

The folktale cycle woven round ‘Gamarala’: a reflection of Sinhalese traditional folklife

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Abstract

Folktale is an integral component of the domain of folklore. It helps to capture folklife factors associated with people in bygone eras than historical records and archeological evidence. Some Sinhalese folktales can be categorized as tale cycles wound around some popular characters that represent traditional Sinhalese village. The folktale cycle woven around Gamarala (Village Chieftain) is an important source of gaining awareness on traditional Sinhalese folklife. This paper aims to examine how the Gamarala's folktale cycle portrays Sinhalese folklife factors, through an analysis of a folktale sample focusing with livelihoods, food patterns, clothing and housing associated with the Sinhalese traditional folk life.

Introduction

The folktale is an integral feature in the discipline of folklore which has recently received serious attention of the scholars of diverse disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology and psychology. The word folklore was coined in 1846 by the English antiquary William John Thoms to replace the term popular antiquities or popular literature (Dorson 1972, p.1). The term "folk" can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. (Alan Dundes, 1965)

In modern usage, folklore is an academic discipline that comprises the sum total of traditionally derived and orally or imitatively transmitted literature, material culture, and custom of subcultures within predominantly literate and technologically advanced societies (Encarta, 2007).

Folktale is also a form of folk narratives. It relates with the ancient art of storytelling that is conveying events in words, images, and sounds. It has been cultivated in all ages and among all nations of which we have any record; it is the outcome of an instinct implanted universally in the human mind (Hartland, 1981). Stories are manipulated as a means of entertainment, education, preservation of culture and to instil knowledge and value morals. Crucial elements of storytelling include plot and characters, as well as the narrative point of view. In the Sinhalese extended family this art has been performed from generation to generation, and survived solely by memory. Although this has become less important with written and electronic media, folk narratives have appeared in written form as well. Conversely, in modern times, the vast entertainment industry is built upon a foundation of sophisticated multimedia storytelling.

The Sinhalese folktale and folklife

Sinhalese folktales have been formed with a rich legacy of stories, legends and myths. Story-telling, thus forms an integral part of Sinhalese culture. After the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the third century B.C., the Buddhist monks began to use the folktale in order to illustrate the Buddhist teachings (Ratnapala 1991). These were later translated into *Pali Atthakathas* the most

important aspect of *Sihalavastu* and the *Sahassavatthu*. Ever since then the folktale emerged with the vast collection of *Jathakas*. Even at present when a Buddhist monk is invited for a Buddhist preaching (*Bana*) he illustrates the Buddhist doctrine by *Jataka* stories. The didactic fables in the *Pancatantra* and the *Hitopadesa* have the folktale element as the key factor for illustration. Sri Lankan society being inseparable from Buddhism, it is natural that most stories are related to the life of the Buddha and Buddha's former births as a Bodhisattva. The collection of 550 Jataka tales (*Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha*) relating to these former births, provided enough material for the devotees to listen to. Most of *Jataka* stories have been accepted as folktales by the Sinhalese society and each story invariably teaches a moral.

Legends relate to stories of some historical value. They have come down the ages and even if the whole story may not be entirely authentic, there would be a link to a historical happening. Certain characters have been transformed into legendary individuals. The memory of great kings and national heroes lasts forever, through legendary tales.

Most of Sinhalese folktales are simple stories woven round the village. The characters in such folktales are simple village people. They have a lot of humour and are always meant for light entertainment. Some folktales can be identified as folktale cycles which are woven round some popular characters such as *Gamarala*, *Mahadenamuththa*, *Andare* and *King Kekille* etc.

Usually, such folktale cycles are fascinating and satirical tales but they reflect the traditional Sinhalese folklife because folktales play a major role in projecting the way of life and traditions continued from the past. Folklife means living traditions currently practiced and transmitted by word of mouth, imitation, and observation over time and space within groups, such as family, ethnic group, social class, regional, and others. It can refer to living traditions passed down over time and through space. Since most folklore is passed down through generations, it is closely connected to community history including folklife. Folklife is also made up of conservative elements (motifs) that stay the same through many transmissions, but folklore also changes in transmission (variants). In other words, folk traditions have longevity, but are dynamic and adaptable and usually anonymous in origin.

