

The Significance of *Vessantara Jātaka* in Supplementary Treatises

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Abstract

In assessing the *Vessantara Jātaka* from the religious point of view rather than from the point of view of literature or history, it will be found that it is invaluable. This is a text that will continue to take place of importance in the heart of new generations. In this paper presented other literatures and brief account of *Jātaka* in addition to Minbu Sayadaw U Obhāsa who compiled eight of the ten *Jātakas* and the original *Vessantara Jātaka*.

Key words: *Jātaka*, ink inscription, wall painting.

Aim and Objectives

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Introduction

Jātaka Literature

Regarding *Jātaka* literature, there are two texts—*Jātaka Pāḷi* and *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā*. The *Jātaka pāḷi* is preached by the Buddha. The *Aṭṭhakathā* texts in seven volumes are published by Myanmar Buddhist Society as Myanmar version of the texts approved in the Sixth *Saṃgāyanā*.⁴ There are also seven volumes of English version in Roman letters.⁵ It was edited by V. Fausboll and published in London in 1877-97. Furthermore there are also Srilanka, Thailand and Cambodia versions as well.

The name of Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā

The word ‘*Jātakaṭṭhakathā*’ is a compound word comprising the words ‘*Jātaka*’ and ‘*Aṭṭhakathā*’. *Jātakas* are the life stories of Bodhisattvas in the previous existences.⁶

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⁴ Version of the Sixth Saṃgāyanā in Kabaraye 1954-1956.

⁵ HIL, 116.

⁶ Sadd, 10.

Aṭṭhakathā is a combination of ‘*attha*’ (definition)⁷ and ‘*kathā*’(word)⁸. Therefore ‘*Aṭṭhakathā*’⁹ means word that explains the meaning. Therefore ‘*Aṭṭhakathā*’ means the interpreted meaning of the words and the accounts included in the *Jātaka Pāḷi* text.

Composition of the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*

Before the exposition of the *Jātaka* stories, the commentator begins with ‘*Nidānakathā*’ (introduction) which comprises three parts namely ‘*dūrenidāna*’. ‘*avidūrenidāna*, and ‘*santikenidāna*’. The account of *Sumedhā* Hermit receiving divine communication from *Dipaṅkarā* Buddha and to being a deva in the celestial abode of *Tusitā* is described in ‘*dūrenidāna*’. The account of Bodhisattva from the existence as a deva in *Tusita* celestial abode to the time of the Enlightenment is treated in *Avidūrenidāna*. The life of Buddha from the time of the Enlightenment to the time of demise (*Parinibbāna*) is described in *Santikenidāna*. After dealing with the three nidānas, the narrative of each of the *Jātakas* is expounded in five portions. They are (1) the past narrative, (2) the present narrative, (3) *gāthā*, (4) exposition of *gāthā*, and (5) finale or conclusion. Regarding the number of *Jātaka* stories included in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, there are 550 *Jātaka* stories according to Myanmar tradition. The number of *Jātaka* stories as accepted by research scholars according to *Jātaka Pāḷi* and *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* of the *Tipiṭaka* is found to be 547 *Jātaka* stories. According to the Sixth *Samgāyanā* version published by Myanmar Buddhist Society at Kaba Aye, the ten great *Jātaka* stories are included in *Mahā Nipāta* and printed in two separate volumes, Sixth and Seventh volumes. Although 547 *Jātakas* have the *Jātaka Pāḷi* and the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, the full number of 550 *Jātakas* can be seen in the terracotta plaques of Anauk Phetleik Pagoda which was a meritorious deed of King Alaungsithu. The added *Jātakas* are *Velāma Jātaka*,¹⁰ ♦ *Mahā govinda Jātaka*¹¹ ♣ and *Sumedhapāṇḍita Jātaka*.¹² The antiquated records of 550 *Jātakas* are found as works of stone sculptures in Sanchi and Bharhut of India. The Ten Great *Jātakas* are of great value in the field of Myanmar literature and culture for their profound influences. Five hundred and thirty-seven *Jātaka* stories in accord with *Jātakas* in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* are

⁷ PMA, 37.

