

A Critical Study on Marriage in Sri Lanka as depicted in Henry Parker's *Village Folk Tales of Ceylon*

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Henry Parker arrived in Ceylon in July 1873 as an irrigation officer. First posted in the North Central Province, he was then transferred to the North Western and the Southern Provinces respectively. Thus, he was able to become acquainted with a cross section of the inhabitants and to get an insight into their different life styles, customs, beliefs and manners. Being a very humane and unassuming person, Parker could closely associate with the local population without any difficulty. He became fascinated by their vast treasures of folk tales, which prompted him to collect them and commit them to writing in the same simple way in which they were narrated to him by the villages. The final product was printed in 1910 with the title *Village Folk Tales of Ceylon*. When viewed from a socio-cultural standpoint, this collection is an inevitable source to understand the Marriage system at the time as it depicts a fairly accurate picture of the society. Through a close analysis of the tales, it is possible to obtain valuable information that will contribute to the creation of an accurate picture of 'Marriage' in Sri Lanka at that time. The theoretical approach adopted in this study is the sociology of literature. An attempt is made to study how marriage functioned in the society as depicted in Henry Parker's collection of folk tales translated into Sinhala by Chandra Sri Ranasinghe. In addition, inscriptions and other documents relating to history and socio cultural themes as well as relevant literary resources have been utilized as secondary resources.

Keywords: folk tales, marriage, sociology of literature, contemporary society

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