

## Spiritual practices and customs of agriculture and perceptions on concept of “*Kili*” (Taint) in folk and contemporary Sinhalese society

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### Abstract

Birth, attainment and death are considered as the main transitional events in human life. Universally, people make various offerings to gods and worship them during their transitional periods. As these events or occasions are universal, such behavior is not characteristic of any particular social sector. Most of these rituals are related to women. These special events and occasions are connected with blood and therefore, they are believed to be causing pollution. Thus out of fear and abhorrence of blood the concept known as '*killa*' has emerged. In Sri Lankan society there are few famous taints such as birth, attainment, menstruation and death. In addition to these there are some other '*kili*' such as food, liquor and '*naga*' or '*cobra*' among folk beliefs. Taint of death and food are accepted as common to both males and females. This study aims to examine the concept based on spiritual practice and custom of agriculture, as it is one of the major aspects in the folk culture of Sri Lanka. For this purpose, this comparative research concentrates on the beginning of the [*killa*] taint, its chronological evolution, folk-tales and its practice in agriculture. This research was conducted in Kundasale Divisional Secretariat Divisions, Kandy to discover how the rituals connected with the concept of 'taint' are practiced in agriculture. Data was collected through interviews, case studies, and group discussions. The study revealed that ancient customs and beliefs woven around the concept of taint in traditional agricultural society has been transformed progressively with development process. Traditional farmers refrain from associating with everything connected with taints when they engage in agricultural works. The main events of taints such as birth, attainment (puberty), menstruation and death strictly have been abandoned and thus, they have sustained their agricultural harvest. Therefore, beliefs on taints in agriculture customs were environmental friendly and preserved the environment. On the other hand traditional farmers believed that with rejection of such custom by the present generation in effect has led to environment adversely. There is, nevertheless, a feeling among the traditional farmers that this kind of disregard to customs and traditions has been the cause of diseases and failure to obtain good harvest. Consequently, new generation refrains from taint, customarily believed by traditionalists, and use harmful chemicals such as weedicides and pesticides for diseases which adversely impacts on environmental pollution and biodiversity in rural agricultural sector.

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