

Managing female 'slaves' in ancient Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this study is to investigate how female 'slaves' in the island in ancient times were treated and punished in the course of managing them and to examine whether the legal and social treatment and punishments varied according to their gender. Consequently, this study will help us to grasp the institution of 'slavery' in the island better. The difficulty of the present task should also be noted at this point as this could perhaps be the reason why no attempt was so far taken to study female 'slaves' in ancient Sri Lanka. Since the evidence is sparse and is scattered through several millennia leaving certain periods in history without any literary or epigraphic evidence, the study requires a broader chronological frame: from the third century BC to early nineteenth century AD (*i.e* before 1815). However, obvious drawbacks of trying to draw general conclusions over such a wide span of time are mitigated by the apparent absence of radical changes in the social conditions within the period, with the exception of the Kandyan period (1529-1815).

KEY WORDS. Female slaves, slaves, management, temperament of the master, legal and social treatment, feminism, caste, servitude

Introduction

Both literary and epigraphic sources¹ clearly reveal that there were unfree groups known by the terms *dāsī*, *dāsa*, *vahal*, *midi*, *vaharala* (2005: 97-102)² in ancient Sri Lanka performing various chores in the households and fields of their masters. I have argued elsewhere that these are blanket terms covering unfree groups such as slaves, serfs, debt slaves, and people in bondage (2005: 97-102). The terms *dāsī* and *midi* being feminine nouns clearly refers to female unfree labourers. But, the terms *vahal* and *vaharala* (the latter occurs only in a few inscriptions) do not seem to have a specific feminine form and it is possible that these terms stand for both genders. Since these local terms collectively refer to many unfree groups in the island, the

present study uses the English term slave within inverted commas to alleviate any confusion.

The objective of this study is to investigate how female 'slaves' in the island in ancient times were treated and punished in the course of managing them and to examine whether the treatment and punishments varied according to their gender. Consequently, this study will help us to grasp the institution of 'slavery' in the island better. The difficulty of the present task should also be noted at this point as this could perhaps be the reason why no attempt was so far taken to study female 'slaves' in ancient Sri Lanka. The major impediment seems to be the insufficiency of evidence and the vagueness of some available evidence. As noted above, since the evidence is sparse and is scattered through several millennia leaving certain periods in history without any literary or epigraphic evidence, it is a necessity to focus on a broader chronological frame for this study, namely from the third century BC to early 19th century AD (*i.e.* before 1815). However, obvious drawbacks of trying to draw general conclusions over such a wide span of time are mitigated by the apparent absence of radical changes in the social conditions within the period, with the exception of the Kandyan period (1529-1815)³ which came under greater South Indian and European influence.⁴ In this survey the ownership of female 'slaves' is studied first since the treatment of a particular 'slave' depends upon the temperament of the master. Then, the study moves to the core of the discussion *i.e.* the social and legal treatment of 'slaves'.

The ownership of female 'slaves'

The monarch and his entourage

According to the sources the number of female 'slaves' in the society was apparently as large as that of the male 'slaves' who were employed in the households of lay masters as well as in Buddhist monasteries. The lay owners were mainly the members of royal family and the high ranking officers of the king who were rich nobles. The evidence further reveals that some ordinary people too possessed 'slaves' and that the root source through which the ordinary individuals and Buddhist temples obtained their 'slaves' was donations from the royalty and their entourage.

As for example, several stories in the *Sīhalavatthūpakarāna* (possibly 88-76 BC or fifth century AD)⁵ mention that the king Saddhātissa (77-53BC) gave hundred male and female 'slaves' (*dāsa, dāsī*), lands and other riches to a free ordinary woman named Hankālā in order to equate her position to his own daughter, the royal princess, in the course of rewarding Hankālā's pious deed.⁶ Although these figures may not be fully trustworthy, the stories hint that the monarchs and the other

members of the royal family possessed a considerable number of 'slaves' as their personal attendants. *Sīthalavatthūpakarana* further mentions that the same king bestowed hundreds of female as well as male 'slaves' (*dāsī*, *dāsa*) to the public in a number of occasions to commend their pious deeds.⁷ Apart from this, the presence of a 'slave' superintendent as the author of the 652nd couplet in Sigiri graffiti suggests that multitudes of 'slaves' may have been owned by the Pandyan king [probably from sixth to eighth centuries AD] he was serving (Paranavitana, 1956: 401). It would not have been far different in the case of the other rulers who reportedly donated hundreds of 'slaves' of both genders to Buddhist temples or monasteries in several occasions throughout history.⁸ Moreover, evidence that reflect donations of 'slaves' to temples by the royalty and high ranking officers tells us about the ownership of 'slaves' not only by the donor but also by the recipient temples. A few of the evidence could be chronologically listed as follows:

