

THE DISTINCTIVE IDENTITIES REFLECTING THE CULTURE OF MALAY MUSLIMS IN KALPITIYA, SRI LANKA

S. Satheeka Begum*

PGIHS, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

*satheekasahthutheen@gmail.com

Kalpitiya is a peninsula, located in the Northwestern province of Sri Lanka. It is known by its natural ecosystem and also as a prominent historical place being a famous port city. It has played a major role in maintaining foreign affairs and the spread of culture from early years. Multicultural communities got established around Kalpitiya because of the value of the port. The Malays emigrated to Kalpitiya during the Dutch period. Generally, the Malays follow Islam and identify themselves as a distinct ethnic group rather than as natives of Sri Lanka. They have specific cultural identities. In Kalpitiya, the Malay Muslims are a very important community which reveals a new culture. Over the years, and mainly due to globalization, most aspects of the Malay culture in Kalpitiya have changed and have come to have a lesser impact on the local culture. This research study examines the distinctive identities that reflect the culture of the Malay Muslims in Kalpitiya in the 21th Century. The study aims at highlighting the residuary distinctive traditions of the Malay Muslims of Kalpitiya. The major research question of this study is how the Malay Muslims act to preserve and reveal the distinctive identities of their culture in the 21st Century, although they have mixed with the local culture of Kalpitiya. Primary and secondary sources were employed to identify the distinctive identities of the Malay culture and their changing dynamics. This study shows that the Malay Muslims follow certain practices intended to preserve their specific cultural identities although their culture has undergone transformations with regard to aspects such as the use of surname, the use of the Malay language and wedding ceremonies.

Keywords: Malay Society, Malay Language, Surnames