

**AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON SINGING, DRUMMING,
AND DANCING OF KANDYAN RITUAL
*SOONIYAM SHANTHI KARMA (UDARATA TOWILAYA)***

T.G.A.M.I. Tanwaththa
PGIHS, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
tanwaththa@gmail.com

This study investigates the singing, drumming, and dancing practices associated with the Kandyan *Sooniyam Shanthi Karma* (healing ritual), also known as *Udarata Towilaya*, within the context of Sri Lankan traditional healing ritual literature. While the *Yak* healing rituals of the Low-Country tradition are widely recognized, knowledge of the Kandyan *Yak* healing rituals has significantly diminished. In contrast to the *Khombakankariya*, the most prominent healing ritual in the Kandyan tradition, the Kandyan *Sooniyam* ritual exhibits distinct features. The objectives of this study are to identify the specific features of singing, drumming, and dancing in the *Udarata Towilaya*, analyze the similarities and differences between the *Khombakankariya* and the *Udarata Towilaya*, explore the reasons for the declining popularity of the Kandyan *Towilaya*, and examine the historical practices and contemporary applications of the *Udarata Towilaya*. Employing a qualitative approach, the study integrates interviews with traditional practitioners and experts in healing rituals to gather primary data. Secondary data are sourced from academic papers, books, videos, and library materials, with ongoing data collection through direct observation of the ritual practices. Despite the prominence of the *Sooniyam* healing ritual in Low-Country traditions, the Kandyan *Sooniyam* ritual remains underexplored, with a diminishing number of practitioners and limited academic inquiry. This research, framed within the discipline of dance anthropology, aims to provide a comparative analysis of the Kandyan *Udarata Towilaya*, contributing to the understanding and preservation of this cultural heritage. Although commonly referred to as the Kandyan *Sooniyam* healing ritual, the correct name is Kandyan *Towilaya*. Two well-known generational families perform this ritual in the Kandy district: the *Palipana* and *Pilawala Thennakoon* lineages. Practitioners from these families are renowned for their expertise in astrology, traditional medicine, and the performance of *Towilaya*. A distinctive feature of the Kandyan *Towilaya* is *Hathpada*, a specific type of verse, sung during the ritual's dance performances. Additionally, the drumming styles *Angarampada Wadanaya* and *Abhinapada Wadanaya* play a pivotal role in the execution of this ritual, enhancing its rhythmic and symbolic dimensions.

Keywords: *Udarata, Sooniyam, Towilaya*, singing, drumming, dancing