



## Moral Values in the Mahisha Jataka Relief at Borobudur Temple: An Iconographic Study

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### **Abstract**

The Mahisha Jataka Relief at Borobudur Temple is one of the most remarkable examples of Buddhist art and iconography. This relief depicts the story of Mahisha Jataka, rich with moral values within the context of Buddhist teachings. The iconographic study of this relief helps to understand the implied moral messages and their influence on culture and spirituality. The purpose of this study is to explore the moral values embodied in the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple and understand how these moral messages are reflected in the artwork. Additionally, the study aims to highlight the cultural and spiritual influence of this relief within society. The discussion of this study has revealed that the Mahisha Jataka relief is a work of art that embraces moral values found in Jataka stories and pays homage to Buddhist teachings. Moral values such as the struggle against evil, sacrifice for the common good, wise leadership, courage, simplicity, the pursuit of happiness and enlightenment, harmonious society, and Buddhist teachings are reflected in this relief. The cultural influence of this relief is evident in its impact on Indonesian art, architecture, and culture.

**Keywords:** *Mahisha Jataka Reliefs; Borobudur Temple; Moral Values; Buddhist Teachings; Iconography*

### **Introduction**

Borobudur Temple is one of the wonders of the world located in Central Java, Indonesia, a remarkably beautiful Buddhist monument. In addition to being an extraordinary cultural heritage, the temple is also a historical and awe-inspiring legacy of Buddhist teachings. One of the stories carved in relief on the walls of Borobudur Temple is the Mahisha Jataka. The Mahisha Jataka relief is the focus of iconographic study, allowing us to delve into the moral messages it contains and understand the cultural context that influences it. Using the iconographic analysis of Mahisha Jataka, we will adopt the approach presented by Erwin Panofsky (Cahyono, 2023). Panofsky's approach enables us to unravel the symbolism, cultural context, and moral values present in these temple reliefs, deepening the spiritual and philosophical experience embedded in the Mahisha Jataka.

Borobudur Temple was built in the 9th century AD and has become a significant symbol for *Mahayana Buddhism* in Southeast Asia. The temple not only serves as a place of worship but also as a teaching tool depicting Buddhist teachings through the reliefs lining its walls. Mahisha Jataka is one of the 547 Jataka tales narrating the early life of the Buddha before becoming Siddhartha Gautama. This

story provides an allegory of Buddhist values, the struggle against evil, and the quest for enlightenment. Mahisha Jataka serves as a source of moral and spiritual inspiration for followers of the Buddhist religion (Sepriady, 2019).

Erwin Panofsky, a prominent art historian, has made significant contributions to the development of iconographic analysis methods. Panofsky's approach views art as a means of communication, allowing us to unravel the symbols, motifs, and cultural contexts contained in artworks, such as the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur (Adnyana, 2019). The Mahisha Jataka story depicts a patient and kind buffalo. The moral message that emerges from this story includes values such as courage, sacrifice, and the struggle against evil in the pursuit of happiness and enlightenment. Through Panofsky's iconographic analysis, we can identify the symbols present in the Mahisha Jataka relief. The buffalo depicted in this story can be interpreted as a symbol of patience (Ayu, 2019).

According to (Nirwana, 2020), moral values in the context of reliefs refer to the moral messages or ethical teachings contained in visual representations. Reliefs are a form of visual art often used to convey stories, myths, or moral messages through carved or sculpted images on three-dimensional surfaces. The moral values in reliefs encourage viewers to reflect on the depicted acts of goodness, evil, sacrifice, or conflict. Reliefs not only serve as aesthetic media but also as a means of moral communication, allowing viewers to absorb and understand the ethical teachings or philosophies conveyed by the artist (Syofiadisna, 2020).

The Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple has long been a subject of interest for art and history experts. The Mahisha Jataka story is one of the 547 Jataka tales narrating the early life of Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha. Many discussions in iconographic studies attempt to unravel the moral values contained in temple reliefs and the symbolic meanings conveyed. Within the context of this study, the literature review will examine several important studies related to the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple (Setyaningrum & Nugroho, 2022).

