

***Kamanita* in Thai Version: Didactic Literature of Buddhist Humanism**

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Abstract

Kamanita in Thai Version by Sathirakoses and Nagapradip illustrates its main theme that ordinary people's means to peace of mind must be based on their determination to develop wisdom to the point of being able to rid themselves of a passionate love. The authors use the plot that contrasts *Kamanita*'s and *Vasitthi*'s expectation for consummate love with *Vasitthi* subsequent spiritual freedom after learning to transform a passionate love into a compassionate love and guiding *Kamanita* to do likewise. Moreover, this novel emphasizes that one can achieve enlightenment only through training his/her own mind until gaining wisdom to solve problems properly. This self-reliance principle of Buddhist Humanism is portrayed in the contrast of the existence in heaven of *Kamanita* and *Vasitthi* as divinities free of all attachments and characterized by celestial wisdom and peace with the struggling in rounds of existences of deities characterized by ignorance and attachments to illusions of magical power and status.

Keywords: Buddhist Humanism, rounds of existences

Introduction

Of all Thai literature which is based on Buddhism, *Kamanita* is one of those extolled for their excellence in euphony and stylistics. The book has been acclaimed so highly that many Thai people misunderstand that it is an original Thai classic literary work. In fact, *Kamanita* in Thai version (1930) is the interpretative translation of Sathirakoses and Nagapradip from the English version *The Pilgrim Kamanita* by John E. Logie, which in turn was translated from the German novel of Karl Adolph Gjellerup, a Danish writer who received the 1917 Nobel Prize in literature.

Since *Kamanita* is a translated work, it is noticeable that researchers have often focused on analyzing its language usage. Likewise, its plot that is related to Buddhism has often led to an investigation of its origin and a comparison with Buddhist Scriptures. Its content concerning love has also led to the interpretation of the work as "a romantic Buddhist literature" (Yamnudda, 2000, p. 74). The translation version's title in particular has caused confusion about its thematic concepts. Sathirakoses once remarked that although there were people who recognized the value of the work and selected it as a text for secondary school students between 1930s – 1960s, the Ministry of Education "asked [me] for a permission to change its title from *Kamanita* to *Vasitthi*" because "it thought

that the book is about carnality” (“Preface” On the Occasion of 100th Anniversary of Sathirakoses and Nagapradip).

Although many scholars of literary studies know that *Kamanita* is a Buddhist literary work, they have been more interested in just one part of the plotline which is the attachment to love and carnality or “kama” in Thai. None have investigated how the whole plotline conveys Lord Buddha’s teaching about the Noble Truth. As for the melodious language and witty use of literary techniques, few have analyzed how they affect the presentation of such teaching. Therefore, these overlooked issues about the ultimate goal of the book and the mean to achieve it should receive a serious examination to offer an overall view of the work.

Purpose

This study aims to search for the major imports of the Thai version *Kamanitta* by linking them with the Buddhist riddles implied in the symbolic comparison of Sathirakoses and Nagapradip.

Review of Literature

A survey of analyses of *Kamanita* found that there are 2 trends:

1. The Studies of the Translation Quality with an Emphasis on Stylistics

Due to the euphuism and impressive style of Sathirakoses and Nagapradip in *Kamanita* despite the fact that it is only a translated work, scholars of literary studies have focused their analyses on comparing it with its original English version. Hongskul (1979) indicates in “The *Kamanita* text” that the literary arts of Sathirakoses and Nagapradip, particularly in their choice of diction, is so wonderful that readers who have no previous information that it is a translation may misunderstand that the English version is the translation of the Thai version. In Somlim’s thesis entitled “Poetic Diction in the *Kamanita*” (1989), the author delineates how the two translators’ crafts have rendered their work “a poetic prose” distinguished in its word choice for proper rhyming and cadence as well as its figurative language for desired descriptions. As for textual comparison of the Thai translation with the English original, Chongsatitvatana (1989) indicates in “Sathirakoses and Translation: Translation of *Kamanita*” that the scholar

employs an “equivalent” translation method in adding, altering, and deleting certain passages in order to have a work which blends well with Buddhist background of Thai culture, hence an elaborate literary masterpiece.

The above acclaims are certainly indisputable; nevertheless, all these studies have stopped short at the aesthetic values. None have pointed out how the translators’ additions imply the religious messages.

