

Covering the Female Body: Transition seen in Buddhist murals from 18th to 20th century – 38th Lecture of The National Trust-Sri Lanka by Prof. Asoka De Zoysa

29th March 2012 at 6.30 p.m. Venue: HNB AUDITORIUM, 22nd Floor HNB Towers 479, T,B, Jayah Mawatha, Colombo 10.

Costume historians observe how items of dress and accessories have been used to cover parts of the body or highlight the exposed parts of the body and embellish the figure using jewelry. Based on sculptures, paintings, drawings, posters, advertisements and photographs, it has been possible to reconstruct how fashion has changed over the past four centuries in many countries. Revolutions, wars and political changes have a large impact on imposing written and unwritten rules, what is permitted to be worn in public and how (especially women) should be dressed in public space. Many cultures or the self appointed custodians of culture seem to uphold the view that covering up certain parts of the body mirror the modesty of the female. The Buddhist paintings on rock, wall, wooden and cloth surfaces from the mid 18th century to early 20th century embody a wealth of information on the lifestyles of the people living under the colonial rule. This lecture will survey how the female body was depicted over the years of colonization in narrative panels showing scenes from the life of the Buddha and his previous births.



Uraga Jathakaya
Madawala Tampitaviharaya



Kattahari Jathakaya
Purvarama Viharaya, Kataluwa

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