

How to Make an Ethno-Religious Coexistence in the Society by Observing Rites and Rituals on the Sacred Journey to Sri Pada (Adam's Peak)

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Abstract

Sri Pada, also known as Adam's peak, is the highest peak in Sri Lanka where Buddha's footprint is left at the summit and is believed by Buddhists and followers of other religions to be a sacred place. These followers commonly observe customs, rites and rituals, and a code of specific language throughout the course of pilgrimage to the summit of Sri Pada. This study thus mainly focuses on those religious beliefs and rites and rituals, which are chiefly observed by the followers in three occasions in the pilgrimage. These three occasions pertain to the beginning of the pilgrimage, the journey to the summit, and the arrival at the summit. The readiness to climb the peak is considered to be a crucial and important step, and the rites and rituals related to the pilgrimage are begun at home. Another set of customs is observed at the foot of the mountain, and such initiated customs must be fulfilled before climbing the mountain. Rites and rituals vary across faiths, but preparations are nonetheless important since the summit—believed to be dominated by a god—is a difficult climb. Another objective of this study is to explain how unity is formed in the community under the umbrella of rites and rituals performed in the pilgrimage to Adam's peak. Besides these rites and rituals, the code of language and poems sung on the way to the summit is instrumental in strengthening intercultural cooperation and ethnic harmony in the multinational and multicultural society. Data gathering in this study, moreover, mainly adhered to the observation method and content analysis of historical accounts.

Keywords: Adam's peak, customs, ethnic harmony, pilgrimage, rites and rituals

Introduction

Tennent (1860) notes that while the Buddhists remain as the guardians of the Sri Pada, devotees of all races meet at the sacred place and share a common adoration. Unlike the Latins' and Greeks' furious contention over the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Sri Pada has been the recipient of pious appreciation of devotees of various faiths who have united in peaceful worship. Sri Pada literally translates to "sacred foot," as "*Siri*" or "*Sri*" means 'sacred' or 'great' and "*Pada*" means foot. The use of the adjective "*Sri*" before the word 'foot' connotes the meaning of "the foot of

a noble person.”

Sri Pada is also known as *Pada Padmaya*, with “*Padmaya*” referring to a metaphor which states that “a foot is like a flower.” Further, poets have referred to Buddha’s foot as a lotus flower. Buddhist perspectives have noted that many a Buddhist symbol is referred to as great or noble, and the main objective of such is to respectfully honor Buddha, who is deemed as one of the great religious leaders throughout history. Since Buddhist traditions revere Buddha’s foot as a sacred and noble symbol, Buddhists have come to accept Sri Pada as Buddha’s footprint. As the Buddha is referred to as ‘*Sakyamuni*,’ Sri Pada is also referred to as ‘*Muni Siripa*.’

In English, Sri Pada is known as Adam’s Peak. While “peak” means the summit of a mountain, “Adam” is derived from the name of the first person created by God, as mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible. Accordingly, Adam’s Peak is identified as the mountain peak where Adam lived, and the name was given by the Portuguese, who called the mountain “*Pico de Adam*.” De Silva (2014), however, states that the name “Adam’s Peak” was coined by colonial powers, and such a change was due to practices of colonialism. Another name by which Sri Pada is known as is “*Shivanoli Padam*,” which means “the foot which gives the light of the God Siva.” Devotees of Islam refer to Sri Pada as “*Babada Malai*,” which means “Adam’s Mountain Peak.”

Such names used to represent Sri Pada were mostly based on religious concepts and beliefs of the respective religions. At times, Sri Pada is associated with religious lore built upon folklore. On the other hand, the religious importance of this mountain summit has also been enhanced due to views expressed by explorers. Accordingly, in this study, attention is focused on historical legends, explorer reports, folklore, and religious documents, all of which had an impact in making Sri Pada a common religious symbol and a place of worship for various religions.

Information was gathered through observations and the study of relevant books. This research paper further discusses the geographical location of Sri Pada, its historical importance, all faith approaches, and religious rituals.

