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ABSTRACTS

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The Moonstone and Associated Sculptural Elements at the Entrances of Buddhist Viharas at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka: A New Interpretation

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The Moonstone is a crescent shaped stepping stone found at the foot of flight of steps leading to Buddhist Viharas. It was originally an undecorated stone similar to the ones found in India and other Buddhist Countries until the Mid Anuradhapura Period, when elegantly carved floral and faunal motifs began to appear in Sri Lanka.

These sculptural representations of Moonstones have been vividly interpreted by scholars. However, no general consensus has been arrived at regarding what the depictions symbolize. In this paper an attempt is made to explore other probable interpretations from a different perspective that incorporates other associated sculptural elements usually encountered at the entrances of Buddhist Viharas. The paper finally lays emphasis on perceiving the Moonstone as a symbolic representation of purification of any devotee who enters the holy premises.