



## Alteration of Class structure in Folk drama: a Critical Analysis of staging the *Kolam* by the Sinhalese Middle Class in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The Sinhalese Comprador class that assumed power following the National Independence in 1948 had no interest in a modern Sinhalese culture and on the other hand, they accepted as their own the culture what the British had. The Sinhalese educated native class felt very much this lack of cultural identity. They undertook the task of creating a modern culture by means of indigenous cultural characteristics. In this respect a substantial role was played by Ediriweera Sarachchandra. He was able to compose a modern dramaturgy by adopting form and Buddhist content of the folk drama that had hitherto been treated as mean cultural features and Japanese, Chinese and Indian cultural components. As a result, the value of folk dramas underwent a transformation. Instead of treating them as mean cultural characteristics, they were accepted as cultural features of national value. Teaching drama and dramaturgy as a subject at educational institutes was commenced and more time was allotted for folk drama in the curriculum. It was purely owing to this reason that the studies of the folk drama multiplied. Folk dramas were performed at national cultural festivals. While teaching of folk arts and folk drama as aesthetic studies were commenced at aesthetic academies without caste distinctions various students began to study them. Thus the approaches hitherto heaped on the folk drama gradually disappeared and instead extremely unrefined elements it contained were dropped behind and on the other hand it was enriched by the kind of stuff which could be enjoyed even by the urban elite. This research is devoted to examine how the folk drama existed during the colonial days prior to its subsequent transformation of which period is discussed in the light of written sources and material gathered out of a few interviews held with several noted scholars. Then an attempt has been made to ascertain how his drama *Maname* gained such distinction as a scholastic work of art differing from *Maname Kolama* which is a folk drama by means of a study of the cultural signs used in the two dramas taking them separately. *Maname* is a folk drama as well as a modern drama. This cultural difference also has been taken into consideration here. It has been identified here that the change of meaning pertaining to folk drama in class structure corresponds to that of politico-economics. The object of this chapter is to examine what meanings folk drama designate in class structure with special reference to *Kolam* drama.

**Keywords:** Kolam, Sarachchandra, Maname, Folk drama, middle class.

### Introduction

**Approach:** The Comprador capitalist class that assumed power in Sri Lanka following independence in 1948 lacked national thinking. They esteemed European values. Hence, it was the middle class that felt badly the need of recognition of national identities. The middle class in question was comprised of the Sinhala educated, half-capitalist natives of which the majority was Buddhist. In spite of the fact that, as a class they shared similar socio-economic and cultural features on the other hand they believed in differences such as provincialism, caste issue etc., The Sri Lankan middle class formed a culture of its own by admixture of a Sinhalese Buddhist content and an European structure. While the said culture had been established as the national civilization by means of the very cultural capital they asked even for the political power. The problem of national identity which is important in the construction of a culture has been discussed in detail by Sarachchandra. (1993:19-30 and 144-151) Therefore, it is not intended to discuss the issue once again here. The evolution of this post colonial political culture

has been amply discussed by Nihal Perera, Kithsiri Malalgoda, Gombrich and Obeysekera, Obeysekera, Michel Roberts, Nira Wickramasinghe Kumari Jayawardana and Lesley Goonawardana etc., who investigated into colonial social and political conditions of Sri Lanka. However, standard research as to how the same issue was implemented in aestheticism has not been carried out yet. Though Wimal Disanayake and Sunil Wijesiriwardana have intervened between the problems it is slender.

Sri Lankan national movement had been exceedingly influenced by Indian grip. It is evident even from the work of Bandaranayake, the pioneer of the middle class cultural movement that came out in 1956<sup>1</sup>. In the post-colonial national movement of Ceylon that affected the influence of the Indian national movement, a greater part was represented by the cultural movement. In spite of the stimulation of the Indian cultural movement present in it, however, the serious theoretical insight contained in it had not been absorbed by it<sup>2</sup>. Those who labored their best in the cultural movement by their

contributions included *Lester James Pieris* to a native cinematography, *Martin Wickramasinghe* to a native art of fiction, *Ediriwera Sarachchandra* to a native dramaturgy and *George Kate* to a Sinhalese art.

