

Evolution of Elephant Clothes and Use of Decorations in Kandy *Perahara* Sri Lanka; Special Reference to *Sri Dhalada Maligawa* Pageant

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Introduction

Sri Dhalada Maligawa is the most valuable inheritance of the nation. The procession of the Sacred Relic commences during the Esala season. It is held annually and ceremoniously during the period of end of July and beginning of the August. It can be identified as the procession of the Rain Worship.



fig.1.1 Old Kandy *Perahara*

The first procession of the Sacred Tooth Relic starts with the *Kumbal Perahara* (*Kumbal* Procession). It is a tradition that the procession parades the streets of Kandy for five days. *Randoli Perahara* (*Randoli* Procession) could be seen only with the procession of the Sacred Tooth Relic and parade the streets for whole five days which is a tradition. In addition, the four *Devalas* carry their own decorated palanquin is taken in the procession.



fig.1.2 Elephants in the Pageants

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Considering the *Perahara* pageants *Diyawadana Nilame* and elephant that travel the casket (*Karaduwa wadammana etha*) are responsible for the casket and they are the main features in this event. In *Dhalada Perahara* the elephant must be a deserving person because he is just second to the *Diyawadana Nilame* in the *perahara* pageant nt.

Main Features of the Elephants in the *Maligawa Perahara*

Perahara is the most elegant and colorful event and it is a part of Sri Lankan tradition. This research aims to identify the elephant costume and the usage of decorations in details about the *Maligawa Perahara*. Each and every elephant is not allowed to carry the cascades in the procession, because it has rules and regulations. The elephant should have certain qualities. *Mangala Hasthirajaya* (Ceremonial Tusker); not every tusker gets the blessing the Tooth Relic. The ceremonial Tusker should have a wide back and seven earth touching spots and a majestic look. He should be decorated with gold woven costumes and tusks should be decorated with golden clips. From the time casket with the Sacred Tooth Relic is placed on the ceremonial tusker. The path the tusker walks on has to be cloth carpeted and a canopy is held over it. (Dayananda K. , 2011,p.51)

Evolution of the Elephant Dress

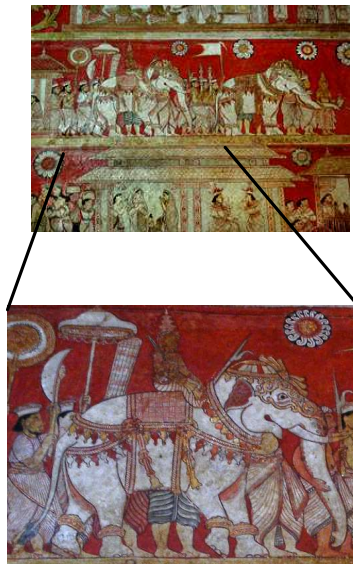


fig. 3.1 *Maligawa* Painting

Elephant dresses are elegant and decorated. They add more rich and colorful appearance to the occasion. When considering the history and origin of the dress it was simpler and it did not cover the whole body in the past. They have used different sizes strings, ropes, belts to decorate the body. Traditionally it called as a '*Raan Gahanawa*'. Other than that bells and brass sheets with different size were used to add an elegant look and create sounds. It is one of the non-verbal communication methods to inform the *Perahara* is Procession. There are no any written documents or pictures to establish it but it can be proven from some traditional temple paintings in *Maligawa* and *Degaldoruwa*

temple. In past the casket was travelled using one elephant. By the time other two supportive elephants were added to the *perahera* pageants to elaborate that event. By the way the elephant dress was developed without any rules and regulations. But they have to follow their colour themes. Gradually different types of clothes were used to decorate the elephant body. Specially Indian bed sheets and clothes with decorative printers were used to decorate the body.

Figure No: 3.2: *Degaldoruwa* Temple Painting



fig.3.2 *Degaldoruwa* Temple Painting

Two bed sheets were used by combining the sim. But it was not a specific dress code for the procession. Mr. Thadhani is one of the current elephant dress designers in the *perahara*. According to Mr. Thadhani, before seventy years back government of the Burma donated a dress for elephant (*Wadammana Etha*). It was decorated with embossed lotus flowers and it was eighty yard long. Brass is used as a decorative material for the *Neththi Malaya*. It is called *Bokkala Piththala* (Brass) decorations. In his knowledge, in 1965 his father (owner of the *Raja Silk*) had donated an elephant dress for the *Maligawa Perahara*. Gradually most of the people have donated elephant dresses for *Devalas* and *Maligawa* to attest them devolve. *Esala Maha Perahara* Pageant consists of Five main *perahara*. *Dhalada Maligawa Perahara* is the main *perahara* in this event and also four *Devala* *perahara* (*Natha Devala Perahara*, *Vishnu Devala Perahara*, *Paththini Devala Perahara*, and *Katharagama devala Perahara*) are combined to dignify the event. Each *Devala* has their individual *Perahara* and specialized symbols, colours and motives according to their beliefs.



