

## **“*Kuweni*” the first female ruler: Characterization of intangible cultural heritage of folklore**

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### **Abstract**

Folklore can be identified as a collection of information compounded with creativity and reflections of a specific culture which are imparted from generation to generation via oral transmission. Folklore has played a significant role throughout history to define the emotions, lifestyle and characteristics of people in the society through narratives. A significant turning point in the antiquity of the Sinhalese nation, Sri Lanka, is the story of “*Kuweni*.” In folklore and folk literature, *Kuweni* is identified as the first female ruler of Sri Lanka. There are different mythical attributes intertwined with the narrative of *Kuweni*, where she has been identified as the main inducement behind the victory of the Aryan Prince *Vijaya* (from India) who conquered the country. There were three communities of *Yakka*, *Naga* and *Deva* in Sri Lanka. *Kuweni* who belongs to the *Yakka* community, betrayed her own community in order to seize power for the prince. According to the written literature of Sri Lanka, it is believed that the *Sinhalese* nation originated from *Vijaya* who captured the power of the country with the help of native *Yakka* princess *Kuweni*. Nevertheless, there are some contradictions between the folklore and literature related to the historical phenomenon around the character of *Kuweni*. Accordingly, the evolution of *Kuweni*'s character as a young woman to a lover, wife, mother and a single parent finally murdered by her own tribe can be viewed as an inquisitive narrative about power. Through examining folklore narratives, the social and cultural attributes which prevailed at the time of *Kuweni* reveal her emotional dilemma and her place in the symbolism of Sri Lanka. This study's purpose is to explore how the character of *Kuweni*, as the first female ruler, both physically and emotionally embodies a representation of Sri Lankan intangible cultural heritage.

The study reviews the literature of an expressively used mythical folklore of *Kuweni* through undertaking a systematic analysis of the story, drawing on two methods for examining folklore: a scientific and a social scientific approach. Using these approaches, the study reviews the character of *Kuweni*. This study will largely contribute to the literature of understanding folklore as an intangible cultural heritage and the study contributes to the contextual understanding of emotions, lifestyle, social attributes and power that existed during pre-historic Sri Lanka. The emotional journey of *Kuweni* will be studied to understand the holistic values embedded in her life. Through revitalizing the character of *Kuweni*, the study has implications for the contemporary creative industries of Sri Lanka, as *Kuweni* personifies the contemporary woman with many challenges in the life, and these may be expressed through dress and

performance inspired by *Kuweni*. *Kuweni*'s emotional journey can be experienced by any woman during a certain stage of her life; therefore, she can be identified as an eternal woman.

Keywords: Folklore, *Kuweni*, Myth, Symbolism, Cultural studies, Intangible Cultural Heritage

## **01. The Significance of Folklore**

There are many mythical stories entangled with folklore, as folklore exists within the society and coming from generation to generation. Gomme (1885) says that "Myth, folklore, fable, allegory, all these are related terms, but terms should be carefully kept apart since they mean different interpretations"(p.3). Folklore should not be confused with mythology since there are some facts and elements that belong to the actual group category, specifically the practices, customs and events which has a solid sociological background for the survival of those element from long ago to present. There are some other subjects such as history, language and cultural studies which are integrated with folklore and nourishing through the facts inside folklore. Folklore can be also put in to the category of social science as it contributes to the human knowledge through the relationships with other sociological subjects (Gomme, 1885).

Folklore consists of three main important characteristics: body of knowledge, mode of thought and mind of art (Amos, 1971; Gupta, 2007). Folklore can be identified as a bridge in between the cultures, because sometimes the members of the community move out of their native place and they carry the folklore/ folk practices to the new environment and they continue to follow those practices. The next is due to the changes of the local environment the people who are living in that area bring different alternatives. Although the people try to retain the originality in both instances folklore can be subjected into changes. Therefore, the changes in the society see changes in the culture, and changes in the culture affect changes in folklore. The changing patterns of folklore is always a component of that society. Folklore is connected with different disciplines such as ethnographic, historic, linguistic and literature studies, and these subject areas cannot be defined without folklore (Gupta, 2007). The language, similar values, beliefs, background knowledge allow folklore to be experienced by the audience. Thus folklore can be identified as an artistic communication in a same reference group with similar values.

