

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACED BY THE AHIKUNTIKA (GYPSY) COMMUNITY IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KUDAGAMA VILLAGE

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, people all over the world are facing various problems in all aspects of socio-economic and health. In this context, this study was conducted with the primary objective of identifying the economic problems faced by the Ahikuntika people. This study was conducted in Kudagama village, a village belongs to Thambuttegama divisional secretariat in Anuradhapura district and mixed method was used. The problem of the research was, 'what the economic problems faced by Ahikuntika community in the face of COVID - 19 epidemic are? Thirty people who are engaged in traditional economic activities endemic to the Ahikuntika community were included in the sample. The majority, 63% were females and 37% were males. It was revealed that all the Ahikuntika women included in the study samples were making a living by fortune telling. Due to travel restrictions in the country, they have not been able to go to the villages for fortune telling. They usually collect rice and coconut from Sinhala households and have not been able to collect such dry food due to the prevailing conditions. The men represented in the study sample are lived by snake charming and using monkeys in performance. It was revealed that they use cobras, vipers and pythons in the display of snakes. The inability to feed their animals in the face of the COVID- 19 epidemic is another problem they face. It was further revealed that they were facing various economic crises primarily because they were living by making money only for daily consumption without saving money. Other problems they have been faced are not being able to afford a daily meal and having no way to earn money for their family needs. According to the data analysis it can be concluded that the Ahikuntika community is facing complex economic problems due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Keywords: *Ahikuntika, COVID- 19, fortune telling, Kudagama, snake charming*