

Some Observations on Personifying Inanimate Nouns in Sinhalese Language

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In Sinhalese language, personifying inanimate nouns is considered a device required in poetry in order to maintain the poetic quality of the language. However, this device has been used in both poetic and non-poetic works in classical Sinhalese literature. In the contemporary Sinhalese language, this device has gone beyond works of literature and such personified nouns can be seen in the everyday discourse of the language as well. In classical literature, personified plurals have been used in both direct and indirect cases even though it is restricted to the indirect cases in the contemporary usage. Personification can mostly be seen in Sanskrit Borrowings ending with 'ඓ' which require some device in order to distinguish the plural from the singular in natural speech. It is apparent that a limited number of pure Sinhalese nouns are also being affected by this device. Another paramount feature apparent in this usage in the contemporary language is that the inanimate nouns are personified mostly in order to form the plurals even though distinctive plural forms exist. In Sinhalese, the root of an inanimate singular noun is mostly used as its plural form. However, as a result of the overuse of personified inanimate nouns, the formal value of the regular plurals is reduced or nullified and the personified plurals have gained currency as their lone plural forms.

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