

'Rathnawali Natakaya' and Gender Socialization

J. M. Uthpala Kumari

Department of Sinhala, University of Colombo

The objective of this research paper is to analyze the patriarchal ideological socialization through the book 'Rathnawali Natakaya', which is a Sanskrit classic written by the Indian Emperor, Sri Harsha. 'Rathnawali Natakaya' is one of the compulsory textbooks for the Sinhala Language and Literature subject in the Advanced Level syllabus in Sri Lanka. Formal education is an important socialization agent which plays a vital role not only in spreading the existing ideologies and traditions among students, but also in the socialization of the student population. It demonstrates the social role and stature of men and women in a patriarchal social structure and plays a key function in maintaining the social order. 'Rathnawali Natakaya' demonstrates this patriarchal ideological socialization. Therefore, in this textbook, men and women are presented as binary opposite characters. Men are stereotypically presented as strong, aggressive, violent, competitive, powerful, less emotional, rational, intelligent, independent and instrumentally oriented. In contrast to men, women are presented as being weak, less aggressive, soft, passive, emotional, dependent, backward, immature, less rational and an ignorant group of individuals who should hardly be trusted. This book presents a contrasting difference in roles and characteristics of men and women in different levels of society. This research paper is based on the content analysis of the text which was carried out from April to July, 2015. According to the findings, the paper further argues that 'Rathnawali Natakaya' is a formal school textbook which spreads and justifies the stereotyped gender roles in patriarchal society instead of challenging and changing the existing patriarchal social structure in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Patriarchal society, Gender, Socialization, Formal education