

## **"Playing ethnicity": Study of H. C.N. de Lanerolle's plays.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**H**. C. N. de Lanerolle wrote a series of drawing room comedies from "He comes from Jaffna" (1934) to "Senator" (1947), which are set in the backdrop of the last phases of colonized Ceylon to the first years of independence. It is very clear that the author wants to show the metamorphosis of his main characters in this period of much political and social change.

These plays which were originally written as fund raises for the Y. M. C. A. have been revived from time to time to entertain an English speaking cosmopolite middle class audience in Sri Lanka.

The study will first ascertain the stereotypes representing different ethnic groups and their class based variations. It will then observe how the main characters change within a play and within a sequence of plays, as some characters appear in more than one play.

Close reading as well as reading between the lines will throw some light on the author's political agenda.

It will then discuss, why "Well Mudaliyar" and "He comes from Jaffna" have been the most popular plays, which are even performed today, and attempt to ascertain the entertainment value of the stereotypes.

With the help of interviews with theater people who have been involved in the recent production, it will then document how the plays have been received in these times of ethnic suspicion and armed conflict.