Iconographic study is an analytical approach in visual arts aimed at identifying, unraveling, and understanding the symbolic and contextual meanings in artworks (Agustina, 2016). Iconography involves the analysis of symbols, motifs, and scenes depicted in artworks with the goal of revealing messages, cultural meanings, and values contained within. This approach requires an understanding of the symbolism and iconography within the cultural and historical context, using it to elucidate the messages intended by the artist. Iconographic studies help us delve deeper into the symbolic aspects and cultural meanings in visual arts, enabling a more profound understanding of the moral and historical messages embedded in artworks (Izza et al., 2022). One iconographic study regarding Mahisha Jataka is the discussion (Khenresta, 2022), which identifies various symbolism in the relief. Highlighting the symbolism of the buffalo, the protagonist in the story, which can be interpreted as a representation of patience. This discussion explains how the reliefs at Borobudur use symbolism to depict the struggle between good and evil. Additionally, research (Raffi Arrazaq, 2019) also attempts to explore the moral aspects of the Mahisha Jataka relief.

The iconographic approach involving symbolism and analysis of the reliefs at Borobudur is also the focus of a study (Susdarwono, 2022). Exploring various symbolic elements, including clothing and attributes of characters in these reliefs, to unveil the meanings and moral messages embedded in the Mahisha Jataka story. Studies by art and history experts provide a profound understanding of the moral values in the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple. The iconographic study in this approach not only breaks down the symbols and scenes in the reliefs but also connects them to the moral messages and cultural context of Buddhism. With the advancement of technology and new approaches in iconographic analysis, the understanding of moral meanings in this artwork continues to evolve, providing deeper insights into this artwork in cultural and spiritual contexts.

The reliefs at Borobudur often depict the battle between good and evil, creating a strong contrast between these two forces. They illustrate the message that through acts of goodness and sacrifice, evil can be overcome. The reliefs at Borobudur Temple not only serve as representations of Buddhist teachings but also as witnesses to the historical richness of Indonesian culture. They demonstrate how religion, art, and moral values were closely intertwined in society at that time. Based on the background explanation by delving deeper into the moral values of the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur through Panofsky's iconographic approach, the focus of the issues can be formulated as follows: 1) Interpreting the symbols in the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple, 2) Understanding the moral message in the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple, 3) Recognizing the role of Buddhist teachings in the moral message of the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple, and 4) Understanding the impact in the cultural and spiritual context surrounding the Mahisha Jataka relief story. These reliefs are not only remarkable works of art but also windows into the spiritual and cultural heritage that depicts the struggle of humanity against evil and the pursuit of enlightenment.

### ***Methodology***

Panofsky explained that to reveal the meaning behind a work of art, there are three stages, namely pre-iconographic description, iconographic analysis, and iconological interpretation (Panofsky, 1955). In the pre-iconography stage, the focus is on identifying the visual aspects of the artwork's form to understand its factual and expressive meaning. Factual meaning involves recognizing the visual forms observed in the research object, as well as changes that occur through certain actions or events. The iconographic analysis stage focuses on identifying secondary meanings by examining the relationship between visual forms and expressions (pre-analysis results) with the themes and concepts of creation. Next, the iconological interpretation stage involves understanding pre-iconographic descriptions and iconographic analysis. This process requires mental involvement referred to as synthetic intuition, which includes essential tendencies from personal psychological thinking and the work creator's view of life.

