

## FOLKLORE IN FASHION- PRESERVING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH FASHION.

Folklore has been an integral part of Sri Lankan culture for centuries and the story of Kuweni is one such entrancing narrative with historical significance, since it is directly linked to the origin of the Sinhalese nation. Kuweni's importance extends beyond folk narratives and is also evident in ancient literature, describing her as a superhuman being, yet her true identity remains shrouded in mystery. Her shape-shifting abilities, as described in various legends, make Kuweni a fascinating character worthy of contemplation from many perspectives. Folklore is distinct from mythology, as it contains factual elements such as practices and customs that have a solid sociological background. Therefore, it is essential to preserve them ensuring that future generations can benefit from the sociocultural and anthropological values embedded to narratives. Folklore in Fashion PhD study addresses the crucial question of how to preserve folklore in a way that resonates with contemporary society.

The study is conducted by Shashiprabha Thilakarathne under the supervision of Dr Sumith Gopura, Dr Ayesha Wickramasinghe from the Department of Textile and Apparel Engineering, and Professor Alice Payne from RMIT Australia. The findings in this stage of the study have shed light on the significance of indigenous craft traditions, including dyeing and weaving technique related to the folklore. The recurring themes of certain emotions and symbols throughout the story of Kuweni has been instrumental in developing samples for "responsible color" which is one of the significant global trends in sustainable fashion.

The study is currently progressing towards its practice-led phase in which textile product is developed using the findings of indigenous craft traditions. The

research team is collaborating with TextileR- Future Textile Industries, QUT Australia sharing their expertise. Shashiprabha featured the outcomes of this research as the HDR (higher degree by research) spotlight in TextileR Autumn Newsletter 2023. Collaborating with multi-disciplinary researchers from TextileR have created many avenues in developing folklore research into international standards.



Figure 1: Shashiprabha presenting her current outcomes of the study on responsible color extractions

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