From childhood to adulthood, these folklores play different roles in shaping one's life and thinking patterns. The fairy tales, hero legends, stories, songs that we used to hear in everyday life and come from generation to generation are under the narrative category of folklore. Most of these stories are generalized in many cultures as queen, king or princess or by famous names or some common names. Certain hero tales are historical or semi historical. At the same time geography and history are appeared in many folklores, because many of those stories are connected to certain era, historically important person or a place legend. Therefore, it is interconnected with many subject areas. Anthropology has a very close relationship with folklore as the cultural, social and human factors are often discussed within. According to Gupta (2007) in Linguistics aspect folk-etymology also have an important role to understand in learning folklore.

The things which appeared to seem primitive in folklore, also has a history and a development throughout a long period of time. Therefore, it has a huge contribution towards the folklore since we can do comparison and justification compared to past and present. In the same way that physical evidences contribute to the development of science, history and geography, the

true explanations, legends and narratives which derives from generation to generation explains the socio-cultural background of people from past to the present and the development of humankind (Burstein, 1957). Therefore, folklore should be studied as a cluster of subjects which are inter related to each other.

Folklore can be categorized in scientific (Gomme, 1885; Burstein, 1957) and social scientific (Islam, 1985; Gupta, 2007) approaches and under each, there are main themes. The scientific approach consists of four main themes as traditional narratives, traditional customs, superstitious believes and folk speech. This categorization is depicted in Figure 01. The social scientific approach mainly consists of ten themes as shown in Figure 1 which can be overall defined as folk culture. As illustrated, any folklore can be categorized under these main themes for clarity.

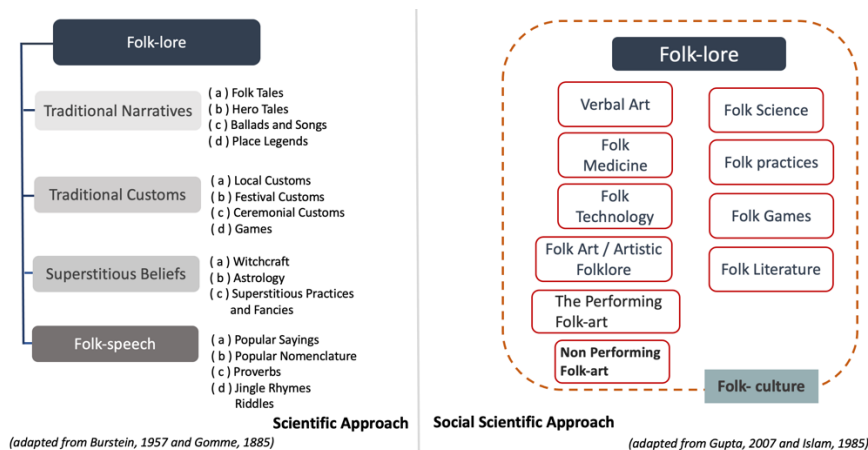


Figure 01: Folklore categorization (developed by Author)

Local knowledge, systems and beliefs get merged into mainstream literature and evolve into a folkloric version. There are some most popular themes for folktales, such as culmination in marriage, couples dying before marriage or consummation of marriage. Therefore, marriage can be identified as a main theme in folklore. The motherhood, birth of a child, giving birth to a male child, strength of men are the other themes highlighted in folk tales.

All the above themes can be identified in the story of *Kuweni* which is connected with many anthropological perspectives (Gupta, 2007). The story of *Kuweni* is connected with Buddhist culture and history of Sri Lanka and India. It is an intriguing story blended with myths and historical incidents; thus, it can be identified as an interesting story to explore many perspectives to understand the holistic values embedded to the culture, history of the country (Weerasekara, 2016). According to Amos (1971), folklore is significant in characterizing and symbolizing concepts and unveiling historical knowledge. The story of *Kuweni* in this context is studied based on the narrations as well as through available, albeit limited, literature, due to the lack of geographical references except a few in performing arts (stage dramas and films) which characterize *Kuweni*.

