

Women in Sri Lankan Historiography

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The study of women runs through different subject streams. It would seem that the vision about women changed with time in the field of history. This state can be further determined by the investigation of views about women in historical writings. It appears that in the modern historical discussions about the woman, the discussions of them are done in a novel way using the concept of feminism in a broad perspective. However, the difficulties faced by the historians to bring forth the discussions about the ancient woman are that the sources do not provide considerable opportunities for the matter. Therefore, the history about the woman can be shown as a social phenomenon isolated from the popular historical streams and the standard sources. The authors who wrote books on ancient history from a male point of view rarely gave the personal names of women unless if she were a mother of a majestic ruler or a wife who safeguarded her chastity. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to investigate the difficulties which historians faced in constructing the women's history of Sri Lanka.

Dīpavaṃsa and *Mahāvāma* which are considered as the main two chronicles in describing the history of the island, and using the other literary text and archaeological data and also by considering the researchers conducted in Sri Lanka about the woman, it is important to investigate the quantitative and qualitative profile of woman in Sri Lankan historiography.

Dīpavaṃsa which is considered as the oldest chronicle to establish the traditional history of the island takes an important position in order to establish the history of woman, because it is considered that the authorship of the book is attributed to Buddhist nuns. But the traditional acceptance is that when establishing the history of women the details mentioned in the *Mahāvāma* and other literature books written thereafter about women were very little and therefore, their contribution is very limited.

In this context, while it is said that the participation of women in the political, social, economic and cultural structures was comparatively low but about the participation of women was mentioned to a certain extent in each field. But the majority bears the opinion that when the ancient history is written justice was not caused to the women. Accordingly, when finding about the quantitative and qualitative state of the women in historiography and when investigating the status of women in whole historiography it is clear that the contributions of sources are comparatively lower when establishing the history of women than the establishment of political and religious history and it is clear that the same factor will hinder the historical researches carried out by historians.

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