The folktale collection of Henry Parker is most important as a secondary source in studying Sinhalese folktales. It was published in three volumes and refers to 266 folktales (Parker I, II, III {1910}, {1997}, 2003). Ever since then there have been many collections mostly published in *Sinhala*. Most of folktales have been translated from the Parker's folktales into *Sinhala* language by many authors.

Characteristics of Folktale Cycle Woven Round *Gamarala*

The folktales revolving round the '*Gamarala*' can be distinguished as a tale cycle which is significant in Sinhalese folktale. The term '*gamarala*' embodies a synthesis of terms '*gama*' (village) and '*rala*' (chieftain). Thus, the *Gamarala* has been used for traditional village chieftain in olden times and he is not met in modern villages. The chieftains were selected by votes of villagers in establishing new villages (Codrington 1980). Each village had a *Gamarala* respected and looked on as a leader in the past. Some synonyms for *Gamarala* such as *Gampathi*, *Gamaya*, *Gammehe*, *Gammaha* have been used for the village chieftain (Peiris 1964, p.365). However, *Gamarala* who comes through folktales does not represent a certain period because most of tales begin with "once upon a time." However, the factors related with the traditional Sinhalese folk society and folklife depicted by folktales, are common to Sinhalese folk society in olden times. Thus, the character of *Gamarala* can be considered as a symbol of village character in Sinhalese traditional peasant society.

Gamarala tales can be divided into three categories;

1. Tales which refer to *Gamarala*'s home life
2. Tales which describe his social life
3. Tales that recount his exploits in super natural world.

The folktales on *Gamarala* are fascinating stories and they are related to the life of *Gamarala*. The stories on '*Gamarala*' are so interesting that, despite the fact that they are make-believe tales; the listener gets carried away and more often than not is convinced that they are true. They have come down through the generations and can still be heard in village households.

The stupidity of *Gamarala* is highlighted in most of stories woven round him. It is a means of criticizing and commenting on the follies of *Gamarala* as villagers were not free to refute him openly in real life. Thus, by this sort of characterization of persons from high caste and upper social strata, the common folk endeavoured to challenge those true characters through folktale.

The objective of the study

To examine how the *Gamarala's* folktale cycle portrays livelihoods, food patterns, clothing and housing associated with the Sinhalese traditional folk life.

Methodology

Analysis of documents and materials comes under qualitative research methodology is used for gathering information.

The Sample

Forty folktales woven round the *Gamarala* have been selected from the Parker's folktale collection and other folktale collections as the sample for this study. The analysis of the sample for extracting required information, is focused only on the factors; livelihoods, food and drinks, clothing and ornaments, and housing patterns. The manner that the folktale sample reflects folklife factors is indicated in the above table.

Livelihoods

Agricultural Activities

The Sinhalese traditional society was based on subsistence agriculture. The people were simple and spent an uncomplicated life with few wants. The stories of *Gamarala's* Tale cycle are connected to the Sinhalese traditional folklife associated with agricultural practices. *Gamarala* has played a role of a land holder because of his richness with a lot of properties such as paddy field, lands, cattle etc. He

had land shares in some village parishes (Tennakoon 1990: p.365). The *Gamarala* in the folktale "The *Gamarala's* son-in-law" (Parker iii {1910}, {1997}2003 p. 67) had a rice field of sixty *yala* and twelve *amunu* (about 2,900 acres).

The folktale named as "The *Gamarala* and Washerman" (Parker I {1910}, {1997}2003 p.300-306) includes important information on traditional agricultural activities. It has been translated into Sinhala as "*Katakara Henaya*" (Gunaratna 1978:p.81). The *Gamarala* in this tale cuts a *chena* with the washerman (*hene mama*). According to Sinhalese caste system, washerman belongs to a lower cast (Peiris 1964. p.67) and his duty was washing clothes of villagers. However, in agricultural activities, all the villagers have worked together suppressing social differences. Although the *Gamarala* worked with the washerman in this tale, *Gamarala* got cheated by the washer man.