Geographical Location

Ancient rock inscriptions and classical literature bear testimony to the fact that the names such as *Samanala Kanda*, *Samanala Gala*, *Samanala Muduna*, *Samanta Koota*, and *Sumana Giri* have generally been used for this mountain summit from ancient times. Tennent (1860) mentions that the majestic mountain has been venerated for ages, as the aborigines of Sri Lanka were compelled to pay homage to the mountains and the sun. Similarly, present-day devotees also take to the mountains to see the sun rising on the summit. In the *Ambagamuwa* inscription written by King Vijayabahu (1058-114 A.D.), Sri Pada was referred to as “*Samanala Kanda*.” Wickramasinghe (1927) notes that the said king had ordered for the “maintenance and repair, offerings of paintings, and lighting of lamps on the *Samanala* rock, which bears the sacred footprint (of the Buddha).”

Prior to the existence of this inscription, the mountain has been referred to as *Samanala Kanda* or *Sumana Giri*, as it was regarded as the domain of the god *Su-manana Saman*. Despite the mountain range being known by various names, the name *Samanala Kanda* has been the most widely used name. Since *Samanala Kanda* is the highest mountain in this mountain range, it has been considered important due to its geographical background itself. Tennent (1960) mentions that the “panorama from the summit of Adam’s peak is, perhaps, the grandest in the world, as no other mountain, although surpassing it in altitude, presents the same unobstructed view over land and sea.”

It is thus presumed that this geographical location may have been the reason for its religious importance in later years. According to the inscription of King Vijayabahu as well as in other historical chronicles, the Sri Pada mountain has been referred to as *Samanta Kuta*. The Mahavamsa chronicle mentions that a ruler full of pious devotions had once traveled to the *Samanta Kuta* with his four-member army and performed his devotions there. The inscriptions also repeatedly mentioned the pilgrimage of the kings to the sacred place of *Samanta Kuta*.

The *Samanta Kuta* or Sri Pada originated from the central and *Sabaragamuwa* provinces of Sri Lanka. The *Samanta Kuta*, which is located at *Udu Patthuwa* and north of *Kuruwita Korale* in the district of *Ratnapura* in the *Sabaragamuwa* province, coincides at a place where longitude 80-40 and latitude lines cross each other. The *Samanala* mountain area spans from Norton Bridge to *Lakshapana Falls* from the south. From the east, the mountain range spans from the *Gilimale* and *Bambarakotuwa* forests to Horton Plain via the *Kotiyagala* and *Balangoda* tea estates. Its southern boundary is on the highway running up to *Haputale*, *Belihul Oya*, and *Halpe*. This land, which is part of the *Samanala* mountain area, was declared as a National Sanctuary on October 25, 1940. Because Sri Pada is located at 7,360 feet above sea level, it is deemed as the highest point in the sanctuary. The *Samanala* mountain range is a wetland well-known for its most outstanding scenic beauty, and the four principal rivers of Sri Lanka—*Mahaweli*, *Kelani*, *Walawe*, and *Kalu*—which originate from this land mass. As such, its religious, geographical, and environmental importance are deemed most significant.

Historical Importance

The dialogue regarding Sri Pada prevails from a period of over twenty-five centuries. Although Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C., Sri Pada had been a place of worship since the 6th century B.C. However, the incident when Buddha was believed to place his footprint on the summit of the *Samanala* mountain was recorded in the historical chronicle named *Mahavamsa* in the 5th century A.D. Records regarding Sri Pada from the perspective of other religions, however, are not as old as Buddhist records. Moreover, Hindu, Christian, and Islamic links with Sri Pada have been mainly based on folklore and reports of explorers and travelers, while the Buddhist approach to the history of the *Samanala* Mountain is derived from legends and rock inscriptions. The historical importance of *Samanala*

Mountain is based on two factors: first, the place where Buddha's footprint is found, and the domain of the God *Sumana Saman*. This would explain why the mountain was previously named as *Sumana Kutaya* (*Samanthakuta* in Pali), before being re-named later on as Sri Pada mountain. The Mahavamsa historical chronicle refers to this mountain as *Samanta Kuta*, which in Sinhala means *Sumana Kutaya*. The incident of Buddha placing his footprint on this mountain was first mentioned in the Mahavamsa chronicle. The chronicle further stated that "when the Teacher (The Buddha), compassionate to the whole world, had preached the doctrine there, he rose, the Master, and left the traces of his footsteps plain to sight on *Sumana Kuta*. After he had spent the day, it pleased him at the foot of this mountain."

