

The Ethical Value of Great Chronicle (Mahāvamsa), the Prime, Heritable and Historical Record of Asians

Yakkaduwe Sugunaseela¹, Niwandama Dhammissara²

ABSTRACT

The *Mahāvamsa*, the foremost chronicle of Sri Lanka or the Great Dynasty of Ceylon, elaborates the lineage of rulers from the arrival of *Vijaya* in 543 BCE to the reign of King *Mahāse-na* (334–361) (6th Century B.C. to 4th Century A.D.). This chronicle which continues to date is considered to be the authentic source that can be cited for the purpose of recognizing the uninterrupted historicity of Ceylon. On the other hand, *Mahāvamsa* reveals the historical, political and cultural evidences not only in Ceylon but also in the other lands in the Asian region. When the overall content of the *Mahāvamsa* is scrutinized, it is apparent that the purpose of compiling this chronicle is not only to record the historicity of Ceylon based on facts but to compile the ethical cultural and philosophical facts or admonitions based on Buddhist philosophical view. Showing examples through historical incidents the *Mahāvamsa* author conveys these messages to the listeners and engages them in practicing mental and physical good deeds and turns their lives towards an ethical way. Furthermore, in each ending of a chapter he indicates that ‘This chapter in *Mahāvamsa* is compiled for the serene joy and emotion of the pious.’ Therefore, by scrutinizing the inclusion of *Mahāvamsa*, a conclusion can be drawn that the intention of compiling *Mahāvamsa* is not only to reveal historically significant factors of Ceylon but also to contribute to develop cultural and human values by encouraging listeners to observe ethical doctrinal factors. In this paper, an attempt is made to point out and examine the ethical perspectives which have been added in ‘the Great Chronicle’ by the *Mahāvamsa* author with the intention of developing ethical values in the entire society.

Keywords: Mahāvamsa, the Great Chronicle, Ethics, Heritage, Human Values