## 02.The Combination of Myth and Folklore

The origin of folklore dates back to prehistory, from primitive life style to the recent history. Therefore, if there are no historical evidences it is difficult to affirm certain stories unless they describe significant personalities, place legends or practices. The rituals, practices and beliefs that a group of people continue for a long period of time over a generation to generation are considered as folklore. Figure 02 shows the origin and evolution of folklore over a long period of time. When the folklore is existing in the form of oral transmission spontaneously it is combined with creativity and experiences. With the socio-cultural changes these folklores were documented as literature.

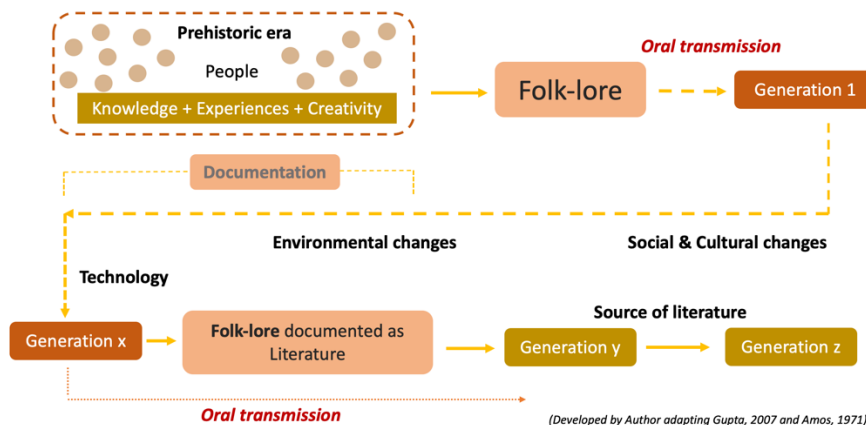


Figure 02: The origin and evolution of Folklore (developed by Author)

It is always difficult to draw a fine line and put facts and myths and fantasies aside, because folklore is always a combination of these two components and often, they are narratives and practices coming with oral transmission. The knowledge and creativity are two components which are deeply attached with folklore. The knowledge and experience are a vital fact for the survival, it is inevitable to omit them as mythology.

The fairy tales are one of the folklore categories which is connected with great deal of myths and fantasies. The fairy tales refers to a form of magic or wonders they can be known as wonder tales or tales of magic and this specific category has been most prevalent in the West Asia and Europe.

The origin of fairytales is unknown, but it is considered that they were popular among groups of peasants all around the world. There are evidences that similar type of stories existed despite of their geographical locations in Asia, Europe and Africa. But most of these stories contained rape, adultery, cannibalism with violence and socially unacceptable acts. Then the popular versions of fairy tales were documented as children's fairy tales by omitting the adultery from those stories (Doster, 2002).

South Asia Region (SAR) comprises of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka and this region has also been referred to as the sub-continent of India. Therefore, all the countries in SAR were highly influenced by the Indian culture and many folktales are inter



connected with Indian sub cultures. Indian and Sri Lankan folklore share similarities regarding these supernatural personalities, but they are quite complex in terms of good and bad behaviors, human or not. Teverson and Lothspeich (2019) states that, “India has its own ways of speaking about classifying its stories, and its own lexicon of symbols, motifs and themes, in its different languages and regions, and among its various ethnic communities”(p.309). Most of the Indian folklore are in written forms. However, *Kuweni*'s story has been prevailing mainly from word of mouth and its main written evidence is the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter (regarding *Vijaya*'s arrival to Sri Lanka) of *Mahavamsa* which is one of the great pieces of writing that consists history, culture and sociology of country, which has documented 2500 years of Sri Lankan history. This was written in *Pali* language by a Buddhist *thero* named *Mahānāma* circa 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Therefore, this can be identified as a valuable literature source which belong to the far history.

The influence of religion, history and culture is also another important factor in folklore, which is highlighted in Asia. The influence of chief religions in Indian sub-continent can be seen in folklore. Three of the biggest religions in the world, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have wide spread in Asia and has highly influenced the SAR narrative landscape, although they often struggle to survive and maintain cultural identity (Teverson & Naithani, 2019). “Buddhism as the dominant religion in Bhutan and Sri Lanka connects the region from the north to the south since ancient times. In Sri Lanka “after the introduction of Buddhism, monks began to use the folktale in order to illustrate the Buddhist teachings” (Rathnapala, 1991, p.211). Buddhism is not folklore but there can be stories within which can be considered as folklore and which are inter related to folklore. One such example is the *jataka* stories in Buddhism (Temple, 1886). These *jataka* stories are considered as folklore since they are entangled with mythical characters, animals and incidents which are far away from reality but at the same time which implies symbolical expressions and code of values.

