

## Abstract No 36

### An Investigation on Holy Circular House (*Chakaghara*)

**Ven. Galweve Wimalakhanthi,**

Senior Lecturer in archaeology, bomaluwatemple@gmail.com

**Ven. Walipitiye Indananda,**

Lecturer, in Sanskrit, Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura

windananda@busl.ac.lk

The ancient monastery complexes such as *Hattikuchchi*, *Vijayaramaya*, and *Abhayagiriya* contain some peculiar buildings. They are normally circular, rectangular or ellipsoidal shapes. These buildings were erected with a special design. The ground floor is open to all who recite *Dhamma* and others can see the occasion by gathering around it and it was quite high from the ground and was not erected to the regulations of the *Adhiṣṭāna* mentioned in the *Manjusri-bhāṣita-vāstuvīdyā-śāstra*. The upstairs might had been made with timber but not with stone slabs though the ground floor was made with stone pillars and slabs. The *chakagharas* were designed to recite *Dhamma*, to place *Dhamma* books, to hold the discussions of *Dhamma*, and to write *Dhamma* books. Though they were renovated the usage of them which was not interpreted properly. The aim of this research is to give a real meaning of their usage, describing the architectural plan. Many scholars interpret it as oblation assembly, *Uposathaghara* or a peculiar building. The present writer identified the real usage of these buildings with support of inscriptions. Three inscriptions out of 64 contain the word "*chakagara*" meaning circular house. Early *Brahmi* inscriptions contain a word "*patibanakuta*". *Patibanakuta* means the hall for reciting *Dhamma* stanzas once a week or a fortnight. In the doctrine of Buddha mentioned the *chakra* of *Dhamma* (*Dhammachakra*) and reciting the *Dhamma* frequently in the *chakaghara* by monks of the monastery together. Laymen and *sāmaṇera Bhiksus* could have viewed as they wish without participating in it. That type of practice has been made in the Anuradhapura period. Mahāvamsa mentioned as *Dhammasangani Gharathe* house for *Dhamma*, *Dhammadhatughara* and *Dhammadatu Mandira*, the depositing house of *Dhammadhatu*. Hence, the *chakagara* mean the house of *Dhamma* affairs prevalent in those monasteries. Methodology of this research based on field and literary survey. According to the facts revealed from newly discovered and interpreted inscriptions and from the plans can be proved it as *Cakaghara* in meaning of *Dhammachakra* building.

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