### ***Result and Discussion***

#### **1. The Meaning of Symbolism in the Mahisha Jataka Relief at Borobudur Temple**

Borobudur Temple is one of the largest Buddhist monuments in the world, located in Central Java, Indonesia. It is a captivating visual marvel that reflects Buddhist culture and spirituality. One of the stories carved in relief on the temple's walls is the Mahisha Jataka. The Mahisha Jataka reliefs are works of art filled with symbolism, and in this writing, we will explore the meaning of the symbolism contained in these reliefs. We will dissect the symbolism of the buffalo, character attributes, and other visual elements that allow us to delve deeper into the moral messages and Buddhist philosophy embedded in the Mahisha Jataka story (Adiani et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Panel 129 of the Mahisha Jataka Relief (Source: Art Reading the Spread of Borobudur Temple, 2012, Page 25)

### 1. The Symbol of the Buffalo: Protagonist and Patience

The buffalo symbol is a central element in the Mahisha Jataka story and is one of the most prominent symbols in the reliefs at Borobudur. The buffalo is the protagonist in this story, and the symbolism of the buffalo depicts patience, happiness, and enlightenment. The buffalo in the narrative contributes to peace in the kingdom, creating harmony for the community, and is descended to Earth by the Buddha in the form of a benevolent and sacred animal. In Buddhist tradition, buffaloes are often regarded as a symbol of patience in facing obstacles that must be overcome in the spiritual journey. Therefore, in the Mahisha Jataka reliefs, the buffalo symbol is a powerful visual representation of patience.

### 2. Character Attributes: Costume and Facial Expressions

Character attributes and facial expressions of the characters in the story also hold significance in the iconography of the Mahisha Jataka reliefs. For instance, character attributes such as clothing and accessories worn by the characters reflect moral and spiritual aspects in this story. The Buddha, in this narrative, is often depicted wearing simple attire and signs of sanctity like a crown encircling his hair. These attributes portray the character of the Buddha as a holy, wise, and compassionate figure. The facial expressions of the characters in the story are also crucial in conveying moral values. The Buddha is often portrayed with an expression of tranquility and wisdom, reflecting inner peace and profound understanding that he possesses.

### 3. Architectural Form and Placement of Reliefs

In addition to the symbolism in images and characters, the architectural form of Borobudur Temple and the placement of reliefs also hold symbolic meaning in the context of the iconography of the Mahisha Jataka. Borobudur Temple itself is a highly symbolic architectural form. The layered structure with adorned stupas and various levels holds philosophical significance in Mahayana Buddhism.

The Mahisha Jataka reliefs are placed in a specific order on the temple's walls, following the spiritual journey from lower levels to higher levels. This reflects the concept of spiritual journey applied in Buddhism, where one transcends worldly life (lower level) towards enlightenment and liberation (higher level). Therefore, the placement of these reliefs holds symbolic meaning in depicting the spiritual journey embodied in Buddhist teachings.

The meaning of symbolism in the Mahisha Jataka reliefs can be further deepened by comparing them with other reliefs at Borobudur. For example, reliefs depicting other Jataka stories portray events from the early life of the Buddha in various reincarnations before attaining enlightenment. Comparing the Mahisha Jataka relief with other reliefs can help us understand the similarities and differences in moral meanings and symbolism presented in the context of Buddhism.

In the iconographic study, understanding the meaning of symbolism in the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur is crucial as it helps us comprehend the moral messages and Buddhist philosophy intended to be conveyed. The buffalo symbol, character attributes, architectural form, and placement of these reliefs, all have significance in the context of the story and iconography as a whole (Riyanto, 2019). Through a deeper understanding of the meaning of symbolism, we can appreciate the profound moral and spiritual messages embedded in this extraordinary work of art. The Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur is not just a visually stunning piece of art but also a means to convey teachings and values in the Buddhist tradition that have influenced society for centuries.

## 2. The Moral Values Contained in the Mahisha Jataka Relief

The Mahisha Jataka relief is one of the stories from the Jataka Tales, a collection of narratives recounting the previous lives of the Buddha as a Bodhisattva. The relief depicts the Buddha being reborn as a buffalo, reflecting human qualities such as patience, wisdom, and kindness (Andriyanto, 2021). This

relief embodies several moral values that are crucial to understand and apply in everyday life. Over time, this relief is often simplified by emphasizing the patient buffalo. Using this context, we will explore the moral values contained in the Mahisha Jataka Relief, with a focus on the buffalo character representing patience. The Buddha, in the form of a buffalo, faces various mistreatments and oppressions from arrogant monkeys. However, the buffalo continues its life with patience and tranquility, never retaliating against the injustices it receives. This reflects that patience is the key to overcoming conflicts and difficulties in life.