As a result of the effort made by *Sarachchandra* so as to seek after a native tradition of dramaturgy, folk dramas such as healing rituals, *Sokari* and *Kolam* etc., which up to then had been points of dissuasion among the fields of studies such as folklore, religion, anthropology etc., came to be discussed in the study of "drama and theater". No scholar either native or foreign who had reported on and done a study of healing rituals and folk drama before *Sarachchandra* has paid attention to their dramatic aspect. Owing to the facts such as the drama "*Maname*" was produced in the light of folk dramas and healing rituals and further as it was acclaimed by scholars as a modern Sinhalese classical drama depicting national identity a singular value was attributed to folk dramas as cultural components which were employed to produce the said drama. In this respect, in fact it was the *Kolam*, which was praised more than the other.

**Research problem:** Sri Lankan culture is an admixture of a number of sources. The admixture of this culture comprises cultural features of ethnic groups of *yaksha*, *Nāga*, *Kumbhānda* and *Gāndarva*, and further the cultural features of ethnic groups such as Indian, African and Persians who visited and invaded Sri Lanka on various occasions, and again the cultural features of European invaders such as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English<sup>3</sup>. As cultural features of one group of people differ from that of another the culture of a particular time depended on the group in power. These cultural features predominant in the days of the Sinhalese monarchy were not treated as acceptable during the European rule. In the process of transfer of power from colonial rule to a native middle class, the cultural values underwent transformation. Though the folk drama remained as a condemned art during the colonial rule on the other hand the native middle class esteemed the same as advance native cultural features. The major problem of this investigation is to unravel the mode of process by which the folk dramas that had once been treated as a mean art was subsequently changed into an advance cultural feature. How the class level and social level, which the folk drama called *Kolam* had in the beginning, was subsequently changed is the issue which will be examined here.

## Methodology

The study is a literary reading as well as a cultural reading. The study done by means of various researches and documents through which the Sinhalese folk drama that had been subjected to humiliation was subsequently freed and brought to the light of acclaim by affiliation the same with studies such as anthropology and the academic study of dramaturgy is called a literary reading. It is based on literary sources. The study as to how the folk drama was employed in order to create the drama *Maname* and the Sinhalese stylistic drama is

called semiotic study. It is by the use of both these methods that a cultural reading is accomplished.

**Folk drama as a mean cultural element in the period prior to middle class:** No formal study had been done of the folk drama prior to the interference of *Sarachchandra* and the majority of contributions reports etc. that appeared in the Royal Asiatic Society's Journal (JRAS) were anthropological studies. The object of the majority of those contributions had been the enlightenment of the colonist on distinctive features of the Sri Lankan culture. It is in the field of study of drama and dramaturgy that *Sarachchandra* commences his study of the folk drama. Thereby he confers a classical value on the folk drama which had been up to then a means of exorcism or entertainment. There had been only two or three studies on folk dramas such as the *Kolama* prior to him. The object of those studies was to examine the *Kolam* as folklore or sources of anthropology. It must be admitted that prior to *Sarachchandras* intervening these folk dramas were existing among subaltern in the society as mean cultural elements. Gamlth opines thus in relation to this:

"Middle class intellectuals who had education in the west engaged themselves in making a cultural embellishment and an identity for the capitalist class which had been in action to gain a relative freedom from the British. They were engaged in weaving the texture of this cultural embellishment by means of threads such as novel, music, song, dancing, cinema etc., and on the other hand the attempt of the middle class intellectuals who had centered round the University of Ceylon were creating an art of drama and making their contribution to the above pursuit. Then they who sought for a precedent for them to follow up and use it as guidance found in the past nothing but a void. In the past, there was no scholastic dramaturgy.

Nevertheless, they noticed that there were folk dramas such as *Sokari* *Kolam* and *Nādagam*. They were convinced, however, that those folk dramas were not an appropriate foundation for them to use. Performance of these folk dramas which went on from sunset till daybreak or sometimes for a number of days were inconsistent with the capitalist society which was in the process of being grown. These dramas were accompanied with monotonous singing and playing; devoid of discipline and full of unsophisticated elements. Moreover, having born and bred in the country they were subjected to humiliation of the upper strata of society. They were stigmatized by the use of such terms as "disgraceful disciplines such as poetry and drama", "bahuru *Kolam*" (a play accompanied by a comic entertainer-clown), "Nādagam" (comic), "Noyiyadagam" (foolish act). Being devoid of refined elements they lacked power of stimulating a deep appreciation"<sup>4</sup>.

