

# An Explanation for Frequently used Terminologies used in the Pilgrimage to Sri Pada in Sri Lanka: A Lexical Explanation

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**Abstract:-** Sripada also known as Samanala Kanda which is at a height of 7359 feet is the third highest mountain in Sri Lanka where Buddhists believe that the Gauthama Buddha placed his left foot-print on the peak of the mountain on the invitation of God Saman who is considered to be the guardian of the Samanala Kanda (mountain). A large number of devotees including the majority of Buddhists embracing different regions strenuously climb the mountain annually during the Sripada season which is from Duruthu (December) full moon poya day to Vesak (May) full moon poya day the following year. In the language of the laymen, the Sripada pilgrimage starts in December and ends in May in the following year and the rest of the period is considered as off-season which is particularly set aside for celestial beings especially for God Sumana Saman. Most of the devotees in their pilgrimage to Sripada used to use a particular set of terminology peculiar to Sripada pilgrimage. These terminologies are not used any other context in Sri Lanka either in a pilgrimage or any other excursion. Thus, this paper attempts to provide explanations to the most frequently used lexis in the context of Sripada pilgrimage in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** pilgrimage, terminology, Sripada season, devotees, Buddhists

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sripada which is also known as Samanala Kanda enriched with biodiversity is virtually surrounded by forest and hills. These massifs which are in the vicinity are not as tall as Sripada. The area covering the Horton Plains national park and the Knuckles range in the central highlands was identified as a world heritage site in Sri Lanka in the year 2011. Environmentally, Sripada is also crucial as a watershed where four main rivers of Sri Lanka, Mahaweli, Kelani, Kalu and Walawe originate from Sripada. In folklore, the following poem shall bear the evidence for originating four rivers in Sri Lanka.

මහවැලිකලණිකලුවලවෙයනගංගා

සමනොළකන්දුමුදුණේසිටපැනනගංගා

බැවුම්නිනලාහෙල්අතරින්රිංගා

මේවාගලසීම්ණිමුතුකැටයටනගංගා

The area to the south and east of this mountain called Ratnapura yields for precious stones (gems) – emeralds, rubies and sapphires for which the island is famous for.

Gautama Buddha's third visit to Sri Lanka is of more significant in relation to history of Sripada. During the eight year after the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha visited Sri Lanka for the third occasion where God Sumana Saman had invited Gautama Buddha to visit his abode at Samanala Kanda. According to Mahawamsa, Gautama Buddha had gone to Samanala Kanda and had engraved his left foot-print with his super natural power acquired through meditation. It is also believed that the Samanala Kanda or Samanthakuta is protected by the God Sumana Saman together with the devotees who used to go on the pilgrimage to worship the foot-print of the Gautama Buddha.

It is also worth to mention little about history of Sripada. The Sripada is first referred to as Samanthakuta in Deepawansa chronicle during the fourth century and in Mahawansa in the fifth century. According to Mahawansa Chronicle, King Valagamba and King Vijayaba had visited Sripada during the fourth century. Event Italian traveler Marco Polo had noted Sripada as a significant place although he had not mentioned of the foot-print of the Buddha. People from all walks of life used to climb the Sripada to worship the sacred foot-print of the Gautama Buddha.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For reference, some of the materials were taken from Chronicles like Mahawansa and Deepawansa in tracing out the historical significance. In addition, folklore literature also was referred to in gathering information about the pilgrimage to Sripada. The participatory observation was employed in accumulating more and more information. Frequent discussions were held while climbing up and climbing down the Samanala Kanda particularly with the older generations (age group 65s and above) as they were more towards spiritual life than that of younger generations. The observers' collections of lexis were given explanations and interpretations after clarifying the denotative and connotative values of the list of terminologies collected through participatory observation.

The provision of explanation for terminology was arranged according to the order of the places we find on our way to the peak of the Samanala Kanda for the convenience of both visitors and researchers for further exploration.

**Hatton**

Hatton is a town which serves as a gateway to Sripada. Pilgrims who used to travel by trains to visit Sripada have to get down at this town and get public transport service to reach the beginning of the excursion to Samanala Kanda where pilgrims start using some of the lexis peculiar to Sripada holy trip.