⁸ PMA, 287.

⁹ Dantaja >Muddhaja
Dental >Cerebralization
tth >ṭṭh

¹⁰ ♦ A III, 195-197.

¹¹ ♣ S III, 178-202.

¹² AP II, 306-321.

TBB, 134.

found to be depicted in terracotta plaques in the interior walls and on the walls of the first to the fifth terraces of the *Ānanda* Temple which is said to be built by King Kyansittha also called Hti Hlaing Shin in 452 M.E.¹³ Furthermore five hundred and forty-seven *Jātaka* stories from *Apaṇṇaka Jātaka* to *Vessantara Jātaka* as included in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* are found to be painted on panelled walls of Temple Number (1050/436) of the *Sangharājā* Group in Bagan area.¹⁴

Of the Ten Great *Jātakas*, the *Vessantara Jātaka* is included in the seventh volume of the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*. The commentator presents the *Vessantara Jātaka* in thirteen chapters and *Jātaka* finale. It comprises the reason for relating the *Jātaka*, the past narrative, and the fulfillment of *pāramitās* as King *Vessantara* in the present narrative. All the 786 *gāthās* included in the *Jātaka Pāḷi* are found to be expounded in detail in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*.

Contents of the Jātakaṭṭhakathā

In the *Jātaka* stories, the objective of *Jātaka* is to give moral lesson to the human beings in each *Jātaka* story. The *Jātaka* stories clearly show the fundamental faith of Buddhists which is belief in karma and its subsequent effect. Thus the *Jātaka* stories contain exhortation to adopt good conducts and to avoid bad conducts.

The Period of the Jātakaṭṭhakathā

This text is considered to appear in about one thousand years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha in the fifth century A.D.¹⁵ As this text originated in Ceylon, the history of Ceylon should first be studied. Most *Pāḷi* scholars consider Venerable *Mahābuddhaghosa* to be the commentator of the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*.¹⁶

One hundred and fifty years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha in the third century B.C, King *Sīridhammāsoka* of India convened the Third *Samgāyanā* for propagation of the *Sāsana*. The King sent missionary group *Samgha* to the nine regions after the third *Samgāyanā*. The *Samgha* sent to Ceylon for the missionary work was Venerable *Mahinda Thera* who was a son of King *Asoka* according to the Srilanka records. After the arrival of Venerable *Mahinda*, Buddhist *Sāsana* began to flourish in Ceylon. During the reign of King *Abhayavajragāmaṇi* (101-77 B.C) the *Piṭakas* were not only

¹³ B.T.L, 257-269.

¹⁴ Ibid, 352.

¹⁵ Vism V.I, B. HPL V.I, 389.

¹⁶ PT, 104. HPL V.I, 474.

edited but also inscribed on palm-leaves to preserve the *Sāsana*. Some regarded this to be the Fourth *Samgāyanā*.

The Commentator of the Jātakaṭṭhakathā

The *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* is considered to appear in about one thousand years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha with reference to the age when Venerable *Mahābuddhaghosa* appeared.

