

Restoration of Ancient History of Sri Lanka with the help of *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa*

Dr. Nadeesha Gunawardana

Department of History, University of Kelaniya,

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.07.2019.p9132
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.07.2019.p9132>

Abstract- The sources contribute to write history (Perera S. Lakshman, 2001:46). *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* is one of the oldest surviving sources, has gained its life due to the untiring efforts of Rev. Polvattē Buddhadatta. Initially, a Burmese copy of the *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* has found from Burma and later on its Pāli copy, as well has been found in the Mahākappinna Mudalindārāmaya in Vāliṭhara in Sri Lanka. Following the due clarification, Rev. Polvattē Buddhadatta is credited to have published this particular book. It can be speculated that this book has been written during the reign of king Vattagāmiṇiābaya (104-67 B.C.E). This can be illustrated as one of the oldest books available right at the moment and further, the way in which the Pāli language is used in this particular book proves the above fact. This book recalls us where Pāli, as a language was not highly used for the purpose of writing. Further, the book seems to have a lot of grammatical errors.

Though Sirima Wikramasinghe in the book of the Anurādhapura era mentions that *Dīpavaṃsa*, written before the 5th century A.C., was the first attempt, to write the Sri Lankan history by way of traditional historical reports (2014:2). It should be noted that *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* is much older than the *Dīpavaṃsa*.

Index Terms- history, chronicles, compile, stipulate

I. METHODOLOGY

The Pali and the Sinhalese translation of *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* compiled by Rev. Polvattē Buddhadatta were studied. I was able to compare historical facts which is in *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* with the chronicles of *Mahāvamsa* and *Dīpavaṃsa*. The evidence of the different texts permits us to conclude with some certainty of that there really existed.

II. MAIN TEXT

There are around 82 stories illustrated over there, while the name of the author has also been mentioned in the book. The book itself clearly demonstrates the fact that āchārya Dhammanandi, of the Pattikotti Vihāra in the Kaṇṭakarasolapattana, compiled this particular book. This particular viharaya is introduced as Saṇḍakonti in the book itself. It is understood that the relevant place does not exist in Sri Lanka and could be thought as a place, situated in the Southern India. The Kaṇṭakarasola pattana could perhaps be a harbour in the Chōla country of the South India

(Ellāvāla Hema, 1962:4). Professor Hema Ellavala has written an article named “Whether *Sīhalavattthupparāṇa* is older than *Dīpavaṃsa*?”, to the fourth volume of the history magazine of the Vidyodaya university in the year 1962.

Furthermore, Professor Hema Ellavala has illustrated that there had been a viharā, called Sīhala Vihāra, mentioned in an inscription of the Nāgarajunarkoṇḍa, belonging to the Vīra Purisadatta who lived in the second half of the third century A.C. The Theravādi monks who travelled from Sri Lanka had been involved in the propagation of Dhamma in this particular viharā. Ptolemy has mentioned a grand business center which was at the bank of Kriṣṇar River, called Kaṇṭhatakossīla (Ellavāla Hema 1962: 5).

Likewise, it is able to point out that a bhikkū who had migrated to India during the famine of Brahmana Tissa may have composed this book. Edward Hallett Carr has mentioned that history cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those who have written the texts (1962:1-25).

The division of the chapters has also not been done properly and which shows the initial stage of composing a chronicle. The author has presented the facts by using the Pāli stanzas as well as the paragraphs. Bōpitiya area in Ruhūṇa, Sēthapabbataya, Vattēgama area in Tissadanauva, Bōmaṅgama grāma in Anurādhapura, Kāmojja grāma in Ruhūṇudanaouva, Dīgāugrāma, Vilgama near the Sāgiriya, Kālakandara Vihāra at Sithulpaouva could be known as the places relating to the story telling. This consists of the stories, surrounded by the countries Gujarat, Gandhar and China. Accordingly, it could be admitted that the bhikkūs of Sri Lanka have had religious relationships with those countries in the past. The expectation of the writer was, not to present the facts on the Sri Lankan history, but to direct the listener to familiarize with the Buddhism. The book has been able to present a great deal of historical facts. The stanza mentioning below, extracted from Sāliya Kumāra Vasthu highlights the expectation of the writer.