Another important mythical feature of folklore is the relationship between human, animals and plants in the folklore all over the world. There are plenty of stories in West as well as in East which are inter connected with human-animal and plant relationships which are magical. Most of these folklores reflects the real relationship between the human and nature (Teverson & Naithani, 2019). Animals were not considered as inferior creatures, so that human were not superior to animals or plants. Animals were protagonists of those narratives and always human beings' cruel behavior has been highlighted in these stories. The close proximity with nature, conserving the environment were romanticized through these stories.

There are some folklores which are inter-connected with different incidents related to Buddhism, such as the story of *yakkas* in Sri Lanka, arrival of Lord Buddha to Sri Lanka and arrival of prince *Vijaya* (Kahadawaarachchi, 1997). There are human beings, gods, *yakkas* and different mythical tribes with super natural powers in the same story. Therefore, the myth can be identified as a vital fact in folklore where the influence of the major religion and the impact of the main continent and their believes can be clearly identified. Another significance in story of *Kuweni* is, it is documented as a literature in the great chronical of Ceylon, *Mahavamsa*. The origin of *Sinhala* community from prince *Vijaya* is starting from the story of *Kuweni*, where she can be identified as the first female ruler. Therefore, *Kuweni* can be identified as a remarkable character blended with myths and historical significance to provoke the intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

### 03. Identifying the Folklore Character - *Kuweni*

The story of *Kuweni* is a well-known narrative in Sri Lankan history which verifies the origin of the *Sinhalese* nation in the island. It is believed that before the arrival of Prince *Vijaya*, the son of King *Sinhabhahu* from ‘*Lata Rata*’, North India, three main communities were in Sri Lanka as *Yakka*, *Naga*, *Dewa*. These communities can be identified in both *Deepawansa* and *Mahavamsa*. In *Deepawansa* it says that Lord Buddha has impelled all the *Yakkas* to the *Giri* Island (an island which is mentioned in *Deepawansa*) in order to make a human habitat for the Aryans (Kahadawaarachchi, 1997). It describes *Yakkas* as a tribal community which eats flesh and fight with each other with an undisciplined behavior. This is very similar to the Indian folk tales where the *Raksasa* have been described. *Deepawansa* is not a religious book, therefore this should not be mixed or compared with Buddhist philosophy. This can be identified as an attempt to document the *Atuwa* and historical stories which penetrated over years in oral transmission (Kahadawaarachchi, 1997). The term “*Sinha*” is referred to Lion in Sinhalese language, where the folklore of the origin of *Vijaya*’s blood line goes back to a consummation between a lion and a princess called *Suppadevi*.

*Mahavamsa* is based on *Deepavamsa* and the narratives that existed during that time. Here it clearly mentions the consummation between the princess and the lion which can be identified as an intimate relationship between an animal and a human being which can be identified as a mythical relationship.

"සිහබාහු නරින්දොසො	සිංහබාහු නරේන්ද්‍රයා	King Sinhabhahu,
සිහ මාදින්නවා ඉති	සිංහයෙක් බඳු ශක්තිමත් අයෙකි	stronger as a Lion!
සිහලොකෙන සම්බන්ධො	ඔහුගෙන් පැවතෙන්නන්ට	His generation is
ආහු සබෙබපි සිහලා	සිංහලයෝ යැයි කියති	known as Sinhalese”
<i>Pali Description</i>	<i>Sinhala Description</i>	<i>English Translation</i>

Figure 03: The description regarding *Sinhabhahu* in *Dipawamsa* adapting Kahadawaarachchi, 1997

*Deepawansa* also highlight the story of *Vijaya*’s blood line featuring why they were known as Sinhalese. Later *Sinhabhahu*, the son of Lion and *Suppadevi* became the king of *Lata* kingdom and he married to his own sister. They had 32 children and *Vijaya* was the eldest among them. *Vijaya* had a very vicious behavior, so that King *Sinhabhahu* expelled *Vijaya* and his companions out of the country. The ship which they came was exposed to a sea storm and they came to *Thambappani*, Sri Lanka.

