

## **Marginalized or Recognized? A study of the depiction of female figures of *Pancanarighata* in Kandyan Buddhist art**

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The artistic motif which is known as the *Pancanarighata* is a combination of five acrobatic women in the form of a pot. Motifs of this acrobatic composite tradition of art are ubiquitous in Kandyan Buddhist Art of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. and said to have been influenced by the South Indian Art. Examples of such can be found at *Ridee Vihara* and *Hanguranketha Palle Dewala*, which were under the influence of South Indian Art during the Kandyan era. This distinct art truly reflects the artists' expertise in creating composite figures, especially of female bodies. The current study will determine why these female acrobatic figures have been used as artistic motifs in Buddhist temples. Hence, this research is focused to identify Buddhist Viharas which have reliefs, paintings or carvings of *Pancanarighata*. The study will be done using primary archaeological sources and secondary literary sources. Contrasting to the composite female figures that revel in tight acrobatic postures to show off female elegance and passion in celebration of life, the Buddhist Viharas meant to provide the spiritual well-being of the clergy and the laity providing them with the essence of the Buddhist values to get away from the so-called illusion of life. Thus, the aim of this research is to identify whether this use of female figures was done to marginalize female figures by showing the transience of the beauty and the passion of life or to recognize female body as an important part of giving life and regeneration as influenced by the Hindu culture.

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