2. *Textual Analyses to Trace its Origin when Compared with Buddhist Scriptures*

A number of literary studies researchers have focused on tracing the origin of *Kamanita* by comparing it with Buddhist scriptures because of the following factors: a connection between the plot of *Kamanita* with the last period of Lord Buddha’s life, references to his teachings, inclusion of characters in Buddhist history, as well as the exposition and the closing of the novel with citations from the Sutra in accordance with the convention of Buddhist literature. M.R. Sawatdikun (1943) points out in his study “*Kamanita*”: *From Which Sutra Is It?*” that in addition to passages from the Sutra, there are also quotations from Lord Buddha’s teaching and Chataka. Besides, it is possible that some passages are influenced by Sanskrit literature. Leela (1979) concludes in “Letter from a Traveler: A Reading of *Kamanita*: A Contemplation on Truth, Love, and a Quest” that the translators have a profound knowledge about Buddhism and rare craftsmanship in creating an intriguing plot based on the religion. He adds that the kind of romance used in the plot of this story is not different from that of familiar Buddhist literature. In his article entitled “*Kamanita*” (2000) Yamnadda, who studies the Thai translated version as “romantic Buddhist literature” asserts that *Kamanita* is not based on Sutra although it begins and ends with statements that sound like Sutra. According to the critic, the translators add to the original plot “some materials from Hindu philosophy in the Veda period, Theravada philosophy, and Mahayana Sutra” (p. 175).

Discussion

Doubtless research about origins of a work is useful but a concentration on merely finding facts in a fiction may confuse us because “literary values are not the same thing as depth and accuracy in social sciences” (Nagavajara, 1987, p. 31) and the negligence of the mission of literature in sharing human experience is a barrier to appreciation of

literary values (Chitchamnong, 2000, p. 4). Therefore, this research tries to focus on an analysis of the translators' art in creating an intricate connection between characterization, plot, and theme. It shows how the true selves of the two principal characters are transformed to evolve along the development of the plot and gradually attain the ultimate truth of Buddhism through the great scholars' use of religious riddles, contrast, and parallelism.

The findings will be presented in the discussion of the two leading characters, their conflicts, and the thematic resolution as follows:

1. Kamanita and Vasitthi: Different Kinds of Self, Different Kinds of Love

1.1. Kamanita: Life Led by Kama

The word *Kamanita* consists of *kama* and *nita*, meaning "to be led by love or lust." When this signifier which the authors intend to link with the character's behavior is considered closely, *Kamanita*'s lustful identity becomes more obvious. In other words, his identity is designated by both the name and the behavior. It is noticeable that sensual desires dominate *Kamanita*'s life from the beginning. Firstly, he feels so satiated by the gratification derived from frequent rendez-vous with *Vasitthi* on the terrace the asoka trees that he is entrapped in carnal pleasure and concludes that those who want to escape from this world, who want to avoid rebirth are stupid. As such, *Kamanita* is blinded by love. The true ignorant person is *Kamanita*, not those who want to be free from rounds of existences.

Kamanita is not only infatuated with *Vasitthi*; the bodily desires plague him so much that "he is listless...tearful and loses all appetites" (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, p. 119). *Kamanita*'s inebriety with sensual craving (*Kama-tanha*) is further aggravated in his meddling with harlots to counter his disappointment with *Vasitthi*'s marriage to *Satagira*. This solution to his incapability in confronting painful reality as part of life cannot help him relieve from sufferings effectively.

Afterwards when *Kamanita* gets married and becomes a wealthy merchant, he shifts his attachment to the hoarded properties. At this stage he is so much dominated by craving for existence (*Bhava-tanha*) that he mistakes *Angulimala*'s approach as an attempted robbery and murder. Not until he feels cornered and terrified to death does

Kamanita learn to cast off his clinging to his status quo and begin to contemplate on the true nature of life. Upon reaching the stage of craving for self-annihilation (Vibhava-tanha), he realizes that he is just “like a rotten fruit . . .with only skin left” (Ibid., p. 174). Knowing that not a single kind of property can make anyone truly happy or wise, he says to his opponent, “Come, Angulimala. Burn down all these buildings and articles! Even my body...cut it to pieces. Don’t spare your sword! This shell is the most vicious enemy of its own. It’s only enmeshed in endless lust and greed” (Ibid., p. 175). When Angulimala leaves Kamanita’s belongings untouched and tells him about the reversal in his own behavior, Kamanita starts to ponder on his existence more earnestly.

