

A Study on the Contemporary Utilisation of the Creative Ability of the Artist to Illustrate Buddhist Proverbs in Paintings

I.M.T. Ilangasinghe

*Department of Paintings, Faculty of Visual Arts,
University of the Visual and Performing Arts*

sathsarailangasinghe@gmail.com

Soon after the arrival of Arahata Mahinda in Sri Lanka or the 'Mahindagamanaya' (250-210 BC), Sri Lankan literary art and mural art were formally established with the patronage of the state. Buddhism was one of the founding conduits of classical literature in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. Artists inspired by Buddhist literature have used literary documents as sources of creativity for murals. Accordingly, the primary objective of the research is to identify the artist's creative ability in drawing a detailed portrait of a literary document. The purpose of the research is to explore the applicability of the creative ability of the identified past artist to the contemporary artist. The research endeavours to investigate what visual techniques have been used by the artists in the past to illustrate Buddhist literary proverbs. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the artist's portrayal of the Dimbulagala 'Mara' street, the murals of the Thivanka Statue that depicts the 'Sasa Jathaka' story and the 'Sasadavatha' inspired by it, in order to examine the identity of each visual symbol. This research study will be conducted via a semantic approach as its main methodological framework. The study observes that, although the mural was created in such a way as to symbolise visual techniques such as the elaborate moon, 'Sakdevindu', 'Valakula', the placement of the moon as well as the positioning of the moon, the use of space, the process of formation of meaningful impressions through those signs becomes the end result of the creation. Furthermore, this study analyses the utility available to the contemporary artist based upon the feasibility of the work of the past artist. Hence, the study concludes that the artist of the past developed murals as an independent medium, where the visual signals that are intensified in the portrayal are the ones that reveal the contemporary cultural identities.

Keywords: Literary documentation, Buddhist proverbs, Murals, Creativity,
Contemporary utility