

The Nagaraja guard-stone during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods

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The purpose of this abstract is to denote Nagaraja guard stone, a symbol of God Vishnu. Although the common name is Nagaraja as it is created with a cobra and a royal figure, critics have not come to a final decision of its concept, symbol or task so far. Nagaraja guard stone was a very popular sight that appeared at the entrances of Buddhist buildings during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. This creation can be seen at the temples in capital city of the kingdoms, neighboring monasteries and the temples of provincial centers. But it was not included in non-Buddhist places like Palaces, Hindu temples, courts, tanks and ponds. We can see a close relationship between the figure of the guard stone and the concept of god Vishnu. According to the *Mahawamsa*, god Vishnu is the guardian of Lankadvveepa (Sri Lanka) as well as Buddhism. It is also present in Buddhist beliefs and God Vishnu is known in different Names such as Upulwan, Uthpalawarna, Udakapathi, Varuna, Vasu, Vasuki, Vasudeewa, Vasuladaththa, Anantha and known to have a close relationship with water. Among them, the figure of cobra is included in Vasu, Vasuki, Vasudeewa, Vasuladaththa and Anantha. There is a similarity between the Vasuki legends and anantha who protected Mahameeru and Vasuladaththa who protected the relics at Ruwanwelisaya. God Vishnu is known as Vasudeevo in the hymns for Vishnu, and also among the rulers of dashadig (ten directions), god Vishnu represents down (land). We can prove that the guard stone is a concept of Vishnu by installing the guard stone in connection with land, making compulsory for Buddhist architectural elements, having a close relationship with both Hindu and Buddhist stories and comparing the features of Vishnu with other characters. Archeological facts and primary and secondary literary sources have been used in this study.

Keywords: Nagaraja, Guard stone, Vishnu, Vasu, Vasuki, Varuna, Upulwan, Anantha