oriented to the Buddha or the deity Saman) from the expressive emotion of pilgrims at Kataragama. Both involve 'the body' excessively but differently. Also, unlike at Kataragama, the devotional and expressive forms of religiosity are not new for adherents of Sri Pāda pilgrimages. Not only do Sri Pāda pilgrims show visible religious behaviour through the singing of devotional songs and their friendly greetings, but their personal devotion is also physically 'externalised'

through the arduous journey to the sacred mountain. At Kataragama the 'devotional ecstasy' is expressed through dance, trance, loud music, fire walking, hanging from hooks, and so on. At Sri Pāda, it is expressed through rather different forms such as the singing of devotional songs and arduous climbing.

The externalised form of devotional religious behaviour at Sri Pāda can be found among the 'urban poor' of the country long before the advent of Hindu-type '*bhakti* religiosity' described by Obeyesekere (1978). It does not mean Obeyesekere is wrong, but the 'expressive devotion' is not new to those 'peasant' and 'working' class people who more or less annually visit to Sri Pāda. This shows that any generalization of those people's religious behaviours must be cautiously made, partly because their religious behaviour may vary from the central values of the sites and the quality of the gods and goddesses they worship. But it might not always the case, some groups from similar social backgrounds can be unadjusted or compete with the intrinsic value of those sites. For example, youth religiosity at Sri Pāda shows how they produce, contest and negotiate culturally transmitted patterns of thought and practice while forming a religious heritage and assimilating it into their 'lifeworld's' by blending both religious and non-religious activities and expectations in creative and unforeseeable ways (see de Silva, 2020: 139-156).

'COLOMBO CROWD'

As my informant who runs a small teashop for the pilgrims told me, a large number of pilgrims would come from Colombo in March and their presence at Sri Pāda would give him a considerably higher income compared to the other months of the pilgrimage season. For this reason I was eager to see these '*kolamba kattiya*'. As my informant predicted, pilgrims came from Colombo in large numbers with their families, relatives and friends. Almost every group consisted of male/female, young/elderly, and even children/babies.

Interestingly, as I later found, most of these pilgrims came from the so-called underprivileged areas of the capital city.[10] Large numbers seemed to come from the North and the West Colombo slums, especially from areas such as Maradana (Colombo 10), Kotahena

[10] For a general discussion of their life patterns, see K.T. Silva and K Athukorala (1991) and N. Fernando (2017). According to Perera the massive transformation took place during the colonial period particularly indigenization of various immigrant communities but their familiarization of the Colombo city were not even. The different origins, lengths of stay, speeds of naturalization, cultural perceptions, and spaces familiar to them transformed Colombo into culturally and spatially the most diverse city in Ceylon (2016: 33). The expansion of the city limits also incorporated indigenous and migrant neighborhoods. In addition, the "immigrants" in Colombo had also naturalized by the end of the nineteenth century, indigenizing both colonial spaces and their own cultural practices (ibid).

and Dematagoda (Colombo 9)] where a large number of 'urban poor', both Sinhala and Tamil, live. Though they had come from underprivileged areas of Colombo, most of them were dressed in their best 'western' clothes, and rarely in traditional white. Some men and women had covered their necks and hands with jewellery and fancy items. Many spent lavishly on food, drinks and souvenirs.

Unlike other pilgrims, they did not rush home but spent a few days either in the southern or northern pilgrimage bazaar towns in order to relax, take river baths and basically 'enjoy' themselves with their families, relatives and friends. This Colombo contingent usually comes to Sri Pāda during the month of March, particularly around the *mädin* full moon day festival, (hence locals in the Sri Pāda area used to call that festival day as '*kolamba pōya*' the full moon day of Colombo people). During this period several special trains run from Colombo to Hatton, the plantation town neighbouring the northern pilgrimage bazaar. Their presence at Sri Pāda creates a more vibrant and colourful atmosphere, both along the path and at the temple. Like other pilgrims they usually worship and make offerings, both at the footprint shrine and the shrine of the god Saman. I noticed, many offered the fruit basket (*pūjā vatti*) to god Saman, either on releasing the vows that they had made in previous visits, or in seeking a general blessing from the god. The temple staff, though they were critical about their general behaviour at the temple, agreed that the visit of 'Colombo crowed' to Sri Pāda resulted in a large increment of temple income compared to other months.