Kamanita’s behavior does not demonstrate only the transformation process concerning yearnings; his “pilgrimage” as a result of disappointment with Angulimala’s refusal to destroy his body and belongings also shows his progress towards the state of detachment (Viraka). This development is in accordance with the Buddhist principle of self-reliance. Kamanita begins to perceive that one should not attach to anything or wait for help from external force. Instead, everyone should try to be self-reliant and improve on one’s insight until “being convicted that the ultimate goal can achieve only through one’s own practice” (Ibid., p. 214). However, because Kamanita’s aim at this point is not the enlightenment because he simply wants to meet Vasitthi again in heaven as they hope in taking oath, his “pilgrimage” displays both his entanglement in sensual pleasure and ignorance. This character’s physical journey exemplifies the observation of Hakuin, a Zen scholar, that we human beings are often “unaware that truth is as close as next to us and therefore travel afar to the never-land to search for it” (Chantrasanti, 2003, p. 97). This remark of Mahayana identifies human beings’ recovery of self-awareness as their first mission in relieving anxiety from feeling tied up or lost. Because Kamanita’s search takes him away from truth and wisdom, he is fatally charged by a mad bull on his way to pay a visit to Lord Buddha for a clarification about heaven. The parallel between Kamanita and the brute to signify futile physical strength and spiritual blindness is certainly one of the most vivid images in this book.

1.2. Vasitthi: Ideal Love, Sacrifice, Honesty, and Wisdom

The meaning of “Vasitthi” designates her as a descendant of an intelligent pundit. Her distinct character is a combination of beauty and virtue. Not only is she so beautiful

that Kamanita falls in love with her at first sight, she also has charming manners due to good upbringing. She reciprocates his love with reservation. What is more interesting is her attitude towards love which reflects her wisdom and refined feeling. She says, “A true love must endure the poison of life and must be willing to take the most bitter taste so that so that we can sacrifice for those we love to live on” (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, p. 63).

Vasitthi's acceptance of sufferings in love shows that she understands life well. In requesting Kamanita to leave with the city's royal guests in order not to be attacked again, she exhibits remarkable firmness and courage. This initial willingness to bear the sorrows in separation in order to lighten the worries of her beloved reveals the sacrificial trait that eventually transforms her love for him into compassion.

Vasitthi faithfully waits for Kamanita for years. Her courage and strong determination in telling the truth to her parents about her feeling with no regard to threatening punishment and her resolute decision to end her life rather than marrying Satagira as arranged affirm her strength and virtues. Finally, she simply marries Satagira against her will because she is led to believe that Kamanita is already dead so an agreement to her parents' wish is a sign of gratitude. Vasitthi's virtues stand out at the critical moment when she finds out from Angulimala that Kamanita is still alive. Her inner conflicts between the contemplation on murder to revenge herself on Satagira and her apprehension about a consequent sin prove that basically she is not a vicious person at all.

Vasitthi's sacrifice and good judgment are further illustrated in her decision to end all relationship with Kamanita. She does not want to ruin the family of the man she loves or to hurt the feelings of his two wives. However, her discreet actions signify that mental maturity is not enough to attain salvation (Mokkhadhamma). The four noble sentiments for proper conduct (Brahmavihara) are also necessary. Such a discovery is a result of Vasitthi's perseverance in studying Dhamma under Lord Buddha's guidance for over half a year and she becomes a Buddhist nun until she has “an insight” about her grief.

Vasitthi's recognition of truth is the result of learning according to the Buddhist belief that humans can refine themselves and can be taught. More importantly, they

“must rely on themselves and must persevere in whatever they do rather than waiting for luck to strike” (Phra Brahmaganabhorn, 2006, p. 214). Vasitthi’s discovery that “the more one is engaged in love, the more sorrowful one becomes” (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, p. 421) reflects an intellectual development according to humanism. Even though on her deathbed she cannot yet completely rid herself of the feelings of love and nostalgia, she no longer aims for a love consummation with Kamanita in heaven. At this point her goal is freedom from “inner enemy” or all desires. Obviously, Vasitthi’s insight significantly grows in the last part of her life.

