Historical importance of Natha Devalaya in Kandy.

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Anuruddhika Dilhani

Abstract

Natha Devalaya is situated in Kandy or senkadagala, the capital city of the last Sinhalese kingdom in the central hills of Sri Lanka, surrounded by Mahaveli River from the south and west. Natha Devalaya could be identified as the oldest remaining structure in Kandy.

Natha Devalaya is located in the terrace situated in front of the sacred temple of the tooth and the kings palatial building and its origin dates back to the era of Gampola kingdom. It is believed that Natha Devalaya had been constructed by king Vikramabahu III who was ruling the Gampola kingdom. The features of Avalokiteshwar figure could be identified easily from the statue of Amithabhaya Buddha on the top of the matted hair. Although the statues of AvalokiteshvaraBodhisatwa were discovered from various parts of the island in the early stages, the name God of Natha was attributed to it only from the 14th century.

In examining the architectural characteristics of Natha Devalaya it could be observed that it resembles the image house features of crowing roof Gedige tradition which was popular during the medieval ages. The pavilion antechamber and the adytum which could be seen in Devalas of south India are also visible here. A coronation chaori constructed to select a prince eligible as heir to wall inscription of the Devalaya creates an immense assistance in building up the history of Kandyan kingdom.

Natha Devalaya is bound with traditional rituals maintained from the ages of ancient kings. Accordingly, the objective of this research is to investigate into the historical significance of Natha Devalaya Kandy with an emphasis on the origin and evolution of the Devalaya with its architectural characteristics and rituals while exploring the value of this historical premises making use of primary and secondary data.

Key words - Natha Devalaya, Avalokiteshvara Bodhisatwa, Kandy, kingdom, architecture

24 Probationary Lecturer, Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya, anuruddhika.dilhani@yahoo.com