A generous grant of 'slaves' (*dāsa*) and other donations of a Tamil officer named Pottakutta, who was serving the king Aggabodhi IV (AD 667-683), to a monastery he erected is reported in *Cūlavamsa*.⁹ The same source informs us that Bhadda the commander of the army of Sena I (mid ninth century AD) built a monastery in his own name and endowed it with 'slaves' (*dāsa*) and revenues. The same monarch also built a monastery on the Aritiha mountain and endowed it with large revenues, many monastery helpers (*ārāmika*) and 'slaves' as labourers (*dāsē kammakārē ca*).¹⁰ Moreover, at the beginning of the thirteenth century AD, Queen Kalyānawathi (1202-1208 AD), built a monastery in the village Pannasala and bestowed to it villages and 'slaves' of both sexes (*dāsī*, *dāsa*) among many other material offerings.¹¹ Moreover, Sena-Lanka Adikāra gave 200 'slaves' (*vahal*) to the Lankātilaka temple (AD 1344).¹² Accordingly, this officer seems to have possessed more than 200 'slaves', as he may have had to retain some for the services in his household.

A different mode of 'slave' supply is recorded in the Galapāta inscription (12th -13th century AD). It registers a purchase of a considerable number of 'slaves' of both genders (*vahal*) by the monastery at Galapāta from an official of the king.¹³ Though this information here upsets the chronological sequence adopted so far in this text, I note it at this juncture in order to separate this mode of slave supply for temples from the prime source so far noted, donations. Moreover, the inclusion of both hereditary and purchased 'slaves' of the family in the sale also implies that the only source of 'slavery' for the royal officials was not limited to the donations of 'slaves' from the king though it may have been the prime root.

This brings us to discuss the ownership of slaves by the officers of Sinhala monarchs. For instance, the guardians of the treasury of king Nissankamalla (late 12th century AD) were admonished not to use anything from the treasury without permission, but if they needed 'slaves' (*vahal*) which possibly referred to 'slaves' of

both sexes judging from other parallel cases, land or any other item of wealth, they should enjoy them having obtained such items with permission from the relevant authorities (slab B. lines 14-25).¹⁴ Another epigraphic record mentions that the same king appointed officials and ministers and provided them with 'slaves' (*vahal*) and other riches such as lands, cattle, gold, silver urns (lines 18-19).¹⁵ It is again possible that, in these cases too, the donations of the 'slaves' to these officers included those of both genders.

Furthermore, a community leader is reported to have given female and male 'slaves' (*dāsī, dāsa*) and other riches to an ordinary man being amazed about a miraculous deed he had done.¹⁶ The *Saddharmālankāraya* (14th century AD) further mentions that a son of a minister lived a luxurious life with male and female 'slaves' in his possession.¹⁷ Such information reveals that the royal officers and at least the temples that received patronage of higher social ranks possessed a considerable number of 'slaves' of both genders.

General public as 'slave' owners

Apart from these, evidence also hints that in certain cases some ordinary people also became owners of 'slaves' of both genders. King Nissankamalla also repeatedly mentions donations of male and female 'slaves' (*vahal*) together with many riches to lay people in a number of inscriptions.¹⁸ Moreover, two epigraphic records of the 12th century mention that men of Ruhuna must live possessing male and female 'slaves' (*dāsi dāsayan*) and other wealth.¹⁹ But the latter cases are vague and do not mention how many female and male 'slaves' were given to each family and whether each family irrespective of its caste received the gift. However, other than such evidence no other information was found regarding common people possessing 'slaves'. It is possible that there were certain limitations regarding the ownership of 'slaves', though they may not have been as strict as they were during the Kandyan period, where the caste system operated in full force. During the Kandyan period people of all castes could not possess 'slaves' and the only people considered to be of inferior caste who possessed 'slaves' were goldsmiths since they were "presented to some of the petty chiefs and, but [*sic*] workmen by the late king".²⁰ But even they could not have anyone considered superior in caste as 'slaves'.