2. *Shackles of Carnal and Love VS Freedom from Lust*

It is indisputable that *Kamanita* portrays Kamanita’s and Vasitthi’s attachments to love to emphasize different desires and consequences. Although both are sorrowful about separation, their reactions at the end of their lives are not the same. While Kamanita aims to consummate love in heaven, Vasitthi is convinced that love is not the aim of her life. When this conflict between entrapment in illusions and spiritual liberation is investigated carefully, the scene about Lord Buddha’s death emerges as a most significant passage. The description of the sorrow of nature which the two scholars add in the Thai translation is not only to create impressive personifications according to Thai literary conventions or to “try to fulfill the requirement for literary beauty” (Chongsatitvatana, 1989, p. 28). In fact, the lack of stability in all things signifies their entanglement in sufferings which is a common characteristic when clinging to illusions. What is more interesting is the contrast between nature’s sorrow in witnessing the decomposition of Lord Buddha’s physical body and its delight in perceiving his total freedom as a result of Nirvana. Together, both reactions convey the truth based on the Three Signs of Beings (Tilakkhana). That is, all things physical—even Lord Buddha as an individual—are subjected to the natural rules of mutability, sufferings, and non-self before breaking free from the rounds of existences and eventually attaining Nirvana. The fact that we often miss the message in the concerted demonstration of nature is echoed in the observation of Phra Dhammapitaka (2003) that the Three Signs of Beings which are the basic characteristics of everything disclose themselves in natural phenomena all the time.

Like most people, Kamanita fails to recognize this fact. Therefore, his feeling for Vasitthi which chains him to the “hope” of meeting with her again in heaven leads him to

reincarnate there. As for Vasitthi, her vow of love takes her there as well. The couple's love has an attracting force. When they smell the fragrance of the coral blossom in heaven "they recall their oath that whenever they are born, regardless of being happy or sorrowful, their love will be equal and the same" (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, p. 283). An analysis of this situation demonstrates that while their stable loves have enough force to bring them together in every reincarnation, the sentiments are also like shackles which prevent them from leaving the rounds of existence permanently. This confusion about love is dramatized in Kamanita's argument with Lord Buddha, "It's natural that humans think about happiness and pleasure and try to seek them. If there is nothing to motivate them to hope, they simply won't try. . . and when they try, they must have hopes. But now I must try to seek hopelessness! What's the trouble?" (Ibid., p. 206)

Consequently, Kamanita's pilgrimage is not a pilgrimage in its true sense. It is not a journey to learn about truth or to understand life. Instead, it is to satiate himself with consummate love with Vasitthi in heaven as "a reward for his perseverance" (Ibid., p. 205). It is not surprising that he cannot understand the state of selflessness. Worse yet, he cannot accept the truth about the natural world or the exposition about disintegration of celestial flowers which Vasitthi quotes from Lord Buddha's: "Death inevitably follows birth; everything decays till nothing remains just as gardens in the human world and flowers in heaven deteriorate." To this Kamanita responds, "Who is that person whose statement has ruined my hope?" (Ibid., p. 292). With a strong wish to be with Vasitthi eternally, Kamanita asks her to join him in concentrating their minds so that they will be born as twin gods in the higher heaven of Brahmas and to be successfully free from the world of the mortals.

Nevertheless, disintegration is unavoidable even in the heaven of Brahma, as described in this statement: "Now Kamanita seems to find the Brahma god not as radiant as before" (Ibid., p. 385). Vasitthi then quotes Lord Buddha to explain that "High up above till the wonderful brightness of heaven there are repetitive beginnings of beings and endings. You should know that whatever is stored in the future--even the radiance of the Great Brahma--can extinguish" (Ibid., p. 386). With his typical attitude, Kamanita retorts that "the exposition is only to ruin the hope of the world". Yet the "hope" that Kamanita clings to is only an illusion that blinds him from perceiving the true nature of

all things. He fails to understand that the decay of celestial flowers or the Brahma god is not an “abnormal” state, that in fact it is a normal state in accordance with the rule of mutability. According to Buddhism, these deities’ births are founded on their accumulated merits only; they are not immortal. For example, when the existence of an Indra god terminates, another who has enough merits will take his position. In short, everything including deities reincarnate again and again in rounds of existences (Rungruangsi, 1980, p. 132, 136).

On the contrary, Vasitthi is “perceptive” about the truths of beings ever since she is a female monk in the human world, so she is not worried about decays in heaven and the higher heaven of Brahma. Therefore, she says to Kamanita that her ambition to reincarnate in the blissful world is now superseded by a worthier wish for a world which can only be perceived with eye-consciousness (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, p. 363).

Her eye-consciousness focuses on finding ways to “set oneself free” according to Lord Buddha’s teaching that is “to get rid of all states which are beginning, cravings, and delusions” (Ibid., p. 362). As for Vasitthi, “the terrible grief and frustration as a result of disappointment in love can no longer affect her” (Ibid., p. 363). Her very goal is Nirvana. She speaks to Kamanita at the moment the higher heaven of Brahma is about to dissolve as follows, “There’s a place where there’s no ending. . .Neither in this world nor the next world. It isn’t located anywhere, in any direction. It has nothing for us to cling to. It’s called *Nirvana*. It’s something too profound to perceive merely through imagination or rationalization, something extremely minute. It’s characterized by total tranquility and extinction. It quenches you of all formative processes, defilements, and cravings” (Ibid., p. 446).