1 Supplementary works (or) treatises pertaining to Supplementary Treatises

1.1 Ink Inscription on Stucco

Ink inscriptions are the writings with durable ink on the walls on ceilings of stupas and temples.¹⁷ Ink inscriptions can be found on the walls or ceilings of cetis, stupas, temples and shrine rooms. The earliest ink inscription can be found in Lokahteikpan Temple which was built by King Alaungsithu (1113-1155 A.D.).¹⁸The ink inscriptions in Lokahteikpan Temple are inscribed about twenty-eight Buddhas and Bodhi-trees in ancient Mon letters, the account of Buddha's preaching on *Abhidhammā* at *Tāvatiṃsā* celestial abode in ancient Myanmar letters, the *Jātakas* excerpted from twenty *Nipātas* in ancient Mon letters, *Sutasoma Jātaka*, *Temiya Jātaka*, *Mahājanaka Jātaka*, *Suvaṇṇasāma Jātaka*, *Nimi Jātaka*,¹⁹♣ *Candakumāra Jātaka*, *Bhuridatta Jātaka*, *Mahānārada Jātaka*, and *Vidhūra Jātaka* in ancient Myanmar letters, the accounts of *Mahosadhā Jātaka* and *Vessantarā Jātaka* in ancient Myanmar letters, and the horoscope in middle age Myanmar letters.

The paintings depicting the previous lives of the Bodhisattvas⁷ are described in ink inscriptions. The events in Vessantara Jātakas are depicted in eight rows. Then the gist's of the events are inscribed in ink in ancient Myanmar letters.²⁰ Ink inscriptions similar to Lokahteikpan can also be found in Vineedho²¹ pagoda, *Thambūla* pagoda and Lemyethna²² pagoda in Bagan Minnanthu area. The first found ink inscription is in

¹⁷ MA V.III, 159.

¹⁸ LKHP,40.

¹⁹♣ Now it seems to mean Nemi.

²⁰ LKHP, 69-74.

²¹ LKHP, 155.

²² LKHP, 59. BIIT, 45.

Apeyadana Temple which was built by Hti-hlaing Min also called King Kyansittha (1084-1113 A.D.)²³ King Kyansittha admired and emulated the way King *Vessantara* perfected the *pāramitās* and aspired for the same results like King *Vessantara*. In addition to Lokahteikpan ink inscription, there are also ink inscriptions of the 550 *Jātakas* in Myinkaba Gubyaukgyi²⁴ and in an ancient Mon pagoda,²⁵ west of Taungbi and a Ceti called Thettawya.²⁶

1.2 Ink Inscriptions of Terracotta Plaques

Myanmar people have the habit of decorating the walls and terraces of stupas and temples with glazed relief figures depicting scenes from the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Jātakas* so that the devotees can cultivate devotion and faith. The relief figures are described with writings in ink. Such writings are called terracotta ink inscriptions.²⁷ At Shwesigon Stupa 550 *Jātakas* are found to be depicted with one glazed terracotta plaque for each *Jātaka*. In *Ānanda* Temple, each *Jātaka* is found to be depicted by 123 terracotta plaques. In Minagalar Stupa, each *Jātaka* is found to be depicted with 49 terracotta plaques.

Ānanda Temple, captions are inscribed in ink starting with the conception of Bodhisattva. Captions are not inscribed for all terracotta plaques. Only important events are found to be inscribed with ink. Bodhisattva as soon as he was born asked property from his mother. The ink inscription for this event is: "Gold is asked for charity."²⁸ In *Ānanda* terracotta plaques, the plaques depicting the perfection of *dāna pāramitā* is recorded with the gist of the event. It is a delightful presentation. Terracotta plaques depicting scenes from the *Buddhavaṃsa* and 550 *Jātaka* stories with ink inscriptions are found in ancient cities such as Bagan, Pinya, Mekkhaya, Sagaing etc.²⁹

1.3 Nissaya

Nissaya is word-for-word translation of *Pāli* texts.³⁰ In translation of *Pāli* literature into Myanmar language, *Pāli* Myanmar *Nissaya* texts have to be relied on. The *Jātakatthakathā* was printed and published by the Religious Affairs Department. There are seven volumes of *Chaṭṭhasaṃgīti* version. The first five volumes contain 537 minor

²³ LKHP, 23.

²⁴ BIIT, 16.

²⁵ Ibid, 42.

²⁶ APY, 55.

²⁷ MA VI, 222.

²⁸ A Studying of terracotta plaques of Maṅgalā Ceti Ten Great Jātakas in Bagan, 110.

²⁹ PPS, 5. (Drama and Drama Literature)

³⁰ SS,Ke,MA V.II,205.