During the period of paddy cultivation, the farmers had to spend full day-time in the paddy field. When husbands were working in the paddy field their wives have carried lunch for them. In order to the tradition of special language usage in the places of processing agricultural activities, the lunch has called as "*Embula*." The folktale "*Kalundawa*" (Parker II, p.42-45) and "*Appuwa Rajaweema*" (Kumarasinghe 2004, p.6-40) are two variants of one story. This tale is based on a legend woven around a King in *Kurunegala* period (1293-1341 AD). It is associated with the Sinhala proverb "Mada Soda Gath Kala Goviya Rajakamatath Sudusuyi" (when washed mud the farmer is qualified for the kingship). There are many variants of this story in the North Western Province.

The son-in-law of the *Gamarala* in this story was a clever farmer and he became the King later. This tale reveals the significance of cultivation. He collects tools for ploughing the paddy field one by one starting from digging hoe, yoke of oxen etc. When he was ploughing his wife carried food. "Thereafter, having stopped the yoke of cattle, and gone to a shade washing off the mud, and having eaten the food..." (ibid, p.43). The *Gamarala's* wife and daughter of the folktale in "The new speech" (Parker II, p.167) carried a box of cooked rice for the *Gamarala* and his son in law who ploughed the paddy field.

Gamarala's folktales also have information on crop protecting methods followed by village farmers. Making a fence, placing scarecrows in paddy fields or chenas and watching crops etc. are mostly manipulated methods. "New Speech" tells about a fence of the rice field (ibid). One *Gamarala* asks villagers who resided near his paddy field to come to work in the paddy field. But they decide to cheat *Gamarala* and place a number of straw dummies as working men when *Gamarala* comes with lunch (Dunumala 2001, p.15-16).

The folktale "*Bena Thora Gath Heti*" (Wijesuriya et al., 1992, p.101-102) reveals that the marriages among villagers had focused on the development of their agricultural practices. The *Gamarala* in this folktale had a beautiful daughter and sought a suitable adolescent for her marriage. *Gamarala* examined several adolescents who came to marry her, giving attention to their general sense and knowledge of agricultural activities. The first boy failed due to bringing the bag of quid without lime. The second boy failed due to being careless about instrument. He prepared to have the lunch without keeping the hoe in a shadow place. Therefore, *Gamarala* rejected him. Finally *Gamarala* found the ideal son-in-law who prepared well to go to the chena taking every tool.

Chena cultivation was a very hard livelihood. The major crop in chena was ragi (*kurakkan*). Sesame (*tala*), green gram (*mung*), paspalum (*amu*), millet (*meneri*), horse gram plant (*kollu*), maize (*Bada Iringu*) etc. were the other grains cultivated in chena. The farmers had to follow crop protection methods until harvesting since sowing. Generally farmers built a fence before or after sowing to protect crops from animals. Setting traps for catching animals was also a crop protection method. In the folktale "The Jackal and the Leopard" (Parker I, p.343) the jackal advises *Gamarala* to set a trap to kill the leopard that eats his goats.

Watching crops (*pal rekeema*) was also a hard duty. Farmers had to spend in watching-hut in the chena or paddy field with lighting bonfires and singing songs (*pal kavi*). *Gamaralas* also went for watching crops as other farmers. When they go for watching crops they carried a "*kolapuwa*" (cover of a coconut flower) as a torch (Wijesuriya et al., I, 1992, p.81).

Some tales tell about secret love relationships between *Gamarala's* wife and other person during the duty period of *Gamarala* in the watch-hut at the chena. The folktale "*Uda Inna Deyiyo*" (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.13-14) tells such a story. The *Gamarala's* wife in this story continues a secret relationship with a man named Simon. While *Gamarala* spends the night in the watching-hut, Simon comes to meet *Gamarala's* wife. One day, *Gamarala* comes home early when Simon is in the room. "The *Nikini* Story" also tells a story about a *Gamarala* who got cheated by his wife when he watches crops. She sends *Gamarala* to find "*nikini*" (look for an unobtainable thing) to get more opportunity for a secret affair (Parker I, p.264-270).

