

The Elephant in Gautam Buddha's Life, Jatakas and their Depiction in Sculptures and Paintings

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ABSTRACT

There were two major events in Gautam Buddha's life in which the elephant had a prominent role. The first event was related to Gautam Buddha's birth and the second one was his miracle at Rajgriha.

Jatakas are the stories of previous births of Gautam Buddha. Before he received the Bodhi (Great Enlightenment) he was born in many births in different forms like a king, elephant, monkey, etc. After passing through these various births finally he was Enlightened. In these Jatakas, Gautam Buddha appears as a Bodhisatva. These Jataka stories are used by Gautam Buddha's disciple to spread their Dhamma.

There are a lot of Jataka stories in which Bodhisatva had been born as an elephant or an elephant is the main character in those stories.

These two events in Gautam Buddha's life and Jataka tales are depicted in the forms of sculptures and paintings at many Buddhist monuments in India as well as countries where Buddha Dhamma reached like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Siam etc.

In this paper we shall take a collective review of various art forms where the above mentioned stories are used as themes.

Keywords: *Buddha, Jatakas, Bodhisatva, Elephant*

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