Vasitthi’s abstinence from profane pleasure which results in her mindfulness and holy happiness testifies Buddhist philosophy and humanist principles that ordinary people can learn to develop themselves until they reach the sublime state of consciousness and wisdom.

3. *Thematic Solution: Nirvana Attainable through Self-Direction with Good Friends'*
Compassionate Assistance

The novel *Kamanita* shows that love is an important element of living. Generally in everyday life, it is like a shackle. Nevertheless, this work also delineates its positive aspect. That is, if it is a sincere, constant true love, it can transmit merits to all involved. Kamanita's ascendance to heaven is an illustration of this point, as he expresses his gratitude in the following wish for Vasitthi, "Now that her love has guided me here, may all auspices be fallen unto her" (Ibid., p. 445). As for Vasitthi, her sincere love takes her to heaven, but more importantly it was her discovery of Dhamma as a cure-all that really puts her in the state of being in heaven. Her ascendance is not the result of merely her own contemplation on disappointment with love and on the true nature of life sufferings. Actually, thanks to Lord Buddha's kind preaching about the causes and the dissolutions of sufferings does Vasitthi start to have the Eye of Wisdom. She learns from him that "Nobody can avoid sufferings as long as he allows anxieties to grow, allows cravings to continue...Until then sufferings still pile up" (Ibid., p. 362).

In the Brahma world, Vasitthi concentrates her consciousness so steadfastly that she can show to Kamanita the image of Lord Buddha, who guides her spiritually. At this point, "while gazing at the image, she acquires the ultimate knowledge, losing all desires and regrets" (Ibid., p. 447) before "vanishing" into the state of Nirvana (Ibid., p. 448). Evidently, "knowledge" is the qualification that emphasizes the significance of insight, which can rid us of ignorance and attachments to the impermanent.

The mental image of Lord Buddha that Vasitthi induces for Kamanita is not only a sign of her love and compassion. She offers this as "a legacy of wisdom" with a scrupulous intention to force him to contemplate on the truth about life. He finally realizes that "Vasitthi completely disappears into the state where there is not a seed for a rebirth" (Ibid., p. 456). Kamanita knows that he can concentrate on his consciousness in order to reincarnate as the Great Brahma, but he poses these critical questions: "Since there's no longer the beautiful and virtuous Vasitthi, what good is there in this existence? What use is it since the life of the Great Bhrama will pass away as well?" Then Kamanita "affixes his mind onto the mental image of Lord Buddha with a purpose to find a mean to

the end of all sufferings” (Ibid., p. 456). This passage shows that the development of Kamanita’s wisdom is partly a result of the good intention and compassion of Vasitthi, who wants to point out the path to Nirvana to Kamanita. His ability in perceiving truth about life also demonstrates his development in wisdom up to the extent that he can free himself from all desires. Kamanita’s success exemplifies the principle in humanism that “humans can fully develop their potential both physically and spiritually” (Nagavajara et al., 1996, p. 3) and the Buddhist precept that victory over ignorance is a religious conduct for virtues in the footsteps of a Buddha-to-be (Bodhisatta).

Sathirakoses and Nagapradip express their conviction in self-determination and the value of friendship by depicting the two main characters’ transcendental process meticulously. Moreover, they draw parallels between Vasitthi’s and Kamanita’s experiences. They have to go through their conflicts and courses of life before finding solutions appropriate to their own nature, but both benefit from friendship and compassion of fellow human beings. The guidance that Vasitthi applies for Kamanita is based on the Lord Buddha’s benevolent model she previously absorbs during conferences with him. In this particular use of parallelism, the two Thai scholars reveal their profound understanding of both Buddhism and humanism in their true sense. They effectively highlight a universal trait of both philosophies that is sometimes de-emphasized or misunderstood. Instead of emphasizing selfishness or arrogance, both Buddhism and humanism assert the crucial proposition that whereas every individual must depend on himself, none of them should ignore fellow human beings or societies around them. Sathirakoses’s and Nagapradip’s insight can be substantiated with their details in Buddhist stories about Enlightenment-beings (Bodhisatta) who resolve to attain enlightenment for the help of their fellow beings and the statement proclaimed in Amsterdam Declaration 2002 of Humanism that “It stands for the building of a more *humane* society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities” (International Humanist and Ethical Union, 2008). Therefore, the Thai translation *Kamanita* is not simply a romance with Buddhist background and “decorative” quotations. Because the Thai learned men pose this conduct guideline in the forefront for readers’ consideration, the book is didactic in the broadest sense. The acquired knowledge that mankind, let alone a single individual,

cannot be the center of the universe can help the audience see the interconnection between all things, man included, in the universe and the importance of cooperation in saving this universe.

