

## **Muvadevdavata as a political Irony**

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මුවදෙව්දාවත යනු දැනට විද්‍යමාන වන පැරණිතම සිංහල කාව්‍ය ග්‍රන්ථයයි. මධ්‍යදේව ජාතකය (09) ඇසුරු කොට ගත් එම කෘතිය අලංකාරවාදයට හා මහාකාව්‍ය සම්ප්‍රදායයට අනුගත වූ බණ්ඩ කාව්‍යයකි. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ (1945), යූ.ඩී. ජයසේකර (1964), සුවර්ත ගමිලත් (1998) ඇතුළු බොහෝ ප්‍රමාණික විචාරකයන්ගේ පිළිගැනීම වන්නේ එය අන්‍යෝවිතාසයෙන් යුතුව වන දුර්වල කාව්‍යයක් බවයි. එහෙත් වැලිවිටියේ සෝරත නිමි (1966), ගාමිණී දැළ බණ්ඩාර (1998) වැන්නන් එහි සාධනීයතා පෙන්වා දී තිබේ. මුවදෙව්දාවතේ දේශපාලනික උත්ප්‍රාසයක් පවතී ද?, එහි දේශපාලනික කතිකාව කවරාකාර ද? යන ගැටලු මුල් කොට ගත් මෙම අධ්‍යයනය ගුණාත්මක පර්යේෂණ මූලධර්ම යටතේ ප්‍රාථමික හා ද්විතීයික මූලාශ්‍රය ඔස්සේ සිදු වූවකි. මුවදෙව්දාවත සංස්කරණ සහ මහාවංශාදි ඓතිහාසික කෘතිවල සංස්කරණ මෙහි දී ප්‍රාථමික මූලාශ්‍රය වශයෙන් විමසා බැලුණු අතර නූතන විචාරක මත ඉදිරිපත් ව ඇති පොත්පත්, සඟරා ලිපි ආදිය ද්විතීයික මූලාශ්‍රය වශයෙන් විමසා බැලිණ. අන්තර්ගත විශ්ලේෂණය සහ තුලනාත්මක විමර්ශනය යටතේ දත්ත විශ්ලේෂණය කෙරිණ. සිංහල පද්‍ය සාහිත්‍යය අතුරින් මුවදෙව්දාවත නම් ගී 164කින් යුතුව වන කුඩා කාව්‍යයක් එයින් දේශපාලනික කතිකාවකට අදාළ වන කොටසක් පමණක් මෙම අධ්‍යයනය සඳහා සීමා කොට ගැනිණ. මෙම අධ්‍යයනයට අනුව මුවදෙව්දාවත එම යුගයේ දේශපාලනික පසුබිම ඇසුරු කොටගත් උත්ප්‍රාස කාව්‍යයක් වශයෙන් රචනා වී ඇති බව නිගමනය කළ හැකි විය.

**ප්‍රමුඛ පද :** සිංහල කාව්‍ය, මුවදෙව්දාවත, දේශපාලනික කතිකාව, දේශපාලනික උත්ප්‍රාසය

## Abstract

The first Sinhala poem **Muvadevdavata** is the versification of **Makhadeva Jathaka** the ninth of 547 Jataka stories, and it reflects the *Mahakavya* and the rhetoric tradition of Sanskrit. According to many critics such as *Martin Wickramasinghe* (1945), *U.D. Jayasekara* (1964), *Sucharitha Gamlath* (1998) that poem is unsuccessful, but some critics such as *Velivitiye Soratha Thero* (1966), and *Gamini Dela Bandara* (1998) have explained the uniqueness of that book. The objectives of this research are examinations of the political discourse and the political irony of **Muvadevdavata**. **Muvadevdavata** and **Mahawansa** editions are the primary resources and the ideas of modern critics in books and journals are the secondary resources of this qualitative research. Content analysis and comparative discussion are the analytical way of this research. Because of the wideness of the Sinhala verse, this research was delimited to **Muvadevdavata** and its political discourse. As a result of this study, the political irony of **Muvadevdavata** has been discussed.

**Keywords:** Sinhala Verse, **Muvadevdavata**, Political discourse, Political Irony

## Main Concepts of the Research

**Jathaka stories, Makhadeva Jathaka, Muvadevdavata, gi meter, and Political Irony** are the main concepts of this research.