The manner in which King Vijayabahu worshipped Sri Pada is mentioned in the Mahavamsa, as well as in the *Ambagamuwa* rock inscription he had set up. Likewise, the Mahavamsa mentions that thereafter, several kings took their respective measures in developing the sacred Sri Pada. Among these kings was King Keerthi Nissanka Malla, whose development activities were mentioned in the *Hetadage* inscription. Wickramasinghe (1927) notes that His Illustrious Majesty *Simhapuresvara Lankesvara Kalinga-cakravarti* toured around Sri Lanka on his second year as sovereign, and had thoroughly inspected, "like a *nelli* fruit on the palm (of his hand)", places that were difficult to access, on account of water, marshes, forests, or mountains such as the *Samanala*." Likewise, King *Nissanka Malla's* pilgrimage to Sri Pada was also similarly mentioned in the Mahavamsa, which stated that the said king, who was a ruler full of pious devotion, had gone to the *Samanta Kuta* and performed his devotions as he was accompanied by a four-member army. Aside from these anecdotes, the Mahavamsa continually mentions the history of Sri Pada. Until the time of Western colonization, kings and ministers conducted rituals with respect to Sri Pada, and historical accounts from the 14th and 15th Centuries featured accounts of kings who went on pilgrimages to Sri Pada. Wickramasinghe (1927) mentions that a ruler named *Viravikrama* once took himself to the *Sumana Kuta* and sacrificed for one day by "pouring one hundred jars of oil into a lamp [that is] fifteen cubits in girth and five cubits high."

The historical importance of the *Samanta Kuta* can also be observed in the importance of its place names, as several places within the vicinity of the *Samanta Kuta*, which have been symbolized as places visited by the Buddha, have been mentioned in folklore and legends. The cave where Buddha rested during the day when he came to place his footprint is referred to as *Divaguhawa*, and the cave in which he spent the night is referred to as *Bhagawa* Cave. In addition, the *Nissanka Lena* or the Nissanka Cave refers to the cave which was made after King Nissanka Malla's pilgrimage to Sri Pada.

Aside from the aforementioned chronicles and inscriptions, records of travelers who had written their respective accounts of Sri Pada also exist. One of these was of the Chinese traveler Fa Hian, a Buddhist monk who visited Sri Lanka in 413 A.D. Fa noted two footprints of the Buddha, one located on the sacred mountain

and the other towards the north of the island, which were venerated on the island. However, it must be noted that no records exist regarding the second footprint in Sri Lanka. Further, Brohier (1965) cites the case of Ibn Bututa, a traveler who recorded an impression of the journey up the peak in the 14th Century.

Reports on Sri Pada during the colonial period also exist, including one of a Portuguese priest named De Queyroz, who lived in India in the 17th Century and had made accounts of Sri Pada. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, British administrators and scholars had likewise explored Sri Pada and made their respective accounts. De Silva (2014) states that the work of British military officers in Ceylon in the 19th Century had mainly contributed to the initial formation of the British's colonial knowledge about Sri Pada. Further, De Silva (2014) mentions that "knowledge about Sri Pada was itself a part of the larger colonial production of knowledge regarding religion and observances of the natives." Accordingly, there is written evidence regarding the approximately 2,500-year history of Sri Pada.

All-faiths Approach

Followers of many religions claim their respective rights to Sri Pada, mainly in accordance with their own religious beliefs. The first to lay these claims were the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, who claimed the oldest right to Sri Pada as the footprint of the Buddha. Subsequently, the Hindus claimed Sri Pada as the footprint of their God Siva, while the Christians and Muslims accepted Sri Pada as the footprint of Adam. Tennent (1860) discusses that in later ages, religious interests were concentrated on one location "to commemorate some individual identified with the national faith." Tennent further discusses:

Thus, the hollow in the lofty rock that crowns the summit, was said by the Brahmans (Hindu) to be the footstep of Siva, by the Buddhists of Buddha, by the Chinese of Foe, by the Gnostics of Ieu, by the Mahometans of Thomas, and the Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia.

