

## THE IMPACT OF FOLK POETRY ON TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION: A REVIEW OF SRI LANKAN JANAKAVIYA

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### **Abstract**

This research delves into the captivating world of Sri Lankan Janakaviya, a traditional folk poetry form, to uncover its profound impact on communication and cultural preservation within the rich tapestry of Sinhala culture. The study explores the historical roots, thematic diversity, and unique characteristics of Janakaviya, emphasizing its role as a medium for conveying the customs, rituals, and experiences of everyday life among the early Sinhalese people. It also investigates the influence of modernization on the practice and appreciation of Janakaviya, particularly among younger generations, who are increasingly disconnected from the rural and agrarian traditions it represents. The findings reveal that Janakaviya serves as a vibrant repository of cultural heritage and plays a pivotal role in fostering a sense of community and moral guidance. Its use of metaphor, repetition, and vivid imagery, deeply rooted in Buddhism, contributes to its unique nature. Moreover, the study uncovers various preservation and revival efforts aimed at safeguarding Janakaviya for future generations, including documentation, integration into formal education, and community initiatives. It highlights the perspectives of practitioners and community members regarding the significance and relevance of Janakaviya in contemporary society. In a rapidly evolving world, Janakaviya stands at a crossroads, facing challenges of modernization and changing lifestyles. However, its cultural significance and communication dynamics make it a valuable and irreplaceable part of Sri Lankan heritage. This research underscores the importance of recognizing and revitalizing Janakaviya to ensure its continued cultural identity and communication enrichment in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** Communication, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Preservation, Janakaviya, Sri Lankan Folk Poetry

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## **Introduction**

Folk literature is a rich and diverse body of traditional storytelling, poetry, myths, legends, and customs passed down orally through generations within a particular culture. It encompasses a community's collective wisdom, beliefs, and experiences, often reflecting its history, values, and identity. Unlike written literature, folk literature is transmitted verbally and may evolve over time through the contributions of various storytellers. It includes a wide range of genres, such as folktales, ballads, proverbs, and rituals, offering unique insights into the cultural heritage of a people. Folk literature serves as a dynamic expression of shared narratives, connecting individuals to their roots and preserving the essence of a community's collective imagination. In this milieu, folk poetry takes a cynosure apart from folk literature.

The Academic Accelerator (2023) defines, “Folk poetry (sometimes called action poetry) is poetry that is part of a society's folklore, usually part of its oral tradition. When folk poetry is sung, it becomes a folk song.” This indicates that every country's folklore has a tradition rooted in the oral form. Moreover, when people employ these poems in various situations, they are inherently recognized as folk songs.

By quoting Al-barghūthī, 'A. (1979), Asaqli and Masalha (2020) define folk songs by showcasing their characteristics. In that sense, “folk song is a form of public expression and represents an emotional escape for many of the psychological situations through which people go because it allows them to express joy or sadness, as well as being a form of entertainment.”

Taking the above into note, it can be seen that Folk poetry, as per the Sinhala culture, *Janakaviya*, is understood as a treasure trove of conventional art and culture in Sri Lanka. The *Janakaviya* has played an integral role in the tapestry of human communication for centuries. Among the rich traditions of folk poetry, Sri Lankan *Janakaviya* stands as a captivating and illuminating example. This study delves into the profound impact of *Janakaviya* on traditional communication within the context of Sri Lanka. By exploring its historical roots, thematic diversity, language, and social significance, it is aimed to understand how folk poetry, specifically *Janakaviya*, has been a dynamic agent in preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese people.

Giving a similar idea to the above, the medium blog (2021) shows that “Sinhala *Janakavi*, or caste-based folk poems, began as a community song shared between various groups as they went about their daily labour”. They are still a popular form of cultural expression today. Folk poems were chanted by ancient Sri Lankans to alleviate feelings of loneliness, sadness, fatigue, and so on. The folk poems do not have an identified author. Kavi was often sung together with annual rites. These old rites are rarely performed in modern Sri Lanka, although folk musicians continue to perform the preserved tunes. The Virindu is another typical Sri Lankan folk style. It consists of impromptu poetry performed to a rabana's beating music. Traditional song competitions were organized, with two virindu singers competing through spontaneous verse. Baila, a Portuguese-influenced folk tradition, has been a prominent folk tradition throughout the coastal areas for the past 500 years and is now part of mainstream music culture (Lahirumax, 2021).

From the world's perspective, there are characteristics of poetry, and they are encompassed in Sri Lankan traditional *Janakaviya*, but they have unique characteristics from the world's perspective. Thus, this exercise is trying to understand and grasp what sort of unique characteristics were there in the Sinhala *Janakaviya* and how people communicate within the cultural boundaries.

