

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SINHALA AND FRENCH PROVERBS

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Proverbs on women are known to be harsh and critical. They are often cited to highlight a negative quality and to criticise women. Certain proverbs express a deep misogyny. As the term itself suggests, a hatred towards women. Proverb repertoire of any language possesses a few that speak ill of women. The present paper examines the representation of women in proverb in Sinhala and French proverbs. How are women represented in proverbs in these two cultures? Which aspects of their lives are highlighted? What are the differences and the similarities seen in the French and Sinhala proverbs? The study attempts to find answers to these questions.

Nearly hundred proverbs, in these two languages that speak of women as a subject are collected and compared. All proverbs are translated by the researcher into English in order to facilitate the study. Women and family is a theme found in both Sinhala and French proverbs. Women's role as mother and her love and affection towards the children are discussed and much appreciated, especially in Sinhalese. Certain proverbs look at the relationship between men and women. Often, in these proverbs, the superiority of men over women is noted. Further similarities can be seen in reference to and comparisons with various animals primarily to stress on character flaws. Interestingly, the choice of animals is not the same in these two languages. In Sinhalese, certain proverbs associate superstition with women. Comments on qualities such as fidelity, intelligence, and chastity, create a portrait of a woman that is inferior, weak and mediocre. It is even possible to state that some are quite sexist in their criticism of women. Several examples also show that women are capable of creating an evil impact on others.

The comparative study brings to light the differences and also the similarities seen in the representation of proverbs of the two cultures. Further, it is possible to come to the conclusion that despite the cultural differences, and the geographical distance, proverbs in these two languages create an overwhelmingly negative impression of women.