Figure 2. Panel 130 of the Mahisha Jataka Relief (Source: Art Reading the Spread of Borobudur Temple, 2012, Page 25)

Patience in this relief can also be interpreted as a form of wisdom. The buffalo's character shows that through patience, we can avoid impulsive actions and anger that often only worsen situations. Through calmness and patience, individuals can make wiser decisions and achieve better outcomes in any situation. In addition to patience, the buffalo's character in this relief also depicts other moral values, namely compassion and responding to wrongdoing with kindness (Bagus, 2021). Despite often facing mistreatment, the buffalo remains kind-hearted and never retaliates with evil. This teaches us to always maintain kindness and not be provoked by the negative actions of others.

The Mahisha Jataka relief, focusing on the patient buffalo character, contains several crucial moral values. Patience in facing conflicts, wisdom in decision-making, compassion, and always being kind to everyone are values that can be applied in everyday life. This relief teaches that patience is the key to resolving conflicts, maintaining morality, and achieving inner peace. Along with that, the relief also reminds us of the importance of preserving kindness and avoiding revenge. Equivalent in a world often filled with conflict and tension, these values can help shape good character and bring peace to human relationships. The moral meaning in the Mahisha Jataka relief, especially through the buffalo character representing patience, can serve as guidance and inspiration for children, teenagers, and even adults in their life journey. This relief reminds us that patience, wisdom, compassion, and kindness are universal values that can help us become better individuals and create a more peaceful world. Therefore, the Mahisha Jataka relief remains relevant and beneficial in the effort to shape human morality and character (Rajeg et al., 2022).



Figure 3. Panel 131-132 of the Mahisha Jataka Relief (Source: Art Reading the Spread of Borobudur Temple, 2012, Page 26)

The Mahisha Jataka relief also reflects the moral values of simplicity and the virtue of a holy life. The Buddha, in the form of an elephant, is often depicted in simple attire and symbols of purity, such as a crown encircling his hair, reflecting the concept of simplicity in personal life and the virtue of a life free from worldly desires. This moral message teaches that a holy and simple life holds high moral value in Buddhism. It means detaching oneself from worldliness and materialism that often hinder the attainment of enlightenment. In a modern society often filled with consumerism and worldly obstacles, these moral values remind us of the importance of living a simple and pure life.

The Mahisha Jataka relief also encompasses a profound moral message about the pursuit of happiness and enlightenment. The Buddha in this relief represents the quest for enlightenment through the struggle against evil (Tanudjaja, 2022). This message reflects the essence of Buddhist teachings about the spiritual journey and the pursuit of enlightenment as the ultimate goal. The moral lesson teaches that true happiness and enlightenment can be achieved through sincere struggle and search, reflecting the values of perseverance, sacrifice, and determination in achieving spiritual goals. In this context, the Mahisha Jataka relief becomes an inspiration for individuals to pursue deeper happiness and enlightenment in their lives. The Mahisha Jataka relief also reflects the moral value of the importance of a harmonious and peaceful society. Depicted in the relief, Manohara's role in sacrificing herself to protect the community is a significant example of how individual sacrifice can contribute to peace and harmony in society. This moral value teaches that collaboration, compassion, and selflessness can shape a harmonious and peaceful society. This message holds strong relevance in a society often confronted with conflict, inequality, and injustice. The Mahisha Jataka relief reminds us of the importance of working together to create a better and more harmonious society.