Although the code of regulations called, *Dambadeni Katikāvata* prohibits both teaching and learning disgraceful arts such as poetry and drama even after *Dambadeni* period composition of poetry did not come to an end. However, either

during the said period or afterwards no evidence can be found for the existence of an art of drama. Though *Martin Wickramasinghe*<sup>5</sup> is of the opinion that even in the *Kotte* period there prevailed a Sinhalese dramatic art no information is extant about the performance of such dramas. In the educated society in Sri Lanka, theatrical performances in between dramas such as *Kolam* and other dramatic performances were generally treated with contempt. Even where caste hierarchy in Sri Lanka is concerned it is clear that the castes involved in artistic creations occupy an extremely low rank in society<sup>6</sup>. Folk drama was a cultural dement in use not only proletariat) among the Subaltern groups of people. The expression “*Bahu rū Kōlam*” in a paradox poem in the didactic work titled the “*Lōvāda Sangarāva*” occurs in scandalous sense.

Take delight eating delicious food  
Apply perfume made of sandalwood  
Furnish with fine ornaments  
All like a mockery act  
(*Lōvāda Sangarāva*)

The *Venerable Weedagama Maitreya* calls the life of sensual pleasure “*bahurū Kōlam*” (mockery drama) attaching the sense of contempt to it. Even *Goonatilleke* says that prior to *Sarachchandra*’s contribution, folk dramas such as *Kolam* was treated as contemptible.

“According to modern usage the Sinhala “*Kolama*” is deeply rooted as a term containing indirect contempt. “*Mala Kolamak novā*” (what an utter disgrace!) is what we hear in day-to-day colloquial Sinhala (among the village folks.) The Sinhala “*Kōlama*” is just like other terms such as “*Vigadama*” (comic), “*Vihiluva*” (joke) *etc.* which has a restricted sense but the former suggests a sense of contempt now.”

“*Kolam* demeans were abundant in mid and end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. But even those days some people did not refrain from identifying them as things which deserved to be mocked at and useless”<sup>7</sup>.

The *Lakminipahana*, the daily reports on 13 December 1884 thus: “*Misbehaviour occurring in theatres where Nādagam, Kōlam and Rūkada (puppetry) are performed by the Sinhalese*”. The *Lakminipahana*, the daily carrying a news item on 15 February 1865 described a dance called “*Pransabālaya*” thus. “*They staged a dance called Kolam under liquor using extremely filthy language*”. *Vessantara Jātakē Sindu Pota* alias “*Vesaturu Nādagama*” (The Book of songs of the Jataka story called *Vessantara*) very nicely defines the customary meaning of the word “*Kōlama*”. It is as follows:

With chin turned pointed  
Teeth having shed  
And cheeks shrunk  
Arch into a hump  
With sunken eyes

*This Jūjaka, the Brahmin  
Like a mock  
For gold left  
With a stick in hand*

(Mr.Hendrik De Abrew Rajapaksha Waidyanatha, ed.1873:55, cited in Goonathillake)

Thus, it seems that the term *Kōlam* was used in a sense of contempt. The Rev. Charles Carter defined the word *Kōlama* as not in a proper order, obstinate, imagery, jovial *etc*<sup>7</sup>.

These folk theatres are not educative. They make the educated boring Mrs. *Beryl De Zoete* who saw a *Kōlama* staged by *Pallis De Silva* of *tukkā Wadu* clan of *Maha Ambalangoda* in (1935) when he was still alive refers in her work to say how she got tired by the play<sup>8</sup>.

Even if your concentration were extended to folk drama such as “*Sokari*” the position would not change. The *Sokari* comprises many instances of vulgarity. In early days, it is said that children and women did not take part as spectators at a *Sokari* (Professor Sunanda Mehendra 27.12.2014) Today *Sokari* is like an educative play which everybody in the village assemble to watch. Its producers represent the educated. They are the people who have read books such as Sinhalese folk drama and have acquired knowledge even out of them. It was a popular tele drama artist that played the role “*Vedarāla*”, native physician in the *Sokari* called *Vanasirigama Sokari*. They stage the drama observing discipline as far as possible. (28.09.2012- *Sokari* drama staged at *Vanasirigama Junction, Makulella Bandarawela*) *Wijesinghe* says concerning *Sokari* of *Kalundawa* thus:

“It is the filth which is typical of *Sokari* drama. Not only in speech but also in gesture and performance the filth is emphasized so much that it becomes the characteristic feature of this play. In short, the whole drama symbolizes sexual intercourse”<sup>9</sup>.

