

# סומנה

סומנה (Sumana): ישות, מוצגת כיקהה בסוטה 'אימחת מגן'.

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## סוּמָנָא

סומאנא רוי (Sumana Roy) - מועג הפילם

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סומאנא חסין sumana@sharjah.ac.ae חסין עטמן hahmad@sharjah.ac.ae מסאחין נגורי קאזני nqazi@sharjah.ac.ae כליה ההנדסה הסנאכית והאיזרית ד. פחרי דוירי

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Sumana Saman devi sihi karalaa. Hadha bathiyen karunaa karala. Lang vemu ... סומאנא  
... חלפה vemu לאנג bathiyen karunaa karala החזא Sihina karalaa סאמן דיפי

# Saman (deity)



A painting of God Saman

**Saman** (also called **Sumana**, **Samantha**, **Sumana Saman**, Sinhala: සුමන සමන් දෙව්) is a deity, subject to local and indigenous belief and worship in Sri Lanka. The name **Saman** means “the rising morning sun”. His character is of historical significance for the Sinhala people and veneration especially to all the Buddhists. God Maha Sumana Saman is depicted crowned, bejeweled, holding a lotus flower in his right hand and accompanied by a white elephant.<sup>[1]</sup>

According to Mahavamsa, the early chronicle of Sri Lanka, Saman is considered as one of the guardian deities of the island and Buddhism in the country.<sup>[2]</sup> Natha, Upulvan, Vibhishana and Kataragama are the other guardian deities. Nayakkar dynasty from South India introduced the goddess Pattini replacing god Saman, during the period of Kandyen Kingdom.<sup>[2]</sup> Saman is the guardian (patron deity) or the presiding deity of Sagaragamuva and the Sri Pada mountain. Accordingly his main shrine or devalaya is at Ratnapura, where an annual festival is held in his honor.<sup>[3]</sup> Another major shrine

dedicated to god Saman is situated at Mahiyangana in Uva Province of Sri Lanka.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 1 History

According to common belief, Saman may have been a king or a provincial ruler (Mahasumana) of Sagaragamuva from the Deva clan, one of the four main clans in ancient Sri Lanka. According to the tradition of *Sammuthi Deva* (considered a deity by common acceptance), he is revered as a deity. Another legend discloses that he was a prince who was a younger brother of King Ravana, who ruled Sri Lanka 6000 BC. Following his death, Prince Sumana Saman became a god, by the name of God Maha Sumana Saman. He is also thought to have been a Deva (god) of the heavens, who later became the presiding deity of Sri Pada. Some also relate him to the Mahāyāna bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

In the legendary history, Sumana Saman deviyo invited Lord Buddha to the Samanalakanda and on request Lord Gautama Buddha left his foot print on the rock at top of the mountain as a token of symbolic worship, in the absence of the Buddha. God Sumana Saman was there when Lord Buddha visited the island for the first time. Saman became a stream-entrant (sotapanna) after listening to the Buddha, who gave him a handful of hairs with which he erected the Stupa at Mahiyangana.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2 Sri Pada

Main article: Sri Pada

According to Mahavamsa, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka, Sri Pada mountain (also called Sumanakuta, Samangira, Samanthakuta and Samanalakanda) bears the impression of the Buddha's left foot, which he left on his third visit to the island. Some say that the name Samanthakuta means the “Peak of the God Saman”. Generally Sri Lankan Buddhists believe that the footmark on the summit of Sri Pada is that of Lord Buddha, who during his third visit to Kelaniya, 2580 years ago, kept the imprint of his left foot thereon as a relict worthy of veneration.

Buddhist devotees who climb the Peak regard God Sumana Saman as their benevolent protector. It is believed that the first person to discover the sacred footprint was King Valagamba (104-76 BC) while he was in exile



*God Saman is the guardian deity of the Sri Pada mountain (Adam's Peak)*

in the mountain wilderness.<sup>[5]</sup> According to the local legend he had been led to the summit of the mountain by a deity in the guise of a stag.<sup>[5]</sup> Thereafter not only ordinary pilgrims but also royalty paid homage to the footprint of the Buddha from ancient times. The pilgrim season to the Sri Pada begins annually on the full moon poya day in December and ends on the Vesak poya day in May. During this six month period, thousands of pilgrims ascend the mountain to venerate the sacred footmark on the summit.

### 3 Beliefs

God Saman is the tutelary deity of the mountain wilderness, whose divine eye is supposed to cast upon Deraniyagala, Boltumbe, Ellakkala, Nivitigala and the mountain Benasamanalagala.<sup>[6]</sup> He is regarded as the chief deity of the area surrounding the sacred mountain as well as of the Saparagamuva country in general.

The Theravada Buddhists of Sri Lanka later made god Saman the guardian of their land and their religion. With the rise of Mahayana Buddhism, Saman was identified as Samantabhadra, one of the four principal bodhisattvas of Mahayana. Like Samantabhadra, Saman is usually depicted crowned and bejewelled, holding a lotus in his right hand and accompanied by a white elephant. At Weligama, an ancient port on Sri Lanka's south coast, there is a 12 ft high statue which some believe is the figure of Samantabhadra carved out of a huge moss-covered bolder. This statue is now called Kushtarajagala. It is thought that the Pilgrims from India and northern Sri Lanka disembarking at Weligama were greeted by this bodhisattva figure as they set out on the long trek to Sri Pada.<sup>[7]</sup>

God Maha Sumana Saman is depicted in human form accompanied by a white elephant, the ancient bulldozer of Lanka, the great noble beast of royal and Buddhist significance, in the background of Sri Pada (Adam's Peak). The resplendent god, a divine being in every sense of the

word, holds a red lotus, a flower of Sinhalese Buddhist significance. His noble elephant too holds a red lotus.

## 4 Impact on the Sri Lankan Culture

The dance tradition of Sabaragamuva relates to the god Saman. The costume worn in the dance is said to resemble his cloths. People of Sabaragamuva have much faith in the deity and many of their traditions relate to him. The dances are usually performed in Ratnapura, relating to the worshiping of God Saman much revered by local people.

The Maha Saman Devalaya of Rathnapura, first built by King Parakramabahu II (Pandita Parakramabahu) in 1270 AD, is the main temple dedicated to the deity Saman.<sup>[8]</sup> Every August this shrine conducts a traditional festival for two weeks every night. This ceremony may be the oldest precession in Sri Lanka, according to a poem sung in "Gara Yakuma" dance, relating to Rama Ravana Story and God Sumana Saman.<sup>[9]</sup>

There is also a Saman Devalaya at Mahiyangana. In Sandesha literature, poems were written to Sumana Saman for his blessing on the country. Pilgrims who climb the Samanalakanda expect blessings of the deity. They make sure not to anger him. The people living in the area tell many tales of his power and miracles.

## 5 See also

- Culture of Sri Lanka
- History of Sri Lanka
- Sri Pada
- Sabaragamuva

## 6 References

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