Jātakas and the last two volumes contain the ten great *Jātakas*.³¹6 *Jātaka Pāli* and 547 *Jātakas* in *Jātakatthakathā* were translated into Myanmar *Nissaya* books by monks starting from the first part of Konbaung period. There are two *Nissaya* versions. The first version is the old *Jātaka Pāli Nissaya* compiled by Kyangin Sayadaw during the reign of King Tharawady (1199-1208 AD).

The other version is the new *Jātaka Pāli Nissaya* compiled by Pyay Sayadaw during the reign of King Mindon.³²The period in which *Jātakatthakathā* was translated into Myanmar in the original form was 1143-1181 A.D. during the reign of King Bodawpaya. The two Sayadaws who fully translated *Mahā Nipāta* called Ten Great *Jātakas* including *Vessantara Jātaka* in *Nissaya* way were Wetkhok Sayadaw of Bodawpaya period and Danttaing Sayadaw Venerable *Guṇālaṅkāra* of Chinbyushin period.³³ Again according to New *Piṭaka* History of Hinthada Myitkway Sayadaw U *Paññāvamsa*, it is known that Pinya *Upāli Mahāthera* translated the Ten Great *Jātakas* including *Vessantara Jātaka* into *Nissayas*.³⁴

1.4 Novels in Prose

Novels in prose are the *Jātaka* story written in Myanmar prose. The two Sayadaws who compiled *Jātaka* stories in Myanmar prose were Mondaing Sayadaw and Nyaungkan Sayadaw.³⁵ These two Sayadaws wrote 537 *Jātaka* stories in Myanmar prose.³⁶ Of the remaining great *Jātakas* of *Mahā Nipāta*, Minbu Sayadaw U *Obhāsa* wrote the remaining eight *Jātakas* in Myanmar prose apart from *Suvaṇṇasāma Jātaka* and *Bhūridatta Jātaka*.³⁷ *Suvaṇṇasāma Vatthu* was written by Venerable *Paññātikkha*, the disciple of Minbu Yangon Kyaung Sayadaw and *Bhūridatta Vatthu* was written by Venerable *Nandamedha*, the disciple of Minbu Sayadaw.³⁸ In attempting to write this dissertation, of the various versions of *Vessantara Jātaka*, reliance is made on U *Obhāsa's* *Vessantara Jātaka* which was published in 1963 by *Hamsāvati Piṭakat* Press of Yangon.

1.5 Drama Literature

³¹6 ZNNS, 17.

³² ZNNS, 18; TGJD, 36.

³³ TGJD, 37.

³⁴ ZNNS, 19. TGJ D, 36.

³⁵ TGJD, 37. ZNNS, 19.

³⁶. This way of writing is called Pāli word translation

³⁷ ZNNS, 19-20.

³⁸ ZNNS, 20.

The plot of the drama is composed by rhymed prose of dialogue.³⁹ Pyazat is a compound word comprising Myanmar word 'pya ' meaning show, direction, shown and 'zat' is a word derived from *Pāli* word *jāta* or *Jātaka*. Pyazat is called in Myanmar by combining 'pya' and 'zat'. Pyazat or drama is considered to originate from display of the events in *Jātaka Nipāta* and *Buddhavaṃsa*.⁴⁰ The earliest drama is the Manikat drama compiled by Wungyi Padethayaza in the late Nyaungyan period.⁴¹ The age of drama appeared because of the works of Myawadi Mingyi, etc. in the Konbaung period. U Kyin U wrote dramas through the succession of three kings, namely King Bagyidaw, King Bagan, King Shwebo. The inheritor of drama after U Kyin U was Salay U Ponnya. U Kyin U wrote nine dramas including *Vessantara Jātaka*.⁴²

