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A STUDY OF VERSE NARRATIVE IN THE PALI JĀTAKA  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SECTIONS X-XI



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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF VERSE NARRATIVE IN THE PALI JĀTAKA

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SECTIONS X-XI

The aim of this thesis is to furnish a textual and interpretative study of the verse material of the Jātakas primarily based on Sections X-XI. The choice of these two sections for this study was chiefly prompted by the fact that in the majority of them outline narratives and simple themes can be obtained from the verse without any assistance from the prose. It has been found that the verse section, generally, contains material which reflects modes of ethical and other thought, not specifically Buddhist but common to all the main religious groups of ancient India; and this appears to constitute evidence of ancient Indian narratives antedating the rise of various schools of religious thoughts of sectarian character. This naturally leads one to the inference that the basic verse narratives, altered perhaps but not totally transformed, have been maintained, with new interpretations and explanations in prose form up to the period of the formation of the Pali Canon.

A number of Fausbøll's readings and a number of the interpretations incorporated in the Pali-English Dictionary (PTS) urgently require re-consideration. In view of the metrical - and hence inexact - nature of the standard PTS version of the Jāataka



translation, it has been found necessary to provide a new English prose translation to accompany the text.

This study is divided into two main parts:

The first part consists of four chapters dealing with the subject-matter mainly of the selected Jātakas. In chapter I, the origin and development of the Jātakas genre is discussed. The constituent parts of a Jātakas are analysed in chapter II, illustrating their historical relation to one another. Chapter III examines the basic features of the early Indian narrative art and their survival in the Jātakas literature. The final chapter is devoted to a metrical analysis, with the intention of establishing the fact that the original features of Jātakas prosody embrace both neo-Vedic and classical procedures.

The second part comprises the translation of each verse and interpretative notes on it. A synopsis of the story is added to each Jātakas in order to make it easy to understand how the prose section of the respective Jātakas has developed into the present form.

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