*Kuweni*: a *Yakka* princess, helped *Vijaya* to seize the power of the country, who came to Sri Lanka with his 700 companions. In *Mahavamsa* as well as in *Kuweni Asna* which was written in between 1410-1467 during *Kotte* Period, Sri Lanka, *Kuweni* is considered as a *yakkini* with therianthropic powers. *Kuweni* promised prince *Vijaya* to get the power of the island and their consummation gave birth to two children named *Jeewahaththa* (son) and *Disala* (Daughter) *Vijaya* established his kingdom in “*Thammenna Nuwara*” with his fellow ministers establishing other villages by their names (Geiger & Bode, 1912). Later, King *Vijaya* wanted an enthronement according to the North Indian customs and his ministers brought a princess from

*Madura puraya*, South India. Since *Kuweni* was an exile, she has to ran away with her two children. Keeping the children outside of the *Yakka* village, she returned to her *Yakka* relatives. Then she was assassinated by a *Yakka* tribe due to her betrayal. One of her uncles who saw the kids outside of the village advised them to run into the forest saying their mother was killed. Terrified, kids ran to the forest eventually leading to the origin of the Indigenous community (*Vedda*) (Geiger & Bode, 1912 ; Weerasekara, 2016).

As such, through folklore also the character of *Kuweni*, can be identified as a mind provoking narrative which can be studied to understand the values behind intangible cultural heritages of a country which are in the verge of extinction due to the lack of perseverance and condemning them as myths. The lack of knowledge in Pali and Sanskrit languages, lack of literature related to folklore and the decline of oral transmission can be identified as the challenges of preserving them to the future.

#### **04.Characterization of *Kuweni* in Literature**

The emotional journey of *Kuweni* has been identified as an interesting character to review in literature as well as in the form of creative and visual arts. Conflicts of power, emotions and betrayal can be seen throughout the story in *Mahavamsa* in a figurative language. The descriptions in the story helps to create visual landscapes in the readers or listener's mind. There are very limited murals and paintings available regarding the story of *Kuweni* since it dates back to 2500 years. Therefore, the folklore and language play a main role in characterizing the first female ruler of Sri Lanka. The *Yakkas* narratives were first revealed in *Deepavansaya* on which the *Mahavamsaya* was based. Different authors later translated it into *Sinhala* (SL's native language) and English. Being a *yakka* princess, *Kuweni* had powers inherited from her ancestry. She had therianthropic powers as when *Vijaya* landed on the island she was in the form of a female hermit spinning cotton by a wheel.

One of the main qualities in *Kuweni* is her power and personality as a female ruler. Without the help and guidance of *Kuweni*, *Vijaya* will not be able to capture the power of the island. According to the *Mahavamsa*, when *Kuweni* asked him to massacre all the *yakkas* who were assembled at *siriwattupura* for the wedding ceremony of the *Yakka* king, *Vijaya*, who was an ordinary human asks from *Kuweni*, "how could I defeat the *yakkas* who are invisible? I will utter cries, and where thou shalt hear that sound, strike! and by my magic power shall thy weapon fall upon their bodies" (Geige & Bode, 1912, p. 58). *Vijaya* slew all the *yakkas* and was bestowed with all the garments of the *yakka* king, and this symbolic act of passing of the garments shows the power-shift from *yakkas* to Aryans. This can be identified as a very strong symbol to understand about the power concept and the power-shift from *Yakka* and from *Kuweni*. At the same time, it gives an idea of shifting the matriarchy social system to patriarchy social system with the power shifting from *Kuweni* to *Vijaya*.

The same scenario can be seen in *Kuweni Asna* with slight changes. Here it shows the significance of shape shifting qualities to capture the power. *Kuweni Asna* it says that,

සුසුම්ලා යකින්නී, නෙත් කදුලු එසින්නී, මෙලෙස සිට කියන්නී. සිංහපුරවර සොඳා රජ ඉසුරු විද ඉදා කරන නොපනත් සඳා නැව් නගා හළ සඳා ලක්දිවට බැස එදා නුග සෙවන වන මැදා තනිව අත් සඳ රඳා බත් බුලත් දී සොඳා මවා විමනක් සොඳා රැ දෙදෙන එහි නිදා වූ සඳෙහි රිච් අඳා වෙළෙම වෙස් ගෙන යොදා යකුන්ගෙ පුර වැදා මරා උන් ලුහු බැඳා රජ සැපත නුම යොදා දසරින කල එදා බිසො කර මා සොඳා ” (Gunawardene, 2008, p. 38).