## **Research Problem**

The research problem aims to investigate the nature and fundamental functions of traditional folk poetry, specifically Sri Lankan *Janakaviya*, in the context of its societal significance and communication dynamics.

## **Research Questions**

To understand the rising problem discussed above, it is aimed to answer a few research questions as follows.

- How has the advent of modernization and technological advancements affected the practice and appreciation of *Janakaviya* in Sri Lanka?
- What are the unique characteristics and themes of *Janakaviya*, and how have they contributed to its enduring influence on traditional communication?
- What strategies and efforts are currently in place to preserve and promote *Janakaviya*, considering its fading nature in the digital era?

## **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to comprehensively explore the significance of *Janakaviya* in preserving cultural heritage and facilitating communication in Sri Lanka. It aims to analyze the impact of modernization on this traditional folk poetry and assess current preservation and revival efforts.

## **Methodology of the Study**

This research's methodology relies primarily on a comprehensive literature review and the analysis of secondary data sources to investigate the nature and functions of traditional folk poetry, specifically *Janakaviya*, within the societal context of Sri Lanka. The methodology commences with an extensive review of academic literature, scholarly works, historical documents, and ethnographic studies on *Janakaviya*, aiming to identify recurring themes, characteristics, and their multifaceted functions in society. Furthermore, the methodology includes data collection from various secondary sources, such as academic databases and library resources, which will be synthesized and analyzed to gain insights into the roles of *Janakaviya* and its evolution over time. The analysis explores the impact of modernization on *Janakaviya* by examining discussions and insights from secondary data. Based on existing literature and secondary data sources, this approach is intended to provide a holistic understanding of *Janakaviya*'s cultural significance and communication dynamics within the Sri Lankan context.

## **Historical Perspective of Folk Poetry Worldwide**

Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, (2023) shows that the formation of folk poetry is rooted in the classical Persian tradition. Nevertheless, it's challenging to determine the absolute first folk poem in relation to Sri Lanka and within the world because folk poetry, by its nature, is often orally transmitted and pre-dates written records. This clearly can be understood within the theories associated with the context and will be discussed in forthcoming content. However, the earliest folk poems are likely lost to history. However, ancient civilizations in different parts of the world have produced some of the earliest known examples of folk poetry.

As a count argument to the above, it can be found that one of the earliest known collections of folk poetry comes from ancient Sumer (modern-day southern Mesopotamia) in the form of cuneiform tablets. These poems, which date back to around 2000 BCE, are associated with the Sumerian city of Nippur. They include hymns, laments, and other forms of folk poetry.

The "Epic of Gilgamesh" is one of the most famous examples of ancient Sumerian literature and contains elements of folk poetry. While it's considered an epic poem, it includes various folkloric and poetic elements (*The Epic of Gilgamesh - Pukit Agrawal - Literature 114 (Spring 2014-2015) - Harvard Wiki*, 2015).

Similarly, ancient cultures such as the Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks also produced early examples of folk poetry in the form of songs, hymns, and oral traditions. These poems often served as a means of preserving cultural history and conveying important stories, beliefs, and customs.

Thus, while it's challenging to pinpoint the absolute first folk poem in the world, these ancient civilizations provide some of the earliest examples of oral poetry and folk traditions. Folk poetry has a long and diverse history, with various cultures contributing to its development over millennia.

When considering the journey commences in a nutshell with the global historical panorama of folk poetry; as an age-old and integral part of human expression, finds its place in diverse cultures and regions worldwide. Whether in the haunting ballads of European folklore or the lyrical verses of Persian

*Figure 1: The Epic of Gilgamesh*



Source: (Begin Again: Marking Black Memories: The Epic of Gilgamesh, n.d.)

bards, folk poetry has, for centuries, breathed life into the tales, traditions, and cultural identities of communities across the globe. Therefore, from this assessment, it is vital to understand the key similarities and distinctions in the evolution of folk poetry across various cultures and highlight its pivotal role in preserving the intangible heritage of humanity.

As described above, folk poems, also known as folk poetry or traditional poetry worldwide, have a rich history in cultures all around the world. These poems are an integral part of oral traditions and are often closely tied to the culture, history, and experiences of the people who create and recite them. These poems have been an essential part of oral traditions and were often used as a means of preserving cultural stories, knowledge, and values. Though the knowledge was transmitted from one generation to another, it can be seen that the practices were meant to be diverse culturally.

Cultural diversity has enriched folk poems, with each culture and region shaping its unique forms of folk poetry. Whether it's the epic poems of the Greek oral tradition, the ballads of the British Isles, or the haikus of Japan, folk poetry takes on different forms and themes in various parts of the world. Therefore, folk poems simply give some knowledge about ordinary people's experiences.