In Myanmar drama literature U Kyin U and U Ponnya's dramas in prose appeared as an age of dram.⁴³ Regarding the *Vessantara* drama the complete manuscript is not yet found. U Ponnya did not write the whole story in the normal pattern. He conspicuously described the part of the plot he wanted to show. Based on the usages in the body of the text it is found to be written in the *Amarapūra* period. As the name of the author is not clearly written in the *Vessantara* drama palm-leaf manuscript, the author might be either U Kyin U or U Ponnya.⁴⁴ The Myanmar drama like Myanmar films was a powerful art of public relation which could attract the interest of people from all works of life. The *Vessantara* drama included in the Five Hundred and Fifty *Jātakas* still remains today as a popular classical drama. Therefore drama is an art of portrayal of a particular event with singing, lamentation, speech and dancing adapting to the human nature and trait.

1.6 Script for Oral Presentation of Jātaka Stories

Script for oral presentation of *Jātaka* is versified, ornate composition melodious to the listeners. It is based on the *Jātaka* story which was preached by the Buddha.⁴⁵ Such oral scripts were written by not only monks but also lay scholars skilled in *Pariyatti*. The *Vessantara Jātaka* came into the field of literature as oral presentations in the late Konbaung period. Numerous scripts of *Vessantara Jātaka* in prose designed for oral presentation or preaching appeared. Some of them were Mawlamyaing in Saya Yaw's

³⁹ M.A V.III, 54.

⁴⁰ PPS, 5.

⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

⁴² Ibid, 14, 18-19, 24.

⁴³ Ibid, 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 29-30.

⁴⁵ M.A V.IV, 242.

"*Vessantara* Hawsar"(*Vessantara* Oral Script), Pazuntaung Saya Kha's" *Vessantara* Hawsar Thitgyi I & II and Dapein U Maung Gyi's "Vessantara Hawsar I & II". It is also known that Salay U Ponnya wrote an oral script of *Vessantara Jātaka* beginning with "*Mahāṇṇavā Samsarā*".⁴⁶ But the script is unearthed yet.

Saya Kha wrote the oral script of the second volume of *Vessantara* Hawsa Thitgyi starting from the act of *Jūjaka* Brahmin asking King *Vessantara* to donate *Jālī* and *Kaṇhājina* and ending at the act of encountering of six kings. According to the text of the second volume, the first volume is known to contain 40 pages.⁴⁷

1.7 Sacred Verses (Pyos)

Pyos are sacred verses in lines of four syllables telling remarkable subjects. Pyos are usually composed setting forth the merits and attempt of Bodhisattva.⁴⁸ Although Pyo is a kind of verse in lines of four syllables, it is different from Ratu (lyrical ode), Mawgun (versified records of significant events) and echin (verses addressed to a royal child). Pyo is unlike mawgun verses which deal with any subject matter that appear in its age. Pyo usually deals with suitable stories from the Buddhavaṃsa and The Jātakas. These Jātaka stories are ornamented with Myanmar verses. The word 'Pyo' seemed to have been used by courtiers⁴⁹ as observed by Professor U Pe Maung Tin. According to U Cheint's of the *Kavilakkhaṇa Dīpanī*, there are four pyos based on *Vessantara Jātaka*.⁵⁰ The existence of 4 pyos is mentioned in Article 83 and 358 of the *Kavilakkhaṇa Dīpanī*.

- (1) The work of Pathama Taungphilar Sayadaw also named Venerable *Munindaghosa* (about 1592 A.D.). *Vessantara Jātaka* in Myanmar verse is taken to be created as a literary work in 954 M.E.⁵¹
- (2) The second earliest *Vessantara Jātaka* in pyo verse was the piece of literary work of poet U Noe of the first part of Konbaung period. According to the observation in the conclusion of the pyo, it is known to be completed in compiling on Tuesday, the fourth waning day of Tagu, 1137 M.E. In describing the introduction, instead of starting with the rain of a cluster of lotuses, that took place at *Nigrodhārūm* monastery, it begins with the birth of

⁴⁶ SA, 307.

⁴⁷ VHT V.II, 40.