Legal and social treatment to female 'slaves'

Having discussed the ownership of 'slaves' we come to the central point of the discussion: treatment of female 'slaves.' As mentioned above, it should be remembered that the evidence is not specifically related to female 'slaves' in certain cases, but is vaguely referred to the treatment of all 'slaves' in the island. Since plenty of evidence comes from the later periods of the island's history (17th and 18th

century AD: Kandyan period) the flow of the evidence in this part of the discussion goes chronologically backwards starting from the Kandyan period.

Prerogatives of a master

Referring to Lawrie's Manuscript III in the *Buddhist journal of Ceylon* R. Peiris mentions that,

A master had the right of punishing his slaves without judgment or sanction from a higher authority, and even if slaves were tortured, they were obliged to submit, having no redress from the capricious tyranny of their masters. On one occasion a slave girl at Wattedgama *valavva* [a house of a noble family in Wattedgama] bore a number of children but as she had too much to do in taking care of her master's younger children, her own, to the number of eight, were buried soon after birth by order of her master, but after the master's children had grown up she had four children whom she was allowed to bring up.²¹

Moreover, a master had the power to rebuke his 'slave' severely and could even put the 'slave' to torture with a red-hot iron. The vagueness of this account does not tell us whether all 'slaves' irrespective of gender were subject to such torture or whether it was inflicted only on male 'slaves'. Referring to the Kandyan period, D'Oyly mentions that the female 'slaves', low caste women, and, probably, women working in villages belonging to the king were corporally punished by the authority of the *gabadā nilame* (officer in charge of king's stores)²² 'if the rice for the king's table be noticed as not properly cleaned and prepared' (1928: 90).²³ The striking point here is the identical manner adopted in punishing the free and unfree women. Moreover, the cases of capital punishment inflicted on women in general were rare, such punishments were generally executed by drowning (1928: 91). For atrocious offences that did not deserve death, the women were whipped with rods at the *maha gabadāwe* or taken along the streets of Kandy, carrying baskets of sand on the head. Sometimes, women who committed such atrocious offences were punished by cutting their hair, which was considered a singular disgrace. After such punishment they were sent to the granary of the royal village Gampola, and compelled to work in confinement²⁴ receiving allowances of paddy. Sometimes they were released after a time at the pleading of their relatives, but sometimes they remained there for life (D'Oyly, 1928: 91). Female 'slaves', who were liable to be punished corporally by chiefs, also may have been subjected to capital punishments and whipping. Here we remember, Geiger's speculation that when a female enters 'slavery' she had to shave her hair (1960: 36)²⁵ which could have been a mark of disgrace attached to her status. Such practices could have been exercised even during the Kandyan times and

when free women culprits were subject to cut their hair the intention could have been to make them look physically similar to 'slaves' and thus to carry the stigma attached to that status.

Furthermore, the *Nīti-nighanduwa* a code of law of the late Kandyan period which bear information on 'slave' marriages, treatment of female 'slaves', and their right to manumit themselves, also records that a master was free to sell or give away his male and female 'slaves' or could transfer them to a new heir.²⁶ This detail refers to the Kandyan period, and we have seen above in examples illustrating the ownership of 'slaves' that the masters had similar power over their male as well as female 'slaves' even in earlier periods and that they handled these individuals as their material property. Moreover, harsh punishments inflicted for various offences²⁷ to people indicate that 'slaves' did not escape punishment for these offences although the punishments were not especially designed for 'slaves'. More specifically, the punishments inflicted on female 'slaves' in earlier periods in Sri Lankan history may have been parallel to those inflicted during the Kandyan period. Also it is possible that, although Buddhism condemns adultery for laymen, female 'slaves' had to endure sexual harassment of certain masters behind closed doors. For, at least during the Kandyan period, according to D'Oyly's information, rape was not considered an atrocious crime if the victim was inferior in caste to the offender, even if she was a free woman, and the culprit, if accused, was only whipped and paid a fine (1928: 51-52).²⁸ Thus, the rape of a 'slave' girl may have been perceived as a trivial matter.