**Jataka** tales are a body of literature comprising accounts of the previous lives of the Buddha, according to Collins dictionary<sup>45</sup>. Traditional Buddhist society believes that the Jataka tales are the previous births of the Buddha. There are 547 Jathaka stories in the Sinhala Jataka book and **Makhadeva** Jataka is the ninth one. Jataka is the tenth book belonging to the Buddhist Canonical work the **Khuddaka Nikaya**, of the Five-fold Sutta Pitka.

In accordance with **Makhadewa Jathaka**, the Bodhisattva was born as King **Makhadeva** one of his previous births and he reigned with wisdom and virtue for eighty-four thousand years after serving as a prince and viceroy, each for the same length of time. The king had informed his royal barber to tell him if he saw grey hair and when the first grey strand appeared, the Bodhisattva became fixated on his death and decided to immediately abandon and live out his final eighty-four thousand years as an ascetic. That day he passed the throne to his eldest son, gave a village as a gift to his barber, and then walked away from the world. In this last phase of his life, he cultivated the four perfect virtues and was reborn in heaven after his death.

**Gi** and *Sivpada* were two main metrical features of the Sinhala poetic tradition, and the *gi* meter is the oldest one. According to the **Elusandaslakuna**, the oldest prosodic book of the Sinhala language *gi* meter consists of four lines (*pada*) and possesses a particular metrical order. Each line has several syllabic instances of feet (Matra) all of which add up to a total of 30 to 44.<sup>46</sup> Some of these orders have been named *gi*, *Piyum gi*, *Mathvala gi*, *Umathu gi*, *Kav gi*, *Bambara gi*, *Yaa gi*, *Duwanga gi*, etc. Although **Elusandaslakuna** has explained the *gi* meter as a four-lined poetic form, it is a two-lined poetic form in its practical usage. The *gi* meter is couched in lines with no terminal rhymes, *elisama* but a few numbers of it (*Unuvilambu gi*, *Gajagemi gi*) have terminal rhymes. Some oldest poetic inscriptions such as the inscription on the rock bolder at the ancient Vihara at *Kossgama Kanda* near *Maradankadawala* in the *Anuradhapura* district (2<sup>nd</sup> Century) have been written using *gi* meters and the graffiti writers of the mirror wall of *Sigiriya* have been used those meters for the aesthetic delight. Although literary and historical evidence such as **Mahawansa**, **Elusandaslakuna**, **Sidathsangarawa**, the oldest commentary of *Sidath Sangarawa* and **Nikaya Sangrahaya** discuss **Asakdakawa**, **Purana Mayura Sandeshaya**, and other books and works which followed the *gi* meter, those all the works cannot see in the present.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/jataka>

<sup>46</sup> *Elusandas Lakuna*, Stanza 28, p. 38

**Muvadevdavata**, **Sasadawatha**, and **Kavsilumina** the crest gem of Sinhala poetry are the three main books of the *gi kavya* tradition, and **Muvadevdavata** is the oldest one.

**Irony** is the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect.<sup>47</sup> There are many types of that, verbal irony, rhetoric irony, linguistic irony, situational irony, cosmic irony, the irony of fate, Socratic irony, structural irony, literary irony, dramatic irony, tragic irony, comic irony, Romantic irony, philosophical irony, poetic irony, historical irony, classical irony, postmodern irony, stable irony, unstable irony, intentional irony, Unintentional irony, complex irony, simple irony, etc. and the Political irony is a sense of oppositeness or contrast in speech or writing that is related to politics. Many Sinhala verses and proses are adaptations of tripitakan resources of Buddhism and some works like *Sigiriya graffiti*, *Kavsilumina*, etc. are aesthetic presentations. Many writers in classical Sinhala literature were unable to reflect the political reality of Sri Lanka but the **Muvadevdavata** poet has been able to discuss the political context of his era in an ironical manner.