⁴⁸ M.A V.III, 51.

⁴⁹ MST, 62.

⁵⁰ KLD, 130, 199.

⁵¹ MSS. V.I, 316.

Bodhisattva prince and *Vessantara Jātaka* was written in full. It is said to be eight years earlier than *Vessantara Jātaka* in Myanmar prose. Another version known as "*Jātivara*" is also known to exist.⁵²

- (3) The third version was the work of a noted poet, Twinthin Taik Wun *Mahā* sithu U Htun Nyo. The age of the literary work was 1160 M.E. The poet was 72 years in age.⁵³ The *Jātaka* was fully described starting from the act of *Phussatī devī's* prayer to the finale.⁵⁴ The essence of this *Jātaka* is the nobility of *dānapāramitā*, (the virtue of charity). It is oriented to *Dhamma* grounds.⁵⁵
- (4) The name of the poet who wrote the last version is unknown. The year of completion of the text is mentioned in the conclusion. According to U Hla Tin's remark, a different version of *Vessantara Pyo* is said to have been found by Sayadaw Venerable *Vāsa* of Mandalay Khinmakan Taik. The first leaf of this manuscript is missing. At Yangon University Library, this manuscript has lost the first and last leaves. It is said to be completed in copying in 1201 M.E.⁵⁶

1.8 Wall Paintings

In Myanmar, Buddhists pay homage to the Buddha in various forms such as votive tablets of *Buddhavamsa*, relief figures in terracotta plaques, and paintings. The earliest mural decoration with paintings of the events in *Buddhavamsa* and *Jātaka Nipātas* are found in Bagan period temples, *sīmā* or (Chapter-house) monasteries, etc.⁵⁷ In Bagan period decoration with paintings of 550 *Jātaka* stories was very popular. Accordingly almost every temple, monastery and Tazaung is found to be decorated with paintings of 550 *Jātaka* stories.⁵⁸ Captions are inscribed in Mon language or Myanmar language below the depicted scenes of the 550 *Jātakas*.⁵⁹ The mural paintings of 550 *Jātaka* stories in Gubyaukgyi, Myinkaba area of Bagan are the earliest.⁶⁰ As the *Jātaka* stories are numerous, one *Jātaka* is painted in a small square space with selected principal scene from

⁵² MSS. V.I, 317.

⁵³ MST, 195.

⁵⁴ MSS V.1, 318.

⁵⁵ MST, 195.

⁵⁶ MST, 319.

⁵⁷ SMB, 3. Figure, 12-18.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 10.

each *Jātaka*.⁶¹ In the Gubyaukgyi temple in Wetkyi Inn area of Bagan although one painting of the event in each of the 550 minor *Jātaka* stories was drawn in a square space, the Ten Great *Jātakas* were given 10 to 20 scenes for each *Jātaka*.

These are also the best works.⁶² Furthermore the scenes of the 550 *Jātaka* stories are also painted in the lower part of the walls in Tilokaguru Cave.⁶³ In Phokala Pagoda of Shwesayan the scenes from 550 *Jātakas* including *Vessantara Jātaka* are painted wallfull.⁶⁴ Also in the pagodas of Khinmon Village, the walls are mainly decorated with painted scenes from the Ten Great *Jātakas* including *Vessantara Jātaka*.⁶⁵ Paying homage with painted scenes of the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Jātaka* is performed with the aim of generating veneration, respect and faith in Buddhism. Furthermore the depicted scenes of *Jātakas* also contain natural and pastoral scenes, the wearing apparels, the articles used and artistic works reflect the different ages like a burnished brass mirror.⁶⁶