The Buddhist Approach

Sri Lankan chronicles note that Sri Pada is regarded as a site of Buddhist heritage. In fact, the Mahavamsa chronicle presents that the Buddha "delivered a Dharma sermon, visited *Samanta Kuta*, and placed his footprint on the summit" after a "jubilant *Naga* king" offered divine food to him and to monks. This account from the Mahavamsa, which was written approximately during the 5th Century, is considered the first written evidence of the footprint being found at the summit of Sri Pada, as the creation of other literary accounts, folklore, and cultural acceptances followed suit. Despite this, there have also been earlier accounts of Sutras highlighting footprints of the Buddha. These accounts mention that compared with ordinary human feet, Buddha's feet possess special characteristics, which thus serve as reasons for Buddhists to render Buddha's feet as a sacred symbol.

The Hindu Approach

The Tamil people, who are followers of Hinduism, refer to the footprint on Sri Pada as “*Shiva Koli Padam*,” which means “the footprint which gives the light of God Siva.” Devotees of Hinduism believe that the footprint found on the *Samanala* Mountain is that of the God Siva, one of the most prominent gods in the Hindu religion. Moreover, they also refer to Adam’s peak as “*Swan garhanam*” which means “the ascent to heaven” (Tennent, 1860).

Hindu beliefs note the existence of three gods: Brahma, the god of birth, Vishnu the god of survival, and Siva, the god of destruction. Thus, it is believed that these three gods serve as the three main factors which decide on the creation, survival, and destruction of the world. Not only do Hindu devotees perceive Siva as a powerful god, but they also believe that Sri Pada is located on the road to heaven. Consequently, historical accounts also note instances which demonstrate that the Hindus have declared their supremacy and claimed their rights over Sri Pada. This was evidenced by King Rajasinghe II, who was King of Sri Lanka in the 14th Century A.D. and who had entrusted the custody of Sri Pada to Hindu devotees.

The Christian Approach

Christian beliefs regarding Sri Pada have been based solely on folklore, and their associations with Sri Pada have been mentioned in writings which date back to the 16th Century. One folklore mentions that Adam, after being exiled from heaven, came to Earth and first stepped into the summit of the *Samanala* Mountain. Meanwhile, written accounts from travelers and traders who came to Sri Lanka noted that they climbed the *Samanala* Mountain and paid homage to Adam’s footprint, which was believed to be located at the summit. Similarly, the Portuguese—who ruled Sri Lanka in the 16th Century A.D.—also confirmed this view. De Silva (2014) states that the renaming of Sri Pada as “Adam’s footprint” or “Adam’s peak” entered European discourse as a result of Portuguese colonialism in Sri Lanka.

However, Portuguese historian De Queyroz stated that the footprint found on the summit of the *Samanala* Mountain wasn’t that of Adam, but of a sage named St. Thomas. Further, Christian missionaries have made accounts on Sri Pada during their visits to Sri Lanka in the 14th Century. Tennakoon (2013) mentions that a Roman named Valentine, who visited Sri Lanka in the 14th Century, climbed the *Samanala* and wept with joy upon seeing Adam’s footprint at the summit.

The Islamic Approach

Historical evidence regarding Islamic religious connections to Sri Pada is rare. Aside from folkloric accounts, Islamic associations with Sri Pada were revealed through travelers’ notes. Tennent (1860) mentions that initially, Chinese travelers accepted the Buddhist origin story of Sri Pada, but Chinese writers had later on accepted the idea that the footprint was that of Pwan-koo, “the first man” in their system of mythology. This shift in belief was likely due to interactions with Mahome-

tans. Brohier (1965) also cited the record of Ibn Batuta, an Arabian traveler who had written his own notes regarding Sri Pada. Brohier further discusses Batuta's account:

“There are two roads, he says, on the mountain, leading to the footprint; the one is known as the way of ‘Baba,’ the other as the way of ‘Mama,’ by which it is inferred that he means ‘the way of Adam’ and ‘the way of Eve.’ I bear witness that there is no God but God and that Mohamed is his Prophet.”