dasavidhakusalēsu appamatthō – bahuvividhānāpathe
smaṅgibhūtō
sugathigathapathā vasōdhayithvā - sakabhavanaṇ viya yatha
dēvalokaṇ

The writing of this particular style attracts its reader deep in to the story (*Sīhalavattthupparāṇa*, 1958: 23-27). It has been mentioned that certain stories should be explained as the story that of the Chulli Upāsaka story, and this fact could demonstrate the fact that, listener is attracted deep in to the story while it is being explained.

King Saddhātissa is the main character of this book as per Mahāvamsa, king Dutugāmuṇu who fought and defeated king Elāra at an intense battle is highlighted as superior who is much greater than that of king Saddhātissa. Mahāvamsa devotes 11 of its chapters on king Dutugāmuṇu. This particular consideration given by the author of Mahāvamsa about king Dutugāmuṇu could perhaps be attributed to the strong foundation laid by Dutugāmuṇu in establishing a social structure which transformed into the cultural and political aspects of the island which was well-established and stable (Wāvage Sumanasiri, 2005:1-2). The contrary to the fact, main character of this particular book is about the king Saddhātissa and also the war, fought by Dutugāmuṇu against Elāra which is not highlighted in this book. As per the story of king Kāvantissa, it is understood that Vihāramahādēvi and king Kāvantissa had been brought up together since childhood (*Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa*, 1958:144). The above facts show that they have not met accidentally but had been known to each other since their childhood. In a story called Death of King Dutugāmuṇu, it was mentioned that having fought with prince Tissa, the king Dutugāmuṇu had been defeated several times by his brother Tissa. The way in which the minister of king Saddhātissa and a daughter Sumanā had been engaged in meritorious activities which have also been mentioned in this book.

Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa is the oldest available book which gives the love story of Sāliya and Aśōkamālā. In the story of prince Sāliya as narrated in the *Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa* also mentions the story relating to the previous births of Sāliya and Aśōkamālā. As per this story, prince Sāliya was a clever blacksmith. A man who is involved in framing came to see the blacksmith with ālvī, pork, tender leaves of Vēvāl in order to get the farming tools. The blacksmith who received those items made a wish to have thousands of gifts either in a form of a life of a god or human being by offering alms, prepared by himself. The alms was offered to four bhikkūs who had arrived from the Puvangu Island. Due to this meritorious activities he was blessed with to have a birth by the Dēvi or consort of king Dutugāmuṇu. A lot of treasure was followed by after the concealment of the prince. *Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa* mentions that prince was named Sāliya due to the fact that treasure had been overflowing for 12 long years while the country had been self-sufficient in rice during that period (1958: 23-27).

According to the *Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa* a poor old woman delivered a baby daughter in a city of Baranasa during the time of the Kaśhaya Buddha. This old woman was used to offer alms to two monks and one day those monks had arrived to receive the alms relatively earlier than the usual time. They preached Dhamma until the alms were ready. Having finished preparation of alms, the old woman advised her daughter to accord the two bhikkūs who were still preaching. Since the sermon got interrupted, the young lady patiently waited whilst, listening to the Dhamma. The old woman who was not convinced of the actual situation there said, “Thee the stubborn girl where had you been all this time?” and at this juncture the daughter having lost her temper retold her mother “Thee the sādol woman I had been listening to the Dhamma” owing to this insult and the demerit which she got owing to her harsh words, made against the poor mother she was born to a lower cast family in her next birth. She

was named Aśōkamālīnī since her mouth got radiant fragrance emanating from the flowers called Aśōka.