Animal husbandry

Animal husbandry is also a livelihood that reflects from *Gamarala's* folktales. Generally, every farmer had buffaloes for using in agricultural activities. *Gamarala* in "*Gamarala and Washerman*" (Parker I, p.300-306) has buffaloes. Some *Gamaralas* have kept cow-boys to look after cattle. In the tale "*Rakshasa-Eating Prakshasa*" the *Gamarala* has two cow boys and two hundred cattle (Parker II, p.228). Some farmers had goat-folds. The *Gamarala* in the folktale 'The Jackal and the Leopard' (Parker I, p.342-344) has a goat-fold and a leopard comes to eat goats. A jackal helps *Gamarala* to kill the leopard. The *Gamarala* in the tale "*Gamarala and the Cock*" had twelve hens for one cock and cattle shed called '*Gava Maduwa*' (Parker II, p.385). The evidences of using bulls and horses for transportation, keeping elephants for heavy works, using dogs for hunting etc. can be identified from the tale "How the foolish Man became King" (Parker II, p.53-55) that has woven around the son in law of a *Gamarala*. Some *Gamaralas*, who have kept cattle sheds, have taken milk from cows as well as buffalo cows. Sometimes pet animals have eaten milk that kept for curdling. The cat of a *Gamarala's* house tried to eat milk placed on the shelf by *Gamarala* for curdling (Gunaratne 1995, p.30).

Spinning Cotton and Weaving Reed

Women have engaged in spinning cotton and weaving reed as domestic manufactures. Generally having knowledge of such works was considered as a prominent qualification of a good housewife. Thus, even women in higher caste had knowledge of such works. The tale of “A Girl and a step-mother” (Parker II, p.179-181) reveals the livelihood of spinning cotton. The step-mother in this tale allocates the corner of their house for her daughter and a part of the garden to the daughter of *Gamarala*'s previous marriage for cleaning cotton. The tools; spindle, (*idda*), bow (*rodda*) and spinning wheel (*yantare*) used for cleaning cotton are also mentioned in this story. Weaving reed is also portrayed by some *Gamarala*'s folktales (Gunaratne {1978}, {1984} 1995, p. 101)

Hair Cutting

Hair Cutting was also important in traditional livelihood. “*Panikkiya*” (barber) was a name used for the hair cutter. He provided home visited service for villagers as well as to *Gamarala* and took paddy, rice, vegetable etc. as the fee. One *Panikkiya* visits *Gamarala*'s house when he is gone out. *Gamarala* has advised his wife to settle share of paddy or rice to the *Panikkiya* who visits home during his absence. One day the *Panikkiya* came to *Gamarala*'s house, but there was nobody to cut hair. The *Gamarala*'s wife does not like to give him the share without working. Thus, she tells *Panikkiya* to cut her hair as a service for rice share. At once, *Panikkiya* cuts her long and beautiful hair (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p. 41-42).

Selling Goods

Some folktales on *Gamarala* include information on selling goods as well as currencies. Village fairs and shops were useful places for selling villagers' productions and buying other required commodities. *Gamaralas* as well as their relatives have gone to fairs and shops. The *Gamarala* and his son-in-law of a folktale (Parker II, p.171) go to a shop and buy sixteen plantains paying a *panama*

(a sixteenth part of a rupee). One *Gamarala* bought a beautiful article from a shop and hoarded in home. He did not show it to his wife and several times in a day he used to see it secretly. The wife got suspicious about *Gamarala* and she threw the article. Finally it was destroyed (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.10-12). There is a village named as “*Modapane*” famous for foolish people in folktales. One day a mother sends her son to the market (*salpila*) for selling a mat woven by her. A *Gamarala* requests the mat to purchase for one rupee but the foolish boy did not like to sell it for other price more or less than five *Ridees* (similar to seventy five cents) as advised by his mother. He was too stupid to understand that a Rupee is worthy than five *Ridees*. Finally *Gamarala* purchases the mat paying five *Ridees* (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p. 101).