On the other hand, the University of Ceylon (1959) mentions that during the latter part of the Anuradhapura era, Muslims had settled near sea parts such as the ‘*Maha Thitta*,’ and the belief that Adam's footprint is found at the summit of the *Samanta Kuta* has been upheld by Muslims since the 9th Century A.D. During this time, Muslims had also begun their pilgrimage to Sri Pada. However, Brohier (1965) states that Arab traders were responsible for propagating the Islamic associations with Sri Pada throughout the world. Islamic relations to Sri Pada are evidenced by a 13th Century rock inscription found in the Sri Pada area, which states “May Allah bless him... the Father of mankind,” as well in folklore, which tells of *Andiyamalanna*, a place found on the way to the summit implied to be a shrine and the grave of a Muslim dignitary. Skeen (1997) further emphasizes that “the earliest account of the Mussulman tradition that connects the story of Adam with the peak” is found in the “narrative of Soleyman, who was an Arab merchant who visited Ceylon” in the early 9th Century. The narrative further states that Soleyman's attention was particularly directed to the mountain called by his countrymen “*Al-rohoun*,” the top of which is thought to be where “Adam ascended and there left the print of his foot, in a rock which is seventy cubits in length” and that “Adam at the same time stood with his other foot in the sea.”

Religious offerings and rituals related to Sri Pada

Brohier (1965) states that devotees of various religious beliefs—such as the Brahmans or Hindus, Buddhists, Chinese, Gnostics, Mohammedans, and Roman Catholic Christians—have imbued the relic with religious, and have, throughout history, gathered around this “object of common adoration, to unite in peaceful worship.” Religious rituals associated with Sri Pada are connected to their respective religious beliefs. Three occasions in which respective religions carry out such rituals can clearly be observed, which include: (1) the initial stage of preparing to go on a pilgrimage to Sri Pada; (2) the stage of ascending the *Sumana* Mountain; and (3) the stage of reaching the summit.

In this regard, followers of various religions observe rituals and offerings connected to their respective religions. It is worth noting that there are similarities between the rituals of Buddhists and Hindus. Initially, the Buddhists believed that the god *Saman* was the guardian god of Sri Pada. Therefore, many rituals and offerings were associated with different gods. On the other hand, Hindu devotees climbed

this mountain with their belief in the god Siva and practiced rituals associated with their gods as they also follow rituals associated with gods. Some religious offerings and rituals, however, do not represent a specific religion, and devotees of various religions perform these rituals in pilgrimage to Sri Pada. This, then, puts Sri Pada as one of the most popular pilgrimage sites for all faiths.

It is obvious that the Sri Pada pilgrimage is a very special and arduous journey, and that various customs and performances are observed and followed prior to the commencement of the pilgrimage. In fact, readiness and observations commence from the date specified for the pilgrimage itself, which includes acts such as observing vegetarianism, being dedicated to the gods, and tying '*Panduru*' or consecrated coins. Pilgrims remain as vegetarians throughout the entire duration of the entire pilgrimage, which may sometimes extend up to three months. However, followers of some religions remain as vegetarians for twenty-one days only. Other rituals also include making vows and praying to the followers' respective gods for protection from the time of the pilgrimage until they return home. These rituals are done after carrying out religious observations in a place of worship closest to the pilgrim's residence. Moreover, devotees who are expected to go on pilgrimage to Sri Pada bestow their lives to the gods by tying *Panduru* or consecrated coins. For example, Buddhists tie these consecrated coins on a branch of a Bo tree. Upon returning home after worshipping Sri Pada, the tied *Panduru* is removed and merit is bestowed on the god for the protection given.

After reaching the foot of *Samanala* Mountain, many other observations are followed before climbing the mountain. Since Sri Pada pilgrimages are normally carried out in groups, an elderly person with a wide experience becomes each group's leader. The leader is primarily responsible for reminding the group regarding taboos, such as words that can and cannot be used and activities to be avoided when ascending the Sri Pada Mountain. Declaring inability or boastings such as "*How to climb this mountain?*", "*It will not be impossible to climb this mountain*", "*Climbing this mountain is not a big thing*", and "*Anyone can climb this mountain*" are among the terms to be avoided. Thus, a suitable vocabulary in the Sinhala language is used when climbing the Sri Pada. One such example is the use of words such as "*Karunakaranawa*," which means 'looking forward,' instead of using the word 'climbing.'