Folk poems, on the other hand, try to preserve history. Folk poems often serve to preserve the history and mythology of a people. They tell stories of heroes, gods, and historical events, passing down the collective memory of a society. Folk poems are not just limited to history and mythology. They often provide a platform for social commentary, reflecting the struggles, joys, and values of the people. This makes them a valuable source for understanding the social and cultural contexts of different periods.

Many folk poems have been passed down through oral tradition, with storytellers, bards, and singers being the custodians of this heritage. The oral nature of folk poetry has allowed it to adapt and evolve. Example: Bhagavad Geta, one of the famous folk poetries in India reflect the heritage of Indian people. Folk poetry has had a significant influence on the development of formal literature. It has inspired many renowned poets and writers, and its influence can be seen in various literary works.

In many cultures, there has been a revival of interest in folk poetry, and efforts have been made to document and preserve these oral traditions for future generations (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020). This includes collecting and transcribing folk poems for posterity. For instance, the oral tradition of Buddha's verses was documented and preserved for future generations in Sri Lanka. Folk poetry continues to be a living tradition in many parts of the world. It can still be heard in festivals, gatherings, and cultural events, and new folk poems are created to reflect contemporary experiences and challenges (Asaqli & Masalha, 2020). The world history of folk poems is vast and diverse, reflecting human experience across time and place. It highlights the enduring power of oral traditions and the significance of these poems in preserving cultural heritage and offering insights into the lives and values of different societies.

### **Historical Perspective of Sri Lankan Folk Poetry**

Before understanding the journey of Sri Lankan *Janakaviya*, it is vital to understand the historical roots of *Janakaviya*. When delving into the rich history of its emergence in the cultural and social landscape of Sri Lanka, as mentioned earlier, there are some significant characteristics of these oral traditions and storytelling, which have been passed down through generations, providing a unique window into the cultural evolution of this island nation. Pearce (1953) shows that in the folk poem, there are deviations and sub-deviations. Accordingly, in Sri Lankan tradition and customs, there are several types of poetry, and each has its unique characteristics and cultural significance.

***Janakavya (Folk Poetry):*** *Janakavya* is a traditional form of folk poetry in Sri Lanka. It encompasses a wide range of themes and subjects, often depicting everyday life, customs, rituals, and the experiences of the common people. *Janakavya* is characterized by its use of colloquial language, making it accessible to a broad audience. It reflects the cultural heritage and values of the Sinhalese people. There are several types of *Janakavya* in Sri Lanka i.e., *karatta kavi*, *kurakkan kavi*, (Tambourine poetry) *raban pada*, (*Oncili Vāram kavi*, *kamat kavi pael kavi*, *pāru kavi*, *neļum kavi*, *patal kavi* etc. The following segment tries to understand a few types of *Janakavya* which introduced above.

තණබලේ දෙන්නා දෙපොලේ	දක්කනවා	<i>Taṇḍalē denna depolē</i>	<i>dakkanavā</i>
කටුකැලේ ගාල තොලිනා වද	දෙනවා	<i>Kaṭukaelē gāla nolihā vada</i>	<i>denavā</i>
හපුතලේ කන්ද දැකලා බඩ	දිනවා	<i>Haputalē kanda dēkalā bāda</i>	<i>danavā</i>
පවිතල ගොනේ අද්දන් හපුතල්	යනවා	<i>Pavkaḷa gonō œdapan haputal</i>	<i>yanavā</i>

The poem above is one of the famous poems in Sri Lanka. The poet addresses the cattle that are pulling a heavy cart. Since the cart bears a substantial load, the cattle are reluctant to move quickly, especially

on the challenging path as they ascend Haputale mountain. The poet has no choice but to watch them bear the burden. Therefore, the poet addresses the innocent cattle, suggesting that they must have committed sins in a previous life, leaving them with no alternative but to carry the heavy load to the mountain's summit.

**Religious Poetry:** These poems were chanted to take blessings from the gods and also to take relief. On some special occasions, i.e., climbing the Adam's Peak, it is normal to catch such poetries in the modern days too.

මුද්දං සරණේ සිරස	දරාගෙන
ධම්මං සරණේ සිත	පහදාගෙන
සංසං සරණේ සිවුරු	දරාගෙන
ඉක්කුයි තන සරණේ	අදහාගෙන

<i>Buddham saraṇē sirasa</i>	<i>darāgena</i>
<i>Dhammam saraṇē sita</i>	<i>pahadāgena</i>
<i>Saṅgham saraṇē sivuru</i>	<i>darāgena</i>
<i>Iññayi tun saraṇē</i>	<i>adahāgena</i>

**Romantic Poems:** These types of poems are a genre in Sri Lanka that focuses on the theme of love and romantic relationships. It often employs vivid imagery and metaphors to express feelings of love, desire, and longing. These poems are typically associated with courtship and courtly love.