1. යේරීපාදය කරුනා කරන්නන් යන අය මේ බස් එකට ගොඩවෙන්න : those who are going to worship, please get on to this bus. Here the word ‘කරුණා කරනවා’ means to go with spiritual piety. It is not used in any other context.
2. සාදුකාර දෙනවා : Before they embark on the journey, everyone start saying “sa’dhu, sa’dhu” three times or more meaning good, excellent or auspicious.
3. සුමන සමන් දෙවි පිහිටිලි : Everyone wishes each other as ‘May God Sumana Saman protect us all from all evils.

**Nallathanniya (නල්ලනන්නිය)**

This is a place situated en-route to Sripada. The meaning of Nallathanniya is ‘good water’ pure water for drinking. From this place onwards, pilgrims have to walk to the peak of the Samanala Kanda

4. තුන්සිත පහ දවා ගෙන කරුනා කරමු: Before we embark in the pilgrimage, in the middle of the pilgrimage and after the pilgrimage, let us have willful and religious faith in our minds
5. ආම්පන්න : required apparatus for the pilgrimage
6. වැහිකුඩ : types of cloths prepared from polythene for protection from rain
7. මල් පහන් හඳුන්කුරු : flowers and clay-lams and joysticks for offering
8. පූජා භාණ්ඩ : offerings for the Lord Buddha
9. කොඩු : people who visit first time to Sripada
10. පන්සිල් සමාදම් වෙනවා : observe five precepts such as I refrain from killing living beings, refrain from stealing things which belong to others, refrain from illegal sexual enjoyment, refrain from lying and refrain from consuming liquor
11. භාරවෙනවා : make vows for specially to God Sumana Saman invoking blessing for protection
12. ආශීර්වාද ලබා ගන්නවා : receiving blessing from Sangha (monks)
13. ඔෂුපැන් : herbal drinks given free for all devotees

**Saama Pagoda (සාමවෛනනියය)**

Pilgrims find this peace pagoda before Sheetha Gangula. This pagoda was built by the famous Buddhist monk Nichi Fugi in 1976 and it is now maintained by several Buddhist monks. Pilgrims shall also be able to hear some of the words being used at this place.

14. ඔෂුපැන් දන්සැල : place where herbal drinks are being offered for the devotees
15. සාමවෛනනියය වැදීම : worshipping the peace pagoda
16. ගිමන්තිවීම : taking rest after a long walk
17. බන්දන්සැල : place where rice and curry are being offered for the devotees who visit Samanala Kanda

**Seetha Gangula (සීතගඟුල)**

Seetha Gangula is a popular stream one would undoubtedly find on our way to Sripada. For devotees, it is customary to have a bath from this cooling spring-water before climbing Samanala Kanda. The very name ‘Seetha Gangula’ suggests that the water is very cold at these heights. It is at present too, the devotees who visit for the first time to Sripada used to have a bath at the spring. Others who have visited several times earlier also used to have baths at this place.

Those who trail via Hatton, Nallathanniya route, the Seetha Gangula has become a resting place where devotees used to have a bath, purify themselves, have their vegetarian meals or their tea and start their trail. This is the exact place where devotees clean a few coins with a piece of lime and saffron and wrap in a piece of white cloth and tie in a tree or perhaps in their hands invoking blessings particularly from God Sumana Saman. Some of the terminologies used by devotees from Seetha Gangula onwards are,

18. ගිමන්තිවීම : getting a rest after miles of walking
19. දියනාපේවීම : having bath and cleaning oneself
20. සුදුපිරුවටආදීම : clad in white cloths
21. පඬුරු ශුද්ධකිරීම : cleaning a few coins with lime and saffron and washing them
22. පඬුරු ගැටගැසීම : wrapping the cleaned coins with a piece of white cloth and tying it in a tree
23. භාරවීම : making a vow particularly pleading from God for protection
24. පඳුරක් අයිතිකිරීම : tying a cleaned coin with a vow
25. සුමන සමන් දෙවි ආශීර්වාද ලබනවා : getting the blessings from God Sumana Saman
26. සුමන සමන් දෙවි පිහිටලබනවා : receiving blessings from God Sumana Saman
27. සමනලකන්ද : Mountain of butterflies or butterfly mountain
28. හුනුදිය පර්වතය : Another huge mountain but not taller than Samanala Kanda