The moral messages within this relief reflect Buddhist concepts such as the Four Noble Truths, *Paticca-samuppada* (law of cause and effect), and the concept of Dharma. It illustrates how Buddhist teachings influence the relief and the moral values expressed in it. The moral messages in the Mahisha Jataka relief mirror Buddhist teachings on the struggle against worldly desires, the pursuit of enlightenment, and values such as compassion, sacrifice, and courage. This serves as evidence of how Jataka stories play a crucial role in conveying Buddhist teachings to its followers (Wulantari & Sukardi, 2018). In addition to detailing the moral values contained in the Mahisha Jataka relief, it is essential to discuss how these values can be applied in everyday life. The Mahisha Jataka relief provides inspiration and guidance for integrating these moral values into our actions and behavior. Implementing moral values such as the struggle against evil, sacrifice for the common good, wise leadership, courage, simplicity, the pursuit of happiness and enlightenment, a harmonious society, and Buddhist teachings in daily life can help individuals achieve higher spiritual, moral, and personal development. It can also contribute to the formation of a fair, coexisting, and peaceful society.

In the series of moral values depicted in the Mahisha Jataka relief, we observe how the story portrays the struggle against evil, sacrifice for the common good, wise leadership, courage, simplicity, the pursuit of happiness and enlightenment, a harmonious society, and Buddhist teachings in a narrative rich in symbolism and meaning. The Mahisha Jataka relief is a Buddhist literary work with profound moral values and serves as a source of inspiration for individuals and society. These moral messages have strong relevance in various aspects of life, from personal struggles to community leadership, as well as in the contexts of spirituality and Buddhist teachings. Therefore, the Mahisha Jataka story continues to be a fount of lessons and inspiration for understanding and applying moral values in everyday life (Wahyu & Pradana, 2019).

### **3. The Role of Buddhist Teachings in Moral Messages**

Buddhism is one of the world religions with a long history, featuring profound moral teachings and philosophy. In various Buddhist traditions, including *Theravada* and *Mahayana Buddhism*, Jataka stories play a crucial role in conveying moral and ethical teachings. One of the most renowned Jataka tales is Mahisha Jataka, found in the reliefs of Borobudur Temple in Indonesia. In this study, we will

explore the role of teachings embedded in the Borobudur Temple reliefs in the implied moral messages of Mahisha Jataka. We will discuss how the teachings related to karma, karma vipaka, and the concept of dharma found in the reliefs influence and give meaning to the moral messages in this story (Cahyana, 2020). The Mahisha Jataka story is one of the Buddhist narratives illustrating moral and ethical values integral to Buddhist teachings. The main character in this story, a buffalo representing qualities such as patience, wisdom, and compassion, embodies essential principles in Buddhist teachings. Using this context, we will delve into how the meanings conveyed in the reliefs contribute to delivering moral messages through the patient buffalo character in the Mahisha Jataka tale.

### **1. Concept of Karma**

One of the essential concepts in Buddhist teachings found in the Mahisha Jataka story is the concept of karma. Karma refers to the law of cause and effect that governs an individual's actions. In this story, the buffalo, embodying the Bodhisattva, endures mistreatment with patience throughout its life. This reflects a belief in karma, asserting that good actions will yield good consequences, while bad actions will result in unfavorable outcomes. Therefore, the patient buffalo in this tale serves as a tangible example of how the belief in the concept of karma influences human actions.

### **2. Patience as a Form of Wisdom**

The significance of patience is considered a primary characteristic of wisdom. The buffalo in the Mahisha Jataka story embodies profound patience, illustrating that wisdom often entails maintaining calmness and patience in the face of conflicts and difficulties. This is a crucial lesson derived from the story and can be applied in everyday life. Patience in dealing with conflicts can assist individuals in making wise decisions unaffected by negative emotions.

### **3. Compassion and Kindness**

Exploring the universal context also underscores the importance of compassion and kindness towards all living beings. Narrating the Mahisha Jataka, the buffalo represents these qualities by living a life of kindness, even when frequently persecuted by the arrogant monkeys. It reminds us of the importance of compassion and kindness in our relationships with fellow beings. Acts of goodness and compassion are pathways to enlightenment and liberation.

