



WERE THE VERSE-DRAMA DISREPUTABLE ONLY FOR BHIKKUS?

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When defining verse-drama considering verse and drama as two different terms, they are defined separately in two meanings. When verse-drama is considered as one single word exclusively, the second definition could be accepted as correct. Verse-drama is considered as profane in terms of Buddhist teachings and ecclesiastical codes such as *Dambadeni Kathikāvatha* code and other laws. According to *Dambadeni Kathikāvatha* and *Karmavibhāgaya*, verse-drama categorically refers to a classification of drama as ‘Kavnalū’ or ‘Kavinalū’. This position is confirmed by poetic texts composed by Sri Lankan Buddhist Bhikkus in different languages namely, Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala. Further, it is assumed that the laws imposed meaningfully according to above sources in respect of verse-drama should not be considered as obligatory. However, verse-drama and music are a taboo for Buddhist Bhikkus according to Buddhism. But, it could be implied by the factors introduced by the sources such as *Mahāvansaya* and other chronicles that Buddhist Bhikkus have been accustomed within the usage of poems and drama exercising as literary compositions. It is a multitude probability that verse-drama or kavnalūwa / kavinalūwa which were prohibited for Buddhist Bhikkus, were not forbidden for laities. But certain factors have been found in contrast with the above perception. Therefore, the objective of this Research is to ascertain as to whether verse-drama were considered as disreputable only for Buddhist Bhikkus. This research is based on the text titled as, *Karmavibhāgaya*, said to have been composed during the Polonnaruwa era. Further, in examining verse -drama, a major part of this study, texts such as *Abhidarma Atuwāwa*, *Dambadeni Kathikāvatha*, Sandesha poetic compositions and *Budugunālankāraya* were employed. In addition to these texts, *Mahāvansaya* and other literary works composed by erudites regarding the above topic were considered at certain phases. Accordingly, this research was conducted based on primary, secondary and tertiary sources, fundamentally.

As such, it could be concluded that verse-drama referred to as Kavnalūwa / Kavinalūwa were set apart for laities and Bhikkus as irreligious to follow during the time of *Karmavibhāgaya* was composed.

Keywords: *Verse-drama, disreputable, Karmavibhāgaya, Bhikkus, laities*