fig. 3.4 *Bokkala Piththala* Design

***Perahara* Specific Colours Use of Symbol/ Motives**

Dhalada Maligawa Perahara White Colour White Colour (Not specify symbols, wearing Same colours *Diyawadana Nilame* and *Dela Ethun*)

<i>Perahara</i>	Specific Colours	Use of Symbol/ Motives
<i>Dhalada Maligawa Perahara</i>	White Colour	White Colour (Not specify symbols, wearing Same colours <i>Diyawadana Nilame</i> and <i>Dela Ethun</i>)
<i>Natha Devala Perahara</i>	Yellow / Gold	<i>Thani Hansaya</i> (One Swan)
<i>Vishnu Devala Perahara</i>	Blue	<i>Gurula</i> (Mythical Image)
<i>Paththini Devala Perahara</i>	Maroon	<i>Nelum Mala</i> (Lotus Colour)
<i>Katharagama Devala Perahara</i>	Red	<i>Monara</i> (Peacock)

Table 3:1 Use of Colours and Motives

4. Identification of the Details and Evolution of the *Maligawa* Elephants' Dresses

The procession of the Sacred Tooth Relic commenced during the regen of Kandy during the period of *Keerthi Sri Megawarna* (301BC – 238BC). The first procession of the Sacred Tooth Relic starts with the *Kumbal Perahara*. This is the first *Kumbal Perahara* shown to the infants to drive away Evil spells and Ill will. It is the tradition that the procession parades the streets of Kandy for five days. The *Kumbal perahara* is popular and remain as an unfinished procession or a semi procession. But the drummers and Tuskers take part without any ceremonial costumes. *Diyawadana Nilame* participates two days for that event. Because of that this *perahara* is not colorful than the *Randoli Perahara*.

4.1 *Randoli Perahara*.

Randoli Perahara procession of the Sacred Tooth Relic parades the streets for five whole days which is a tradition. The four *Devalas* carry their own decorated palanquins with religious articles of the *devala*.

4.2 *Maha Randoli Perahara* (Grand *Randoli* Procession)

The Grand *Randoli Perahara* is the last procession in the *Esala Maha Perahara*. The Tuskers come with garlands and decorated with gold stitched costumes. All participants wear their ceremonial costumes in this occasion. Specially the *Diyawadana Nilame* adds a novel glamour to the procession by wearing a newly stitched costume. Not only that but also the costumes of the *Dela* elephants look too glamorous to match with the *Diyawadana Nilame* costume. Specility is *Diyawadana Nilames*' and *Dela* Elephants' costumes are needed to be in the same colour in the *perahara* pageant. *Gajanayaka Nilame* is the in charge of the group of tuskers of the king. Symboling this *Gajanayaka Nilame* walks as if he is in charge of the elephants and tuskers who walk in the possession.

4.3 Identification of main features of the Elephant Dress

Wdammana Eduma (Elephant who carries the casket)

It should be more glamorous and elegant than the *Dela* dresses. *Wadammana eduma* was previously called as an outer garment (*Pita Redda*). This cloth includes ornaments and adornments to add a rich look and velvet is used to create the outer garment. *Diyawadana Nilame* wears five different colours in ten days. It is the same for the *Dela* dresses.

Elephants' cloth colours;

Yellow	}	for 10 days
Red		
Maroon		
Blue		
White		

Wadammana Eduma (for *Indiraja*) - One set out of (Yellow, Red, Maroon, Blue White)

Dela Eduma - Two sets out of (Yellow, Red, Maroon, Blue White)



fig. 4.1 Colour variation of the Velvet clothes

'*Watha Putuwa*' is a small metal chair, which is used to keep the casket forehead in an auspices time. It is tied using leather belt, or band to keep stability and convenient to the body.

Set of the Elephant Dress called *Aiththma* (an Item)

1. *Neththi Malaya*
2. *Kanwesuma*
3. *Ath Hettaya*
4. *Mini Kuttama*
5. *Chamara*
6. *Dala Kopu*
7. *Gejji*

4.5 Size variation of the Elephant Dresses

According to the historical evidence, there was a nominated *Rajakariya* system for people in the Feudalism period. But it is difficult to find family or caste system who prepared the elephant dresses. It can be clarified by written documents which refer to a caste called *Sannaliyo* (people who sawing the dress) and it can be believed that they prepared the elephant dresses as well.