ඉතෙන් බලාපන් ඉන වට ශේල	බලාපන්
කරේ බලාපන් කර වට මාල	බලාපන්
අතේන් බලාපන් අත වට වලපු	බලාපන්
දැයුරු ඔයෙන් එන එතනගේ ඔමරි	බලාපන්

<i>Inē balāpan iṇa vaṭa sēla</i>	<i>balāpan</i>
<i>Karē balāpan kara vaṭa māla</i>	<i>balāpan</i>
<i>Atē balāpan ata vaṭa valalu</i>	<i>balāpan</i>
<i>Dæduru oyen ena etanage omari balāpan</i>	<i>balāpan</i>

This poet introduces a young lady. According to the poet she has an attractive waist, chest and hands. Thus, she is a coquettish young lady.

**Upadesha Kavya:** Upadesha Kavya is a form of instructional poetry that imparts guidance and wisdom. These poems provide lessons and advice on various aspects of life, including ethics, conduct, and spirituality. They are often written in a didactic style.

ගොඩ්ල්ලේ තරම දැනගෙන ලිද	කපනු
බොර්ල්ලේ තරම දැනගෙන උඩ	පතිනු
කඩ්ල්ලේ තරම දැනගෙන කද	බද්නු
තමුන්ගේ තරම දැනගෙන කල්	හරිනු

<i>Godællē tarama dænagena lida kapanu</i>
<i>Borællē tarama dænagena uda paninu</i>
<i>Kaḍullē tarama dænagena kada badinu</i>
<i>Tamungē tarama dænagena kal harinu</i>

In this poem, the poet advises the listener to understand the soil's structure before digging a well. In the second stanza, the poet emphasizes the importance of knowing about the quality of water before using it. The third stanza cautions against disregarding the Kadulla (a gate constructed using wooden logs) when making a pingo. Finally, the poet reminds us to self-reflect and stay within our limits.

**Raban Kavi:** Also known as "drum poetry," is a form of poetry that accompanies drumming and rhythm. It is a vibrant and rhythmic style of poetry often used in ceremonial and religious contexts.

These are some of the key types of poetry in Sri Lanka, each serving different purposes and catering to various aspects of the country's rich cultural heritage and communication. *Janakavya*, in particular, is a significant and distinctive form of folk poetry that has played a vital role in preserving the cultural identity of the Sinhalese people.

As ventures deeper, it'll analyze the vast thematic diversity found in *Janakaviya*. From agricultural practices to daily life, customs, and rituals, *Janakaviya* is a mosaic of the everyday experiences and beliefs of the Sinhalese people. The poems have an exceptional ability to adapt to various professions and industries, providing us with unique insights into the lives of individuals from different walks of life.

### **The Role of *Janakavya* in Social and Traditional Communication**

*Janakavya* goes beyond poetic expression; it serves as a medium for traditional communication within Sinhalese society. The poems reflect society's norms, values, and beliefs, addressing social issues and offering moral guidance. This section will explore how *Janakavya* has influenced and critiqued social behaviour. Thus, eventually, the reader could understand how communication has been done with the use of *Janakaviya* in traditional Sri Lankan society.

When understanding the communication with *Janakaviya*, it can be seen that there are unique characteristics. Thus, it can be understood that the use of *Janakaviya* in the field of communication and its characteristics at the same time. Therefore, the uses and characteristics can be identified by reading the following.

1. **Anonymity:** Anonymousness is a distinct feature of the Sinhala *Janakaviya* since it was chanted by ordinary people in order to refrain from loneliness, sadness and unusual fatigue. Therefore, the *Janakaviya* has no author or identified owner. By listening to the *Kaviya*, other people have taken its spirit, such as the idea, knowledge and rhythm to keep the *Janakaviya*, alive. Thus, it enhanced the beauty of the *Janakaviya* and transmitted knowledge via this communicable media at that time.
2. **Repetition:** Another remarkable feature of the folk poet's language is repetition. Although this was considered a poetic error in poetry, it has been used here to emphasize the facts further. Repetitive sounds are easier for the listener to grasp and emphasize the objects being expressed.

කවර කලද ගල් පිට මල් පිපෙන්	නේ	<i>Kavara kalada gal piṭa mal pipen nē</i>
කවර කලද මෙර සුළගට වැශෙන්	නේ	<i>Kavara kalada mera suļaṅgata vænen nē</i>
කවර කලද මුහුදේ දුම් තැගෙන්	නේ	<i>Kavara kalada muhudē dum nægen nē</i>
කවර කලද අපි එකතුන සිටින්	නේ	<i>Kavara kalada api ekatæna siṭin nē</i>

According to the poet, just as no flowers will bloom on rocks, no mountains will crumble due to the wind's force, and oceans won't emit smoke, people also cannot remain in the same place indefinitely. To convey this message, the poet utilizes repetitive words, such as '*Kavara kalada*', to emphasize and ingrain the idea.

