

Ambaa Songs in the Oral Tradition of Fisher folk

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Abstract

Fishermen are known for hard work. The struggle they wage day after day against Mother Nature accounts for their physical and spiritual strength. It gives them the self-confidence to face any opposition with courage. The fishing communities living along the coast of Jaffna (including the study areas of Columbuturai, Passaiyoor, Gurunagar, Navanthurai and Mandaitivu) are a source of folk songs with their unique literary and artistic characteristics. The objective of the present study is to analyse the genre of oral literary tradition of *Ambaa* folk song existing throughout the Catholic fishing communities along the coast of Jaffna. It is intended to make an effort to identify the terminology unique to the fisherfolk, to trace the origins, background etc. of *Ambaa* folk songs and to identify the reasons and remedies for their obsolescence. Information used as primary data for this study includes field surveys, questionnaires and interviews while its secondary data consists of books, research studies, essays, research articles etc. Descriptive and analytic methodologies have been used to illustrate the origins and background of *Ambaa* folk songs and analytic methodology to identify their contents and categories. Obsolescent aspects of folk songs could possibly be revived by way of similar studies. Such studies could contribute to the rediscovery and analysis of the concepts of *Ambaa* folk songs and ultimately pave the way for a resurgence of folklore in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: fishermen, oral tradition, Ambaa songs.