The visit to the Sri Pāda temple for these Colombo pilgrims is a very important event in their annual religious calendar. As some of the pilgrims I interviewed told me, they begin to prepare for the Sri Pāda journey well before the commencement of the pilgrimage season. They used to save money with the aim of undertaking the Sri Pāda journey every year. Many of them save the money through the rotating credit system popularly known as "*seittu*". This system is most popular among rural and urban women of low-income groups. Considerable numbers of people from these underprivileged neighbourhoods, however, go on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda with the support of individual sponsors in these neighbourhoods. These sponsors are basically influential men of their communities, and

they can be characterized as "strong men" in the sense of wealth and power. Most of these sponsors make money by engaging in "illegal business" in their respective communities. Under such personal sponsorship the expenses of the entire pilgrim group would be looked after by those "strong men". In turn, pilgrims in such a group would offer respect, obedience and behave under the sponsor's words throughout the journey. This kind of personal sponsorship among pilgrims seems not to be an old arrangement, but rather a recent innovation that cannot be even found among other pilgrims groups.

Emergence of such personal sponsors for the pilgrim's group is a clear departure from the 'traditional' arrangement of the pilgrim's groups (*nade*) discussed in my other paper (de Silva, 2019). One informant from the Colombo pilgrims told me how he went on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda with a *nade* of his neighbourhood, normally organised by a *nadegura*, the leader of the *nade*, and how he taught how to sing "*tunsarana*" (devotional songs) prior to the pilgrimage, and advised them on the practice of self-restraint during the journey, and how the *nade* respected and obeyed the authority of the nadegura. Such an arrangement is no doubt very similar to the formation of a village pilgrim group in many ways. Hence, one could consider such arrangements as the continuation of village level pilgrimage practices in a highly urbanised context. Certainly, such practices would have been brought to Colombo by people who had migrated from villages, and became working class city dwellers.[11] However, like other pilgrim groups, the arrangement of today's Colombo groups has undergone a set of changes, including the emergence of an individual sponsor for certain pilgrim's groups from the predominantly proletarian parts of Colombo. One such sponsor justified his spending as "meritorious giving" and he firmly believes such an act would help him to successfully conduct his own business. These new sponsors not only expect to gain material benefit but also seek personal honour from fellow pilgrims. In other words, these new sponsors are enjoying a sense of leadership among fellow pilgrims that was previously enjoyed by traditional pilgrims' leaders, *nadegura*.

Some characteristics of "Colombo crowd" can be illustrated by a

[11] Historically speaking, some of the ancestors of these slum communities were highly engaged in collective 'Buddhist activities' at Sri Pāda, particularly building of *ambalam* (pilgrim's rests), supplying drinking water and free foods for pilgrims (*dansala*). During my field research I observed that some of their descendants still operate few *dansala*s particularly at the time of their own [Colombo] pilgrims visit to Sri Pāda. The collective 'Buddhist activities' of these city dwellers at Sri Pāda, no doubt can be recognized as what John Rogers calls "non-elite participation of the Buddhist revival activities" (see 1997:323-333). The Buddhist revival began in last quarter of the nineteenth century by the upwardly mobile elites against the cultural encroachment of Christianity but as Rogers correctly points out studies of the revival have not yet dealt systematically the non-elite activities in

few case studies, which I have gathered at one of the overcrowded working-class slum neighbourhoods in the North of Colombo, Kotahena. This neighbourhood called Belinwatta is closely situated to the Colombo port where most people in the community work as port labourers as did their ancestors.[12] This area contains an important Buddhist temple; Dipaduttamaramaya which enjoyed virtual hegemony over the nineteenth-century Buddhist revival, particularly its resistance to Christian missions under the revivalist activities of orator monk Mohottivatte Gunananda, from a Southern coastal town who presided over the temple for nearly fifty years. Though this community has its own temple now, some people still maintain their connection with the historically important Dipaduttamaramaya. There is a small Hindu temple in the community where the Tamil segment of the community regularly make offering to the god Murukan. Interestingly, both Sinhala and Tamil people in this community speak both languages fluently and live in considerable peace.

I met Ebert (59) and Ananda (28) at the Sri Pāda temple and briefly interviewed them there, but then made a few follow-up interviews with them at their own community. Let's talk about Ebert first.