29. බැනසමනලකන්ද: Another mountain but not taller than the Samanala Kanda
30. මහාසෙනග: huge gathering or crowd
31. බැනිමතුන්: devotees
32. තුන්සරණකීම: reciting virtues of Lord Buddha a series of melodious stanzas
33. පහන්සිනිත්: with a religious mind and be pleased with kindness
34. සිරිපාකරුණාකිරීම: walking towards or climbing the Samanala Kanda
35. වදිත්ටයනමේනඩේට  
සුමනසමන්දෙවිපිහිටයි-May God Sumana Saman protect the group climbing the Samanala Kanda for worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha
36. වැදලබහිනමේනඩේට  
සුමනසමන්දෙවිපිහිටයි: May God Sumana Saman protect the group climbing down the Samanala Kanda after worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha
37. නඬේගුරා: Leader of the group
38. වන්දනානඩ: Groups of devotees climbing the Samanala Kanda for worshipping the foot-print of Lord Buddha

**Geththampaana(ගෙත්තම්පාන)**

When Lord Buddha visited Samanala Kanda, he had to mend his Chivaraya (robe) at this place and as a result the place where Lord Buddha used to mend his robe is called as Geththam Pana. As a custom, devotees event at present do not forget to weave with a roll of cotton thread and a needle. From this place onwards, the difficult selection of the climbs encounters. In order to avoid tediousness, devotees used to recite thunsarana (virtues of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha).

39. ගෙත්තම්කරනවා: Weaving
40. සිරිත් : customs
41. තුන්සරණ: virtues of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha

**Mahagiri Dambaya (මහගිරිදඹය)**

The final set of steps railings leading up to the summit is called Mahagiri Dambaya. The wind is very strong and rough at this place. The steps and rails provide protection at this place. Sometimes people call it ahasgawwa or himaya(අහස්ගව්ව/ හිමය) as the devotees can feel that they are almost touching the sky. The only protection for the devotees is the blessing of Buddha, Dhamma and Shangha and God Saman.

After Mahagiri Dambaya, devotees reach fist the lower compound where most of the devotees worshipping chanting Stanzas and then take their rest. Then they climb to the upper compound for worshipping the Foot-Print of the Lord Buddha with their spiritual flavor with piety. Then they come down to the lower compound and rest to their satisfaction. Here,

devotees used to consume what they have brought to quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger.

42. මහගිරිදඹය: the place before reaching the summit
43. උඩමලුව: upper compound
44. පහනමලුව: lower compound
45. සිරිපතුල: Foot-Print
46. එරන්පතුල: devotees attribute the foot-print to be of gold
47. මැණික්පතුල: devotees attribute the foot-print to be of gem
48. වදිනවා: worship
49. ගිමන්තිවනවා: taking rest
50. පුෂ්පෝහාරදක්වනවා: offer flowers and worship
51. සමන්දෙවොල: Place where the statue of God Saman is kept for worshipping
52. කෝඩුකාරයා: the devotee who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
53. කිරිකෝඩු: the youngest female one who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
54. දඩුකෝඩු: the youngest male one who is going to worship the foot-print of Lord Buddha for the first time
55. කරුනාවයි: have mercy from God Saman
56. මළුවේකක්වීමේකගන්නවා: taking rest for a while at the compound
57. අග්ගලා: a type of sweet made of rice-flour ball-shaped. This sweet is famous and significant at the Sripada pilgrimage
58. තේබොනවා: drinking tea
59. පහලටකරුණාකරනවා: climbing down the steps after worshipping the Foot-Print of Lord Buddha
60. නැවතත්එන්නජරාථ්ඵනාකරනවා: wishing for another trip to Sripada the following year
61. ගම්බිම්බලාපිටත්වෙනවා: returning to their villages

**III. LIMITATION**

Most of the information was gathered during researchers' observation to Sripada via Hatton Nallathanni route. It is believed that this particular route is the shortest way to reach the summit of the Samanala Kanda. However, the other route Ratnapura via Palabaddala is the longest and oldest route to Sripada. It is certain; some of the significant places were missing out since researchers did not observe the other route. Some places like Dharmaraja Gala (ධර්මරාජ ගල), Lihinihela Ambalama (ලීහිනිහෙලා අම්බලම) and some interesting folk stories are missing out in this study. In addition to this, literature written around the Sripada is also missing out since this is a participatory observation research. Therefore, this research is open for further exploration to nourish with ample information.

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