## 2. Literature Review

**Muvadevdavata** which is the first Sinhala poem is regarded as a *khanda kavya*. *Kanda* means piece or bit and *Kanda kavya* is shorter than *maha kavya*, the greatest poem tradition. According to Sanskrit critics, *Maha kavya* is a poem divided into chapters<sup>48</sup> but *Kanda kavya* is a unitary body. There are only 164 verses in **Muvadevdavata** and 1 to 7 poems are presentations of the worship and the summary of the story in accordance with *maha kavya* tradition. The city *Mithila*, the king *Makhadeva*, Autumn, Evening, Night, Morn, the grey hair, the royal court, the king's departure, the park, and the on-ward trek, the sylvan Himalaya glades, Loving-Kindness pervades, and Birth as a Brahma is the order of **Muvadevdavata**.

**Muvadevdavata** editions are the main primary resource in this study. The edition of *Cumarathunga Munidasa* (2495 AD), the edition of *Walagedara Somaloka Thissa thero* (1966), the edition of *Polgaswaththe Sarananda thero* (2006), and the edition of *Ranjith Wanarathana* (2002) were studied. In 2007, **Muvadevdavata** was translated into English by *Vini Vitharana*, and it is a great opportunity for foreign readers to understand that poem.

Many Sinhala critics like *Sucharitha Gamlath*, *Martin Wickramasinghe*, and *U.D. Jayasekara* do not agree with to believe that the success of **Muvadevdavata**. *Sucharitha Gamlath*,

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/irony>

<sup>48</sup> *Kavyadarsha*, 1.14, p.09

in the 27<sup>th</sup> chapter of his book *Sambhavya Sinhala Kavyaye Vikasanaya*, the involvement of classical Sinhala poetry has analyzed the irrelevancy of descriptions like the night, the Autumn of the present poem.<sup>49</sup> In his book *Gi Kave Vagathuga*, the story of the *gi* meter *U.D. Jayasekara* discusses the relevance of the descriptions of **Muvadevdavata** and he says that only 27 verses are relevant out of 164<sup>50</sup>. *Martin Wickramasinghe* in his *Sinhala Sahithyaya Nengeema*, Landmarks of Sinhalese literature says:

“... The **Muvadevdavata** is full of far-fetched images manufactured under the stress of necessity and strung together by the intellect. Far from conveying any feelings, genuine or otherwise, they are interesting to the reader only for their skill and ingenuity...”<sup>51</sup>

“...The Jâtaka tales and earlier Sanskrit poetry testimony to the high quality of the earlier Indian culture, while later artificial poetry shows the decadence that set in subsequently. This high quality is reflected in the sermons of Buddha and the literature that grew around them. The decadence began with the inability to criticize the mass of superstitious beliefs which were ignored by Buddha and the great Vedic seers alike, the gradual growth of rite and ritual, and the perverted taste of pundits who sought to win the approval of licentious kings by prostituting their talents before them. The poet of the **Muvadevdâvata** follows this later tradition and spoils, with his sophisticated imagination, the natural charm of what was the product of a genuine though primitive Buddhist culture...”<sup>52</sup>

*Henpitagedara Gnanaseeha thero* in his book *Sahithyaya* the Literature disagrees with *Martin Wickramasinghe* and He has explained the inability of *Wickramasinghe* to understand this aesthetic Sanskrit poetic tradition.<sup>53</sup>

*Welivitiye Soratha thero*'s introduction of **Muvadevdavata** edition by *Valagedara Somaloka Thissa thero* has explained five good qualities: narrowness, beautifulness, modernness, clearness, and rareness of mistakes in that poem and he says that the reason to study it in Buddhist *Pirivena* monasteries since a long history<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> *Sambhavya Sinhala Kavyaye Vikasanaya*, pp. 196, 198

<sup>50</sup> *Gi Kave Vagathuga*, pp. 74, 75

<sup>51</sup> Landmarks of Sinhalese literature, p.33

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 40

<sup>53</sup> *Sahithyaya*, pp.23-26

<sup>54</sup> Introduction, *Muvadevdavata* (Ed.) *Valagedara Somaloka Tissa Thero*, pp. I, II

*Gamini Dela Bandara* in his book *Sambhavya Sinhala Sahithyaya*, Classical Sinhala Literature has evaluated the *Muvadevdavata* as a new trend in *Sinhala gi kavya tradition* and he has pointed out many successes of that poem<sup>55</sup>, but he does not analyze it as a political irony.