### **4. Responding to Wrong with Goodness**

One strong moral message in the Mahisha Jataka story is the importance of responding to wrongdoing with goodness. The buffalo, despite enduring persecution, never retaliates with evil. It reflects the meaning embedded in the Mahisha Jataka relief about the significance of avoiding revenge and maintaining tranquility in facing conflicts. This action also mirrors the principles of metta (loving-kindness) in the Mahisha Jataka relief, emphasizing the spread of love and compassion to all beings, even those who have disappointed us.

### **5. Application of Moral Messages in Daily Life**

The moral messages in the Mahisha Jataka relief, influenced by Buddhist teachings on karma, dharma, and ethics, hold strong relevance in everyday life. These moral messages impart the importance of virtuous actions, justice, sacrifice, and the protection of society. In the modern context, applying these moral messages can provide ethical guidance in decision-making. It reminds us to always choose actions that bring goodness and positivity into our lives and to avoid actions that harm ourselves or others.

The moral messages in the Mahisha Jataka relief also motivate us to act with compassion and kindness toward others. It prompts us to care about collective well-being and to assist those in need. Devotion to these moral values can contribute to building a fair, harmonious, and peaceful society.

The Mahisha Jataka relief serves as a powerful example of how Buddhist teachings influence and imbue moral messages within Buddhist narratives. The concepts of karma and karma vipaka, the idea of dharma, and Buddhist ethics are reflected in the actions and characters in this story (Nizam, 2022). The moral messages in the Mahisha Jataka relief teach the importance of virtuous deeds, justice, sacrifice, and the protection of society. They provide ethical guidance in daily life and remind us to act with compassion and kindness towards others. Through this comprehensive discussion, it can be concluded that the Mahisha Jataka story is an intriguing example of how Jataka tales and visual artworks like the Borobudur reliefs serve as means to convey Buddhist teachings and profound moral values to the people (Saputro & Maret, 2023).

The moral messages in this story are not only relevant in the context of spirituality but also in guiding ethical actions in daily life. It is a tangible example of how the meaning in the Mahisha Jataka relief remains relevant in shaping human behavior and ethics to this day. The Mahisha Jataka relief is a concrete example of how Buddhist teachings can inspire powerful moral messages. Concepts such as karma, patience, compassion, kindness, and the rejection of revenge are essential principles in Buddhist teachings depicted through the character of the patient buffalo in this relief. The moral messages drawn from this relief can serve as a guide for individuals to lead a meaningful and ethical life. The significance of the Mahisha Jataka relief teaches us that by following these principles, we can achieve inner peace and contribute to creating a better world.

The Mahisha Jataka story is an example of how Buddhist narratives are not merely moral tales but also a means to teach principles embedded in the Mahisha Jataka relief in a more easily understood context. Through the patient buffalo character in this story, Buddhist moral messages about karma, patience, compassion, kindness, and non-retaliation can be conveyed with moral values. This is one way in which Buddhism becomes not only a religion but also a source of inspiration for a better and more meaningful life. In a world often filled with conflict and tension, the significance of these moral messages remains relevant and beneficial in guiding humanity towards higher ethics and morals.

#### **4. Cultural and Spiritual Impact of the Mahisha Jataka Relief**

The Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur Temple in Indonesia is not only an extraordinary work of art but also a cultural and spiritual heritage that has influenced the history, culture, and spiritual life of the region. Through this discussion, we will explore the cultural and spiritual impact of the Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur. We will delve into how this relief has influenced society and how the story reflects profound Buddhist values and teachings. On a cultural level, the Mahisha Jataka relief has had a significant impact in Indonesia. Borobudur Temple, where this relief is located, is one of the most important historical sites in Indonesia and has become an invaluable cultural icon. The reliefs at Borobudur reflect the rich Hindu-Buddhist art and culture that has influenced art, architecture, and culture in the region (Hariyadi, 2020).