Although such were the legal powers of masters over their 'slaves', it seems that the masters seldom exercised their legal rights over the 'slaves'. The popular notion was always in favor of mild treatment to 'slaves'. Robert Knox, who was taken as a prisoner by the king of Kandy, Rājasingha II in 1660 AD speaks of his experience, and mentions that the 'slaves' "very familiarly talk and discourse with their Masters"(1911: 121). But he does not completely deny that 'slaves' were beaten up by their masters. Referring to the disposition of Sinhalese people, Knox tells us that, "it is not customary to strike; and it is very rare that they give a blow so much as to their slaves" (1911: 121). However, the idea of mild treatment to 'slaves' is explained by Knox as follows:

For whose ['slaves'] maintenance, their Masters allow them Land and Cattle. Which many of them do so improve; that except in Dignity they are not far behind their Masters, only they are not permitted to have Slaves. Their Masters will not diminish or take away ought, that by their Diligence and Industry they have procured, but approve of it, as being Persons capable to repose trust in and when they do buy or other ways [*sic*] get a new Slave,

they presently provide him a Wife, and so put him forward to keep House, and settle, that he may not think of running away (1911: 130).²⁹

Influence of caste distinction on servitude

It should also be noted that during this time at least 'slaves' in general were not considered as members of a caste in the society but as a group of non-free individuals who were the property of the master. However, the free-born individuals fallen into 'slavery' due to debt retained their caste.³⁰ It could be due to this reason, that a limitation was imposed on low caste individuals regarding the possession of 'slaves'.³¹ The *Nīti-Nighanduwa*, seems to provide some legal recognition and protection to female 'slaves'. It mentions that a female 'slave' cannot be given in marriage against her will to one who is her inferior in caste. The *Nīti-Nighanduwa* also mentions that the masters could give female 'slaves' in marriage to free men. It further mentions that, in such a case, if the 'slave' woman, with the approval of the master, lived outside the master's premises on her own with the husband earning a living and hardly visiting or doing services to the master, the master could not sell or gift her or her offspring. But, if a female 'slave' bears children to a free man without obtaining freedom in the above manner, while living in the master's premises and in service, her children belonged to the master. Accordingly, marriages of female 'slaves' to freemen with the consent of the master seemed to have won legal recognition, as it was capable of switching the 'slave' status of the woman to that of a free woman. But, the evidence does not indicate whether this privilege was only available to females fallen into 'slavery' under circumstances such as being in debt or for all 'slaves' including home born 'slaves' and purchased 'slaves'. Also we do not know the situation in this regard in earlier periods. Marriages between 'slaves' too were, perhaps, recognized, at least, to a certain extent because 'slave' families were not fragmented. The other crucial issue is that a master could own 'slaves' as long as he maintains and provides shelter for them. In other words it was not considered lawful for a master to obtain services from 'slaves' without maintaining them.³²

Living conditions

Domestic 'slaves' of the Kandyan period are reported to have lived in small dwellings with their families closer to the household of the master. D'Oyly provides first hand evidence for the Kandyan period and mentions that 'slaves' were seldom sold or had their families separated though they were given as dowry or transferred to heirs (1928: 120). Non-separation of families may have mainly affected the female 'slaves' as the bearers of children. Such privileges or tolerance regarding

their familial conditions seem to have existed even during the earlier periods. For instance, the Galapāta vihara inscription³³ shows us that the 'slave' families were not separated in the process of the transaction. Here, the temple had purchased 'slaves' with their families and each family is recorded as mentioning the members by name and the relationship to one adult (male/female). Thus the record mentions wives, siblings, children of both sexes, both parents and even other relatives. For instance, the first family headed by a male member contains both his parents, his younger sister and his four younger brothers (lines: 13-14). Also in three families wives are mentioned along with children and each of these three families are headed by the husband (lines: 17, 20, 23). More interestingly, one case also mentions an aunt of a 'slave', along with his siblings and son (line: 19). The issue that three generations of a family are named together, at least in one case, and the point that the slaves knew their fathers, assures the affixed nature of such 'slave' families. But, the fragmentary nature of the inscription does not permit a clear observation of the condition of these families, not to mention that of female 'slaves'. While most of the 'slaves' were given a plot of land to maintain their families when serving their master, (line: 23) the Lahugala inscription (AD. 1153-1189)³⁴ mentions that the 'slaves' of the temple were given heritable lands (*paraveni*), further implying that their families were not separated and had some plot of land to obtain permanent subsistence for their families. But, how big these families were and what the size of the land received was not mentioned in the record nor any such evidence has yet been discovered.

