

## A critical study of the efforts made by the successive rulers of Dambadeniya period in order to safeguard and protect the sacred tooth relic of the Lord Buddha

Sudharmawathie Wanninayaka<sup>1</sup>

In the history of Ceylon, the change of capitals for the third time occurred in the city of *Dambadeniya*. In 1232 A.D. under the king of *III Vijayabahu* of *Dambadeniya* became the centre of power and overall authority.

When examining and analyzing the courses and effects of the decline of *Polonnaruwa* and the rise of *Dambadeniya*, Sri Lanka was engrossed in a formidable predicament. This came about as a result of the invasion launched by an unscrupulous invader *Magha* from the state *Kalinga* in India. By his invasion, he degraded the political, economics, social and religious harmony and dignity in the country.

The contemporary *Bhikkus* who had seen this situation had exerted enormous energy to combat this state of affairs, mainly to safeguard and protect the sacred tooth relic from the invader. The *Bhikkus* who engaged themselves in this arduous and meritorious deed, having hidden the sacred tooth relic underground at *Kotmale* and left the country in order to escape from death. The *Dambadeniya* dynasty comprises *III Vijayabahu*, *II Parakramabahu*, *IV Vijayabahu* and *I Buanekebahu*.

Among the religious services and activities performed by this rulers pertaining to the secret tooth relic took an important place. The most important duty of *III Vijayabahu* on his becoming the king was to call back from the India the *Bhikkus* who had left the country for fear of death, and to restore the sacred tooth relic which was hidden at *Kotmale* to *Dambadeniya*. From that time rulers had taken scrupulous care to protect and guard the sacred tooth relic.

This study is made on historical literature and archaeological data. By this study the conclusions arrived are:

1. There had been a strenuous effort throughout this period to safeguard and protect the sacred tooth relic.
2. There were religious performances connected with the tooth relic, exhibition of the tooth relic, periodical processions connected with sacred tooth relic.
3. In addition to above, the possession of the sacred tooth relic had been the symbol of power and kingship.

**Key words:** Sacred Tooth Relic, Dambadeniya dynasty, Religious performances, Historical literature

<sup>1</sup> Department of History, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka