

Anjalee Wegodapola

University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka,

Typographical Exploration to Preserve The Passionate Memory of Grandparents' Storytelling

Abstract – Intergenerational storytelling between Grandparents and Grandchildren is instrumental in strengthening the core of their relationship. Amongst the experiences of Grandparents and Grandchildren, the narration of Jataka stories is commonly seen in Sri Lankan families. Jataka Tales, about the early incarnations of the Bodhisattva, originate from the 550 Jatakas written in the Kurunegala Era. The memorable ways in which Grandparents leave their identities inside the stories were observed in the study, taking Sasa Jatakaya as the story. Through a typographical approach, the research was focused on enlivening the memory of grandparents inside the stories they narrate. The traces of Grandparents in the Jataka story were applied on to a Sinhala typographical skeleton. By applying a number of experiments on to a Sinhala letterform, possible ways in keeping Grandparents alive inside the stories they narrate were explored. The stories, both old and new, add a characteristic Sri Lankan flavour when narrated by the older generation. Their style of narration, vocal tone and usage of language is unique and authentic to them. It is the time where the physically feeble Grandparents transform into energetic personalities, enlivened with the spirit of the story. It is the time where the chaotic and noisy younger generation turn silent, sit in one place and enthusiastically listen to their elders. These are precious moments a young person can never experience again in their lives. Those moments only become a blurry memory, with time. This Experimental project is an Ethnographic, Participatory visual research based on recorded oral narratives of Sasa Jatakaya by grandparents and close participant observation which finally led to the visual experimentation of the Sinhala letterform based on the facial expressions of Grandparents while storytelling.

Keywords: Intergenerational Storytelling, Experimental Typography, Intergenerational Relationships, Jataka Tales, Photo Ethnography