The dress included three main parts *Neththi Malaya*, *Kanwesuma*, *Ath Hettaya (Pita Redda)*, *Pasalaba* (Anklet)

Sizes – Extra Large (XL), Large (L), Medium (M), Small (S)

It is an ornament that can be used to decorate the legs and arms. Today it can be identified as a decorative element but in the past it was used to inform of the elephant in the pageant to the audience who would hear the rhythmical sound. Other ornaments are *Chamara* (Fan), *Minigediya* (A Bell) etc. what is special is that these components are used only for the *wadammana Etha*,

4.3.2 Neththi Malaya

It was used to cover the elephant's trunk.



fig. 4.2 Movements

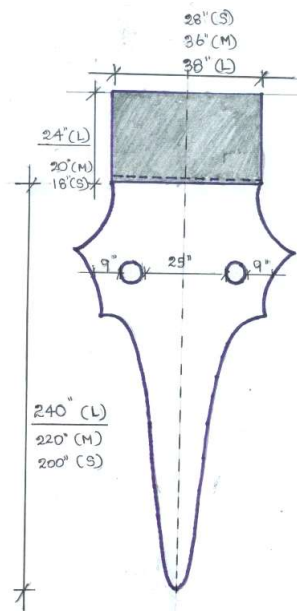


fig. 4.4 Details

fig. 4.3 Sizes of Neththimalaya



fig. 4.5 *Neththi Malaya*



fig. 4.6 Method of storage

4.4 .3 *Kanwesuma*



fig. 4.7 *Kanwesma*

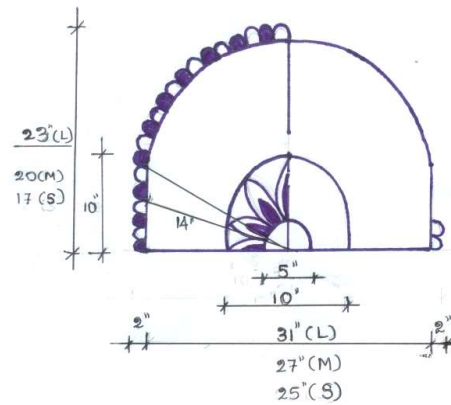


fig.4.8 Sizes and Pattern

It consisted of two parts, it was like a bag and used to cover their ears. It was also decorated with traditional lotus motives with coloured sequins and coloured stone beads. When they are moving their ears it looks shinier when turned to different angles.

4.4.4. *Ath Hettaya* (It is used to cover the Body)

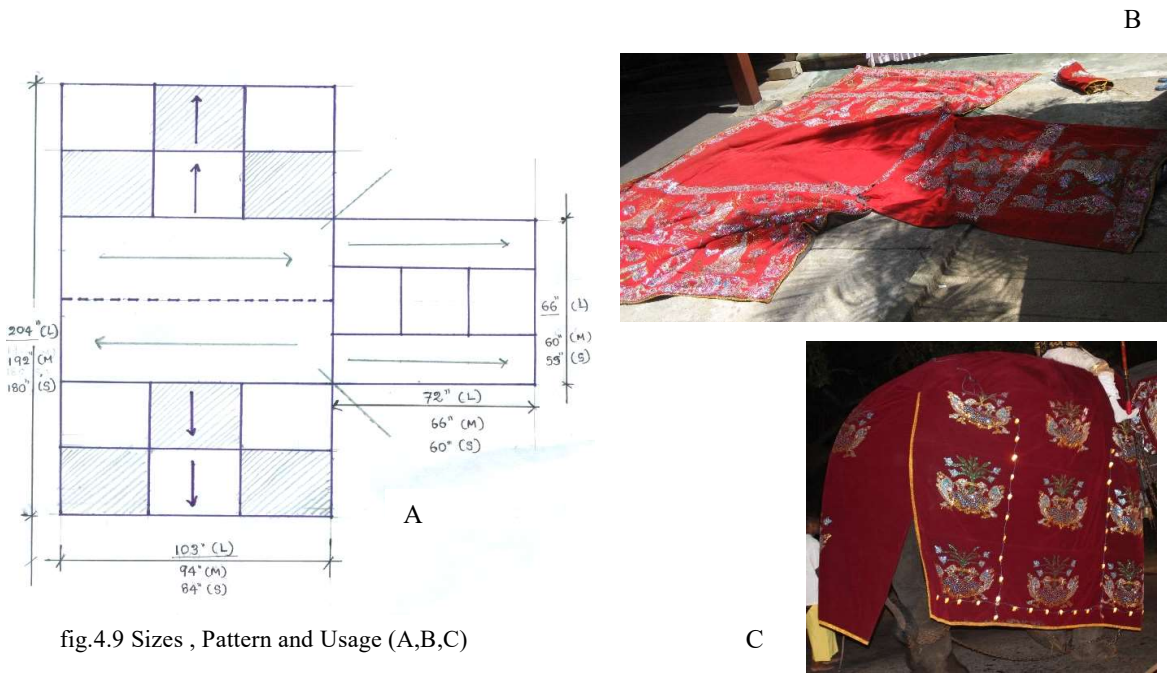


fig.4.9 Sizes , Pattern and Usage (A,B,C)