In addition, it is customary to bathe in the river at the foot of the mountain before climbing the mountain, and this custom is followed by followers of all religions. This practice reflects the belief that one should be clean before the worshipping or entering a place of worship. This is exemplified by Islamic beliefs since Muslims must clean themselves by washing or bathing before entering mosques. The same act is also practiced by Hindus. Cleanliness is a deemed a decisive factor, especially in activities related to making offerings to the god. Devotion towards god *Saman*, the guardian god of the *Samanala* Mountain, is also a major factor for such observations.

Climbing of the Sri Pada commences after pilgrims have cleaned and reflected on their beliefs. To illustrate, the Buddhists first observe the Five Precepts near the gate at the entrance before climbing the mountain as a group.

Generally, climbing is not done in solitude. Traditions require pilgrims to recite poems, the meanings of which are full of blessing, whilst ascending and descending. Among the various religions that climb the Sri Pada, the Buddhists often recite poems known as “*Thun Sarana*” and bless each other, as well as non-Buddhists they meet on the way, who in turn accept these blessings kindly. A special characteristic of ascending or descending the *Samanala* Mountain is that pilgrims behave as members of the same family, regardless of their differing religions, castes, and nationalities. The Sri Pada culture of group feeling is exemplified by sharing their packed food among themselves, helping those who struggle in their ascent or descent, and sometimes carrying the belongings of other pilgrims.

There are several special places on the way to the Sri Pada summit. These include *Idikatupana (Getthampana)*, *Haramitipana*, *Andimala Tenna*, *Ehela Kanuwa*, and *Mahagiridamba (Ahasgawwa)*. A custom hailing from ancient times is observed at *Getthampana*, where threads fixed to a needle are tied on the flight of stairs. Despite the religious and legendary mythologies surrounding this custom, it is nonetheless followed by all, regardless of their religions, since it is accepted as making a determination to complete the arduous journey ahead.

The next place that pilgrims come across with is a place named *Haramitipana*, where most people walk with walking sticks as a form of symbolism and disabled elderly people use these walking sticks as support. The practice is observed since folklore mentions that Buddha climbed the mountain with the support of a wooden stick. Buddhists primarily use these walking sticks as a symbolism, although there have not been any religious controversy regarding this custom. Another activity performed here is the lighting of ‘*Pandam*’ or torches, which is brought by pilgrims as they walk up to the top of the mountain. Meanwhile, the place of *Adimale tenna* is named after one Hindu devotee called *Adi*, who died on the way to the summit.

It was mentioned earlier that devotees bathe and clean themselves before climbing the Sri Pada Mountain. On the way to the mountaintop is a stream called *Sita Gangula*, which Brohier (1965) describes as a “holy river which takes its name from the icy coldness of its waters,” and where pilgrims will stop at, bathe in, and “put on clean white apparel before continuing the journey to the peak.” It is evident that all devotees bathe at the *Sita Gangula* and receive the blessings of the god. Hindus believe that in the *Rama Ravana* story mentioned in ‘*Ramayana*,’ Rama’s wife *Seetha Devi* was hidden in this stream by *Ravana*. Because of this story, the Hindus believe that the stream is filled with holy water. On the other hand, Islamic devotees believe that Adam, who was exiled from the heaven, maintained a fruit garden near this stream, and that some of the fruits flowed down in this stream, thus causing Muslims to consider the stream water as holy. The Buddhists, meanwhile, apply lime juice, bathe, and get themselves near this stream. Knox (2007) re-

fers to those that he had seen and heard as historical factors related to findings of the holy mountain on the part of citizens of the country belonging to categories of Buddhists, Hindus, and Burghers.

A place named *Asela Kanuwa* can likewise be found when climbing the Sri Pada, which Buddhists treat as a place of worship and use to observe the Five Precepts. Those from other religions also receive blessings according to their religions. Following the *Asela Kanuwa* is the *Mahagiriamba*, which is regarded as the most arduous area of the Sri Pada Mountain due to its critical slope. After passing this most arduous section of the Sri Pada pilgrimage, the pilgrims arrive at the summit of the Sri Pada. Customs, including the worshipping of Sri Pada, the most sacred item of worship, are performed here.