*The yakkini was sobbing with tears and telling this to the king. Consuming all the luxury from Sinhapura you came here because of your violent behavior from a ship to this island. We met under the banyan tree alone in the forest, I gave you rice and betel and welcomed you. I created a splendid bed to two of us and we slept together during that night. I transformed myself to a mare (female horse) and went to the yakka kingdom to kill the yakkas. Then I got the kingship to you with all the wealth and luxury. You made me your queen on that day. Now what is the difference?*

Here it says that she transformed herself to a mare and killed the *Yakkas* to get the power to *Vijaya*. In *Mahavamsa* it says she cried loudly so that, the *Yakkas*’ weapons fell off from their bodies and they got killed. Although these two stories are bit controversial one common fact can be identified. The power and influence of *Kuweni* was vital to capture the island. Both techniques can be identified as super natural powers. Geiger & Bode (1912) highlight, “*Vijaya* had one son and one daughter by the *Yakkhini*; when he now heard that the princess had arrived, he said to the *Yakkhini*: ‘Go thou now, dear one, leaving the two children behind; men are ever in fear of superhuman beings’” (p. 60). The same idea has mentioned in a more rhythmic manner in *Kuweni Asna* with the desperate emotions of *Kuweni*. The use of alliterations and poetic language is significant in *Kuweni Asna* in creating visual interpretations.

Giving betel and welcoming can be identified as a very important practice in Sinhalese culture. In *Mahavamsa* it says that *Vijaya* and the 700 companions ate rice and curries which were given by *Kuweni*. It implies that she had enough food to feed 700 men. In *Kuweni Asna* it says she welcomed *Vijaya* by giving rice and betel. This is practiced when a bridegroom is coming to see a bride for the first time. Therefore, those practices and customs also can be seen in *Kuweni Asna* as well as in *Mahavamsa*.

The royal customs and luxurious behavior as a royal can be seen in creating a splendid bed under the banyan tree. This is a common fact that can be seen in folklore, *Mahavamsa* as well as in *Kuweni Asna*. Their consummation is also included in both literature and her support to capture the power is also confirmed by both stories.

Next important fact is the tender qualities *Kuweni* possessed as a woman. The love and faith she had towards prince *Vijaya*, her hopes and desires to have a life with him having two children symbolizes the dreams and aspirations of an ordinary woman as a wife and a mother. In *Kuweni Asna*, *Kuweni* cries with tears and questioning from king *Vijaya* and she recollects the past they built together. That symbolizes the support that she gave to her husband to build his empire but finally getting betrayed by him and become abundant with two children. Finally, she becomes an exile in her own land and got murdered by her own community. That symbolizes the pathetic plight of many women, therefore *Kuweni* becomes an eternal symbol of woman who belongs to the past present and future (Jayasena, 1964).



At the same time, it is debatable how to define *Kuweni* as a *Yakkini* with a violent behavior if she were begging love and protection from *Vijaya* – a human being? She had consummation with *Vijaya*, had human children from *Vijaya* and finally she laments pleading the reason to abandon her? It highlights the human qualities that is common to all woman kind such as fear of protection, loss of love care and being in fear of being abundant. It symbolizes the sensitive emotions and feelings of *Kuweni* as a lover, wife and mother. Therefore, the character of *Kuweni* is a complex personality with diverse emotions, feelings and physical appearance as revealed by the story from the above data sources.

