

AN ANALYSIS ON ARTISTIC CREATIONS CONNECTED WITH STŪPA

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There are many ideas regarding the origin of Stūpa. As we call, in Sri Lanka, *Cetiya*, *Caitya*, *Stūpa*, *Dāgeba*, and *Vehera* is appeared not only in the Far East Asian countries but also in the whole Buddhist countries in the world. When concerning the Buddhist rituals, we can identify three places of worshipping called " *Trivida Caitya*". After passing away of Buddha, there was no any precious organism to worship or honour for Lord Buddha. Therefore, the Buddhist tradition has taken a decision to create a certain way to worship Buddha. There are three ways of worshipping places namely *relics Stūpa* (Buddha's body relics), *Paribhōgika Stūpa* (Bo-tree) and *Uddēsika Stūpa* (Buddha Statue).

Among all these three methods of worshipping, it had been started first worshipping Stūpa. According to the canonical texts, it was approved by Buddha addressing following words of *Ahampi Pujaraho* that is a quotation taken from *Aranavibhaṅga Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Besides this, four individuals have been mentioned as '*Thuparaha*' in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of *Digha Nikāya*. According to the words of Buddha, the devotees created Stūpas keeping Buddha's relics.

After the origin of Stūpa establishing and worshipping, it was created in various models in the world. As the result of that, Sri Lankan Artist built up various kinds of Stūpa to worship and honour Lord Buddha. They built up various kinds of creations connected with Stūpa like *Vestibule*, *Balustrade*, *Guardstone*, *wall* and *Moonstone*. Through these kinds of architectonic arts, the devotees gathered around Stūpa to worship Lord Buddha memorizing his various qualities.

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Methodology

The method of this research basically depends on the primary and secondary sources. All the available sources are being studied to have more data relevant to this theme. Not only that I gain details using a discussion with the scholars who have a sound knowledge of this area.

Discussion

At the very beginning, when we enter to a Stūpa, we can see various kinds of artistic creations connected with Stūpa. By this, Architectures who created artistic creations as *Vestibule, Balustrade, Guardstone, wall and Moonstone* shows not only the artistic value of Sri Lankan but also with the meaning of religious purpose.

Moonstone is a remarkable artistic creation that has been created by the Sinhala Buddhist artisans. Specially, it is a great creation which shows the capabilities of Sinhala Buddhist artists. There are few great moonstones in Anuradhapura which have created four kinds of animals as tusker, horse, lion and cattle. One of them has been situated near Abhayagiri Stūpa. The other has been situated near by the Jaya Sri Maha Bo-tree. In addition to that there is another Moonstone at the Panchāvāsa Vihāra complex. When we compare with those three moonstones, we can identify that all those moonstones have been created by a same artist. That is an inheritance artistic historical treasure creation created by a Sri Lankan artist. It is like a shape of half-moon. In the moonstones that have been created in India, these artistic features cannot be seen.

When we enter to a religious place or a royal place, at the very beginning of steps, we can see a creative stone which is known as guard stone. Between the two guard stones, at the beginning of steps the moonstone is often situated. This creation is called as doorkeeper stone or security stone. At the beginning, the guard stones are used as a stone shelf. That was controlled the guard stone and the balustrade. It is used as a wedge. There are few guard stone in Sri Lanka as mentioned following,

- ❖ Guardstone with vase (*Mihintale Kaludiya Pokuna, Nehuvila*)
- ❖ Guardstone with pigmy (*Abhayagiriya, Mihintalen Rajagiri Lena*)



❖ Guardstone with cobra (*Anuradhapura Ratnaprāsāda, Polonnaru Vatadāge*)

Though this inheritable art named guard stone, Sri Lankan scholars say that it has been created by the Sri Lankan artistic due to the Indian influence. The guard stone which was highly expanded under the discrimination is a special attentive creation in Buddhist devotees.

Balustrade which is situated near the guard stone stands beside the steps. It is used as a handrail. At the beginning of the balustrade, it was created very simple way. But, later, it was changed as a dragon balustrade at the second period of Anuradhapura. The scholars say that the dragon picture is focused by the Indian artist. Later this dragon balustrade has created by collecting seven kinds of parts of the animals as mentioned following,

❖ Crocodile	-	Mouth
❖ Tusker	-	Trunk
❖ Lion	-	Foot
❖ Pig	-	Ear
❖ Fish	-	Body
❖ Swan	-	Plumage
❖ Monkey	-	Eye

So, the balustrade has been created as beautiful artistic creations that were not changed at the later period of Anuradhapura. It's a very special character of balustrade in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa period.

When we concern the ancient carving arts in Sri Lanka, we can find at first vestibule in Anuradhapura period. This vestibule which is called as 'Ayak' is one of parts of architecture. The Vestibule is an architectural creation that has been situated in four directions of Stūpa. It has been created with a stone plank. We can see there are two terminations of the vestibule that are high stone plank and short stone plank. Among them, animals like tusker, horse, lion, bull and pictures like cobra, pigmy, dragon and swan were created. Apart from that, different festoon and vignette have been created.

Conclusion

Though Stūpa was created independently at the beginning, the Sri Lankan artist by adding various kinds of artistic creations to Stūpa, shows protection of Stūpa, the capabilities of creativity, and religious devotion. Some of those artistic creations are inherited to Sri Lankan tradition from beginning upto date. Some of them are directly connected with India. But, finally we can identify the unique capabilities of Sri Lankan artistic in these creations.

Keywords: Stūpa, vestibule, balustrade, cuard stone, moonstone.

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