

## **The Service Rendered to Preserve the Buddhist *Shasana* in Sri Lanka, by Ven. Weliwita Sri Saranankara Sangharaja Thero**

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This paper examines the cultural heritage of Buddhism and the value of Buddhist *Sasana* in Sri Lanka through the service fulfilled by Ven. Weliwita Sri Saranankara Sangharaja thero to preserve Buddhism. The main purpose of this research is to find out the *sasanika* work done by this great Buddhist scholar and to draw public attention to preserve the decaying cultural heritage in rural areas in Kandy district. The author discusses the personal information of this great scholar and the difficulties he faced in his young age as a Buddhist monk to save Buddhism in the face of the influence of non-Buddhist beliefs existed in Kandyan kingdom at that time. Religion is the key indicator of the culture of Sri Lanka and it also depicts its heritage. The field of this research is the history of Sri Lanka in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is observed that many social factors affected this monk's *sasanika* work during his life time. The author has conducted a literary survey and field-work to gather relevant historical facts to estimate his service and to provide a sufficient description. After the investigation of historical facts of the written history, existing temples where the monk used to live, the house where he was born, his relations, livelihood, and the books and other documents written by him were also looked into. The following conclusions were arrived at: the biographical information of this great character has not been exposed to the society and his work has only being used by the Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka; no proper actions were taken to preserve this scholar's work and life and his knowledge and also his works has not being exposed to the society in general. Suggestions of the author in this regard is: to preserve the biographical information of this great scholar and to preserve the existing evidence about him for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to include the learning about this great scholar's importance to the Sri Lanka in the school curriculum.

**Keywords:** *Weliwita saranankarasangharaja thero, Buddhist shasana, Heritage, Buddhist culture, Kandyan kingdom, Suriyagoda temple*

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