3. **Enhanced rhythm:** Prioritizing sound over meaning is a distinctive feature of folk poetry. In folk poetry, the emphasis is placed on the auditory experience, as it was primarily created for singing. This focus on sound enhances communication, making the message more memorable to the audience.

සසද සසද දිය පල්ලේ තිබෙයි	අල	Sasañda sasañda diya pallē tibeyi ala
සසද සසද සිය මතුපිට තිබෙයි	කොල	Sasañda sasañda siya matupiṭa tibeyi koḷa
වැස්සට පිනි බඩා මෝරන කැකුල්	මල	Väessaṭa pini babā mōrana kækulu mala
මස්ටකයින්ට මුතු කුඩායකි නෙව්ම	මල	Mastakayinṭa mutu kuḍayaki neṭum mala

When reading the poem above, one can observe a distinct rhythm. The literal meaning of the poem is not very important. It says that; the Lotus bulb is submerged in water, leaves on the water's surface, and its blooming flower nourished by rain. In the final stanza, the lotus flower is likened to an umbrella, sheltering the fish within the lake. This simplicity of the idea and the lack of an overtly important message underscores their keen attention to environmental details. In an indirect manner, the poet extends an invitation to the fishermen to harvest fish beneath the protective embrace of the lotus petals.

4. **Religion-based concepts:** The ideas presented in the poems are rooted in the concepts of Buddhism. The principles of Karma and the consequences of Pina and Pawa (Virtue and Sin) were deeply ingrained in their daily lives. Consequently, the message conveyed is a stark reminder to abstain from sinful actions, as the potential consequence could entail being reborn as cattle and serving an owner without respite for sustenance or rest.

තණඩලේ දෙන්න දෙපොලේ දක්කනවා		Taṇḍalē denna depolē dakknavā
කටුකැලේ ගාල තොලිහා වද දෙනවා	දෙනවා	Kaṭukaelē gāla nolihā vada denavā
හපුතලේ කන්ද දැකළා බඩ දනවා	දනවා	Haputalē kanda dækalā bāda danavā
පවිකළ ගොනෝ ඇදුපන් හපුතල් යනවා	යනවා	Pavkaļa gonō œdapan haputal yanavā

ගමන් යන්ඩ නැකතින් පාරු පැද ගෙනේ		Gaman yanđa nækatin pāru pæda genē
සමන් දෙවියන්ඩ පුද පඩුර බැද ගෙනේ		Saman deviyanda puda pañduru bañda genē
මෙවන් කඩ ගගේ කදු මුල් බලා ගෙනේ		Mevan kaļu gagē kaňdu mul balā genē
අපින් යමුව සැම දෙවියන්ට වැද ගෙනේ		Apit yamuva sēma deviyanta vænda genē

5. **Socially sound:** None of the *Janakaviya* is understood as offensive or illicit within the traditions and customs of the Sinhalese social organisation. The main reason could be the influence of Buddhism.

අල්ලාගෙන නෙරිය අතකින් කිමද නගේ		Allāgena neriya atakin kimada nagō
වසාගෙන දෙනත අතකින් කිමද නගේ		Vasāgena detana atakin kimada nagō
හිමියෙක් නැති ගමන් තනියම කිමද		Himiye kæti gaman taniyama kimada nagō
නගේ		Ambalamē iñdalā api yamuda nagō
අම්බලමේ ඉදලා අපි යමුද	නගේ	Allāgena neriya mađa tævarena hindā
අල්ලාගෙන නෙරිය මඩ තැවරෙන හින්දා		Vasāgena detana biliñduge kiri hindā
වසාගෙන දෙනත බිලිදුගෙ කිරී	හින්දා	Bāla massinā passen ena hindā
බාල මස්සිනා පස්සෙන් එන	හින්දා	Yannam ayyandi gama raṭa dura hindā
යන්තම් අය්යන්ඩ ගම රට දුර	හින්දා	

The poem's meaning is centered around a conversation where one person asks a woman why she's holding her apron and covering her breasts. The person further inquiries because she's walking alone and suggests taking a rest in a nearby shed. The woman responds by explaining that she's holding her apron to protect against the muddy road, covering her breast because it bears her child's milk. And her younger cousin is approaching, so she must continue her journey, as she's leaving her home.

It's evident from this exchange that the person who extended the invitation has no ill intentions towards the woman. Instead, she declines his invitation due to being married to her cousin.

A similar idea is given in the following poems.