The tolerance and non-separation of families of 'slaves' signify a certain social identity and recognition available for the 'slaves' as social units. Arguably, therefore, such a 'slave' was not a total stranger in the society. The Galapāta inscription provides a fine example for this point, where, the sale or transference of heirs, apparently, involved the entire 'slave' family. On one hand, such measures may have discouraged slave desertions and instead may have induced slaves to work loyally for the master. Moreover, 'slave' children may also have received some parental care. But, on the other hand, female 'slaves' may have been subjected to male domination within their families. Nonetheless, female 'slaves' may have felt some protection in the family although 'slave' husbands and fathers may have had no power to protect their wives or daughters from a cruel master who may want to punish or seduce them.

Such mild measures, as allowing them to live with the family, may also have induced masters to tolerate the property of 'slaves'. Robert Knox informs us, that during the Kandyan period, 'slaves' were allowed to improve their wealth and possess them and also that the masters did not confiscate what they earned through diligence (1911: 69-70). Once again the detail is vague and does not mention whether this applies to all groups of unfree 'slaves' or only to a particular group

such as debt 'slaves'. Also it is not known whether female 'slaves' could improve and possess wealth or any other possession as a separate individual.

Furthermore, Pridham (1849: 223-233) informs us that, 'slaves were competent like freemen to give evidence in a Court of Law and were even called upon as witnesses to transactions of their masters.' The value of this information decreases due to its vagueness as to whether this privilege was given to both genders of 'slaves' or only to male 'slaves' and as to which period this account bears evidence.

Influence of Buddhism on slavery

However, the story of Nāgā who arranged to offer meals to 60 monks and the 'servant girl' *Vimāna* in the *Vimāna* stories³⁵ reveal that female 'slaves' (also perhaps male 'slaves' as well) were allowed to engage in religious activities. Besides this information the story of Nāgā who served as an *inna dāsī* (debt 'slave') in a rich household in Nāgadeepa further tells us that, at least, debt 'slaves' were allowed to engage in monetary transactions. The story runs as follows: Nāgā who was an *inna dāsī* for 60 *kahapana* desiring to offer food for 60 monks, whom she came across while going for water, went home and borrowed another 60 *kahapana* for the purpose from her master promising to become a *ratti dāsī* ('slave' working during the night). Her master commented on her act saying that other debt 'slaves' try to reduce their debt while Nāgā is increasing her's, wrote the transaction in a piece of paper and gave the requested sum to Nāgā.³⁶ And the girl having received the money distributed it among 60 houses, one *kahapana* each, and requested each household to prepare a meal for one monk with the money provided. Then she informed the monks about her deed and asked them to obtain their food from those 60 houses.

The above account of Nāgā informs us that her duties were not rigorous and that she had time to engage in religious activities even briefly. The other point is that her master tolerated a certain disturbance to her chores when she performed this task. Moreover, the fact that she already being a debt slave for 60 *kahapana* could again borrow a further 60 indicates that she could engage in monetary affairs. But caution is necessary since this is a special case where the intension of the 'salve' was to perform a pious deed, and in the period concerned (i.e. time of Saddhātissa – first century BC) Buddhism thrived and most people were devoted Buddhists. The religious enthusiasm of the time may have provoked the master to lend the money requested by the 'slave' girl. Furthermore, this was a debt 'slave' and was not a 'slave' in origin. Thus, considering the circumstances that may have led to this act, it is hard to consider whether all female 'slaves' were able to borrow money from their

masters or to enter any kind of monetary transaction, due to lack of information. The comment of Nāgā's master that "other 'slaves' reduce their debt"³⁷, requires close attention at this juncture. This indicates that debt 'slaves' became free once they pay their debt. But, whether this was paid through service or in cash is not clear. The other striking point is the existence of *ratti dāsī* female 'slave' working during the night). What duties such a 'slave' performed during this period where lighting systems remained at a primitive stage is open for debate. Few tasks that were possibly assigned for such a 'slave' could be pounding and husking the paddy of the master, watching over the masters' paddy-field /chena, and nursing the sick or young children when required.

