

A comparative study on the concept of hell between Buddhist literature and Japanese literature

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As Buddhists, we are all aware of the concept of hell. According to the ancient Buddhist texts, we believe the existence of hell despite the fact that we have never seen it in reality. We might have heard several stories regarding hell, the people who have experienced death or who have heard the suffering voices from hell. There are many situations like these and our interest in such cases is ever growing. Somehow, due to these facts, people do believe in both heaven and hell. However, this research will mainly focus on the concept of hell. It is quite easy to see that the concept of hell has not been limited to just Buddhist texts or Buddhism. It has been introduced in literature as well and has shaped human society while enhancing the beliefs of people. The definition of literature is the body of artistic writings of a country or period that are characterized by the beauty of expression and form by the universality of intellectual and emotional appeal. This paper intends to examine the hell which was artistically created in Japanese literature. It further intends to compare the structures of the hell between Buddhism and Japanese literary works due to encountering some interesting differences between them. Therefore, the comparative study will be based on a Japanese book called “The Spider’s Thread” written by the great Japanese novelist Akutagawa Ryonusuke, and a Sinhala book called “Ooga Tharana Maga”, which is a genuine Buddhist book in Sinhala.

Keywords: The hell, Buddhist literature, Japanese literature