බුලත් කඩා දෙමි කට රතු කර ගන්ව සපුමල් නෙලා දෙමි කොණේචය සරසන්ට දිවසලු ගෙනත් දෙමි ඉන වට පලදින්ට ආවෙත් මා සමග රජ සැප දෙමි	මබට	Bulat kadā demi kaṭa ratu kara ganṭa Sapumal neṭā demi koṇḍaya sarasanṭa Divasalu genat demi ina vaṭa palañdinṭa Āvot mā samañga raja sēpa demi obata
බුලත් මොටද කස්තුරී කපුරු කන සපුමල් මොටද නාමල් පලදිනා දිවසල් මොටද සොඳ සහ පිළි තියෙන අන්හිමි මොටද මග රත් කද ගෙදර කොට	මට	Bulat moṭada kasturi kapuru kana maṭa Sapumal moṭada nāmal palañdinā maṭa Divasalu moṭada soñda salu piļi tiyena maṭa Anhimi moṭada mage ran kañda gedara koṭa

These poems are sort of a conversation between a male and a female. The male person invites the lady. "I will give you beetles to make your mouth, a red one. I will bring you champak flowers to dress your hair. I will provide you with the finest garments fit for angels if you accompany me, I will provide you and care for you like a princess".

She declines the invitation, saying, 'I do not need your beetles, as I use camphor. I do not require your champak flowers, for I wear 'Na' flowers. I do not need expensive clothing, as I have my own. Moreover, I do not need you, for I have a wonderful husband at home".

When observing the above, it can be seen that communication between two parties often involves a struggle between wants and needs, yet people tend to avoid controversial ideas and conflicts, thereby preventing miscommunication and ideological contradictions. This approach ensures that clear ideas are conveyed, meeting the fundamental communication needs.

6. **Simple words :** The heart of this assignment lies in understanding how *Janakavya* employs colloquial language, making it relatable and accessible to the common people. When delving into the *Janakaviya*, the significance of this linguistic choice, and the use of literary devices like similes and imagery to convey complex emotions and ideas, ensures effective communication with the audience.

මල්ලියේ ඔහොම නොකියන් අපේ	අම්මාට	<i>Malliye ohoma nokiyan ape ammāṭa</i>
දෙනතේ කිරී දුන්තෙනත් අප	දෙන්නාට	<i>Detanē kiri dunnet apa dennāṭa</i>
තියන දෙයක් දෙන්තෙනත් අප	දෙන්නාට	<i>Tiyana deyak dennenet apa dennāṭa</i>
බුදුන් වැඩින ලෙස වැදුපත්	අම්මාට	<i>Budun vañdina lesa vændapan ammāṭa</i>

The idea of this poem is simple: 'Brother, don't speak to our mother like that. She provided us with milk from her breast, and she gave us everything she had. Worship her with the same reverence you offer to Buddha.' This poem emphasizes the importance of respecting one's mother for her selfless sacrifices and equates that respect to the veneration of Buddha. It underscores the preservation of essential societal values and discourages the mistreatment of parents and an excessive focus on material possessions. These ideas are expressed straightforwardly, using concise and easily understandable Sinhala words.

7. **Advisory forms of poems to disseminate knowledge:** Most of the poems are advice to youngsters. But in the Sinhalese tradition, if there is a person who needs any assistance or guidance, it will be given. However, it disseminates knowledge to the other parties. When considering these ideas, the following poem can be taken as a pivotal poem.

ඇස තැකි දා පොත ගන්නේ	කියන්ට ද	<i>Esa næti dā pota gannē kiyanṭa da</i>
දක තැකි දා උක්දඩු ගිණි තපින්ට ද		<i>Data næti dā ukdaḍu giṇi tapinṭa da</i>
වෙර තැකි දා ගහගන්නේ	දිනන්ට ද	<i>Vera næti dā gahagannē dinanṭa da</i>
පුද ඇති දා තැකි කග තොස් කොටන්න ද		<i>Yuda æti dā næti kaga kos koṭanna da</i>

"There is no point in taking books when you are old and blind. When you are old, and have no teeth, sugar canes are pointless. When you are weak, what is the point of making an effort? Is it for fighting? What use is a sword that remains unused in times of war? to cut jackfruits?".

The underlying message of this poem is a piece of valuable advice: the importance of using resources wisely and at the right time. It emphasizes that when things are not utilized appropriately, they lose their value and become pointless or worthless. Therefore, the poem encourages us to be mindful of timing and make efficient use of what we have.

8. **Metaphor:** Metaphors, similes, and imagery are the basic characteristics of *Janakaviya*. On this idea, most of the *Janakavi* have used metaphors to make life a success.

එක් උනදාට උක් දන්බි පැණි	සේමා	<i>Ek unadāṭa uk daṇḍē paeṇi sēmā</i>
වෙන් උනදාට යක් දෙම්බරේ වද	සේමා	<i>Ven unadāṭa yak dembarē vada sēmā</i>
ගොසින් ගොසින් කටු අත්තේ අග සේමා		<i>Gosin gosin kaṭu attē aga sēmā</i>
ඉතින් ලදේ කරවිල තිබ්බටු	සේමා	<i>Itin ladē karavila tibbaṭu sēmā</i>

"In the time we met, it was like honey in the sugar cane. When we were apart, it was like wasp poison, and it hurt like the tip end of the throned branch. Therefore, life is like bitter gourd and *Tibbatu* (another vegetable which is bitter like bitter gourd)". This is a metaphor to say the more

it is bitter, the more it is rich with nutrients like bitter gourd and *Tibbatu*. Therefore, life is not as sweet as it is meant to be. Be patient (බුදු දහමින් පෝෂිත ජන කවිය, 2011).