She was barely 12 years when she first met prince Sāliya on her way to Anurādhapura. She was frightened to have seen the prince and got covered herself by leaning to a nearby wall. Having noticed this, prince Sāliya had questioned as to who had been drawn such a beautiful picture on the wall. The servants had told him that it was not a true picture drawn, but a girl belonging to a sādol cast. The prince had asked his assistants, to be brought her to the harem and later declared that she could be his consort.

The King Dutugāmuṇu having heard that prince Sāliya got married to a girl from the Sādol cast expelled prince Sāliya from the city. *Sīhalavaththupakarāṇa* mentioned that having seen Aśōkamālā who fetched water in golden basket wash the feet of the king who was got mesmerized from her presence. The king had told “if she were not your wife, I would have taken her as my wife. Once you are in love, you disregard the cast, the creed and the clan”. According to this book it shows that king Dutugāmuṇu himself was not truly against the marriage of prince Sāliya to sōkamālā. In the *Mahāvamsa* 3rd stanza in 33 chapter gives some kind of narration of the prince Sāliya. It further mentions that he was even willing to abdicate the throne because, of the strong and the unblemished love he had with a young sādol damsel namely Aśōkamālā who lived in the sādol village established by king Paṇḍukābhaya (1967,33:1-3).

The *Vansaththappakāsini* which is considered as a tīkāva of the Mahāvamsa mentions that prince Sāliya was an extremely handsome young man, bestowed with a great deal of merits and having abdicated the throne and lived in the Sādol village established by king Paṇḍukābhaya whilst been seriously committed to Aśōkamālā. It further says that both of them were philanthropists in their previous lives. There was a blacksmith by the name of Tissa in the great village of Muṇḍagaṅga. His wife was known as Nāgā. Once a wild boar was given to him by a son of Vāddā in order to compensate the work he has done in the paddy field. This blacksmith having prepared a curry from that meat he wished that a pious arahat would arrive at his door step in the future. On the following day Dhammadinna thērō who lives in the *Thilaṅgapabbata Vihāra* of the Puvangu island, *Gōḍiyamahātissa* thērō, *Mahānāga* thērō of *Samudra Vihāra*, *Mahānāga* thērō of the *Kālavallikamaṇḍapa*, *Mahāsaṅgarakkitha* thērō of *Chōrakaṇḍakavihāra*, *Dhammagutta* thērō of *Patavivāḷaka*, *Mahānāga* thērō of the *Bhāthiyavaṅka*, *Malaya Mahādēva* thērō of the *Kōtapabbata* attended to the alms giving. The said person who gave alms died while recalling on the same action, which was meritorious enough to be born as a son of king Dutugāmuṇu. This was happened to be a meritorious deed done throughout his life.

In the meantime after the demise of the wife of above mentioned person born as the youngest among seven daughters of a senior carpenter of the village, situated at the Western entrance of the city of the Anurādhapura. Since gruel was had and it was scattered everywhere having returned after visiting the shrine the mother had asked “which slave woman had committed this?”. Having heard the above words, the mother herself was blamed by the using exactly the similar words and due to this insult, it is said that Aśōkamālā was born to a lower cast. Having seen Aśōkamālā plucking Hōpalu flowers in the garden prince Sāliya had accompanied her to his home (*Vansaththappakāsini*, 2001:484-485).

III. THE ECONOMIC FACTORS

Although *Mahāvamsa* talks less about king Saddātissa, *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* fills this void. The story about king Saddātissa appears in the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* gives an idea on the monetary transactions done in ancient Sri Lanka. King Saddātissa wanted to offer an alms giving to the Saṅga with the money earned by the hard work. The king had left the palace without informing anybody and had met a villager on the way, where he says that he is a labourer who is paid on a daily basis (1958: 28). If this news is accurate enough, it can be stipulated the fact that, at that time, there were people who were paid on a daily basis even by the 2nd century B.C.E in Sri Lanka. Further the above story narrates that, the king had been provided with paddy as his wage. It could be understood that in the distance past, the monetary transactions and also that of the exchange of goods had prevailed. The *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* further mentions that the wife of the king had taken juggery, Ghee and oil cakes by selling the paddy, received as the wage given to her husband (1958:29).