A few of such instances which seems to be of filth present in the *Sokari* of *Kalundawa* has been described by *Wijesinghe*.

Accordingly, folk dramas in Sri Lanka had been a popular but a mean cultural element in society at that time. These dramas were not consumed by educative society and in fact, they were condemned by it. Till these dramas were welcomed by the middle class of Sri Lanka as they thought would fulfill them the cultural identity they had been treated as extremely elementary rustic cultural elements. They had been popular only among the subaltern class of the society. It was *Sarachchandra* who brought these dramas to the fore giving them a classical value. To do so classical studies were performed.

**Lifting up of folk drama to a scholastic culture: Academic contribution:** *Sarachchandra* who entered the middle class in Sri Lanka through education first worked as a teacher and then as an administrative officer at Lake House and finally as a lecturer in the University of Ceylon by when he had carried out his researches into the folk drama. Being more impressed with the removal of the faculty of Arts to *Peradeniya*, *Sarachchandra* made arrangements to publish his research as a book. Contemporaneous with this event in accordance with an idea of Professor *Ludowyke* work commenced to produce three stage plays and a drama workshop led by Mr. B. N. Jubal an Austrian was held. Even if he did not like it, *Sarachchandra* also had to attend to it.<sup>10</sup> *Sarachchandra* proceeded with the production of the drama called '*Veda Hatana*' with *Jubal* and having abandoned it he was engaged in writing a work called Sinhalese folk play. This work was published by the publication section of the University in 1952<sup>10</sup>.

A number of papers and books have been written by *Sarachchandra* in orders to locate folk drama in the study of the subject drama and theater. It was purely due to his efforts that folk dramas turned into a cultural element, which became popular among middle and upper classes. Even folk dramas themselves shedding the rustic features that had been there and adopted elements suitable for appreciation of the educative.<sup>11</sup> Major publications published by *Sarachchandra* on folk dramas before 1970 are as follows:

The article titled "*Kolam*, The live art of caricature" published in *Ceylon Observer Annual* in 1947. This is an article exclusively written on *Kolam*. This is a four-page article accompanied by 18 photographs of *Kolam*. It includes 16 photographs of *Panikkirāla* and *Nonchi Akkā*, the two *Kolam* performed by *Goonasinghe Gurunnānse* of *Balapitiya* and the other two are masks of *Kolam*. The article which is a general description of *Kolam* is written in the kind of way that it will attract the English speaking section.

The Sinhalese Folk play published in 1952. Though this work is based mainly on the book titled '*Exorzismus und Heilkunda auf Ceylon*' published by *Paul Wirz*<sup>12</sup> and the documents of *Pertold* his attention has been paid to the folk dramas still existing in society. Some of the photographs of Lake House photographers exhibited at Colombo Plan Exhibition in 1952 have been utilized for this work. It has been mentioned by *Sarachchandra* that he had absorbed some information out of documentaries that belong to folklore society inaugurated in 1950.<sup>13</sup> The work consists of 8 chapters which are as follows: i. The Cultural Background, ii. Impersonation and Mime in the Ceremonies of the Folk Religion, iii. Dramatic Interludes Attached to the Ceremonies, iv. *Kolam* or Masked plays, v. *Sokari*, vi. The *Nadagama* or the Folk Opera, vii. The puppet Play and The Roman Catholic Passion Play, viii. Beginnings of a Modern Theatre.

The lecture titled "*Oriental Dramatic Art*" delivered at International House of Japan in Japan on April 17, 1957. Through this lecture, he proved that eastern plays were stylistic drama paying special reference to the Sanskrit drama, *Noh Kabuki* and Indian Folk dramas.

*Some problems connected with the cultural revival in Ceylon*, 1962, Bulletin of the institute of Traditional Cultures: Madras, India; and was published in Number II "*Samāja Vighraya*" periodical of Economic Union of University of Ceylon. Through this contribution, reference is made to the role of the educated middle class in fashioning the culture and applying the concepts "Little tradition", "Great tradition" Folk dramas were attributed to the former therein.

