

An Exploratory Study of the Cult of Pattini in South Indian and Sri Lanka Societies based on *Silappadikaram* and *Panthis Kolmura*

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The legend of Kannagi and Kovalan is found in *Silappadikaram*, a Tamil epic composed during the Third Sangam period of South Indian literature. It contains information about the apotheosis of Kannagi as Pattini and the subsequent establishment of the cult of Goddess Pattini. Based on Buddhist and Jain philosophies, it was instrumental in establishing the understanding that chastity and total devotion to her husband could help a woman achieve an outstanding and venerable position in society. Therefore, although *Silappadikaram* is based on the story of Kannagi and Kovalan, its main aim is to convey the theme of importance of a woman's chastity and devotion to her husband. Upon studying folklore and the growth of the Cult of Pattini, it is possible to trace how the Cult of Pattini has travelled across the borders of India to neighbouring countries where it has now been established as a long established system of folk rituals. One such example is the case of King Senaguttavan who built and worshipped an idol of a virtuous divine woman who was known for her chastity and loyalty towards her husband, as mentioned by Nilakanta Sastri in his book about the history of South India. As far as the above historical studies are concerned, it becomes clear that the Sinhala devotional songs sung in praise of Pattini in Sri Lanka were based on the devotional songs sung in South India and in Sinhala Buddhist society; Pattini is considered the goddess of the goddess of both chastity and prosperity.

Based on the above evidence, this study intends to substantiate that Pattini is worshipped in Sri Lanka as the goddess of chastity as well as of prosperity, while she is worshipped in India as the goddess of chastity. A qualitative approach was adopted in this research.

Key words: Pattini, Panthis Kolmura Kavi, *Silappadikaram*, Nilakanta Sastri, Kannagi, Kovalan