

KUCCHIVEDI: A DISAPPEARED ITEM WITHIN THE REVOLUTION OF SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST STŪPA

Ven. Galle Dhamminda¹

W. Ishankha Malsiri²

Introduction

Buddhist Stūpas have an evolutionary history more than 2000 years. In Sri Lankan context although the basic concept of Stūpa was taken from India in 03rd Century B.C with the arrival of *Arahat Mahinda*, has been developed by indigene craftsmen's on their whims and fancies. As a result of the evolution during hundreds of years many of basic structural features of Stūpa have been developed and changed. Previous researchers including Hocart, Longhertz, Bell, Parānavitana, Prematilleke etc., have mentioned about those developments by time to time. In this paper we pay our keen attention to discuss about the disappeared item within the evolution of Stūpa. It is called Cucchivedi.

Methodology

Methodology of this research is based on collecting data from primary literary sources. Those data also compared with Archaeological data including murals, inscriptions and relic caskets unrevealed by various excavations during last century.

Analyzing

Ancient Stūpas in India existed three of railings which shown by stone murals of Sāñci and Bharhut. Those railings were called as

¹ Temporary Lecturer, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

² Postgraduate candidate, Department of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

Chattavedikā or Muddhavedikā, Kucchavedikā and Puṭavedikā. Kucchi is a synonym of *Udarawhich*, as will be shown in the sequel, is a term by which the dome of a Stūpa is referred to in the Pali writings of Ceylon (Paranavitana 1946:18). Generally it stood on the uppermost terrace was known as *Kucchavedikābhūmi*. Devotees could pay homage to the sacred relics enshrined inside the Stūpa by walking along the *Kucchivedi*. Though this structural item can be seen in some of Indian Stūpas like Sāñci, the great Stūpa in Vidisa, there are no any material evidence about the Sri Lankan usage. However primary literary and inscriptional sources help to shed a new light about that. Following factors were considered by us.

1. When describing the finishing of *Mahāthūpa* by Saddhatissa the Mahāvamsa has been mentioned following verse.

Cittakarehikaresi – vedikaṃtatthasādhukaṃ (xxxii:10)

According to the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, *tīkā* of the Mahāvamsa has been written in 08-10th Century A.D, ...*tatthasādhukaṃtitasmiṃcetiyesādhukaṃ Kucchivedikaṃcakārāpesitiattho*....(V.K.584).

2. *Mahāthūpevedikādvē – thūpavhe'posathavhayaṃ* (M. V. xxxiv: 39)

It means that the King Bhatikabhaya (39-47 A.D.) was constructed two railings for the Mahāthūpa. The Commentary has been described the word 'Vedikādvē' as *Kucchivedikā* and *Muddhavedikā*.

...*VedikadvētiKucchivedikāmuddhavedikātidvedikācakāresi*...(629)

3. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, the commentary of *Dīgha-nikāya* written in 05th Century A.D. by Ven. Buddhaghosa is included another evidence about *Kucchivedikā*. It has been mentioned three railings called *Chattavedikā*, *Puṭavedikā* and *Kucchivedikā*. *Linattavaṇṇanā*, the *Dīghanikātikā* has been described what three types were. It says, *Cattavedikā* construct for umbrellas and *Puṭavedikā* construct around the

Stūpa for pay homage with walking. Kucchivedikā means that the stage which construct around the Dome and combined with it.

...Cetiye chatta saheṭṭhā kata bba vedikā chatta vedikā.

Cetiya mparikkhipitvā padakkhiṇakara nattāna mantokātvā kata bba vedikā pūṭa vedikā. Cetiya ssa kucchimparikkhipitvā taṃsa mbandhameva katvā kata bba vedikā Kucchivedikā... (L.V. 280).

4. Thūpavaṃsa written in 12th Century A.D. describes about the finishing of the Mahāthūpa. It mostly depended on ins and outs of the Mahāvaṃsa.