*The Folk Drama of Ceylon*, 1966. This is a second edition of the title "The Sinhalese Folk Play". The work has been improved by addition of fresh photographs etc.,

"*Nātya Gavēshana*", "*Vīmansā Prakāshana*, No 10, Kelaniya, March 1967. Through this work a systematic background necessary for the creation of a Sinhala discourse on the study of Drama and Theater were shaped.

The article titled "*Bauddha Sanskrutiyeen bihi vunu Sūkshma nātya kalāva*" 1967. This is a contribution made to the periodical "*Vīmansā*". It contains an analysis of Japanese traditional dramas *Noh* and *Kabuki*. Both of these dramas are Folk dramas of Eastern Asia.

"*Sinhala Gāmi Nātakaya*" 1968, this is a Sinhala translation of the *Folk drama of Ceylon*. The Sinhala version contains three chapters, which were not included in the English original. (chapters 1-3) Three chapters include characteristics of drama, origin of drama, refined dramatic art and religion. As this study was directly associated with anthropology, *Sarachchandra* says that he had sought assistance of *U.A. Gunasekara* and *Gananatha Obesekara* the anthropologists. (preface).

"*Nātyaya hā Sanskritiya*", (Drama and culture) an article, 1970, published in the *Sarasaviya*, the newspaper. The question whether the cinema is a challenge to the drama is discussed in this article. Through all these studies *Sarachchandra* is able to establish locate folk dramas in the learned discourse. His attempt was fulfilled by 1970. As such, subsequent contributions are not discussed here.

Owing to factors such as academic intervening of *Sarachchandra*, that of establishments such as Folklore society and Royal Asiatic Society. (Ceylon Branch), further the helping hand given by *Mahajana Eksat Peramunu* government appeared in 1956 the Folk drama gradually turned into an educative cultural element<sup>14</sup>.

**Table-1**  
**Cultural deference of Maname kolama and maname stage drama**

Comparison of Maname kolama and Maname stage drama		
Caption	Maname Kolama	Maname drama
Genre	Folk drama	scholastic drama
director	Folk dramatists	Dr. Ediriweera Sarachchandra
Drama script	Varies from place to place	Definite
Theme	male chauvinism	Humanistic
Story	Present	Present
Narrative	Same	Same
Taste	Satire, anger	Sorrow
Massage	Women vacillate	Doubtful (as <i>Rashomon</i> )
View	Divine (women are born vacillate)	Feminist/humanistic
Costume	South Indian costume and masks	Taken from images of temples (simple)
Theatre	Stage or a temporary hut	“Picture Frame” stage or Amphitheatre
Cast	Male actors only(non-professional)	Professional actors and actresses
Makeup	Masks and folk methods	Japanese or Kabuki style
Presentation	Sabē Vidānē (Gurunnānse)	Potē Guru
Dance	Methods of devil dance	Vasanta kumara
Music	Yak drum or sometimes trumpet	Folk music and Rāgadhāri mixed music
Singing	Verses said in rough male voice	Singing characteristic of sense and taste produced by female and male voices
Duration	3-7 days at a stretch	about 2 hours and 30 minutes
Audience	Peasants, manual fisher folks	Intellectuals of middle and upper classes
Appraisal	Clap and cheers	honors of critics
Result	Entertainment and piety	Taste and sense

A close scrutiny of the above comparison will convince the reader that in the process of transformation of *Maname Kolama* into *Maname* stage play the latter has mixed up with various elements of folk dramas and that of educative culture. Instead of classical theistic personalism belonging to *Maname Kolama*, *Sarachchandra* utilizes liberal humanistic view which had originated in Britain and subsequently widespread in the world. *Sarachchandra* admits himself that the story has been brought to an abrupt end because of the influence of *Rashomon*<sup>10</sup>. *Maname* can be categorized as a multi-cultural admixture of dramatic traditions of folk drama, Sanskrit, Japanese *noh*, *kabuki* and on the other hand, of western thought and European theatrical forms as well as that of theatrical culture. This rough chart shows what was added and what was mixed in the process of transgression.