CASE A. Ebert Zoysa was born of Sinhala Buddhist parents in 1944. He is now fifty-nine years old. His father was a port labourer at the Colombo port as was his grandfather. Ebert's grandfather originally came from the Southern coastal area called Dadalla near Matara, similarly his mother's father also came from the neighbouring area called Gandara. Ebert's father married in 1942 and he was the second eldest of seven children; six of them are alive at present. All of Ebert's siblings are male except the youngest. Ebert went to Gunananda primary School at Kotehena up to grade five. He is bilingual. He can read and speak Tamil in addition to his mother tongue Sinhala. Several years after leaving school, Ebert became a port labourer following in the footsteps of his father and his father's father. In 1999 he retired. Now he runs own three-wheel taxi for a living. Ebert has three children, all of them married except the youngest son. Ebert made his first journey to Sri Pāda when he was fourteen, and according to his calculation he has visited Sri Pāda thirty five times so far. On one of those visits he first met his marriage

the Buddhist revival (ibid. 324). One such non-elite activist was H. Salamon Singho who was trained as tailor. In 1913 he started a society called "*Sripadabhivadaka dāna samitiya*" with the intention of supplying free food and drink (dansala) for the *pilgrims* who largely visit Sri Pāda around the full moon day in March with the help of the donations from pious Buddhists. In 1926 the society constructed an *ambalama* at the Seetagangula of the Kuruvita path where it gave *dansala* for thirty nine years. After the death of Salamon Singho in 1954 the society ceased to function. (This brief information was obtained from a pamphlet belonging to his daughter. She gave me a copy of the pamphlet but was reluctant to talk much about her father). Similar but the detail story was documented by Kanthi M. Vitharana (see: chapter 03 &

partner who came from a neighbouring proletariat part of the city. When I met Ebert at Sri Pāda he was with a *nade* of twenty-seven; all of then belonged to his extended family apart from a few friends. The journey to Sri Pāda in Ebert words is "religious as well as an enjoyable". He continues,

> *My parents used to take us to Sri Pāda from our childhood, we do exactly the same thing for our children. I took my children to Sri Pāda when they were babies. We go to Sri Pāda every year, but we don't go to Kataragama every year unless we have to fulfil a vow. Sri Pāda is the journey that everybody in this area would hardly miss. People enjoy going to Sri Pāda, but we actually enjoy ourselves after finishing our worship. The worship of the sacred footprint and the god Saman is the main purpose of our visit to Sri Pāda. Every year I offer a fruit tray (pūjā vatti) to god Saman even when I do not make a vow at his shrine. After all of these activities at the maluwa (temple) we enjoy ourselves with our families and friends by spending one or two days at Palabaddala or Nallatanni (the small towns the foothill of Sri Pāda). But today many people take Sri Pāda pilgrimage as entirely 'vinoda gamanak' (a pleasure trip) particularly young people. They hardly perform the customs and the practices (sirith-virith), which are appropriate to Sri Pāda journey. Therefore, unlike in the past the miraculous power (hāskam) at Sri Pāda has been disappearing. For example: there is no rush for large numbers of people is presented at the temple (even it has a very limited space) but today the belief in such miracles don't happened. We still come to Sri Pāda because if we don't make this journey each year we feel like something has not happened to our life (siri pāde nogiyāma aduvak vage dënenava). Even one or two months after the journey we talk about our experiences with our neighbours and friends by doing*

04, 2004) on non-elite involvement in Sri Pada affairs particularly supplying of electricity to the Sri Pada temple after establishing 'Svasthika Brotherhood Society' at Grandpass area, Colombo in 1933. It was dysfunction after the government-initiated project was launched to electrify the pilgrim's paths in 1950.

[12] Interestingly many of their roots go back to the southern province of the island where they originally came from before settling in this part of the city as workers of Colombo port during its expansion under the British colonial rule.

that we enjoy it and sometimes laugh and make jokes. Sometime we start to talk about similar things just prior to the next journey. When our neighbours get ready to go to Sri Pāda we also make our plans for the next journey. When the pilgrimage season comes in each year no one dares to ignore it. I would say it is our annual journey that our parent trained us to undertake from our childhood we still enjoy (he means both sacred and secular manner) visiting Sri Pāda.