The influence of art and architecture in the Mahisha Jataka relief is an excellent example of intricate Buddhist relief art. The impact of this art can be observed in the art and architecture of the archipelago as a whole. The motifs and artistic styles found in the Borobudur reliefs have influenced the art and architecture of various historical buildings in Indonesia, such as Prambanan Temple. These reliefs have also served as inspiration for local artists and craftsmen in creating their own works of art that reflect the influence of Buddhist art.

The Cultural Heritage of Borobudur Temple has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, and the Mahisha Jataka reliefs are an integral part of this cultural heritage. This recognition



provides legitimacy and protection for this cultural heritage. It also raises awareness of the importance of preserving and safeguarding this site as a highly valuable cultural asset. Tourism to Borobudur Temple and its reliefs has become a major tourist destination in Indonesia (Noorwatha & Wirawan, 2020). The presence of tourism brings significant economic benefits to the surrounding region, creating employment opportunities and business prospects in the tourism sector. Additionally, it enhances the understanding and appreciation of the local community for their own culture and history.

The educational value of the reliefs at Borobudur Temple is a significant source of learning, not only for tourists but also for the local community. They enable educators and researchers to study the history and culture of Indonesia in depth, providing a foundation for education and research in the context of Indonesian history and cultural arts. The Mahisha Jataka relief at Borobudur is a remarkable example of how art, culture, and spirituality can coexist and mutually influence each other. They not only serve as invaluable cultural heritage for Indonesia but also provide a window into the teachings, and the Mahisha Jataka reliefs hold a highly positive meaning that can be extracted and applied. These reliefs embody meanings and values that can be applied, providing profound insights into concepts such as karma, karma vipaka, and dharma. They also enrich the spiritual life of the Indonesian community by offering visual tools for meditation, tranquility, and contemplation. Through the moral and ethical stories contained in these reliefs, Buddhist teachings continue to thrive and inspire people worldwide.

Through the entirety of this discussion, it can be concluded that the Mahisha Jataka reliefs at Borobudur are an extraordinary fusion of art, culture, and spirituality. They not only constitute a crucial part of Indonesia's cultural heritage but also illustrate how art and spirituality can unite to create a profound and impactful experience for society. By preserving, caring for, and respecting these reliefs, we can continue to comprehend and appreciate the cultural and spiritual values they represent.

## **Conclusion**

Through the iconographic study of the Mahisha Jataka reliefs at Borobudur Temple, we have delved into the profound moral messages implicit in this work of art. These intricate and impressive reliefs serve not only as an exceptional example of artistic and visual beauty but also as a reflection of moral values within the context of Buddhist teachings. The Mahisha Jataka reliefs reinforce moral messages about the struggle against evil. These reliefs illustrate the conflict between good and evil, depicting the Buddha in the form of a buffalo battles a proud and often troublesome monkey. They remind us of the importance of fighting for justice and against evil in our daily lives.

The moral messages within these reliefs depict the importance of a harmonious and peaceful society. The Mahisha Jataka reliefs also reinforce Buddhist teachings within the context of Borobudur Temple's reliefs. The iconography in Borobudur reliefs illustrates moral values such as karma, karma vipaka, and the concept of dharma. They serve as a means to convey Buddhist teachings to its followers and illustrate these teachings within the context of moral and ethical stories. Through the entirety of this study, we can conclude that the Mahisha Jataka reliefs at Borobudur are not merely awe-inspiring visual artworks but also embodiments of moral values. These reliefs reflect deep moral messages about the struggle against evil, sacrifice for common goods, wise leadership, courage, simplicity, the pursuit of happiness, enlightenment, harmonious societies, and teachings that we can extract from the Mahisha Jataka reliefs. They continue to inspire individuals and communities in seeking meaning and wisdom in daily life and serve as a source of teachings on profound moral values in society. The discussion of the Mahisha Jataka reliefs underscores the significance of Borobudur Temple as a historical and religious site that must be preserved and safeguarded diligently. It is crucial to continue further research and documentation of these reliefs to understand the deeper historical and cultural contexts and ensure the preservation of this valuable heritage.

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