### 3. Data anlysis and Discussion

The political background of the Polonnaruwa era (1056-1236) is important to understand the political irony of *Muvadevdavata*. According to *Mahavansa*, the great historical evidence of Sri Lanka, there were many conflicts for the Sri Lankan kingdom, after the *Anuradhapura* era. Many kings, queens, commanders, and aggressors including King *Vijayabahu I* (1070-1110), King *Jayabahu I* (1110-1110), King *Vikramabahu I* (1110-1131), King *Gajabahu II* (1131-1153), King *Parakramabahu I* (1153-1186), King *Vijayabahu II* (1186-1187), King *Nissanka Malla* (1187-1196), King *Mahinda VI* (1187-1187), King *Vira Bahu I* (1196-1196), King *Vikramabahu II* (1196-1196), King *Chodaganga* (1196-1197), Queen *Leelawathie* (1197-1200), King *Sahassa Malla* (1200-1202), Queen *Kalyanawathie* (1202-1210), Queen *Leelawathie* (1210-1210), King *Anikanga* (1210-1210), King *Dharmasoka* (1210-1210), King *Lokissara* (1211-1211), Queen *Leelawathie* (1212-1212), King *Parakrama Pandya* (1212-1215), King *Kalinga Magha* (1215-1236), King *Parakkamabahu III* (1287-1293) were able to achieve the Polonnaruwa Kingdom.<sup>56</sup> As a result of the fight of many parties to achieve the kingdom, Polonnaruwa was a bloodied era. In that period, the present poem has been composed by one of the alternative poets of Sri Lankan society. King *Makhadeva* who had 84000 years more to rule his kingdom, after the barber discovered his gray hair, immediately abandoned the kingship having passed his throne to the elder son but many political leaders of the *Polonnaruwa* period fought for the kingdom repeatedly. This hidden comparison is a political irony same to the *Vessantara* poetic drama directed by *Ediriweera Sarachchandra* which was staged in the 1980s. King *Vessanthara* in the *Vessanthara* Jathaka was kind but the presidents of Sri Lanka in the 1980s were not kind.

The poet of the *Muvadevdavata* is unknown but there are four main arguments about the author.

1. By a monk.
2. By king Sena I
3. By Vijaya Bahu II
4. By King Gajabahu II

<sup>55</sup> *Sambhavya Sinhala Sahithyaya*, pp. 44-91

<sup>56</sup> *Mahavansa*, Chapters 56-80

The second and the third ideas are not believable. *Sena I* who is the author of *Siyabaslakara* is not a poet of *Polonnaruwa* he was a king who govern the *Anuradhapura* kingdom and *Vijaya Bahu II* who is referred to as a great poet (*Kavissaro*) in the chronicle *Mahavansa* was able only for a single year (1186-87) to govern the *Polonnaruwa* kingdom. There is not any valuable evidence for their authorship. The final idea, which is on the writership of King *Gajabahu II* (1132-53) is believable and it tallies with the previous concept, the reflection of the political background of Sri Lanka in that era. *Vini Vitharana* has explained it in his many literary works, including his articles in *Sahithya latha* (*Geethi Kavya*) and *Vidyodaya* journal<sup>57</sup> and the introduction of his ***Muvadevdavata*** translation.

“There seems to be no doubt that during these final years of his life, he enjoyed the peace of mind that he hardly experienced during his 22-year reign and that he devoted himself to spiritual pursuits (as his nature seemed to have been, even as a youth) in the course of which he came across the lofty character of the Bodhisatva (Aspirant Buddha) Makhādēva, in whose life he found phases that corresponded with a few of his own. Verse no. 77, for example, may be highlighted as an expression of his own sentiments when he found himself helpless as all his generals had met their end.”<sup>58</sup>

*Vini vitharana* has discussed this phenomenon as a personal experience of king *Gajabahu II* but the political analysis of ***Muvadevdavata*** is an ironic explanation considering the political context of that period.

The idea that the author of the ***Muvadevdavata*** is a Buddhist monk is not an agreeable idea, but the three starting verses of the present poem have been presented as evidence for that by some critics. Having considered the Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka, many writers of classical Sinhala literature have started their books worshipping the triple gems Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. But these three poems are only for the Buddha and the author who advises worshipping others does not participate in the worship. It may be his practice.

