

Ankeliya: Beyond a Game Methodology and Tradition

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Abstract

The main objective of this research was to study the cultural significance of *Ankeliya* (horn-pulling game) or *Ang Aedeema*, a ritual practice dedicated to worshipping the Goddess Pattini. Primary data were collected from the observation method and the study area was Kadadorapitiya and Madakumbura villages in Pundaluoya, Kotmale Divisional Secretariat, located in the Nuwara Eliya district of the Central Province in Sri Lanka. The study took place on March 2023. This ritual game is performed by the male population of the village. *Ankeliya* is a competition between two teams, one representing Goddess Pattini-Yatipila (Lower side) and the other Palanga-Udupila (Upper side), they meet at the *Ang-pitiya* (tugging field), which contains a strong tree known as the *Ang-gaha/Ang-kada* (horn tree)/*henakanda*. Narrative analysis was used as the data analysis method. This study identified that *Ankeliya* serves as a means of passing down ancient knowledge to subsequent generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage. *Ankeliya* often involves the participation of people from several villages, bringing them together for a shared religious and cultural experience. The collective involvement in festivals and rituals fosters a sense of unity, cooperation, and social cohesion among community members. It provides a platform for various artistic and cultural expressions, including music, dance, and storytelling. Performances and recitations related to Pattini and Palanga story, add vibrancy and creativity to the rituals, contributing to the overall cultural richness of the region. Overall, the *Ankeliya* ritual plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, fostering community bonds, and celebrating the rich mythology and artistic traditions of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Ankeliya ritual, Goddess Pattini, Preserving cultural heritage, Ritual game*