

Thuparamaya – The First Stupa of Sri Lanka



Thuparamaya the oldest Stupa of Sri Lankan History is a sacred obeisance in Anuradhapura Sri Lanka. Tourists never ever forget to visit this stupa as it is another pride of Sri Lankan tourism. Simply it is located in the north of Ruwan weli maha seya.

It is believed that it buttress the collarbone relic of Gauthama Buddha which was a honorable gift from Emperor Dharmashoka as a result of the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It was the time where the King Dharmasoka was providing orientation services to establish Buddhism in all Northern, Eastern, Southerb and Western countries of the world.

Therefore it was much comfortable have any support from our neighboring India. Thuparama stupa was built by King Devanampiya tissa who did a prime duty to establish Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C. We can imagine that there might be a colonnade which covered the stupa in a circular area which is also known as ‘Vata Dage’ as the columns are still remaining around the Stupa. It was rewamped by the King Aggrabodhi the second who ruled around the 7th century.

By the way the stupa had to face many destructions and modifications. In contrast Thuparama is a small stupa , 20 m in height . The stupa is constructed according to the ‘paddy –heap’ shape but the present shape has been changed to a ‘bell’ shape with the renovation in 1862. Close to the south east side of the dagoba, is a ruined hospital which medicated and looked after the patients. It is evident as soon as you enter the ruined premise that it is a valuable ancient ruin of Buddhism. The environment around the dagoba is a kingdom for monkeys.

Here you can see medicinal stone troughs which were used to cure sicknesses like ‘snake bitings’ through medicinal baths which were enriched with medicinal potions. This way of treatment is a fast way of absorbing the herbal medicines to the whole body simply commits to heal the body and mind. However The Thuparamaya Dagoba is well maintained now by the Viharadhipathi and authorities. Some records say that the pinnacle of the Dagoba shines in various colors when the Sutra and Gatha were recited on Poya days. Regarding this incident some reporters have captured some photographs of such lights too. Pilgrims believe that thats because of the arrival of Gods to worship the Relic of Lord Buddha.

This is the first stupa to be built in the country after the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Built in the time of king Devamnampiyatissa (250BC – 210BC) this was a stupa as well as an Aramic complex (monastery). Today ruins of this complex covers nearly 3 ½ acres. The stupa was built on the instructions of Mahinda Thero who brought Buddhism to the island to enshrine the right collar-bone of Lord Buddha.

On this stupa you can see a unique architectural feature called vatadage, a stupa-house. This building completely housed the stupa. At present four concentric circles of stone pillars are found around the stupa. They diminish in height from inner most circle and at one time carried the weight of a dome-

shaped roof over the stupa. There has been 176 pillars which supported this stupa house and in 1896, 31 complete pillars with capitals has been standing. This vatadage has been built in the 1st century AC.

In the seventh century BC the stupa was covered with a gold and silver casing and the vatadagê (stupa-house) with golden bricks and golden doors. Then Pandians (south Indian Tamil) plundered the stupa of it's all gold, jewels and treasures.

Again Mahinda IV (956-972) re installed the golden casings and the golden doors but again in the late 10th century Colas (south Indian Tamil) completely plundered the complex of its valuables.

The renovation of the present stupa was completed in 1862 which as completely changed the ancient features of this most ancient stupa.

On the left to the stupa you can see the conserved remains of an Image house belonging to this stupa complex. This was built by king Devanampiyatissa in the 3rd century BC and six hundred years later this was destined to be the first to house the Tooth Relic of Buddha, to claim the title of first Dalada Maligawa in the island.

The building is adorned by a pair of beautiful guard stones at the entrance. Some of the pillars still holds the lotus shaped crown and smooth polished surface which has survived over 2 millennia is a rarity in the building in Anuradhapura.

Next to this is remains of a small building with the two smaller guardstone and a granite doorway. Next to this is an ancient well made of granite blocks. On the opposite side of the walkway to the stupa you will find a small stupa called Padalanchana Stupa.

On the north-western side of the stupa you can see the Basawakkulama tank. This is the most ancient monument in Anuradhapura. This was built by king Pandukabhaya in the 4th century BC.



Photos before restoration



photo taken on late 1800's
or early 1900's

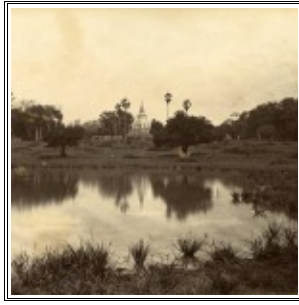


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