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Representation of women in the folktales of Henry Parker

An identification of positive and negative stereotypes of women in Sri Lankan folktales is timely since many of them are indiscriminately used in educational textbooks and moral discourses. Though some school textbooks have been analyzed for such purpose, very little has been done to analyse the folktales or folklore that are popular in Sri Lanka.

This study was initiated with the objective of identifying and naming negative as well as positive stereotypes of women that are found in the collection of folktales of Henry Parker (1910-1915) which have an ancient lineage.

Using Lasswell's formula (1948) of content research this study identified the different categories and social roles given to women and counted and compared the frequencies a positive or a negative stereotype of women appeared. Analysis of sexism showed the number of times reference is made to male and female characters indicating, that an inferior status was allocated to women in all three volumes.

The study reemphasizes the need for content analysis of all genre of Sri Lankan folklore, since folklore, per se is supposed to influence, to inspire to from the mass conscience of a host of writers not only in print media, but also in electronic media.

Any biased unrealistic negative representation of women should be re-examined with the help of modern scholarship on folktales its, exact nature, significance and function and the role in one's culture since they tend to impose false role models of women in the minds of the public, belittling women.