

සද්ධර්මාලංකාරයෙන් හෙළිවන අතීත ලංකාවේ ස්ත්‍රීය පිළිබඳ විමසුමක්

The Position of women in Sri Lankan history as depicted in the *Saddarmalankaraya*

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Abstract

The *Saddarmalankaraya* is one of the best known mediaeval Sinhala scriptures. The author of *Saddarmalankaraya* Jayabahu Dharmakeerthi Sangharaka Thera lived in Lanka during the Gampola era. The main source in the composition of the *Saddarmalankaraya* was the Pali Rasavahini based on local information of the Anuradhapura era. The text is considered one of the most detailed descriptions of mediaeval Sinhala culture and society. More than half of the 103 chapters of *Saddarmalankaraya* represent the Sinhala society. It includes descriptions of the nobility, priests and ordinary people who lived during the time. It includes descriptions of elites, priests and ordinary people who lived during the Gampola Era. Although certain chapters of *Pansiya Panas Jathakaya* prove that the literati of the *Jathaka* stories have not depicted females as illiterate, capricious and conservative, *Saddarmalankaraya* depicts females in a different manner. In the ancient times there were wise women who also protected civility. Yet, while the author has made an effort to praise females whenever possible, in certain places satirical and scornful allusions have been made towards women. Especially through 'Kakawarnatissa Vasthu' the capriciousness of women is highlighted. As such, it appears the author has made an effort to present a balanced attitude regarding women. Nevertheless, a citation in *Saddarmalankaraya* exposes all the compositions that alluded to women in that era in a sexist manner. The narration related to Dutugemunu's Royal Tusker (Kadol Etha) and the mare Dheegahuni highlight the relegated view on women. According to *Saddarmalankaraya*, there are facts about superfluous readings on feminine chirognomy, called Samudrika Shastraya, and how only male children of patriarchal families have been encouraged to obtain an education. Texts namely *Kinchisangha Vasthu*, *Vessamiththa Vasthu*, *Naga Vasthu* present various information about education for females, cookery and other practices confined to women. These texts divulge facts about females who gained liberation through *savoir faire* and meditation. Also, marriage had not been an assured bond for women. Moreover, women had been engaged in professions such as nurses and midwives.

සද්ධර්මාලංකාරය, ලක්දිව මධ්‍යතන අවධියේ විරචිත බණකතා සාහිත්‍යයට අයත් කෘතියකි. එහි රචනා කාලය ලෙස සැලකෙන්නේ, සාහිත්‍ය යුග අතර එන ගම්පොළ අවධිය යි. තත් කෘතිය ද්විතීය ජයබාහු ධර්මකීර්ති සංසරාජයන්ගේ රචනයකි. වේදේහ නම් හික්ෂුවක විසින් ලියන ලදැයි සැලකෙන අනුරාධපුර සාහිත්‍යික අවධියට අයත් පාලි රසවාහිනී නම් කෘතිය ප්‍රධාන මූලාශ්‍රය වශයෙන් ගෙන අනුවර්තිත සද්ධර්මාලංකාරය,