

## ***Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva* in the Buddhist tradition of art in Sri Lanka**

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*Avalokiteśvara* is a prominent *Bodhisattva* in *Mahāyana* Buddhism venerated in the Buddhist community throughout Asia. This research was focused on the representation of *Avalokiteśvara* in Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition of art, aiming at exploring how *Avalokiteśvara* has been portrayed as a symbolic icon of *Bodhisattva* in Buddhist art. The study used intertextual analysis of *Mahāyana* texts and *Avalokiteśvara* iconography to understand his role and representation in Sri Lankan Buddhist art. The study was focused on rock cuts, stone sculptures, and metal sculptures. The research identified two types of *Avalokiteśvara* statues in Sri Lankan Buddhist art, namely *Yogi Avalokiteśvara* and *Rajakumara Avalokiteśvara*. Different seating and head designs were discovered, such as *Vīrāsana*, *Rājalīlasana*, *Bhadrāsana*, *Lalitāsana*, *Jatāmakuta*, and *Kiritamakuta*. Several distinct *Yogi Avalokiteśvara*-type statues were identified in Sri Lanka, including those located in Giridara, Thiriyāya, Sithulpauva, Budhumuththeva, and Buddharuvagala. These statues were designed without upper body ornaments. In contrast, *Raja Kumara Avalokiteśvara* statues were found in complete *Raja Kumara* costumes, as seen in the Dambegoda *Selmuwa* and the Weligama *Kushtarajagala* statues. The statue of *Avalokiteśvara* in Thiriyaya was found to be designed as a sage. The country's oldest statue of *Yogi Avalokiteśvara* was found in Sithulpauva, reflecting the tendency to depict *Avalokiteśvara* as a sage. The study also explored the changes in the depiction of *Avalokiteśvara* over time, as recorded in oral tradition. It was noted how the images of *Yogi Avalokiteśvara* were initially reidentified as Lord *Nātha*. The *Avalokiteśvara* has developed a particular discipline in Buddhist art through various cultural understandings, establishing a vast range of symbolic icons of the *Bodhisattva*. Although the symbolism of *Avalokiteśvara* represented in different images of Sri Lankan Buddhist Art was unique to each of them, it was apparent that all forms bear a closely connected relationship.

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