Other Traditional Works

Blacksmith's work is also a livelihood related to Sinhalese traditional folklife. Blacksmiths made plough-shares, axes, knives and other tools. Their service was not for money. They also took paddy, rice, vegetable and other goods produced by others in exchange as the fee for their service. The *Ridinneda* (washerwoman), blacksmith (*Naide*) and others receive paddy and rice from *Gamarala's* house. The *Gamarala's* son-in law in the Story of *Kalunadawa* went to the smith and requested a digging hoe from him (Parker II, p.42).

Food and Drinks

Rice

Cooked rice has been using from the origin of Sinhalese as the staple food. Rice is processed by pounding paddy. Generally, it was a duty of women in the traditional village. Before pounding they have to boil and dry paddy. But in some parts in the country specially, in Southern region, rice has been processed without boiling paddy. The rice processed without boiling is called as “*kekulu haal*” (raw rice). After threshing paddy rice it is ready to cook for meals. They used the mortar and pestle to pound paddy. The folktale “The *Gamarala* who Went to the God-World” (Parker III, p.195-196) and a variant of it “The Tusk Elephant of the Divine World”

(ibid, p.197) tells a story about tying up mortars of villagers and destroying the mortar of his home because he thinks that mortars go to his rice field at night to eat. There was a certain place named as “*bim-mola*” (Ground mill) for threshing paddy as a group activity. *Bim-mola* is a piece of stone that is fixed to the floor. The daughter of the *Gamarala* in the folktale *The Gamarala’s daughter* has pounded paddy and taken rice (Parker II, p.8).

Generally, cooked rice has taken for three meals of the day in Sinhalese folklife. Most of people took the cold rice left overnight named as “*heel bath*.” *Heel bath* has been considered as a minimum breakfast. The *Gamarala* in the tale “*Nadi Beleema*” (Testing pulse) meets often *Vedarala* to test *Vedarala’s* knowledge. In every meeting *Vedarala* tells correctly what *Gamarala* has eaten. One day *Gamarala* meets *Vedarala* without having breakfast. Then *Vedarala* found that *Gamarala* has not eaten even a bit of *heelbath* (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p. 92-93). The method of cooking rice is described in the tale “How foolish Man became King.” “Having gone into the jungle, and prepared a hearth near an ant-hill, in order, after having cooked, to eat cooked rice...” (Parker II, p.54). Banana leaves were used as plates in eating rice. The tale “*Mulin Katha Kala eka Paradaï*” reveals that there were servants to *Gamarala* to supply Banana leaves daily (Gunaratne {1977} 1995, p. 40-41). According to a folk belief, when having meals using banana leaves daily, it helps to keep beauty of hair and face (Endagama. 2003, p.251).

Pittu

Some people’s breakfast was “*pittu*” with milk or dried fish curry. In the folktale “*Pittu Bambuwa*” (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p. 36-37) the *Gamarala* went to meet his friend. His friend was also a *Gamarala* and he tasted more “*pittu*” from friend’s house because he had never tasted them prepared by using bamboo. This *Gamarala* stole the bamboo from friend’s house and gave it his wife to prepare “*pittu*”. But they could not make *Pittu* because *Gamarala* had not brought the operculum of the bamboo.

Milk Rice (*Kiribath*)

Kiribath also is a popular food item among villagers. There was a box of milk rice on the head of the *Gamarala* in the tale "The Jackal and the *Gamarala*" (Parker III, p.50) who was going to ask for a yoke of cattle to plough. Milk-rice also has been used in exorcist practices (Parker I, p.264-270).

Gruel

Gruel is a drink as well as a food prepared by rice and coconut milk. When some people go to the paddy field, chena or jungle a pot of gruel had been carried to use when they feel hungry. The *Gamarala* of the tale "The Stupid Boy (Parker I, p.297-299)" told her stupid son to make a pot of gruel and take it when they go to the jungle. There are many kinds of gruel that make with or without coconut milk. Salt-gruel is considered as the minimum food for someone who is sick. It is prepared with boiled rice, water and some salt.