It was through the subsequent emphasis given to *Maname* by *Sarachchandra*, his own pupils and other critics as a national drama which depicts domestic identities that a cultural value was attributed to the folk dramas on which it was based. Folk dramas are a cultural capital to those who possess a comprehension of it. It was with the object of absorbing the cultural capital *Maname* contained that the middle and higher social classes were included to gain knowledge pertaining to it.

**From folk drama to modern drama: change of cultural signs:** Let us study some of the important cultural components of the above table.

**Table-2**  
**Maname paradigms**

1	Folk drama
2	Dreams of the public
3	Educative drama
4	Popular drama

Cultural genre comprises educative drama, rural drama, folk drama and drama of the general public of which *Maname Kolama* belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> category. It was described as a rite which reflects a fertility or exorcist ritual which is meant to protect the child in the womb by *O. Pertold* who studied it in 1930 and by *M. H. Goonatilleke* who intervene with it in 1963. *Kolam* had been described as an invaluable folk play by Mrs *Beryl De Zoete* who studied it in 1935 and 1945. *Sarachchandra* who intervened between *Kolam* in 1952 classified it under the genre called folk drama. When he interpreted *Kolam* as folk drama apparently, he treated Sanskrit and Greek drama as educative. It seems that *Noorti* had been considered as dramas of the ordinary man or dramas of popular kind. According to the unanimous agreement that prevail in all the academies today

*Kolam* is a kind of folk drama. However, the drama *Maname* cannot be classified under either the category folk drama or popular drama. It is a cultural product meant for a selected fraction of society. It aims at making audience conscious of appreciation and absorption of sense. It is a cultural product meant for (Sinhalese) middle class newly came to being in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is an educative drama. As a play, *Maname* is not popular among a great multitude of spectators. It is restricted just to a selected community of men and women. At present, it is restricted to those who study Sinhala art subjects. No peasants or employees of garment factories or those laborers engaged in other industries frequent this drama. Moreover, its content is also rich in man an educative element.

“Like the moon free from scars and pleasant  
Winning the heart of all the disciples  
I am the submissive daughter of the guru  
The king of wisdom” (Sarachchandra, 1986:18)<sup>15</sup>.

Though some critics are of the opinion that *Maname* represents the culture of the common person it did not approach the masses surpassing social, class, rank, race, sex differences table-2. So it should be treated as a scholastic drama.

**Theme:** It is *Sandakinduru Kolame* which is staged at the first night of the *Kolam* show. The drama praises qualities of woman. Then *Maname Kolama* is staged. This drama speaks ill of woman. Characters of these *Kolam* dramas consist of stereotype concrete features. The power of the chastity of the woman is appraised in *Sandakinduru Kolama*. Its final message stresses that chastity is a noble quality of woman. Its power is so great that even if husband dies its strength can give him life again. Therefore, one must refrain from polygamy and observe chastity. Then the woman who is lustful and is more deeply attached to the *Vedda* who is stronger and more stout and sensual than her husband, prince *Dhanurdhara*, gives the *Vedda* the sword and got him killed. Next, even the *Vedda* leaves the woman by which act the message given to the woman is that whatever her feelings are only by devotion to the husband that the wife will always be protected. *Beryl De Zoete* reporting on *Kolam* dramas she saw in 1948 in Sri Lanka says

zz. *The fascinated attention of the crowd – which never melted away, and which certainly seem to grow as the night wore on, till it burst into clapping at the Veddah s sermon to the wicked queen- showed how excellent a form of village drama this could be, and no doubt once was...*<sup>8</sup>.

The whole audience shares in full the tragedy the woman in the *Maname Kolama* experiences. If she did not mete out with this calamity the audience would not have been content. In order to move the audience the way narrative should have been arranged was for the woman to collapse. (Every myth reflects systems of essence of the particular culture to which it belongs, theories, ideologies etc.).

*Maname* is not a drama which reflects a definite theme. In spite of the fact that as some critics think it embodies a notion that the woman living in the patriarchal society is a tragedy and on the other hand it can be said that the drama produces either it is impossible to theorize human behavior or else human traits cannot be grasped by means of theories. *Sarachchandra* says that *Akira Kurasova's* film “*Rashomon*” had an influence on the theme of his drama “*Maname*”. Events such as first letting the *Vedda* who was engaged in the duel with the prince *Dhanuddara* snatch the sword from the princess and second letting her later deplore the *Vedda* and third still letting the princess verbalize her love to him clearly manifest the uncertainty.