- 9. Hidden Messages:** All the poems do not give the same meaning. Some poems are trying to give a different meaning than it seems.

මාතර ගගේ ඉන්නා කිඩුලිගේ	පැටියා	<i>Mātara gagē innā kiṁbuligē pætiyā</i>
තල්ල සුදුයි බෙල්ලේ ගෝමර	කැටියා	<i>Talla suduyi bellē gōmara kætiyā</i>
යන එන ඔරු පාරු නවතාගෙන සිටියා		<i>Yana ena oru pāru navatāgena sitiyā</i>
මිනි තොකයි මාතර කිඩුලිගේ	පැටියා	<i>Minī nokayi mātara kiṁbuligē pætiyā</i>

The literal idea of the above poem can be shown as follows.

“Baby crocodile in the *Matara* river has a white spot under the neck. All the canoes and pontoons are stopping there. Baby crocodile in the *Matara* river is not harming humans.” When seeing the above poem, it cannot spot a difference. But when taking the hidden message, it can be shown as follows.

This poem was created and came into use during the time of *Matara Haminela* and *Kaisaruwatte Muhandiramla* from *Gamperaliya* (a book written by Martin Wickramasinghe) or even earlier. During this period, even the Matara Bridge may not have existed. However, at that time, the boats of Matara used to travel a lot as the main means of transportation. Because today's lorries, vans and carpet roads did not exist then. During this time, a woman who ran a restaurant or a rice shop that provided food and drinks to the boatmen lived near the Matara River. Being quite a countable "Ammandi" (woman), she was nicknamed Kibuli" (Crocodile) by boatmen, ferrymen and the village crowd (where she is not). This name may have been associated with the racket she allegedly ran.

Kibuli had a son who grew up to become the count or bully of the area. The whiteness of the son's palate and the lumps on his neck became evidence of his identity. This person has taken extortion forcefully from boats and ferries going to and from Matara or Nilwala as a form of smuggling and the helpless thoti had no alternative. In this way, the grievances of the children who are under the pressure of his punishment were brought to the people in an allegorical Paru poem.

- 10. Chanted on every special occasion:** In the Sinhalese social organisation, people chanted *Janakavi* in every ostomy. For example, in the marriage pattern of the traditional Sinhalese people, cross-cousin marriage was pivotal. The Sinhala custom of reciting *Kadulu Tahanchi* poetry can also be considered in this prevention category. It seems that these rituals started to make a young man feel that he would not be betrayed just because he asked for a young woman. By reciting tahanchi poems, the groom appreciates the bride and the status of her relatives and also entertains the people attending the wedding. In some areas, a gun is also carried, and a shot is fired at the stump of the bride's wedding house to announce the arrival of the groom.

As soon as the groom approaches the gate/kadulla of the wedding house, Tahanchi Kavi is recited by the bride and the groom's side recites Tahanchi Kavi to jump the gate/kadualla. This is according to the Sinhala system, when the groom arrives, the bride's cousin closes the gate.

The prevailing opinion at that time was that the giving of this kadulu meant that the sister-in-law should go to the brother-in-law. Because of this, in order to get what belonged to the brother-in-law from another groom, he had to get his permission first.

වැසි දිය අයිති ගං හෝ ඇල මල් පැණි අයිති වට ගුම් දෙන මේ රා අයිති කිතුලේ කල නැනා අයිති කාට ද	සමුදුරටයි බමිරාටයි වැද්දාටයි මස්සිනාටයි	<i>Væsi diya ayiti gam hō æla samuduraṭayi Mal pæni ayiti vata gumu dena bāmbarāṭayi Mī rā ayiti kitulē kala væddāṭayi Nānā ayiti kāṭa da massināṭayi</i>
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“Rainwater belongs to the river, canal or the ocean. The honey in the flower belongs to the bee. *Kitul* Toddy belongs to the Vadda. My cousin belongs to who? It should be me.”

However, giving access to pass the kadualla is a symbol of how far they could go. Here, betel leaf is given to a number of adults, but half of the betel leaf is given to children. This is taken by the brother-in-law to the bride's mother, after which she prepares food for the relatives. In between, tahanchi poems are recited between the groom and the bride's side. Meanwhile, the mother of the bride, who sends a betel in her brother-in-law's hand, symbolizes that she welcomes the groom.