CASE B. Ananda is an unmarried Sinhala Buddhist man in his late twenties and has become a well-known moneylender in this area. He runs this business together with his mother and brother and has not allowed others to taken up business in the neighbourhood. Ananda has been visiting Sri Pāda since he was nine, and when I met him at the Sri Pāda temple he was just completing his fourteenth journey together with a group that he had sponsored. According to his words:

We visit Sri Pāda every year, I would be really disappointed if I missed it. When the pilgrimage season comes it is so difficult for me to avoid the Sri Pāda journey. During the month of March everybody talk about the Sri Pāda journey. It is not like the journey to Kataragama, we don't go to Kataragama every year but we all go to Sri Pāda every year. If someone doesn't have money to go to Sri Pāda, people voluntarily support them. This time I took thirty people including myself. I looked after all their expenses, that cost me Rs.30, 000 but some people may think that I am a "foolish"[13]*. I spend that amount of money because people like me strongly believe that spending money on Sri Pāda pilgrimages will encourage us to run our business successful manner. I believe that god Saman helps such people. I have already experienced it myself on several occasions. On one occasion I was about to do a profitable deal [brokerage of land] with a company, before that deal I visited Sri Pāda*

[13] He used the term "*mōra*" (lit. 'shark' but no relevance at all to it real meaning) such language expression is commonly found in the everyday language use of people living in this part of the City.

and asked help of the god Saman by making a vow. Surprisingly, the deal was succeeded. I don't usually offer fruit basket (pūjā vatti) to god Saman as other business people do in our area but I offer money to him and the footprint because my business is directly connected with the money. I know many people not like me they do "bad business" such as drug dealing, selling illicit liquor, running gambling centers. They earn a lot of money by doing such businesses when they go to Sri Pāda they wear a lot of jewellery on their hands and necks to show their richness to others but I know some were wearing imitation jewellery. I myself wear jewellery but not imitations. I remember when I was a child, our whole family was taken to Sri Pāda by a person who sold illicit liquor. He is still taking pilgrims to Sri Pāda with his own money. Since we began our own business we don't go behind them. I have my own group now, I take them to Sri Pāda each year, and anybody would like to join into my pilgrim group they all are welcome, I have the courage to look after them. I usually take my group to Sri Pāda by train as most others do. In the train we enjoy ourselves by singing, dancing and joking with each other. Most of the train carrying pilgrims from Colombo is occupied by the pilgrims from our part of the city. Sometime fighting erupts between different pilgrim's groups when they try to over occupy the train seats. On one occasion, two of my group broke their teeth, and some of them were taken into police custody and as a result we had to cancel our journey. These things are happen every year; it may also happen in the pilgrimage bazaar towns when all the people from Colombo gather there. Once we get to the pilgrimage bazaar town, Nallatanni, we stay there over night and then go to the Sri Pāda temple and return to Nallatani. At Nallatanni we enjoy ourselves for at least three days with our fellow pilgrims. Some

years, after spending a few days at Sri Pāda we make a trip to the hill resort city of Nuwara Eliya to have more fun.

These two accounts give us a different picture of the pilgrims who visit Sri Pāda from lower class social backgrounds. As I mentioned before most "Colombo crowd" come to Sri Pāda from the overcrowded working-class slums, though some of them have managed to accumulate a certain amount of money through "illegal business" and have become pilgrim's sponsors like Ananda (case B) in their respective neighbourhood. As the two case studies show, the journey of Colombo pilgrims to Sri Pāda is not necessarily entirely religious but combines seeking 'divine' help and 'pleasure' (see de Silva 2019). The latter purpose seems to have developed more recently.

Let me compere this situation with Gombrich & Obeyesekere who co-authored the massive book, *Buddhism Transformed* (1988) where they have detailed the religiosity of the "urban proletarian" class, in which city slum dwellers like my "Colombo crowd" are predominantly represented. According to them "urban proletarians" are the adherents of new urban spirit cults that have emerged around three deities, namely Huniyam, Kali, and especially Kataragama. The popularity of these deities among the proletarians, according to them, is further evident in the emergence of new shrines dedicated to them in the proletarian parts of the city. Specifically, in these areas Kali and Huniyam have become increasingly important (ibid.). In my view, however, their interpretation of the religiosity of the urban proletarian class has failed to understand its connection to "traditional" pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda or the purpose of their visiting those sites. Detailed accounts are provided of the increasing prominence of the three deities among the people belong to this class and their forms of religiosity are identified as "new spirit cults" (1988: 65-163) in the "disordered modern society" (1988:100).