Manumitting female slaves

As for the chances available for female 'slaves' to obtain manumission, at least a few epigraphic records bear evidence. The only single evidence concerning this reveals a case in which a husband pays the manumission fee to free his wife from bondage.³⁸ Thus, due to extreme lack of evidence, we do not know whether female slaves too were eligible to buy their own freedom. The brevity of the record does not inform us how this woman became a 'slave'. But, the occupation of the husband (a carpenter) as given in the record suggests that he may have pledged her to 'slavery' as the security for the money he borrowed in dire circumstances to save himself and his infant children from starving to death. This was a known practice among the poor, and several cases are known where parents pledged their children to 'slavery' as the security for the money they borrowed, in similar occasions.³⁹ But, such stories do not disclose whether female 'slaves' were allowed to accumulate some money. Interestingly, in all available evidence female 'slaves' managed to buy their freedom with the intermediation of a third party. But, to the scant and imbalanced spread of evidence do not permit us to conclude that the absence of evidence illustrating female 'slaves' buying their freedom without any intermediation is because such cases went unrecorded or because such incidents never happened in the history of the island. Perhaps, female 'slaves' were also allowed to save some money by saving a part of their subsistence allowance. Once again, it should be remembered that these were either debt 'slaves' or individuals fell into 'slavery' being destitute. Nonetheless, once freed, a 'slave' went totally free and had no attachments to the ex-master and neither the ex-master nor his heirs could even call him/her his ex-'slave'.⁴⁰ This feature in the Kandyan period may perhaps have come through the earlier periods. Since there were certain restrictions on women in general the freed 'slave' women may also have led a normal life within the set social frame.

Conclusion

What is discernible is that in times prior to the Kandyan period, the members of royal families and their officers were the main 'slave' holders and mainly through their donations Buddhist temples also became holders of large numbers of 'slaves'. In such cases these 'slaves' apparently lived in 'families' and also in communities allowing the female 'slaves' in these having recognition, security and some spare-time within their family units. Such a situation seems to have made it easier to control them. But, the treatment and punishments received by a few or a single female 'slave' in a household may have depended upon the temperament of the master and the mistress. However, the strong Buddhist atmosphere that prevailed in the island may have induced the masters to treat their 'slaves' with kindness. The absence of a particular code of law instructing masters about treating their subordinates may also hint at the gentle treatment the 'slaves' received without gender specifications. During the Kandyan times, however, we have seen legal records that inform masters about their limitations on managing 'slaves' especially those of the female gender. This development may have resulted due to social and political changes of the time. The strong South Indian influence may have amplified the existing caste distinctions to a point of exaggerating its importance even over the distinction between the free and unfree statuses. On the other hand, both due to South Indian and European influences Buddhist values may have diminished threatening the automatic security and kindness it made available to the 'slaves' through their masters. Moreover, the legal and social reception of female 'slaves' has improved, at least, theoretically and became codified due to the accelerated caste distinctions during the Kandyan times. But, to what extent such measures were really exercised in the society is hard to say due to the absence of concrete evidence.

Notes

- 1 Stories in *Saddharmalankāraya*, *Sīhalavatthūpakarana* [Henceforth, abbreviated as *Sīhalavatthū*] and *Epigraphica Zeylanica* [Henceforth, abbreviated as *EZ*] vol. I no. 7, for instance, mention both male and female 'slaves'.
- 2 Interpretations given to the term '*vaharala*' and its variant forms have created much controversy among scholars and they range from 'slavery' to 'timber'. I have discussed elsewhere in detail each of these interpretations trying to apply them to all available '*vaharala* records' before concluding that the interpretation that suits all existing such records is 'slavery' in the first Appendix to C.S.M. Wickramasinghe, *Slavery from known to unknown: a comparative study of slavery in ancient Greek poleis and ancient Sri Lanka* (2005).
- 3 Before the Kandyan period the caste distinctions were not practiced severely as it happened during the Kandyan times and also, the social measures such as *rājakāriya*

system and profession-based caste systems continued without any interference effecting a smooth functioning in the society. But during the Kandyan period the European invaders tried to crush the *rājakāriya* and the *caste* system (which became severe due to strong South Indian influence) upsetting the local social system.