***“The Ocean to the Rivers of Knowledge  
The Moon to the Night-lilies of the Disciplined  
To the Dew of Defilements, a veritable Sun  
To the Sorrows of Existence, a Forest Fire***

***The Lotus Lake to the Swans of Virtue  
To the Bee-swarms of the Good, a fully blossomed Lotus***

<sup>57</sup> 1968, I, I, p.60

<sup>58</sup> Introduction, *Muvadevdavata*, (Trans.) *Vini Vitarana*, p. vii

***The Craft to cross the Ocean of Evil  
To the Elephants of Heresy, a maned Lion***

***The Charm that represses the Drug of Desire  
The Vessel supreme to reach Deliverance  
The Beam to vanquish all Obstruction  
The one great Friend to the Three-fold World***

***To Him in sincere veneration  
May you offer humble salutation***<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, these three poems may be a rejection of monks. The *Mahawansa* says in chapter 78 about the dissension of Buddhist monks in that era. Before writing this poem, the combination of monks and the political leaders of Sri Lanka is very famous. Many times, they have tried to shift the political power to their amicable parties, and they have gotten benefits in the same way not only in the previous eras but also in the current political situation (21<sup>st</sup> Century) of Sri Lanka.

The description of the *Mithila* is an explanation of that town and after that, the poet presents the description of king *Makhadeva* who is a just ruler and happy to see the enjoyment of his citizens. Then Autumn, evening, and night. Many critics have criticized these descriptions as parts of the *maha kavya* tradition of Sanskrit but those are not improper. In accordance with the Jataka story, the king relinquishes the kingdom due to his doldrums but in the present poem, he relinquishes it with his deep knowledge of life. However, the king's departure at *Muvadevdavata* is a political irony. He had a long period to govern the kingdom and he was a popularized king, but he departs from the kingdom because of his gray hair.

The poet says that India the land of the Rose Apple Tree is a lotus set in the blemish-less, golden, and lustrous. The *Mithila* the city in which king *Makhadeva* lives is the great seed cup, by them a-bound among the cities numerous, peta-like around<sup>60</sup>. In that great city, there reigned a king named Makhadeva whose radiant water of fame did bring the whole world to constant luster.<sup>61</sup> In the night of Autumn, the poet explains the sexual enjoyment of the people in that city.

***“Observing then the disheveled hair  
And sweating faces of maidens fair  
Ananga, the floral darts returned  
To their quiver, his wishes interned***

<sup>59</sup> *Muvadevdavata* (Muv.) (Trans.) Vini Vitarana, poems 1-3, p. 02

<sup>60</sup> Muv. poem 8, p. 09

<sup>61</sup> Muv. poem 33, p. 34



*As pollen of Nika fell on paramours' eyes  
From maidens' hair-locks, in such guise,  
They lost, for once, the excellent chance  
Of gaining, of their thighs, a merest glance*

*With a blow from the lily that adorned their ear  
The maidens the lamp subdued,  
But the radiance from their girdle clear  
The failing longings of paramours rescued*

*Seeing, as such, each frivolous dame  
Engaged at will in wanton sport  
The Lady of the Night seemed, as in shame,  
To shrink away in hasty deport'<sup>62</sup>*

Although many critics including Wickramasinghe, Gamlath, and Jayasekara have criticized the irrelevancy of this description of the spiritual poem **Muvadevdavatha**, it is not improper considering the departure of king **Makhadeva**. If **Siddharta** was a person from a lower caste poor family his renunciation of household life is not a great renunciation, and it is a general phenomenon. In the same way, the departure of king **Makhadeva** who lived in a great sexual city is a great renunciation. Not only in the old world but also in the modern world many politicians always wish to achieve power, valuable properties, money, and especially lustful joys. Because of the renunciation of all the things by king **Makhadeva**, **Muvadevdavata** is ironic politically. The sexual night is also ironic because of the great departure of the king the next day morn.

**Muvadevdavatha** poet presents the morn as the singing of royal eulogists same as the **Kavsilumina**, the Crest Gem of Sinhala poetry<sup>63</sup>. At the end of that song, the king comes to the upper floor, having climbed the stairs to meet the royal barber.