This process has been identified in broad psychological terms. Gombrich & Obeyesekere attribute the key to the emergence of '*bhakti* religiosity' as 'urbanisation', consisting primarily of a 'breakdown of traditional structures of authority and meaning' (ibid.

53), the failure of the economy to meet the aspirations of the people, a political system which encourages unrealistic aspirations, and mass universal education, which, in turn, increases social aspirations. Such changes, according to them, have heightened the psychological tensions of the masses and one way of relieving such tensions is to rely on new forms of religious devotionalism. As I have shown elsewhere such an analysis fails to see how so-called "traditional forms of religiosity" are engaging in continually innovative practices, albeit in different forms in contemporary Sri Lanka (de Silva 2000). Their investigation has failed to identify 'continuity' as well as the 'changes' in the 'old' forms of religiosity. As I demonstrate in this paper pilgrims belonging to the "urban proletarian" class are still attracted in large numbers to sites like Sri Pāda, where the Buddha, and the most benevolent deities like god Saman, have long been worshipped and honoured. Though the motivations of "Colombo crowd", like other pilgrims to today's Sri Pāda vary from devotional forms of worship to the extreme position of seeking pleasure, the point is that Sri Pāda has continued to flourish as a pilgrimage site that attracts people from lower- social class backgrounds. The nature of religiosity of those groups depends upon the intrinsic qualities of the sacred shrines they frequently visit. Also, the paper is not merely focus on the devotional practices of urban poor at Sri Pada and what do such devotional practices connect with many other practices in those low-income settlements.

CONCLUSION

In the existing anthropological literature both Obeyesekere and Kapferer agree that deity worship in contemporary Sri Lanka is more a middle-class practice than working class or peasant practice. As I demonstrate above, their formulation is problematic: when compared with the social background of the pilgrims who visit national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda. For Buddhists, Sri Pāda is a site of worship oriented to the Buddha and the deity Saman and it largely attracts pilgrims from 'peasant and working class' than from the so-called "middle class". This suggests the looseness of the class analysis of popular worship in contemporary Sri Lanka. In

considering religiosity of urban poor at Sri Pada, we can conclude that they are not necessarily followers of Hindu-type '*Bhakti* religiosity' as described by Obeyesekere (1978) but they continually worship traditional deities like Saman[14] and on top of that the Buddha or his relic like Sacred Footprint. It also suggests that the urban poor use their sacred spaces as arenas for retaining and reviving old and new forms of religiosity but do not necessarily move away from their traditional form of worship, belief and reverence that they have inherited from the older generations before moving into the capital city of Colombo. The findings in this study are not beyond the dialectic of continuities and discontinuities during urbanization, modernization even globalization of Sri Lankan society, but they rebalance this dialectic in favour of continuity and change. Therefore, this paper made an effort to explain how the religiosity of urban poor is in the process of continuity and transformation in the increasingly globalized and urbanised Sri Lanka.

[13] See detail of worship of deity Saman (de Silva, 2008).

REFERENCES

Amarasuriya, H., & Spencer, J. (2015)."With That, Discipline Will Also Come to Them": The Politics of the Urban Poor in Postwar Colombo. Current Anthropology, 56(S11), S66–S75. https://doi.org/10.1086/681926

Bastin, Rohan 1996.'The Regenerative Power of Kali Worship in Contemporary Sri Lanka.' Social Analysis. Vol.40, 59-94.

2002. The Domain of Constant Excess: Plural Worship at the Munnesvaram Temples in Sri Lanka. New York/Oxford: Berhahn Books.

De Silva, Premakumara 2000. Globalization and the Transformation of Planetary Rituals in Southern Sri Lanka. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies

2006. 'Anthropology of 'Sinhala Buddhism' In Contemporary Buddhism An International Journal, 7(2),

2008. 'God of Compassion and the Divine Protector of 'Sri Pada': Trands in Popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka.In The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities (SLJH) xxxiv (1&2).