1.9 Classical Songs and Declaration of *Sāsana*

Musical composition to be sung with or without musical instrument is called a song. Songs which are known as kyo, bwe, thichinkhan, patpyo, yodaya, etc. sung traditionally by Myanmar are called classical songs.⁶⁷ U Pyon Cho's song beginning with "Taungzambu paing" adapted from the Thai and the song beginning with "Taw Wingaba Marlar kyaing kyaing hmway pyant thin" briefly tell Maddidevø's search for fruits, *Puṇṇa*'s receiving of offering, and the Sakka's receiving of offering. In 1258 M.E., Meiktila Phontawgyi of Tayokemyo Myingyan village Kyaukyan Tawya wrote *Sāsana* declaration of *Vessantara* which begins with "Athinchay lay-yat, ta thein kat hmya phiup paramī* ." This composition begins with *Vessantara Jātaka* through the Enlightenment of the Buddha up to the present *Sāsana*. The composition style in prose mixed with rhymed expressions. This *Sāsana* declaration was published by Mandalay *Guṇavatī* Press in 1284 M.E.⁶⁸

1.10 Stories in Pictures

⁶¹ Ibid, 6.

⁶² SMB, 11.

⁶³ Ibid, 21.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 24.

⁶⁶ SMB, 1-2.

⁶⁷ M.A V,IV, 189.

⁶⁸* oacsFav;&yfwodef;uyfrsSjzfnf.tyfyg&rD PLWMD, 345, 415.
SA, 312.

"Yokeyya zatlan" (Stories in Pictures) is a combination of "Yokeyya" (showing pictures) and "zatlan"(story). "Yokeyya" is a book of story shown with pictures.⁶⁹ "Zatlan" are the events contained in traditional drama, marionette, movies, dramas, novels, etc.⁷⁰In the field of Myanmar tradition and matters, effort is made to get the devotees acquainted with the events of Buddha's previous lives using various means of presentation so that they can admire and take the examples shown by the Buddha. In such attempts, story in pictures plays an important role. In drawing the illustrated *Jātaka* stories, Minbu U *Obhāsa's* 'Illustrated *Jātaka Vatthu*" including *Vessantara Jātaka* was published by Mandalay *Padetha Pitakat* Press in 1325 M.E.

The artist U Ba Kyi drew illustrated stories of the Ten Great *Jātakas* in four volumes. The first volume was published in 1975, the second volume in 1976, the third volume in 1977 and the fourth volume in 1978 from Yangon Myawady Press.⁷¹ The stories in pictures can easily be read by all ages. As the stories are illustrated in colors, they are popular. The illustrated *Jātaka* stories form an effective way of guidance for moral development of children.

Conclusion

Myanmar is a country where Theravāda Buddhism thrives, Buddhists study the Ten Great *Jātakas* pertaining to the Buddha etc. *Vessantara Jātaka* is the presentation of King *Vessantara's* exemplary acts of charity. In the foremost section of the *Vessantara Jātaka*, the vocabulary of *Jātaka*, and the appearance of *Jātaka* literature are presented in detail in the introduction. The Five Hundred and Fifty *Jātaka*. Stories depicted on the walls of the temples in Bagan, ink inscription, paintings, terracotta depiction, and the captions written in Pāli, and ancient Mon inscription stand witness to the invaluableness of the *Jātakas* and *Buddhavaṃsa*. Lokahteikpan ink inscription is found to be the earliest Myanmar prose on the Ten Great *Jātakas*. The *Vessantara Jātaka* which has taken place in the heart of successive generations is a great text that can be studied on the usages of Myanmar words, rhetorical composition, metaphorical uses and similes, and short-to-the-point expressions.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my special thanks to Dr. Mu Mu Myint, Rector of Taunggyi University, Dr. Win Win Ei, Pro-Rector of Taunggyi University, I would like to express appreciation and thanks to Dr. Kay Thi Kyaw

⁶⁹ M.A V.IV, 40.

⁷⁰ M.A V.II, 52.

⁷¹ Ten Great *Jātakas* Illustrated stories in picture, V. III.

(Professor Cum Head), Dr. Thandar Htwe (Professor), Department of Oriental Studies, Taunggyi University, for her guidance and encouragement for my research.

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