

# **An Investigative study of beliefs and faiths in ancient time by using ruins of *Dedigama Kotawehera***

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## **1. Introduction**

Dadigama kotawehera is one of the most important Buddhist inheritance in Sri Lanka. According to historical resources written about Sri Lanka, Dadigama kotawehera has created by king Parakramabahu the great. What are the beliefs of people of that era can be identify by using from ruins and evidence have remain in Dadigama kotawehera is the problem of this research. Finding many of believes during at that time in Sri Lanka using from ruins of Dadigama kotawehera is the main purpose of this research. Ath pahana major creative work of ancientners is a special item have found at Dadigama kotawehera. Dr. Manawadu, prof. Senarath D.G.A Perera, Dr. Rohan D. Gunarathna and many of other scholars have given special attention for it. There are a few of archeologic ruins have been unearthed. The ath pahana which was one of a very creative lantern has many of details of beliefs in ancient people created and there are lot of social symbols relevant at that time. Though many scholars have paid their attention about Dedigama kotawehera but they haven't analysed the beliefs of those special inventions clearly yet. This research mainly aimed at beliefs of normal masses connected with religious and social phenomena. Qualitative research methodology has been used for this research.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Qualitative research methodology is used for this research. Pottery, inscriptions and architectural remnants found at the site, stone inscriptions which can offer insight into the religious, cultural and social contexts, detailed accounts from archaeological excavations and document findings, contexts and interpretations by researchers of excavation reports, ancient texts or chronicles that mentioned the site such as the Mahavamsa, have used as the primary sources and they provide more valuable details to understand the main atmosphere of that era. Explanations of Prof mandavala and Dr. karunasena's also used for more clarifications.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

Archaeological excavations done by many scholars found several special findings including Buddha's status, metal objects, aesthetic inventions, symbols and many more from Dedigama Kotawehera. Kotawehera Dagaba and Soothighara maha seya reportedly build by king Parakramabahu the Great. This place identified as the birth place of king parakramabahu. So he has created this largest and valuable stupa in this place. Ath pahana is most important symbol can be found from excavation at dadigama kotawehera. Elephant or Tusker is most respectable animals even in nowadays. Elephants or Tuskers has used for this special creation. Some scholars mentioned an idea for the question, why a statue of this animal has used to create this lantern. According to them, Elephant or Tusker has a respect during king Parakramabahu the great. Because in procession festivals they use for proceeding sacred things or relics. Also the holding chain fixed with the Ath Pahana has designed to represent the procession culture elements.

This holding chain has created with small statues of drummers, dancers connected with each like in processions. So it is clear that the procession is a major part of this period.

Another important archaeological statue which show symbolic belief performed in that era is cobra statues. Lots of cobra statues may have created in that era of Parakramabahu the great. During his reign, Hinduism was introduced to Sri Lanka because Hindu invasions attacked king Parakramabahu. When they confirmed the throne, their cultural beliefs and symbols crawling in to Sri Lankan culture.

The foundation of the Soothighara stupa has separated chambers. According to the scholars special foundation structure can be pointed out as main evidence for Tantrayana influence which one part of Mahayana sector. In Tantrayana Buddhism have special item called "Mandala". That beliefs may have influenced to structure formation of Dadigama kotavehera stupa foundation. Tantrayana Buddhism have arrived to Sri Lanka during last part of the Anuradhapura kingdom. It can be pointed out from this evidence. Some of cobra statues have found inner of stupa. Naga worship is most powerful belief in Sri Lankan society at Pre-Buddhist era. That belief within the Anuradhapura kingdom. Ancient local artists represented naga arts in Guard stones which placed near the Buddhist stupas and buildings.

Overall, the findings suggest that the ruins of Dedigama kotawehera are not merely remains of past civilizations but are imbued with layers of belief and faith, illustrating how ancient societies integrated their spirituality into both their architecture and daily life. This interplay highlights the importance of a reflection of enduring values and communal identity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Finally, the archaeological findings at Dadigama kotawehera provide a deeper understanding of the site's historical and cultural significance, particularly during the reign of king Parakramabahu the great. The presence of various artefacts such as Buddha statues, Ath pahana and unique architectural elements underline the fusion of religious beliefs and artistic expressions of the time. The depiction of Tusker in the Ath pahana reflects the cultural reverence for elephants, their symbolic importance, in ancient Sri Lankan society. Furthermore, design elements such as holding chain of Ath pahana illustrate the interconnectedness of dance, music and cultural celebrations, indicating a rich tradition of processions and communal gatherings.

Influenced by Tantrayana Buddhism, the basic Mandala-like structure suggests significant interaction between different Buddhist Traditions during this period. In addition, the discovery of naga statues reinforces the continuity of Pre-Buddhist naga worship within the evolving religious landscape, demonstrating the ability of local beliefs to coexist with new ideologies. Overall, Dadigama kotawehera serves as a testament to the complex interplay of cultural, religious and artistic developments in ancient Sri Lanka, offering a valuable perspective on the historical narrative of the region. The site not only celebrates the legacy of king Parakramabahu but also enshrines the Sri Lankan identity. Many of beliefs during ancient time can be pointed out using from ruins have found at Dadigama kotawehera.

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#### **6. Keywords:**

Ath pahana, Cobra Statue, Dedigama kotawehera, Soothigara maha seya

#### **7. References**

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