The appearance of *Kuweni* has mentioned in different places in the form of shape shifting qualities. First, she appears as hermit who is spinning cotton yarns under a tree and she uses her powers to capture the 700 men to a chasm. ‘Then *the Yakkhini* seized him, and hurled him who cried aloud into a chasm. And there in like manner she hurled (all) the seven hundred one by one after him’ (Geiger & Bode, 1912, pp. 54–64). Eventually, *Vijaya* realized that *Kuweni* is a female devil with supernatural powers. The shape-shifting from one human form to another clearly depicts her superhuman powers, and her depiction as devouring the treasures from trade ships which were going near the coast shows *Kuweni* as a very powerful woman within her territory. The ability to attract the prince to win his heart and to be his spouse by developing an intimate relationship from the very first meeting clearly shows *Kuweni* as a woman who was gifted with charm to acquest the heart with her sensual qualities (Sturkenboom, 2014). The clothing, adornments and sensual pleasure of *Kuweni* is romanticized in a figurative language. “When the *yakkhini* had taken the first portions (of the 26 meal) that *Vijaya* handed to her, she was well pleased, and assuming the lovely form of a sixteen-year-old maiden she approached the prince adorned with all the ornaments” (Geiger & Bode, 1912, p 57). In *Kuweni Asna* and in folklore it says that she had 3 breasts, and the middle one got disappeared when she found her husband, it says that’s how he recognized *Vijaya* as her lover and husband to be. In *Kuweni Asna*, Gunawardena (2008) says that

“වෙන්වගොස් හිමි උතුම් කෙලෙස සනසමිද  
ලැම ලැමද කනතුනකින් එකක් ඉන් ඇති සෙනේ  
හිමිතුමකු දුටු දිනේ මැකකකී බස් ගෙනේ  
සිත සිතා මෙම වනේ උන් සඳෙහි නුඹ සෙනේ  
දුටු විගස එම තැනේ මැකී ගිය එම තැනේ  
එතැන් සිට හිමි සෙනේ තදව බැන්දෙමි...”

*How to get separated and comfort myself?  
There were three breasts and  
It said one will get disappeared when I see my  
husband, I was thinking about it in the forest  
then I saw you and because of your love, that  
breast got disappeared. From that day onwards  
I am deeply attached by your love” ( p.55).*

The future predictions of soothsayers are also another important component that can be seen in folklore, Here *Kuweni* recognizes *Vijaya* as her future husband with the soothsayer’s predictions and the transformation which is happening her body. It gives a logical interpretation for her to trust and love this unknown man, believing him as her future husband and helping him to capture power.

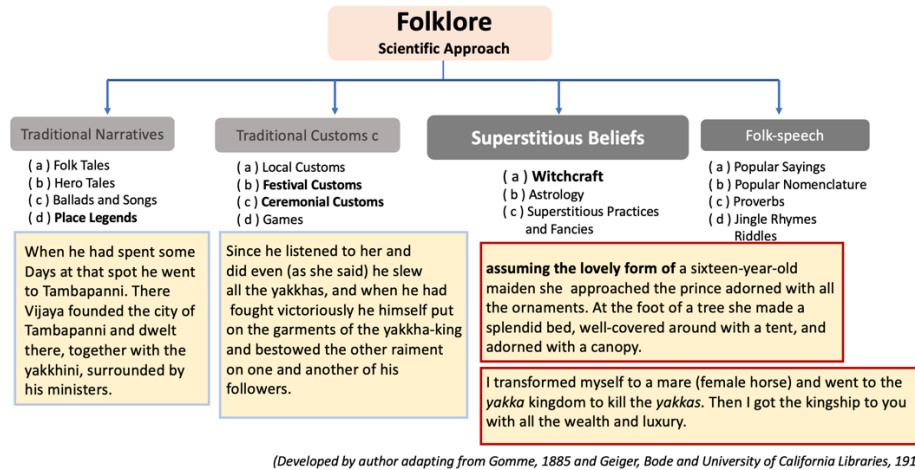


Figure 04: Folklore Analysis according to SA

Although *Kuweni* has been described as a *Yakkini*, in any of the places she was not described a daemon with an ugly figure. Upon receiving the food, she was pleased and transformed her appearance from a hermit to a very attractive sixteen-year-old young maiden. This metaphorically shows her physical and psychological transformation where the prince, infatuated by her beauty, accepted her as his spouse. *Kuweni* did not perform promiscuity with every man since she believed in true love with the predictions of the soothsayers, so physically and psychologically she transformed herself to a lovable woman and devoted to her husband and this can be identified as a turning point of her life, and the *Sinhalese* nation. As seen in figure 04, the whole story can be categorized under the main themes with their specific characteristics. Therefore, the SA and SSA help to identify the sensitive details of the personality of *Kuweni* which helps to identify the content of the story.