2018. 'Colonial governmentality': Legal and Administrative

Technologies of the Governance of Sri Pāda Temple in Sri Lanka" In Thomas Borchert (ed.) Theravada Buddhism in Colonial Contexts London: Routledge.
2019. "To Worship Our 'Boss' (the Buddha):" Youth Religiosity in a Popular Pilgrimage Site in Sri Lanka' In Jürgen Schaflechner and Christopher Bergmann (eds.) Rituals Journeys in South Asia. London: Rutledge Publication.
Fernando, N. 2018 Vulnerability to Poverty and Livelihood Strategies of Urban Deprived Communities: The Case of an Urban Resettlement in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Colombo: Samayawardena.
Gombrich,R.F.1971. Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Gombrich, R.F & G. Obeyesekere. 1988. Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Kapferer, Bruce 1983. A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
1988. Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia.Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
1997. The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power. Chicago. University of Chicago Press
Malalgoda, Kitsiri 1973. 'The Buddhist-Christian confrontation in Ceylon 1800-1880, Social Compass vol. xx: 2, 171-200
1976. Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900: A study of Religious Revival and Change. London: University of California Press.
McKinley, Alexander 2024. Mountain at a Center of the World: Pilgrimage and Pluralism in Sri Lanka. Columbia: Columbia University Press.
Morinis, E. Alan 1984. Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: A case study of West Bengal. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
1992. (ed.) Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage, London: Greenwood Press.
Nissan, Elizebeth 1985. The Sacred City of Anuradhapura: Aspects of Sinhalese Buddhism and Nationhood, unpublished Ph. D the-

sis, University of London.
1988. 'Polity and Pilgrimage Centres in Sri Lanka'. Man23: 2, 253-74.
1989. 'History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation'. Social Analysis, No 25, Sep.

Obeyesekere, Gananath 1962. 'The Sinhalese Buddhist Pantheon and Its Extensions' In Nash,M. (ed.) Proceedings of the Conference Theravada Buddhism. New Haven: Yale University.
1963. 'The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism'. In Journal of Asian Studies. Vol.22, 139-153.
1972. 'Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon'. Modern Ceylon Studies 1, No1.
1977. 'Social Change and the Deities: The Rise of the Kataragama Cult in Modern Sri Lanka'. Man, 12, 377-396.
1978. 'The Fire-Walkers of Kataragama: The Rise of Bhakti Religiosity in Buddhist Sri Lanka' Journal of Asian Studies 36: 457-476.
1981. Medusa's Hair. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1984. The Cult of the Goddess Pattini. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Perera, Nihal 2016. People's Spaces: Coping, Familiarizing, Creating. London & New York: Routledge
1998. Society and space : colonialism, nationalism, and postcolonial identity in Sri Lanka. Boulder: Westview Press

Rogers, John 1997. The Kalutara Bo Tree Affair, 1891-1897 in Michael Roberts (ed.) Sri Lanka Collective Identities Revisited Volume I. Colombo: Marga Institute Publication.

Scott, David 1994. Formation of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala Yaktovil. London: University of Minnesota Press.
1994. 'Religion in Colonial Civil Society: Buddhism and Modernity in 19th Century Sri Lanka', In The Thatched Patio, July/ August, 1-16

Seneviratne, H.L 1978. Rituals of the Kandyan State. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1999. The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Chi-

cago: University of Chicago Press.
Silva, Kalinga, T. and K. Athukorala 1991. The Watta-Dwellers: A sociological Study of Selected Urban Low-Income Communities in Sri Lanka. Lanham: University Press of America.
Spencer, Jonathan 1990. 'Tradition and Transformation: Recent Writing on the Anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka'. Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford. Vol.xx1, 2
Tambiah, S.J 1976. World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1985. Culture, Thought and Social Action. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
1986. Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantaling of Democracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1992. Buddhism Betrayed: Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Vitharana, M. Kanthi 2004. Sri Padasthanaya Pilibanda ithihasika thorathuru ha haskam (in Sinhala). Maradana: S. Godage.
Yalman, Nur 1964. 'The Structure of Sinhalese Healing Rituals'. In Religion in South Asia, E.B.Haper (ed.). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Premakumara de Silva is the Chair Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the Department of Sociology, University of Colombo. He also a Senior Research Fellow at University of Birmingham, UK and was an Adjunct Professor at Deakin University, Australia.