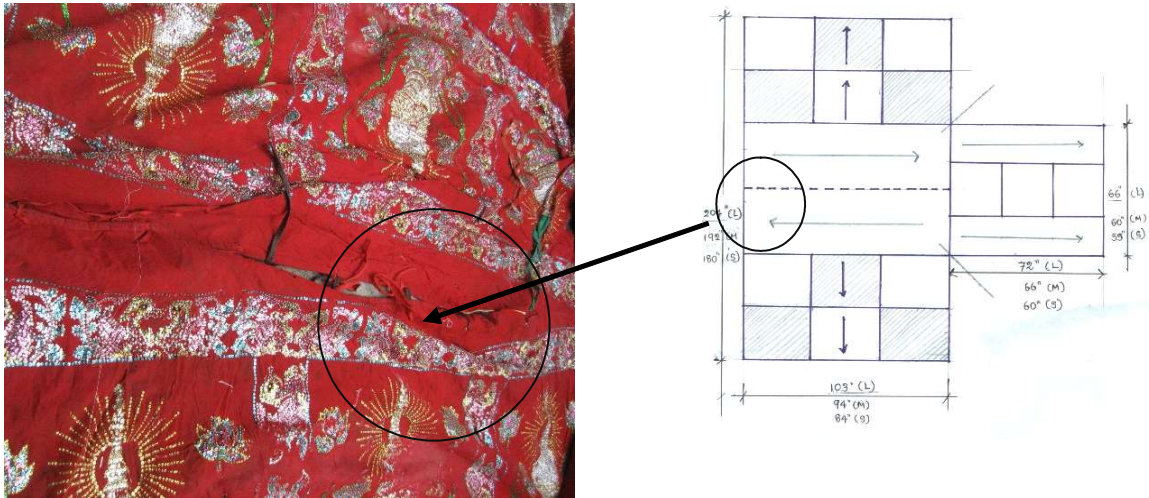


fig. 4.10 Joint line of the *Ath Hettaya*

Elephant dresses consisted of three layers to give them strength, hardness and durability and also the comfortability. To complete the full kit, it needed 105m of fabric.



fig. 4.11 Section of the Dress

The system of storing the clothes



fig. 4.12 Steps of Packing the Dress (1,2,3,4,5,6)

4.5 Decorations and use of Materials

As mentioned in the Table No:3:1, there are identical colours and motives which are already established according to the myths and beliefs. *Hansa Puttuwa*, *Nelum mala*, *Liyawela* for borders, *Monara*, *Bo- patha*, *Era*, *Handa*, *Annasi Mala*, *Liyawela*, lines, *Hemamala Dantha Kumaru* are some of the examples of what they used to decorate the surfaces in *Dhalada Maligawa perahara*.



fig 4.13 Final Designs (Use of motives and Decorations)

4.6 Use of Materials

Main decoration materials are sequins and stone beads. They are gathered and combined by needling one by one.

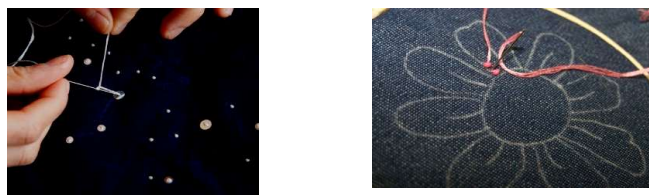


fig. 4.14 Steps of Apply Decorations



fig. 4.15 Variety of Decoration Materials (Sequins / Plastic Beads)

Conclusion

Decorating and manufacturing of elephant dress is not an easy task. They have to pay attention to complete the dress glamorously. When considering the evolution of the elephant dress, it has a considerable evolution as design and decoration wise. It has a traditional identity, but in current practice some designs have been applied without any concepts and design validity. They just do it as a job to earn money. It has a tradition which needs to be considered and try to develop some conceptual limitations to develop and apply design in an identical framework. It When applying many of the decorations (heavy glamorous and fancy appearance) it reduces the qualities of the simplicity and traditional identity of *perahara* concept. It is a main issue in the current context, because current responsibility is to protect our tradition and beliefs for future generation. Cultural artifacts and events express the own identity and transparency for the future community.

References

Dayananda K. "*Splendor of the Pageant*", Historic Kandy Esala Perahara 1699, August 2011.