*"Then the host of minstrels commenced to sing  
The praises of their lord, the mighty king  
In words of sweetness that dispelled  
His need to sleep; and thus impelled,*

*He climbed the stairs for the upper floor  
Like a lordly elephant is musty flow  
Leaving the chamber as white as the sheen  
Of night-lilies, as ever has been'<sup>64</sup>*

<sup>62</sup> Muv. poems 79, 80, 82, 84, pp. 80, 81, 83, 85

<sup>63</sup> *The Crest Gem of Poetry*, (Trans.) W.R. McAlpine and M.B. Ariyapala, Canto Seven, poems 323-334, p.61-63

<sup>64</sup> Muv. poems 91, 92, pp. 92

'The chamber as white as the sheen of night-lilies' may be a connotation about the sexual enjoyment of the king in the night and 'Like a lordly elephant is a musty flow' may be a connotation about the sexual power of the king. However, the beauty of the original Sinhala poem which is combined with traditional sound devices, rhetoric way, and connotations cannot deliver by translation.

*"piya bajana yahan tala pul koṇḍa kumudu sudu  
meden ada ganda gijindu bandu naraniṇḍu vāḍi mahalata"*<sup>65</sup>

The king who understood the reality of the samsara came to the Royal court making his eyes with tears of delight<sup>66</sup>. The royal court is a description added by the poet. In that praise, the poet says that the king spent all his days sunk in the darkness of sensuous ways till then. In the lust of worldly life had him, though lightning-like, thrown indolence was high<sup>67</sup>. If there's one whose attachment ties, to his own life, is not the one that ably multiple? A fleeting lightning flash to be adorned with it as a sash<sup>68</sup>? Finally, he presents his decision to his ministers like this.

***"Hence shall I now in haste repair,  
To the pleasant flowery sylvan glades, where  
Abiding in joy on ascetic fare  
Tarry long, O ministers, safe and fair"***<sup>69</sup>

While the king presents his decision to depart the kingdom the ministers beg him to stay furthermore.

***"The world inspired by the sparkling splendour  
Of your lustrous fame pervading in candour  
Exceeds in spirit the lilies of the night  
Immersed in the autumnal moon-rays bright***

***Swarms of bees- the poor numerous  
Rushed to full-blown lakes of lotus  
-Your halls of alms, to furnish thence  
The nectar of needs of worth immense***

***O illustrious sire, if you this world renounce  
Which yourself have exalted to great renown  
Plunging it to oceanic depths of grief, despair,  
When... and for whom, would be any welfare!"***<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Muvadevdavata, (Ed.) Valagedara Somaloka Tissa Thero, poem 92

<sup>66</sup> Muv. poems 96, 97, pp. 95, 96

<sup>67</sup> Muv. poem 100, p. 98

<sup>68</sup> Muv. poem 102, p. 100

<sup>69</sup> Muv. poem 106, p. 104

Because of the good qualities of king *Makhadeva* as a leader, ministers try to stop him. He was a glorious king who was able to protect the kingdom and he donate always to the poor people in the country. The citizens were able to enjoy his reign.

On the other hand, the attempts of ministers to stop the king are ironic politically. Ministers are members of political groups, and they always try to show their rapport with the leaders. All their benefits depend on their political hero. This is a universal truth not only Polonnaruwa era but also in all the eras of the world.

But the king whose decision to depart the kingship was very strong, laughs at the ministers<sup>71</sup> and says this:

***“Abstain, hence, you ministers all,  
From efforts to hold me in your control,  
If topples the Yugandhara Mountain tall  
Who, with a lotus leaf-bud, can thwart its fall?”***<sup>72</sup>

King *Makhadeva* goes to the royal park having passed the crown to the princely son under the accepted tradition of passing the kingship<sup>73</sup>. (Poems 125, 126) The presentation of the sorrow of the citizens about the separation of the king is a rhetorical connotation.

***“The noble lord, his court abandoned,  
And stamping the city with dew-spangled  
Lilies of red, his steps he turned  
Towards the royal park - the rest he spurned”***<sup>74</sup>

Dew-spangled Lilies of red are a great symbol for the tearing eyes of the citizens. Not only in the *Polonnaruwa* period but also in the citizens of modern periods are difficult to change their kings or presidents. They have to implement many protests and struggles. But citizens cry thinking about the departure from the kingship of king *Makhadeva* in this poem. Because of the greediness of the kings, queens, and aggressors toward the Sri Lankan Kingdom and their oppressive reign, this situation in the *Muvadevdavata* is ironic politically. This political analysis is comparable to the modern political background of Sri Lanka.