According to the story of Tissa the dress maker, king Saddātissa had donated dressmaker a house consisting of all the necessary items and goods, fifty thousand dresses and a village where treasure worth of thousand comes in to being (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958:3).

Most of the stories, mentioned in the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* illustrates that monetary transactions was carried out by means of goods. As per the Harithala tissa's story of the same book, it is explained that the paddy of an amuṇa had been taken as the wage. An amuṇa is equal to 40 lāha and 4 pāllers. While a Lāha being equal to 4 nālies. A nāli is equal to 2 pounds (Gunawardana. R.A.L.H,1979:64.) Harithalatissa gives a quantity of paddy in one Amuṇa as the wage given to his wife and ask her to bring meat, fish, milk and Ghee (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958: 5). King Mahāchūlimahātissa had also worked in sugar factory and received sugar as his wage and further he had taken steps to offer arms with the sugar given to him (*Mahāvamsa*,1950,34:1-6). In this respect king has received sugar as his wage. Likewise, it is understood that the payments had been done by means of goods. The story about prince Sāliya of the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* also speculates on sources which are able to understand that methods of exchange of goods had been in practice in the process of monetary transactions. The story further says that a certain farmer had obtained the farming tools by exchanging rice, pork, tender leaves of Vēvāl with a blacksmith (1958: 23).

The labourers who had worked in expecting a wage have also been introduced by as bhāthaka (*Niddēsattakathā in Kāmsūtra nirdēśha varṇaṇā*,2008:64). As per the story of the Mahānāga thērō king Saddhātissa had given money and goods for a villager (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958:78). The hundred male and the female workers and villages had been given to the Haṅkāla by king Saddhātissa (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958:81). *Mahāniddēsattakathā* gives information on a cross sections of people who has become servants by the birth itself. As per that it is clear that they had been servants both by the maternal and paternal side. As far as the *Mahāniddēsattakathā* is taken in to account some of the people had lived as servants until their death nearly because of solid poverty (2008:237).

Regarding the story of the Kuṅtha the goldsmith, king Saddhātissa has given gold for a goldsmith in order to get a golden plate made. Further, goldsmith had sold the same gold in order to

have alcohol and at the end of the story, the king who was impressed by the goldsmith had donated him a village, a Janapada and money (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958: 96). The reign of King Saddātissa's, having worked at night, a lady servant by the name of Chandrā had received a wage (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958:131). It is mentioned that the king having been impressed by her, also given her in marriage to a soldier where, a village and money had been given to him as a donation by the king himself (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*, 1958:131). Likewise it is clear that goods and money had been given as the wage in the second century B.C.E.

In the story of the sixty monks of the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* it is mentioned that a certain king and his consort had secretly left the palace and worked in a field as labourers. The king attended to the yielding of the harvest, the consort was engaged with the chopping paddy and for that received the wage (1958:126). Further a story in the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* narrates that a king had paid money for a minister who gave him security and protection (1958: 122). During the famine of Bāminithiya a certain women had travelled all over the towns with a massa looking for food (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*, 1958:137).

During the reign of king Saddātissa, a certain poor farmer mortgaged his daughter and gained eight kahavaṇu and with that money a land of 22 kiriya had been purchased, where the business making bricks had been started (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*, 1958:108). A certain mother and a father having mortgaged their daughter received the 12 kahavaṇu (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958: 125). When the famine occurred in the Jaffna peninsula a daughter had been mortgaged by parents and received the forty kahavaṇu. The name of the daughter has been given in the text itself as Māthudēvikānāga. The above story further mentions that having signed a treaty with his master Māthudēvikānāga got the permission to work in the night and received the 60 kahavaṇu (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958: 132). The thousand worth of a gem has been sold by a man at the time of the famine (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958:105). Sivijāthaka of the *Dhammasaṅganippakarāṇa* mentions that even bōdhisattva himself had the practice of offering alms daily to the monks (2008:66).

Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa comments on a book call *Saṅuktamahāvagga* which shows that it takes three dawn to go through this particular text. Likewise it should be noted that *Saṅuktamahāvagga* had even been composed by this time. It is mentioned that a bhikku who was on board a ship had recited by heart the caption of *Dhammasaṅganippakarāṇa* (*Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*,1958: 150).

As further *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa* a Nāga king had fought over chair made of red sandal. The king Nāga of Nāga dīpa got married to a daughter of the Nāga of the sea. The Nāga king of the sea gifted her daughter with a valuable chair made of red sandal as a dowry. Later on the father of the Nāga princess demised and the brother of the Nāga princess sent a letter to his bother in law in which it had been requested the sandal plate to be written to him. As the request unheeded a war irrupted between both of them. The Nāgas of the land were determined to make the sea as the Nāga kingdom itself. It is mentioned in the *Sīhalavattuppakarāṇa*, seen this war the Lord Buddha had visited Nāga Dīpa by air in order to disciplined the Nāgas.

The story of the Mahānāga thērō convinces that the Bhikkūs were offered with alms which included with meat and flesh. “You the dear daughter offer the Bhikkūs āl rice flesh and meat cooked with addition of gee” and also it could be noted that meet had also been consumed by the bhikkūs. The story of Harithālatissa’s describes that the alms consisting of lunivila leaves prepared and offered to by Sumanā have been refused and thrown a way in her presence itself (*Sīhalavattupparāṇa*, 1958: 4-8).

During this particular period there had been times where the Bhikkus visiting the Uttarāpatha in order to worship the sacred Bō tree. They having come to Anurādhapura from Ruhūṇa while being on board of a ship of Mahākoṇḍa got down Kāvēripātuna while gradually approaching towards to Utrāpatha through the wood. Mahākoṇḍaya mentioned in this text could perhaps be the port of Mahātitha. Likewise, it is understood that the port Godavāya in Ruhūṇa at that time was not much significant. Several stories appearing in this book says that the bhikkus of the Puvangu Dīpa have arrived in Sri Lanka during the time at which the alms were daily offered. It can be speculated that this puvangu island as the Island of Puṅkuduthive or an area situated near by the reservoir Nāchchadūva.

The names given to some places mentioned in the stories in the vicinity of the Surrattha Janapada are available in the *Sīhalavattupparāṇa*. Sahuthala area, Ālārabālapatthna, Pōrimāsi River, Koṇḍapūdi Vihāra, Chittago Vihāra, Mahānīdi Parvata, Upasiṅga Vihāra, Achchimanthasēla Parvata, Vikkiṅṅa Nagara are the places surrounded by the Surattha janapada in Indian subcontinent. Though Rev. Polwatthe Buddhadatha thērō who translated this book into Sinhala sent a letter to professor P.V Bapath the head of the department of Buddhist studies of the Delhi University in order to ascertain the authenticity of the name of those palces mentioned, it is apparent that a reliable reply has not been received. If the authenticity of the name of those places can be proven, the reliability, pertaining to the facts given in this book could easily be highlighted. The story of lay devotee of Mahādeva commenced on a situation where the people of Sri Lanka been on board of a ship had sailed Suvarṇabōmi (the land of gold) in order to bring the gold back home (*Sīhalavattupparāṇa*, 1958:81-84).

IV. THE SOCIAL FACTORS

The book depicted a picture on the social status of Ancient Sri Lanka. The story of Haritāla Tissa mentions when a daughter was given in marriage, a nāli of rice, pot with a lid, mortar and pistol, and a plate to eat the rice had given as the dowry (*Sīhalavattupparāṇa*, 1958:4). This seems to be the society that existed with the less equipments.