**Taste:** *Mamame Kolama* is performed to make the audience first laugh at and then to make it wrathful at last conversations of the princess with the *Vedda* after killing the prince are extremely satirical.

“Vedda king : I fancy there is an avatar here where the murder has been committed!  
Queen : (approaching with gesture) Oh! Couldn't you make me out?  
Vedda king : Could. Glad to see you. Pleased to see you.  
Queen : How was the king, was he strong?  
Vedda king : Extremely brave.  
Queen : That's it. I felt sorry when he was being dragged. That's why I gave the sword. His strength owes to what I fed him.  
Vedda king : For him to be so strong what did you actually give him?  
Queen : Given nothing in particular. It is the secret of this hand which fed him”<sup>16</sup>

But the *Maname* was produced as its creator himself asserts in order to create the taste of sorrow.  
“After hearing this old story  
Comprising the taste of compassion  
Endure with loving – kindness  
Even if we are in the wrong  
Finding no fault with us  
Beg the learned audience  
To appreciate it with delight”

In the play *Maname*, every character has been made complex and even the events connected with them cannot easily be fluctuated from the good to the evil.

**View:** The view of the *Kolam* maker is to establish the notion that the woman is by birth an oscillatory creature is a universal truth. It is a common human characteristic and the lapse should be rectified by women is announced by the *Kolam* drama. On the other hand, the drama *Maname* does not stick to such opinion and tries to be more liberal in its policy. Interrelations and individual desires of prince *Maname*, Princess and the *Vedda* king find no place appropriate to each other in the plot

because of the way their desires behave. It implies the notion that everything is indefinite and either due to an abrupt action or due to an event everything is liable to change rather than reaching a definite view. It implies further, as conclusion, though it is said that the princess repents but why does she do so is a point not specified. On the other hand, the very fact of having used easily the theories such as classical humanism, Marxism, psychoanalysis etc., subsequently to reread the drama *Maname* itself proves that there had been no attempt on their part to introduce a definite worldly vision.

**Costume:** Masks characterize *Kolam* dramas. Every character has to put on a mask. However, *Sarachchandra* says that a few of the characters at seldom have not needed masks. However, the nature of the *Kolam* drama is to represent every character very well and to perform the forms of the characters exceedingly well. Costumes of the king and Queen etc., seems to have been considerably elegant and adorned with five jewelry and colours. Commenting on some of the costumes worn in *Kolam* of 1950 *Sarachchandra* says that attempt was made to represent realism.

zzThe next character in the order of appearance is the Mudali (Mudaliyar) with his attendant. He is attired in the usual costume of mudaliyars of today. After he leaves the arena there enters the King together with his retinue, which usually consists of his minister and the crown prince (yuvaraja), and accompanied by his Chief Queen. The masks of the king and queen are the largest of all and it is with difficulty that these characters perform their initial perambulations. The leader of the troupe usually conducts them round, and finally shows them to their seats. They watch what goes on afterwards ZZ<sup>13</sup>

A mere glance will convince one that the costume and makeup of the drama *Maname* is exceedingly of educative quality than that of *Maname Kolama* or *Maname* verse play. Referring to the case *Sarachchandra* himself says thus:

“It was due to Siri Gunasinghe’s costume creations and make up that *Maname* production received such beauty and specialty. Though those features did not attract the attention of the critics drama goers must be grateful to Prof. Goonasinghe for the new turning point in the art of making costumes in the Sinhalese dramatic art. Just like Manjusri did in case of Pabawathie, Gunasinghe tried to get aid from India and Sri Lankan sculpture. Nevertheless, unlike Manjusri, Gunasinghe was able to adjust it in accordance with the performance”<sup>10</sup>.

The costume of the drama *Maname* is very plain. It does not have the fictitious native, i.e. exceedingly embellished costumes found in novels. Costumes of *Kolam* take rather a real appearance than an artificial look. It is free from symbolic marks. The costume of the *Mudali* takes after that of a real *Mudali*. *Siri gunasinghe* introduces a novelty in respect of the costume through *Maname*. This originality of costume created by *Gunasinghe* has no any resemblance to the ancient Sri

Lankan’s style of dress. As *Wickramasing* he points out the evolution of culture, pertaining to the ancient Sri Lankan woman is to a great extent uniform. With the exception of a few paintings of clothed upper part of the body belonging to 6<sup>th</sup> Century, the rest is comprised of naked upper part of the body everywhere.<sup>17</sup> *Kolam* dramatist very often employed style of dress of the images of the *yaksha* and *deva*. In case of creation of costume, for *Maname* none of those examples seems to have been sought after, Hence it cannot be said that Indian or ancient Sri Lankan pattern of dress has been followed in inventing the costume necessary for *Maname*. It is a novel creation backed by European cultural influence.

