

An Inter-Arts Study of the *Vessantara Jataka*

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Introduction

Vessantara Jataka is one of the past lives of *Gauthama Buddha* and it was the last life before the *Siddhartha Bodhisatwa* life. All the characters of the *Jataka* story have compared with contemporary characters in the Lord Buddha's period. This *Jataka* story was propagated in many of Asian countries such as India, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Laos and China. The Origin of the *Jataka* story belongs to the oral tradition and the evidence of the script is found after the 1st century A.D. The basic concept of the *Jataka* story is based on the charity and the gift which are the principal qualities of every human being in common sense. This *Jataka* story has been represented different fields of arts in various objects.

A poem represents the folk poem tradition belongs to *Kandy* kingdom period was found in Sri Lanka, called as *Vessanthara Jathaka Kavya*. The aim of the poem is much different from the *Jataka* story. Its main concern is about the relationship between parents and children. *Vessantara Jataka* has not only influenced the making of a poetic tradition, but also influenced the temple paintings, rituals and various therapeutic treatments in the chanting medium. The *Jataka* is found in both prose and verse as well as in other forms of expression. Chanting of the *Vessanthara jathaka kavya* called *Mala potha*

kiyaveema was a Buddhist funeral ritual in the medieval Sri Lanka. *Vessantara Jataka chanting day* is an annual festival where held in Thailand, is called *Mahachat* means the great birth. The aim of this festival is to express the supreme sacrifice to the society. There are many Buddhist religious places in Sri Lanka which this *Jataka* story has painted such as *Hindagala temple, Aluviharaya, Tiwanka Pilima geya* and *Maha Thupa* etc. As countries Sri Lanka, India, Burma, Thailand, China and Cambodia contributed by painting of this story. There are some differences of these painting from the text. There are also many sculptures in various countries related to the *Vessantara Jataka* such as India, Cambodia, Java and Sri Lanka etc. One of these sculptures implies a profound political concept of a liberal kingdom. The meaning of the *Vessantara Jataka* is more illustrated in a social dimension from this sculpture other than the text.

There is a stage play '*drushya Kavya*' called *Vessantara Gitanga Nataka* in Sri Lanka by playwright *Ediriweera Sarachchandra*. The aim of this theatre is to expose a political analysis of *Vessantara Jataka* and to criticize the contemporary political ruling system in 1970s in Sri Lanka. Leading songstress *Nanda Malani* in Sri Lanka who did

something new with refer to *Vessantara Jataka Kavya*. Her attempt was to expose the virtues of the mother. She released an audio cassette by the name of 'Kirimaduvel' means breast milk from the forest.

Object and methodology

The aim of this study is to explore and map the multiple dimentions of the *Vessantara Jataka* in different arts. While literary resources have been used extensively in this regard, an attempt has been made in this study to collect the details from *kandy* district, Sri Lanka through fieldwork.

Experimental results

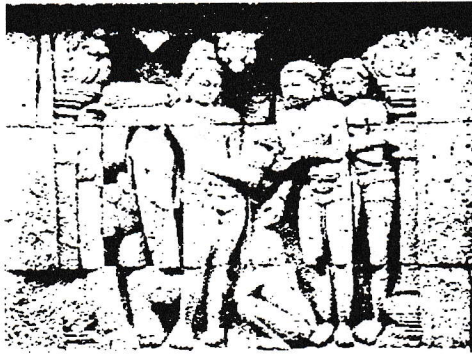
Sinhala Jathaka srories are studied in a new approach by this method. Primary and secondary schools' students will be encouraged to study classical Sinhala prose in different perspectives. This new method will be more effective for scholars

in higher educational sector who conduct their research in the field of classical Sinhala prose. As a result of this study a theoretical framework is introduced to analyze a text with its subsequent representations in deferent media. Furthermore multiple representation of a literary text such as phono-centric, scripto-centric and body-centric is explored through various genres in Asia. **Vessantara Jataka** story was originated as a **Pali** text and it was translated into many languages later. The aim of the text was to explain the charity and gift of **Vessantara**. There are different types of production based on this story in many Asian countries such as poems, rituals, paintings, sculptures, plays and audio cassette. The writers and Artists of these events try to say different types of aims related to the society and human sense.

Friends are making jocks to Amittatapana
- Cambodia



Friends are making jocks to Amittatapana – Cambodia



Charity of elephant and advice to
banish - Java

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