It is understood that kahavaṇu and half of it had been in the usage. There had also been occasions where kahavaṇu been offered having sold the hair. This particular book is one of the classic examples which narrates as to how, the people of Sri Lanka faced with famine Brahmanatīya. It is mentioned in the story of Bandagrika Tissa it is clear that the parents, friends and the people who had been known also perished and the people had also travelled to the up country looking for food during the time of famine Brahman Tīya (*Sīhalavattupparāṇa*, 1958, 102-106). The Story of Sumanā bālika stipulates on a time where young lady, offering her only a dress to a bhikku and later been attired in pothhiya, made of leaves (seehal 1958 110-112).

Piṅdapāta viśuddhi narrates a story which gives information on a husband and a wife had mortgaged their daughter for twelve kahavaṇu. This clearly shows that the children were mortgaged at a time of critical situations such as famine. According to this particular book, it is clear that the famine had lasted for about 12 years. The weaving, pottery, making of musical instruments and jewellery could be introduced as the industries prevailed at that time.

V. CONCLUSION

As far as the above facts are taken in to account, it is understood that this particular book, demonstrates the historical, social, economic and cultural aspects of ancient Sri Lanka, while giving a considerable contribution to the restoration of the Sri Lankan history as well.

REFERENCES

- [1] *Dhammsanganippakaraṇa (Attasālini)*, (in Sinhala) (2008), tran. S.P. Velagedara, Buddhist Cultural Centre, Dehiwala.
- [2] *The Dīpavaṃsa*, (1992), H. Oldenberg., Asian Education Services, New Delhi, Madras.
- [3] *Dīpavaṃsa* (in Sinhala), (1959), Kirellē thera, M.D Gunasēna, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- [4] *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, (1950), W. Geiger., Ceylon Government Information Department, Colombo.
- [5] *The Mahāvamsa the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, (1912), (trans.), W. Geiger, Oxford.
- [6] *Mahāvamsa in Sinhala I & II*, (1967), Sri Sumangala thera and Batuwantudāve Dēvarakshita Pandi, Ratnākara book shop, Colombo.
- [7] *Niddesattakathā (Saddammajotika)*, (in Sinhala) (2008), trans. Indraratna thera Hattotuve, Buddhist Cultural Centre, Dehiwala.
- [8] *Sīhalavattupparāṇa (in Sinhala)* (1958), Buddhadatha thera Polvattē, Anulā press, Maradana, Sri Lanka.
- [9] *Vansattappakāṣini*, (2001), Akuratiye Amaravaṃsa & Hemachandra Disanāyaka, S. Godage publishers, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

(Secondary Sources)

- [10] Carr Edwar Hallett (1962), *What is History*, London Macmillian, Co. Ltd.
- [11] Ellavala Hēma, (1962), “Is Dīpavaṃsa older than the Mahāvamsa”, edited, Karamada
- [12] Vimalatissa thera & M.P. Somaratna, (1962), *Sri Lanka Vidyodaya University Magazine*, vol 4, Historical society, Sri Lanka Vidyodaya University.
- [13] Gunawardana, R. A. L. H.(1979) *Robe and Plough Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early*
- [14] *Medieval Sri Lanka.*, University of Arizona Press, Arizona.
- [15] Gunawardana R.A.L.H, (1993), *Sivura and Nagula*, Society of Sociologist, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.
- [16] Perera S. Lakshman, (2001), “Sri Lanka Ithihasaye Mulashrayo”, edited, Hemachandra R, *History of Ceylon vol I*, Vidyalandara University.
- [17] Vavage Sumanasir, (2005), *Duttgamani Abhayarāja*, Tharnga printers, Maharagama, Sri Lanka.
- [18] Vikramasinghe (2014), “aithihasika Mulashrayo”, edited, Amaradāsa Liyanagamagē,
- [19] Ranaweera Gunawardana, *Anuradhapura uyyaya*, S. Godage publishers, Maradana, Sri Lanka.

AUTHORS

First Author – Dr. Nadeesha Gunawardana, Department of
History, University of Kelaniya, nadee@lkn.ac.lk