

The folktale cycle woven round '*Gamarala*': a reflection of Sinhalese traditional folk-life

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Folktale is a form of folk narrative and an integral component of the domain of folklore. Any component of folklore reflects the socio-cultural evolution and expresses the feelings, thoughts and sensations of the day to day life of people in bygone eras. The folklore components are useful than the historical records and archeological evidence in recapturing attitudes, values, habits and emotions of the people who lived in olden times.

The characters, stories and events in folktales provide an almanac to understand the folk life. In the context of Sinhalese folktales, many folktale cycles could be found that are wound around some popular characters such as *Gamarala*, *Mahadenamuththa*, *Andare* and *King Kekille* etc. They reflect the traditional peasant life and therefore those are important in studying Sinhalese traditional folk life which was based on traditional agriculture. Today there exist some remains of traditional folk life in some rural areas, but the general scenario is that the actual traditional life-patterns have been vanished because the modern technology has taken a steady control over individual lives. The objective of this paper is to examine the folktale cycles that have portrayed the character of *Gamarala* (a village Cheaftain) as a source of gaining awareness in traditional Sinhalese folk-life. Folktales which articulate *Gamarala*'s domestic and social life eloquently, and recounting his exploits in the super natural world in the form of exorcism are selected from the *Gamarala* folktale cycle as the sample. Selected folktales which replicate livelihoods, food patterns, clothing, housing etc. associated with the Sinhalese folk life are focused in this study. This type of studies provide an enormous contribution to bequeathing information on traditional folk-life to future generations.

Key words: Folklore, Folk narratives, Folktales, *Gamarala* folktale cycle, Folk-life

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