

SIMILARITIES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST SRI LANKAN NOVEL IN SINHALA AND TAMIL

A.H. Lareena

*Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Peradeniya,
Sri Lanka*

lareenahaq@gmail.com

Novel is a very important genre in literature. In Sri Lanka the first Tamil novel “*HasanBay Sariththiram*” was written by M.C. Siddi Lebbe in 1895 while the first Sinhala novel “*Meena*” was written by Simon De Silva in 1905. M.C. Siddi Lebbe (1838-1898) was one of the pioneer Muslim scholars during the 19th century, who contributed a lot to reform the Muslim society. Also, Aluthgamage Simon De Silva (1876-1920) was one of the prominent writers, who also contributed to Sinhala Buddhist renaissance through his writings at the time. ‘*Hasan Bay Sariththiram*’ is a story of a young pious Muslim youth Hassan, who is kidnapped from his parents and adopted by a couple, who did not know the real story of his birth. Hasan fell in love with an English lady Falin and the story describes how his adventurous life come to a joyful end with finding out his real parents and getting married to his lover. The first Sinhala novel ‘*Meena*’ is also a simple love story by Simon Silva, that focuses on the inner workings of the heroine’s mind, revealing a gift for character development, and bears other characteristics of the novel as a genre. While having the same historical, social and cultural background in Sri Lanka, how the two pioneer novelists created their first novels so innovatively, especially the creation of characters, how ‘*Thousand and One Nights*’ stories may have influenced both of these novels and how the first novels impact on Sri Lankan literary field in both languages? These are very important questions to rise. Although this paper takes in to account of those questions, it mainly focuses on the similarities and the significance of above novels. According to Liyanage Amarakeerthi, “the major challenge that the pioneer novelists faced in that period of time was, to make the readers familiar with the new literary genre” (2008:314) while W.A. Silva addressed that “Sinhalese language is not yet developed to write ‘Novel’ and it is necessary to format the language” (Swadesa Mithraya: 26.03.1930). On other hand Martin Wickramasinghe (1992:58) and Chandrasiri Palliyaguru (27.03.2012) argued that the Sinhalese readers are already familiar with ‘*Prabandha Khath*’ through ‘*Umagda Jathakaya*’ etc. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the core fact in between these statements. Moreover, Ediriweera Sarathchandra pointed out that the first Sinhala novel has been influenced by both *Thousand and One Nights* stories and “*Ramayana*” (1951:43,59). Hence, it is important to see how much they were influenced by them simultaneously in order to identify the aspects of originality of the native soil. This research is conducted by using comparative and theoretical analysis methods.

Keywords: First Sinhala novel, First Tamil novel, Comparative literature, Sri Lankan literature