**Theatre:** The theatre of the *Maname Kolama* was the *Karaliya*. The description of the Master *Pertold* performing method with regard to that was employed in *Kolama* in 1925 is as follows:

“...Like other Sinhalese dances it is also performed at night. Like other festivals, a place is cleared and is decorated with tender coconut leaves (called “gok kola”.) The place is illuminated well<sup>18</sup>.

Observation of *Sarachchandra* concerning *Kolam* that prevailed in 1950s is as follows:

“...the performance usually takes place on a stage erected in the compound of the patron. Spectators sit around it. This is the most plain *Kolam* theatre. Sometimes some performers erect a pandol which resembles aile which is put up to perform “garā yakuma (a kind of devil dance) beside the stage. Before the characters such as “Maru rāssa”, “guru rāssa”, “nāga rāssa” etc., ascend the stage (they) ascend the aile frighten the audience showing their horrific masks and then jump on to the stage and dance”<sup>18</sup>.

Not only *Kolama* but also even with regard to methodology of watching folk dramas and old ceremonial dances *Sarachchandra*’s observation are the same.

“...There are other differences in the style of performance among *Kolam*, *Sokari* and *Nādagam*. A practice common to each and every kind of these performances is the walk of the cast accompanied by dance around the stage. Even the spectators watch the drama again while sitting round the stage. Another practice common to all performances is saying half of the verses accompanying the “Potē guru” (narrator) and other characters. This is a practice followed in devil dance too. Though the stage of *Nadagama* is constructed by a heap of earth *Kolam* and *Sokari* are performed on a circular area”<sup>15</sup>.

However, what *Sarachchandra* says about theatres where *Maname* was performed is as follows:

“...there is no verse theatre than proscenium stage for the performance of *Maname*. Actor’s movements in Proscenium stage are meaningless. Background description given by the speaker is meaningless. In short, the open style of *Nadagama* is

obstructed by limitations of Proscenium stage. Nevertheless, what are found in Sri Lanka are only the theatres with Proscenium stages built following the British stages in colonial period<sup>41</sup>.

Then as there was no suitable theatre (stage) for performance of *Maname*, what is today known as open-air theatre (outdoor area) of amphitheatre type was put up. It is somewhat akin to the kind of building in ancient Greece, i.e. Epidaurus theatre. There the spectators sit above the stage not below. Accordingly, the picture the spectator sees is of low angle. However, the theatre with uncovered three sides where *Nādagama* and *Kōlam* were performed differed from both amphitheatre and Epidaurus this was the nature of the theatre where folk dramas were performed.

### Conclusions

Sri Lankan folk plays had been for centuries as elements and arts of folk exorcism so that they were treated by the educated society as disreputable. Even since periods such as *Dambadeniya* and *Kotte* (ancient capitals of the country) these folk practices had been let down by the sophisticated. Lack of evidence for having held this kind of folk plays in the interior part of the kingdom where the society was essentially sophisticated clearly manifest that the educated did not tolerate these folk arts. In other words, they did not get the blessing of the greater culture. In this respect, it was *Sarachchandra* who performed the most substantial role. It was due to his interference that folk drama was developed as a study of classical importance. It was due to his interference that the anthropological and aesthetic value inherent in folk drama was highlighted. As a result the feeling of contempt some had towards the folk drama vanished. It is somewhat paradoxical that *Sarachchandra* reached the culmination point of his scholarly achievement by producing as the pioneer work of native dramatic art a folk drama employing the very folk dramas as its component parts. Hence, owing to his interference these people's dramas can no longer be branded as folk dramas. They have been transformed into a kind of educative dramas with a folk history behind them. The cultural elements called folk dramas are today not unsophisticated, rustic and subalterns. They are a species of traditional artistic creation.

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