Sathirakoses's and Nagapradip's emphasis on the thematic aspect of the work is notable. A textual analysis of Kamanita's last phase of self-annihilation alone is sufficient to see how the two translators-authors achieve their goal through literary devices.

Contrastive technique is the most obvious one. Sathirakoses and Nagapradip highlight Kamanita's spiritual growth by contrasting the elation of his fellow deities with his repulsion for it. Headed by the Great Brahma himself, these ignorant Brahmas joyously welcome the new day of the higher World of Brahma. This phenomenon reminds Kamanita that they are still enmeshed in pleasures of the rounds of existences and unaware of the Noble Truth. Therefore, to reach the state of Nirvana, he has to escape this illusory state of immortality.

In addition, Sathirakoses and Nagapradip use a paradox to describe the states of these beings. The sharp contrast between the brightness of the first day of the new world and the dwindling brightness of the star of deity Kamanita until it is completely extinguished signifies that the "extinction" of Kamanita is in fact his "enlightenment" which is brighter than the Great Brahma's radiance that cannot shine enough to reveal a way out of the miserable world although it is so powerful as to set a blaze on ten million worlds. The Great Brahma's ignorance is stressed in his failure to find out why the star Kamanita does not absorb his transmitted rays. The great god's ignorance and arrogance is evident in the question he poses to himself, "Is there another radiance brighter than mine?" (Sathirakoses & Nagapradip, 1985, pp. 458-459)

Furthermore, Sathirakoses and Nagapradip use symbolic comparison in their religious riddles to convey the concept about Nirvana. The "sudden disappearance" of Vasiṭṭhi illustrates the complete abolition of physical existence in her salvation (Anupadisesa-nibbana), which inspires Kamanita to contemplate on the bondage caused by attachments and desires until he is insightful enough to recognize the Truth. Sathirakoses and Nagapradip compare Kamanita's total quench of burning desires right before his deliverance as "a flame in a lamp that extinguishes because it has used up the last drop of oil" (Ibid., p. 459). This portrayal makes concrete the meaning in the root

word of “Nirvana”, which refers to the demolition of impurities, cravings, and sufferings (Wilaiwong, 1990). It is possible that through visualization, the reader can initially guide towards Nirvana as Kamanita is.

As such, it can be said that the translators-authors’ stylistics enhance the theme in the work as much as their characterization of Kamanita and Vasitthi.

Conclusion

The Thai version of *Kamanita* is distinct from other Buddhist literary works in having a good balance of didactic and aesthetic values. The translators-authors can successfully portray that the sufferings from carnal desires can be used as a mean to salvation as long as humans learn to benefit from them and know when to desert them for higher Truth. It shows that even compassionate for each other is powerful enough to lead spiritual wisdom as shown in the case of Kamanita and Vasitthi in their pledge and their fulfillment, such kind of love is still too base for one seeking spiritual freedom. Not until Kamanita and Vasitthi learn from their own weaknesses and miseries do they understand the genuine state of all beings and attain Nirvana. They perceive through their perseverance and Eye of Wisdom that “an invitation of sufferings and understanding of them form the foundation of enlightenment” (Sriaraya, 2000, p. 16). The instance exemplifying miseries as a prerequisite for salvation is seen in the contrast between Brahma deities’ ignorant joys and self-annihilated Kamanita’s pity on the situation. The contrast between the characters of Kamanita and Vasitthi as well as their different paces in reaching their goals exhibits both Buddhism’s and Humanism’s democratic principle in accessing Nirvana and self-reliance philosophy at the same time. On the other hand, the parallel between Vasitthi and Kamanita in receiving guidance from Lord Buddha and Vasitthi indicates that a good friend’s assistance is vital for a spiritual quest.

Such an intricate plot, together with the translators-authors well chosen images of bondage, emptiness, selflessness, and total eradication of burning desires attests the stature of *Kamanita* as a Thai classic literary work of great weight.

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