බද්ධ සරණේ සීරස ධම්ම සරණේ දෙවුර සංස සරණේ දෙපය මේ තුන් සරණේ කඩුල	තහංචී තහංචී තහංචී තහංචී	<i>Buddham saraṇē sirasa Dhammam saraṇē devura Saṅgham saraṇē depaya Mē tun saraṇē kaḍulu</i>	<i>tahamcī tahamcī tahamcī tahamcī</i>
බද්ධ සරණේ සීරස ධම්ම සරණේ දෙවුර සංස සරණේ සිවුරු මේ තුන් සරණේ කඩුල	දරන්නෙමු දරන්නෙමු දරන්නෙමු පනින්නෙමු	<i>Buddham saraṇē sirasa Dhammam saraṇē devura Saṅgham saraṇē sivuru Mē tun saraṇē kaḍulu</i>	<i>darannemu darannemu darannemu paninnemu</i>

(Rupasinghe, 2023)

### Dying nature of *Janakaviya*

Unfortunately, *Janakaviya* is facing a grim reality—the threat of extinction. In today's rapidly evolving world, traditional jobs, customs, and lifestyles are shifting, distancing people from the very experiences that *Janakaviya* celebrates. The advent of modernization, urbanization, and technology has led to a decline in the practice and appreciation of folk poetry.

The impact of this decline is most evident in the younger generation. The youth, exposed to contemporary media and global trends, are less connected to the rural and agrarian way of life that *Janakaviya* represents. As a result, *Janakaviya*'s ability to communicate effectively with this generation is diminishing.

Furthermore, the dwindling interest in preserving and transmitting *Janakaviya* through oral tradition threatens its continuation. With the absence of formal education and awareness, the knowledge and artistry required for composing and reciting *Janakaviya* are dwindling.

### Preservation and Revival Efforts

In the modern age, traditional forms of communication, such as *Janakaviya*, face the challenge of adapting to the digital era (Haugen, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate contemporary efforts

aimed at preserving and promoting *Janakavya*. This discussion will explore the strategies and challenges involved in maintaining this rich oral tradition for future generations. Since the objective of this exercise differs from the one above, the study is limited to understanding the role of folk poems in Sri Lankan traditional culture. Preserving *Janakavya* in Sri Lanka is vital to mitigate this cultural loss, and it is highly recommended to enhance the publication of traditional folk poems.

As a summary of the findings, the following can be understood. research uncovers the distinctive characteristics and themes that define *Janakaviya*. This may include the extensive use of metaphor, similes, repetition, and vivid imagery in the poetry, as well as the presence of religious and moral concepts rooted in Buddhism. These characteristics contribute to the unique nature of *Janakaviya* as a form of traditional folk poetry. The study grasped the idea that *Janakaviya* serves multiple essential functions in Sri Lankan society. It acts as a medium for cultural preservation by conveying the customs, rituals, and experiences of the common people. *Janakaviya* fosters a sense of community and identity among the Sinhalese people, and it plays a role in conveying moral values, social commentary, and historical narratives.

The findings revealed that modernization has had a significant impact on the traditional functions of *Janakaviya*. As younger generations become more disconnected from rural and agrarian lifestyles, the practice and appreciation of *Janakaviya* may be diminishing. This impact on the ability of *Janakaviya* to effectively communicate with contemporary society is a crucial aspect to explore. The study uncovered various preservation and revival efforts that are currently in place to safeguard *Janakaviya*. These include initiatives to document and transcribe folk poems for posterity, as well as attempts to integrate *Janakaviya* into formal education and promote awareness among younger generations. The research findings understood the perspectives of practitioners, enthusiasts, and community members regarding the roles and relevance of *Janakaviya*. Their insights will provide valuable information about the cultural, social, and communicative functions of *Janakaviya* from the standpoint of those who actively engage with it.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this assignment endeavours to unveil the profound and enduring impact of *Janakavya* on traditional communication in Sri Lanka. From the characteristics, it was trying to showcase how folk poetry, especially *Janakavya*, stands as an essential thread in the intricate fabric of cultural heritage and communication. The dying nature of *Janakaviya* is a poignant reminder of the evolving landscape of communication and cultural preservation in Sri Lanka. While *Janakaviya* has been a powerful means of connecting generations and communities, it now stands at a crossroads. To revitalize this fading art form, there is a pressing need for awareness, education, and concerted efforts to ensure that the vibrant tradition of *Janakaviya* can adapt and thrive in the modern world while preserving its unique cultural identity.

*Janakaviya's* ability to capture the essence of life, communicate cultural values, and foster a sense of community should not be lost. It is imperative to recognize its significance and take proactive measures to rekindle interest in this invaluable facet of Sri Lankan culture, ensuring that *Janakaviya* continues to enrich and unite generations to come.

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