

A review of the social backgrounds of the Kandy and Matara literature periods, according to the “Pali Attaka”.

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An element which consists of eight parts is referred to as *Attaka* in Pali. This word is built from the *Ashtaka* of Sanskrit. The “Ganga Shatakaya” is the oldest poem in the history of Attaka literature which has been written by the great writer Walmiki with the purpose of giving thanks to the river Ganga. While this poem refers to water as a noble element Vaidika literature and the Rig wedaya in general indicate that all water, fire and the wind are noble elements. On the other hand the gods like ‘Indra’, ‘waruna” and ‘Agni’ are more powerful and respectable according to above mentioned literatures. The roots of the concept of *Attaka* is found in the Rig wedaya and there are eight parts such as ‘Guhattaka suththa’, ‘Dhuttattaka suththa’, ‘suddhattaka Suththa’ ‘Jayamangala attakaya’, ‘Seehalinda attakaya’ ‘Paramaththaka suththa’ of attaka wagga in Pali attaka suththa nipatha. Among these, Jayamangala attaka and seehalinda attaka are the oldest attaka in Sri Lanka. As literature progressed the attaka was written for Lord Buddha, the kings and other great people in Sri Lanka. The political background of Kandy and Matara became more complex after the colonial period and the standard of literature plummeted as a result of subsequent wars and the poor political conditions. One of great heroes of Sri Lanka, Weliwita Saranankara fought against the Ganinnanasela, re-established the Upasampadawa and paved the way to free of religion and the power of the literature. The social conditions of the Kandy and Matara period have been revealed by the pali Attaka as below.

1. Details of mudali and wasala mudali.
2. Details of the previous cast system.
3. Administration of the British governors.
4. Literature and the religious development by weliwita Saranankara there.
5. How to cut off the literature from the religion.
6. Usage of the literature for social benefits.

Key words: Attaka, social effects, literature, British governs, cast, religion.