Oil Cakes (*Kevum*)

Kevum is a favorite sweet of Sinhalese people. A *Gamarala* wanted to eat oil cakes and said to his wife to prepare oil cakes for him and for his four sons. After cooking cakes the sons ate all. Then *Gamarala* thought of making cakes at a place outside. However, he was unable to eat cakes (Parker I, p.201-204). In the occasions of festivals, ceremonies, rituals and auspicious events this sweet is compulsorily used. Cooked oil cakes, milk rice and ripped banana have been prepared for a meritorious act (*pinkama*) related to funeral ritual in the tale "The new Speech" (Parker II, p.17).

Yams

Village people have taken some kinds of yams such as *Katu-Ala* found from jungles. The folktale "*Katuala Kema*" (Wijesuriya et al.,1, 1995, p.51-52) tells that the *Gamarala* in this tale is eager to eat this yam. In the morning he goes to

the jungle and brings a basket of *Katu-ala* in the evening. His wife prepares them as diet with *Lunu-miris* and coconut.

Meat

Although the Sinhalese rural people were Buddhists, most of people have eaten meat. Most of the people went to the jungle for hunting animals for meat. Some *Gamaralas* had guns. A friend of a *Gamarala* (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.18) needed the *Gamarala's* gun to shoot an elk. Cooking meat was a duty of wives but some wives of *Gamaralas* also could kill animals for meat. The *Gamarala's* wife in the tale "*Marapu Heti*" killed a monkey and cooked its meat for *Gamarala* (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.16-17).

Toddy (Raa)

Drinking toddy was favored among gents. Toddy was produced by people using coconut flower or *Kithul* flower. The paramour of *Gamarala's* wife named Simon has drunk toddy and fuddled in the tale "*Uda Inna Deyyo*" (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.18).

Clothing and Ornaments

Mens' Clothes

The folktales women around *Gamarala* have information about clothing patterns in traditional society. Until few decades in the 20th Century, the clothes of Sinhalese were very simple. Farmers did not consider covering the bust. In the Kandyian period, mens' clothes were limited to a piece of cotton cloth wrapped around the waist (Cordiner, 1983, p.55). In the agricultural life, the span-cloth (*Amudaya*) was very popular among farmers due to its lightness and simplicity. "This is a piece of cloth suspended by a cord tied round the waist and tucked at both ends covering the genital origins and the backside. The upper end of the cloth is again taken over the cord and allowed to hang loose almost in the way of a three-

corned flag covering the genital origins" (Ratnapala 1991, p.156). In the folktale "Apuuru Danduwama" (Wonderful Punishment), the *Gamarala* has worn the span-cloth (Gunaratne 1998, p.42). Most people have used span-cloth as underwear and worn a raw, coloured cloth which was long to the knee from the waist. Some times *Amudaya* has been used to swab something dirty (Wijesuriya et al., 7, 1995, p.10). Men have worn sarongs and a shawl on shoulder when they go out. The folktale "Awasara" (Wijesuriya et al., 1, 1995, p.24-25) three *Gamaralas* met a low caste man while they were going somewhere. After the man moved the shawl from the shoulder to uncover his hand one *Gamarala* told that, that man honoured him. But other two *Gamaralas* did not agree with him and they told honour was for them. Finally they asked the lower caste man, for whom was his honour and he replied that 'I honoured the bigger fool in your group'.

When people are engaged in religious or ritual practices they have worn a white cloth. In the *Nikini* story, the farmer who helped the *Gamarala*, arrayed white clothe and tied a red coloured cloth round the waist. The *Gamarala* in the tale "Gamarala Silgath Heti" (How *Gamarala* observed sill) wore a white sarong for going to the temple (Kumaranathunge 1954:p.8).

Womens' Clothes and Ornaments

Robert Knox has mentioned about the ornaments worn by Kandyan women. "On their arms silver bracelets, and their fingers and toes full of silver rings, about their necks, necklaces of beads or silver, curiously wrought and engraven, gilded with gold, hanging down so low as their breasts. In their ears hang ornaments made of silver set with stones, neatly engraven and gilded" (Knox, Robert, 1956).