<sup>70</sup> Muv. poems 109, 111, 115, pp. 107, 109, 113

<sup>71</sup> Muv. poem 116, p. 114

<sup>72</sup> Muv. poem 119, p. 117

<sup>73</sup> Muv. poems 125, 126, pp. 123, 124

<sup>74</sup> Muv. poem 127, p. 125

After staying a few days in the royal park, the king understands its uselessness. Doubting what are urban delights achieved by him, he left the park in a hurry<sup>75</sup> and goes to the Sylvan Himalaya Glades<sup>76</sup>. The environment, the animals, and the others in the forest help ascetic **Makhadeva** to fulfill his meditation.

The nymphs of Siddha bands were silenced having stopped their dance<sup>77</sup>. As sylvan deities with clasped fingers red at their forehead, saluted as he onward treads<sup>78</sup>. Deer, elephants, and other animals are calmful<sup>79</sup>. Heavy with blooming flowers the forest glade bows to the king. The breeze had blown soft and saluted to the king<sup>80</sup>. He enjoys the calmness of the environment, and the environment also enjoys his coming. When the king spent his days in the Himalayas, loving and kindness pervades that forest. The enemy animals were friendly and helpful. The vicious serpent ensconced within the glamorous peacock feathers to win their warmth<sup>81</sup>. Serpents seeing the toads sick, and swooning offers the parasol comfort of their hood<sup>82</sup>.

According to some critics, the description of the forest in **Muvadevdavata** reflects the king's kindness and calmful mind<sup>83</sup>. However, at the end of the poem king **Makhadeva** births as a Brahma.

***"Having cleansed that sylvan domain  
With his peerless virtue and righteous mien,  
Over the Righteous Path he treaded long  
And to the Brahma Realm he passed along"***<sup>84</sup>

Vini Vitharana explains the similarities between the milestones of king **Gajaba II** in the *Polonnaruwa* period and king **Makhadeva** of the present text. **King Gajaba II** the author of the **Muvadevdavata** as Vini Vatarana's belief, also departs from the kingship to achieve a spiritual life same as king **Makhadeva**<sup>85</sup>. According to chapter 71 of **Mahavamsa** the historical evidence for the Sri Lankan Kingdom, prince **Gajaba** the son of king **Wickramabahu II** fights against the princes **Kithsirimevan** and **Sri Vallaba** for the Kingdom. After the establishment of the kingdom, he leaves the kingship having passed it to the young prince **Parakramabahu**.

<sup>75</sup> Muv. poem 134, pp. 132

<sup>76</sup> Muv. poem 143, pp. 140

<sup>77</sup> Muv. poem 144, pp. 141

<sup>78</sup> Muv. poem 145, pp. 142

<sup>79</sup> Muv. poems 149, pp. 146

<sup>80</sup> Muv. poem 146, pp. 143

<sup>81</sup> Muv. poem 155, pp. 152

<sup>82</sup> Muv. poem 161, pp. 158

<sup>83</sup> Wijayawardena, Hemapala, *Sinhala Gi Kavya Kerehi Sanskrutha Alankara Shastraye Balapema*, p. 134

<sup>84</sup> Muv. poem 164, pp. 161

<sup>85</sup> Vitharana, Vini, *Githi Kavya*, Sahithya latha, p. 178

## 5. Conclusions

**Muvadevdavata** the oldest book in Sinhala verses is not only a presentation of the Jataka story *Makhadeva* but a political explanation of the Polonnaruwa era. The points such as the worship of the poem<sup>86</sup>, the King's decision for the departure<sup>87</sup>, the ministers' responses in the royal court<sup>88</sup>, the sorrow of the citizens,<sup>89</sup> and the calmful mind of the king<sup>90</sup> (poem 164) reflect the political background of Sri Lanka not only the *Polonnaruwa* era but also the present situation in an ironic manner. Therefore, the classical Sinhala poem **Muvadevdavata** is valuable as a political irony.

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<sup>86</sup> Muv. poems 1-3, p. 02

<sup>87</sup> Muv. poem 126, p. 127

<sup>88</sup> Muv. poems 97-123, pp. 96-121

<sup>89</sup> Muv. poem 127, p. 125

<sup>90</sup> Muv. poem 164, p. 161

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