Pilgrims who go to the place where the “*Dolos Mahe Pahana*”—which translates to ‘the lamp which is lit throughout the year’—is located, put oil into it to keep it alight. During ancient times, a fire was made to reduce the severe cold and was later turned to an offering of light to the Buddha. Similarly, those who worship the gods consider the act as an offering to the gods. Taking oil from this lamp and applying them on the head is a custom carried out by many devotees. Devotees take oil in small bottles as well, as the oil is believed to contain medicinal values. Thereafter, pilgrims perform their own forms of worship to the Sri Pada. Buddhists and Hindus, for example, sprinkle scented water and flowers, spread white cloth, and worship the Sri Pada by placing their heads on it. Afterwards, they go to *Saman Deva-laya* to pray to the god, bestow merits, and obtain blessings.

Another major custom observed by those who go on pilgrimage to Sri Pada at night is the viewing of the sunrise. This custom, which is especially linked to Hinduism, is considered as a form of worship to the sun. However, other evidence also suggests that even the Buddhists performed the same custom during ancient times. The Buddhists, who believed that the sun is worshipping Sri Pada, chant “*Sadhu, Sadhu*” loudly with deep devotion upon seeing the sun rise for the first time. The sunrise, which can be beautifully seen from the Sri Pada summit, invokes a feeling of devotion and happiness called *Irasewaya*. William Skeen, a British national who went on a pilgrimage to Sri Pada once, stated that he watched the sunrise from the summit of Sri Pada and prayed from there (1997).

Another special instance in the Sri Pada pilgrimage is the sounding of the bell. The bell is a common religious symbol found in all places of worship, such as churches, temples, and *Kovils*. The bell in the summit of Sri Pada is a common property sounded by followers of all religions, but the sounding is primarily done by the Buddhists as their custom, in which they ring the bell according to the number of times they have visited Sri Pada. Thus, a devotee who comes to Sri Pada for the first time does not sound the bell, but those who have come twice can ring the bell twice, as is the custom. Mutual blessings among those in the group of pilgrims are another custom observed during the pilgrimage. In this custom, not only do younger pilgrims worship the elders, but they also embrace and bless each other.

Thereafter, the pilgrims begin their descent from the Sri Pada, but this does not signify that the pilgrimage has ended. Upon the pilgrims' return to their respective homes, the gods are bestowed merit and are thanked for allowing the pilgrims to return home safely.

Results

People in any society represent various religions, nationalities, and cultures. Although this diversity has caused conflicts to rise and has even waged wars, peace can nonetheless be still built up, but only if all nationalities and followers of various religions act with common understanding. Sri Pada has thus become a roadmap for such. Those who go on pilgrimage to Sri Pada represent various religions. As pilgrims climb the Sri Pada Mountain via three routes and eventually meet at the summit, they meet people of various religions along the way, and they bathe in the same stream and get themselves cleaned. Sri Pada becomes a place of worship where those who belong in quarreling religions set aside their differences as they share the same resources and observe the same customs. Because various nationalities have cultures which are endemic to them, cultural values built up from rites and rituals declare the identity of any nationality. Although the Sri Pada pilgrims perform religious customs based on their cultural heritages, there is a similarity in many rites and rituals. Therefore, Sri Pada pilgrimages comprised of followers from all religions become stakeholders of a common culture.

Discussion

It is worth noting that various religious groups have laid their respective claims that the footprint on Sri Pada belongs to the sacred personality of their faith. Though much has been researched about Sri Pada, there are still few pieces of research which discuss the specific rites and rituals performed on the pilgrimage to Sri Pada. It can also be noted that some researchers have mainly focused on Buddhist customs rather than other faiths. Moreover, existing observations and historical accounts support the fact that Sri Pada is a common sacred place for every faith, and that there is no real desire to truly verify ownership, for whoever stepped down from Heaven to leave this footprint in stone, the pilgrims leave their own, more transitory, footprints. Every ethnic group has its own religious customs on the pilgrimage to the Sri Pada, and this study chiefly observed those religious groups and their devotion in performing the rites and rituals in the pilgrimage. However, further research in this area may be done in the future, as some customs and objectives of the pilgrimage may become subject to change due to the more modern lifestyles upheld by today's pilgrims.

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