There are many variants of a folktale based on a story about a girl child who was abandoned by a *Gamarala* and his wife in a *kekiri* (cucumber) *chena* and looked after by a couple of birds. Such folktales include many items of clothes and ornaments used by ladies in Sinhalese traditional society. In one variant, the girl child has been looked after by a couple of black storks. One day the storks went out to bring bracelets and golden anklets for the girl. At that time a *rakshasa*

(demon) came to eat her and tried to cheat her by speaking as storks. He told her “here are golden bracelets, oh..... daughter here are golden anklets, oh... daughter, open the door...” (Parker I, p.110). In another variant the girl was also taken care by storks and the *rakshaha* tried to cheat her by telling about clothes and bracelets. “Having brought bracelets for the arms, jackets for the body, clothes for the waist, Oh..... daughter open the door...” (Ibid, p.111). The girl has been taken care by a couple of crows in other form. Here a *rakshashi* (female demon) tried to cheat her by saying as crows. “We are bringing pearls from the sea; we are bringing also wire for stringing” (Ibid, p. 112). There is another variant of the above story that a couple of storks look after a girl. It tells about bracelets, rings and coral necklaces (Ibid, p. 113-114) which were worn by girls.

The “Kekiri Kella” (Wijesuriya et al., 1995, p.26-27) is also a form of that story. In this story a female demon tries to cheat a girl by telling “*Mala Kuru Genava Duwe-Dora Erapan Mage Duwe*” (We bought necklaces and Hair pins-please open the door). “*Emal Biso*” is also a similar story and the demon of it tells about golden bracelets, golden earrings, necklace and pearl (Gunaratne, 1994, p.55). Most of the wives of *Gamaralas* have kept their jewelries in a parcel (*pottaniya*) bound by a thick cloth. A son of a *Gamarala* has found his mother’s jewelries from such a parcel (Wijesuriya et. al.,1995).

Housing Patterns

The houses in olden village were built in the natural setting and they were simple homes. Following traditional practice, they were wattle and daub (*warichchi saha mati*) wall houses thatched with woven coconut bough, straw or *illuk* grass. Clay is used for the floor. Cow dung is generally applied as a top layer. There would be a front door to enter the house. In front is an open verandah where there would be a bed. Visitors usually sit on the bed, which is used by the male to sleep at night. The wife and children sleep on mats inside the house. Mats have been sold at the “*salpila*” (market). *Gamaralas* also have bought mats from there. In a village home there were only two windows and one door. There was a benching (*pila*) in the open verandah. It was useful to the grand father or other males for chatting in day time and to sleep at night. (Wijesekara 1969, p. 64-65).

Houses of *Gamaralas* also were simple. Therefore, they had to make temporary attachments on special occasions such as weddings, funerals or other festival that more people are assembling. A king has ordered a *Gamarala* to build inner sheds and outer sheds for King's visit to summon *Gamarala's* daughter in marriage (Parker, II, p.8). In building of a house firstly, people had to cut suitable trees for supplying wood. The *waewarana*, *kaetakala*, *milla*, *kolon* were good timber trees commonly used in building houses. *Paepol* (Papaya), *eramudu* (coral tree), *murunga* (drum stick) etc. were soft woods and useless for any kind of work (Parker, I, p.301, 305).

Conclusion

Folktales woven round *Gamarala* are fascinating stories related to the domestic and social life of the '*Gamarala*'. They cannot be rejected as useless tales considering many unbelievable and impossible matters included in such folktales. When examined carefully we can find out important evidences associated with Sinhalese folklife. The characters related with *Gamarala*, activities in paddy fields, chena and other workplaces, foods and drinks they have had, houses they have lived, clothes they have worn etc. cannot be considered as imaginary matters. Such matters are based on experiences of day to day activities of people.

This paper is not a comprehensive study discussing every factor related to folklife. Although there are many factors associated with Sinhalese folklife to examine, in order to limit the paper it focused only livelihood, food and drinks, clothes and houses. There are various factors related to Sinhalese folklife which can be found out through comprehensive studies on the folktale cycle that is woven around *Gamarala*. Today, there exists some remains of traditional folklife in some rural areas, but the general scenario is that the actual traditional life patterns have vanished because the modern technology has taken a steady control over individual lives. Thus there is a need for an enormous contribution to bequeathing information on traditional folklife to future generations.

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