...Knowing the king to be weak, he thought; it is not possible to do the work, that is not yet finished before (he dies) and having had a covering made of white cloth, he had the shrine covered (with it), and on the covering did he have made by painters a railing and rows of filled vases and the five finger marks....(T.V. 92).

5. There are two inscriptional evidences those mentioned about Kucchivedi.

The first is a rock inscription engraved on the rock near the Kanthakacetiya at Mihintale. It may belong to 02nd or 03rd Century A.D. The rock is much damaged and inscription is uncompleted. Following sentence is vital with discussing the kucchivedi.

...nayaetakahamaṇadina hi

pacekasapurahayamahacetahibadavetiye kaṭa

Cetabara-vihārahi (vasa)naka.....yaha (Paranavitana 2001: no. 135).

It is very interesting that they used 'baḍa' as a synonym for 'Kucchi' in Pali. 'Veti' means 'Vedi' in Pali. 'Veta' is the modern usage.

6. The second inscriptional evidence from Kosavakanda Vihara, situated a mile to the east of the 65th mile on the road from Anuradhapura to Dambulla lines as follows.

...Sidha Kuḍaganaka Vateyatamaha Giravi Seherahi Akāḍavivikahi

(da)ka(pati)Jaḷakatakaveherahitubahitumahakaritacetahica.



Mudavet(i)kahaçabaḍavitikahaca.....jinapaḍisatiriyakotudini(Paranavita na 2001:no.156).

KuḍaganakaVateya, granted to the monastery of Jaḷukataka, the water revenue from the tank Akada in GiraviSehera, for the purpose of dilapidating decays at the *cetiya*, caused to be built by him, at the railing on the summit (of the Stūpa) and at the railing at the dome....

7. Three relic caskets have been revealed from Stūpa excavations which show the features of Kucchivedi.
 - I. The Golden relic casket found at the topmost terrace of the Kotavehera of Srikuntacaityarama at Deliwala in Kegalle district. May be belongs to 02nd or 01st Century B.C.
 - II. A relic casket unearthed from the southern *vahalkada* of the Dighavapistūpa in Ampara district. According to a gold foil inscription which found with this casket it belongs to the 02nd Century A.D., reign of Kanittatissa (167-186 A.D.).
 - III. A relic casket made of gold foil, revealed from inside the Kotavehera at Lahugala in Ampara district. May be belongs to the 01st or 02nd Century A.D. (See, Schroeder 1990:Pl. 1C, 1D & 1E).

Conclusion

According to the above literary and Archaeological evidence we can come to a conclusion about the Kucchivedi in the Sri Lankan Stūpa culture. Kucchivedi could be seen in number of Stūpa s over the island including Mahathūpa since 03rd Century B.C. At least it was a common feature during 02nd Century A.D. However when the Stūpa culture developed rapidly, Kucchivedi failed to protect its significant. So after 04th or 05th Century A.D. Kucchivedi was disappeared from the Stūpa features. Previous researchers have discussed about the development of Stūpa items. But we should

remember there are some items like *Kucchivedi* were totally vanished within the evolution of Stūpa. So evolution is not only a development of features but also a destroyed.

Reference

- DīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkāLīnaṭṭhavannaṇā, ed. L. De Silva (1970) London: PTS.
- Paranavitana, S. (1946) *The Stūpa in Ceylon*, Colombo: Ceylon Government Press.
- Paranavitana, S. (2001) *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. 2, Part ii*, Colombo: Department of Archaeology.
- Schroeder, U. V. (1990) *Buddhist sculptures of Sri Lanka*, Hong Kong: Visual Dharma Publication Limited.
- The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. Tms. W. Geiger.(1960) London: Great Britain.
- Thūpavamsa; The legend of the Topes*.B.C. Law.(1945) Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.
- Vamsatthappakāsini*, Vol. ii, Ed. G.P. Malalasekera, London: PTS.
- WalpolaRahula. (1956) *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo: M.D. Gunasena and Sons.