- 4 There might be differences in the social system and in the types of servitude in Tamil speaking Northern province. But our knowledge of slavery in the rest of the island is again limited to two accounts which bear a wide chronological gap. One is the Nāgā story (well before the Kandyan period and referred to in the *Sīhalavatthūpakarana*) and the other account is reported by C. Pridham (1849: 224, 229) referring to a time little after the fall of the Kandyan monarchy in 1815.
- 5 This work was compiled by the Buddhist monk Dhammanadi. The date ascribed to this source has become a point of dispute among scholars. Though some have proposed an early date i.e. late first century BC some propose a much later date (Fifth century AD) to this source.
- 6 *Sīhalavatthū* XXXIII.
- 7 *Sīhalavatthū* XXXV, XLV.
- 8 Cf. The discussion below for examples.
- 9 *Cūlavamsa* [Henceforth, abbreviated as Cv]. XLVI, 19-21. First 40 chapters of this volume were composed in the twelfth century while the next 11 chapters were composed in the fourteenth century and the last eight were composed between AD 1746 and 1780.
- 10 Cv. L, 82& 63-64 respectively.
- 11 Cv. LXXX, 35-36. The same queen built an alms-house and granted 30 slaves (*vahal*) and cattle and buffaloes and lands to it. Although this was to offer food for the poor, there is no doubt it also offered alms to monks who could not obtain any alms until the last moment. (EZ vol. I no. 14, pp. 179 & 181-182).
- 12 Evers, H. D., (1972) *Monks, priests and peasants: a study of Buddhism and social structure in central Ceylon* (Leiden): 109 (Appendix).
- 13 EZ. vol IV no. 25 (ll. 12-23)
- 14 EZ vol. III no. 11
- 15 EZ vol. II no. 17.
- 16 *Sddharmalankāraya*, *Riyahal vastuva* p.598.
- 17 *Saddharmalankāraya* XX p. 645.
- 18 EZ II nos. 19, 21, 22, 24, 29, EZ I no. 9 l. 56, EZ V no. 43, 44.
19 Dias (1991): 21-22, EZ III no. 35. Both inscriptions were set by the king Nissankamalla, and the content of the records are almost identical.
- 20 D' Oily (1928:189-190), Hayley (1923) Appendix 31 note 1 and Lawrie Mss. 3: 297, *Kandyan Law and history, material collected for two projected works by A. C. Lawrie*, mentions this as Sawyer's information.
- 21 *Buddhist Journal of Ceylon* 29-6-1829 (Lawrie Mss., III) from R. Peiris (1956:188).
- 22 There were *gabadā gam* which could have been villages used as stores or villages that supplied for the king's stores, *gabadā nilame* could be an officer either in charge of such villages or his stores.

- 23 But other women were not punished by the Chiefs, corporally, or by fine or by imprisonment. In these cases, D'Oyly continues, if the complaint was less important 'women were sent for by the Chief and reproved with their male relations, who are sometimes imprisoned and fined on their [women's] account.' If charged with serious offences, they are brought under the king's cognizance. And were liable for corporal punishment under the command of the king depending upon the seriousness of the offence.
- 24 During inquiry they were detained at the *maha gabadāwe* or in a house of a chief and never in the prison D'Oyly (1928: 91). But this account does not mention where they were kept after the inquiry, when they spend the rest of their lives when working under confinement.
- 25 'In Sinhalese the word for female slave is *midi* which derives from Sk. P. *munditā* 'shaved.' This shows that in former times a female slave was not allowed to wear long hair, but had to shave her head when she was taken into the family.'
- 26 *Niti-Nighanduwa* [Henceforth abbreviated as *NN*]: 10-11.
- 27 *EZ* vol. I no. 21 (ll. 25-30).
- 28 But if a girl was raped by a man inferior in caste, the victim may face death at the hand of her own relatives in the attempt of preserving the dignity of the family.
- 29 All nouns in the quoted passage begin with capitals.
- 30 Perhaps because they blended into the same caste once they became free.
- 31 Sawyer's *Digest* 29 in D' Oyly (1928:189).
- 32 *NN*: 10-11.
- 33 *EZ* vol. IV: no.25: 196-212.
- 34 *EZ* vol. VI: no.27: 126-134.
- 35 Masfield, P., & N.A. Jayawickrama, (1989) *Elucidation of the intrinsic meaning so named: the commentary on the Vimāna stories*,: 'servant girl *Vimāna*'.
- 36 *Sīhalavatthū* LXII
- 37 *Sīhalavatthū*. LXII
- 38 *EZ* vol. IV: 128-136 Vessagiriya inscription.
- 39 *Sīhalavatthū* LXII.
- 40 *NN*: 10.

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