

Silent power of myths for environment management in Nuwarakalaviya

Gamini Ranasinghe¹

Abstract

The area named Nuwarakalaviya is bounded by the main giant tanks; Nuwara, Kala and Padavi. This is a very special geological and cultural area in the island which has had a large number of manmade-tanks over the last three millennia. Those tanks and the environment have survived until now as a result of the powers of mythical gods like *Ganesh*, *Ayyana*, *Patthini* and *Wawe Bandara*, half gods named *Neelamaha yoda* and *Bahirawa*, devils like *Kadawara* and *Athakota yassani*. Even though one has not seen any of them on the above list, people in most traditional villages located in Nuwarakalaviya believe in the power of those gods to protect the irrigation system and the harvest from any natural forces. A large number of very valuable trees and minerals are still laying around the tanks in safe mode in the competitive economical social environment. No one wants to acquire the above natural resources around the tanks for personal use. This research mainly focuses on the hidden relationship between tanks and myths for their sustainability. The method of participation observation was used to collect the data for the research. A number of traditional villages which still preserve the rituals of the mythical gods and devils for the tanks and paddy fields were observed. According to the results of the observation, there are very traditional laws and regulations on tanks and their environment to be protected. No one can cut the trees around the tank except the village ayurvedic doctor. If there are incidents reported, there are punishments given under the country law which is more harmful for the life style of the village. Therefore, no one wants to violate the traditional law on the environment. Although there are not any visible gods and devils in the study area, that concept is very powerful in the minds of the villagers. The natural resources are protected and preserved around the tank by the villagers as their own property because of the influence of myths shaped by Buddhism and Hinduism as well as local beliefs.

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¹ *Department of History and Archaeology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.
Corresponding author's email: gaminir76@gmail.com*