

## **The Content and Contextual Study of Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta and its Relevance in the Modern World**

**D.C. Kirtiraj**

### **ABSTRACT**

It is said that during the period of 307 BC and 267 BC, Sri Lanka was ruled by King Tissa, who later became popular as King Devanampiya Tissa. Arahant Mahinda Thera, the son of King Ashoka and his companions- four Bhikkus, one Samanera and one layman arrived on Missaka Mountain near Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka now known as Mihin-tale. The Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta was recited by Mahinda Thera to the King of Sri Lanka who then sought refuge in the Triple Gems; the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Thus Buddhism was reintroduced to Sri Lanka in 247 BC, and it is believed to have happened on the Full Moon day of June. The day is celebrated as Poson in all over Sri Lanka with gaiety and enthusiasm so as to mark this important historical event. The question, however arises in what context and why Mahinda Thera selected this sutta to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

In fact, this sutta is based on the profound teaching of the Buddha. It is one of the most effective suttas based on the simile of elephant footprints to introduce Buddhism to the fresher non-Buddhist folk. Apart from the qualities of the Buddha, it also discusses the gradual path of training on sila, samadhi and panna leading to the fruition (magga phala) of direct knowledge about the past births, dying and reappearing of the beings and the wisdom that is knowledge about the destruction of mental influx. It starts with the dialogue between Janussoni; a Brahmin and a recluse Pilotha Vacchayana, who became a disciple of the Buddha by virtue of the qualities of the Buddha to influence others. Pilotha narrates Janussoni that the Buddha is the only enlightened one and awaken one and he can say this seeing His big foot print just as a skillful forester understands the bull elephant based on his hoof prints on the ground in a jungle. Inspired by Pilotha, Janussoni met Buddha and got influenced by him when he rejected the praise of recluse Pilotha about Him. Buddha tells him that any outsider regardless of his status, caste or Varna can reach the goal of Arahata ship if he walks along the path of the Dharma as taught by Him. Janussoni, a Brahmin then took the refuge of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Taking the clue from the Buddha himself, Mahinda Thera too selected the same sutta to introduce Buddhism to the non –Buddhist outsiders.

The present paper is based on the content analysis, context and relevance of Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta in Majjima Nikaya of the Pali canon, and its relevance and importance in modern world today.

**Keywords:** *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta, content analysis, context and modern world.*

Institutional Affiliations: Bharti Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Social Sciences Center, Pune, (India).

Email: drkirtiraj67@gmail.com