

## Identification of the Buddhist Temple Paintings Depicting the Features Conjoined to the Early Modern Transport System

Kusumsiri Kodithuwakku<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Different kinds of carts and chariots have been added to the transport system in the course of history and they can be identified among the Buddhist temple paintings in Sri Lanka, particularly in the low-country. Among these, paintings some depict the features of early – modern transport system rarely found in murals in the Buddhist temples located in coastal regions belonging to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The *Dvibhummikaramaya* at Galketiya in Galle and *Subodharamaya* at Karagampitiya are belonging to the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century carry examples on this subject. These paintings are based on religious themes however; the artists were not in a position to be devoid of modernity that they experienced in day-to-day life. As a result, a steam powered train and two road bridges have been included in their paintings. One of the paintings of *Dvibhummikaramaya* contains a railway station with a steamed engine and a station master carrying a tablet. There it is recorded a number “ N 20 ” ( N as a mirror image) in front of the locomotive engine to indicate that it is a “ N ” class locomotive which had been used only in the narrow-gauge railway line. Two paintings of *Dvibhummikaramaya* depict road bridges and two tunnels at both ends, built of bricks together with two protective fences in both sides which is only an imagination of the artist. Nevertheless, a painting in the *Sathsathi Viharaya* in *Subodharamaya* built in 1897 reflects an arch-bridge more prominently. The arches of the bridges are shown in segments in four spans and paid an attention to the parapet walls that are on both sides. The bridge is represented as a masonry arch-bridge belonging to the period of 1850 and 1900AD. The objective of this paper is to identify the manner in which modern features were absorbed into temple paintings conjoining the early-modern transport system.

**Key Words:** *Buddhist temple paintings, Dvibhummikaramaya at Galketaya, Subodharamaya at Karagampitiya, Steam powered train, Road bridges*

---

<sup>1</sup> Visiting Lecturer, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Museum Keeper, Jetavana Museum, Central Cultural Fund, Anuradhapura  
kusumsiriko@gmail.com