

PARALLELS IN POETRY : 1450 - 1650 SRI LANKA AND ENGLAND

LAKSHMI DE SILVA

For the reader habituated to English poetry certain Sinhala verses from the 16th century onwards provide interesting technical and thematic parallels combined with striking dissimilarities. Tracing these to their causes may prove instructive to those interested, not only in the clear light of ratiocination that surrounds formal poetics but in the rich obscurity, the complex commingling of personal and societal factors from which the creative impulse springs. A similarity between social fabrics of economic and technological levels may well result in a similarity of content and technique in the poems of two widely separated regions, even if the extent to which this occurs is necessarily limited, due to cultural divergence.

For instance, there are resemblances between the poetry of the Kotte period and the Elizabethan and early Jacobean poetry: the elaborate descriptions of towering edifices, of sportive damsels, of vernal woods and flowering gardens in such long narrative poems as the *Kusa Jātaka* and *Guttīla Kāvaya*, often with mellifluous and long-drawn patterns of assonance and rhyme, are paralleled by occasional verses in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

383. *Guttīla Kāvaya*

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ම	ලේ	පුළුරද	පනමී	ය		නැමී	ය
පු	ලේ	කපිපෙරවි	බිමී	ය		බිඳ	ය
ම	ලේ	කැර සැවි	දමී	ය		බිමී	ය

13th Canto *Faerie Queene*

No tree whose branches did not bravely spring
No branch whereon a fine bird did not sit
No bird but did her shrill notes sweetly sing
No song but did contain a lovely dit:
Trees, branches, birds and songs were formed fit
For to allure frail mind to careless ease.

It may be pointed out that the *Faerie Queen* works through the medium of allegory while the two Sinhala poems convey their moral message more overtly. This directness, like that of Chaucer's narratives, is necessitated by the fact