When *Vijaya* asked her to leave the palace to do the enthronement with a queen from India, in the beginning she laments. That can be clearly seen in *Mahavamsa* as well as in *Kuweni Asna*. She recollects their past and expresses her deep attachment towards him. But she had to go away with two children. Demising all the hopes in life can lead anybody to convert their selves to desperate feelings, so her anger turns out to be rage and then she cursed *Vijaya* and his successors on her death (Seedaraman, 2016). That is known as curse of *Kuweni*. The cursing practice in Sri Lanka can be identified as a channel for keeping physical violence in control but at the same time which is more powerful that it addresses to the psychology of a person (Claus-Bachmann, 2004). In *Mahavamsa* also it states that *Vijaya* did the enthronement in a festive manner with the *Pandu King's* daughter, but the curse is not mentioned there. It can be seen in *Kuweni Asna* and folklore. In *Kuweni Asna*, Gunawardena (2008) says that

“විජය රජ කුමරවර සපිරිවර පෙරහරින් ගෙනැර පුරවටට සෙද පඩිබිසව අභිසෙක කරවමින් සහපෙමින් දවසරින කළ සැපන කළ විපත දැක රැහැණි වූ ගිහිණි වූ යක්ගණි කෝප වූ දිවි වෙසයක් රැගෙන දෙගවිදුර රුදුරු වූ විදුරුමය දිවක් දිගුකර මහත් දොර සනක් සිදුරු කර දැදුරු කොට විජය රජු හෘදය මධ්‍යයට පොවතා...” ( p.55).

*“When king Vijaya accompanied the Padi queen with a beautiful possession and held the enthronement and lived happily with her, seeing the unreservedness happen to the yakkini she was full of anger and transformed herself to a leopard with very long sharp teeth and pierced the middle of the heart of the Vijaya with it ...*

It is believed that King *Vijaya* used to see this dream every night and finally became sick because of the curse of *Kuweni*. The successor of *Vijaya*, King *Paduwasdew* also experienced the same dream and in order to cure the curse *Kohomba yak kankariya* was introduced to Sri Lanka (Seedaraman, 2016).

### Conclusion

The story of *Kuweni* can be identified as an important narration to understand the socio-cultural changes that happened in ancient Sri Lanka, the historical background and customs and traditions that prevailed during that time. At the same time, it opens new pathways to explore this story by applying the scientific and social scientific categorization of folklore, which is helpful to understand the main themes under that specific folklore. The overall picture of *Kuweni* is an important role to study since she was the turning point of history of Sri Lanka but who has been condemned as a tribal leader, for she betrayed her own community.

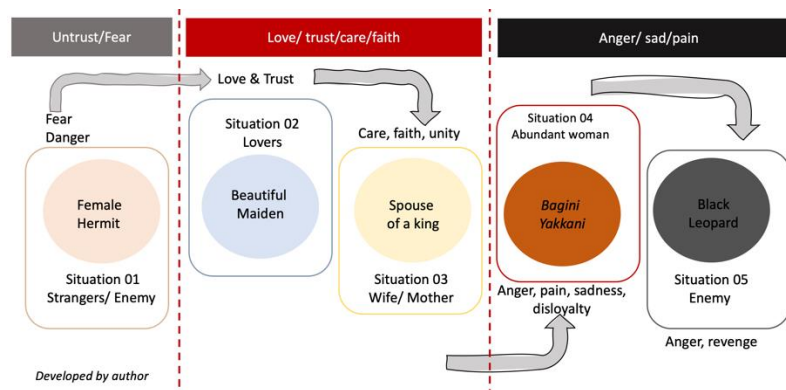


Figure 05: Emotional Journey of Kuweni

Nevertheless, the careful study on the story line and the emotional journey of *Kuweni* open sensitive details behind her behavior, actions and what forced her to transfigure herself during different situations in her life as shown in Figure 05. Understanding such sensitive details behind the folklore narratives, its practices and character helps to develop and revitalized the hidden qualities in a new impression with their true emotions and personality. That also helps to revitalize the personality of *Kuweni*, who symbolizes the contemporary woman in the

country. The feelings and emotions of an eternal woman can be identified in a same form, so that will be helpful to develop the modern literature and creative/visual arts in a more sensible manner which addresses the entire woman kind all over the world who symbolizes *Kuweni* in different time frames of their life.

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