

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

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ABSTRACT

The Perahera tradition is one of the cultural identities of the Sri Lankan community. The Kandy Esala Maha Perahara is a main perahara ceremony which is conducted annually by the Sri Dhalada Maligawa. The Kandy perahara consists of traditional dancing items, drumming items and four Dewala Peraharas. In the Dhalada Maligawa perahara the elephant who carries the casket of the Tooth Relic is just second to the Diyawadana Nilame. This research focuses on identifying the elephant dress of the Maligawa Perahara.

The elephant is the main character in the perahara pageant. However, there is no historical evidence or written documents that reveal reasons for their attire, importance of dress, use and motives for decorations, cultural beliefs and current practices that are important facts to transfer the knowledge to the future generation. This research will be helpful for future researchers.

Studying the perahara pageant is a vast and complicated field which needs to be considered from different perspectives. The perahara consists of five perahera pageants; Maligawa Perahara, Natha Dewala Perahara, Katharagama Dewala Perahara, Paththini Dewala Perahara and Vishnu Dewala Perahara. This research focuses only on the Sri Dhalada Maligawa Perahara with special reference to the elephant's clothes and use of decorations and its evolution. This research is based on the grounded theory method to gather data.

Flowers (Lotus Nelum Mala) and Swans (Hansaya) are mainly used to decorate the body surfaces in the perahara pageant. Apart from that bo leaves, liyawela, sun and moon, peacock and different types of flowers were used. Princess Hemamala and Price Dantha are used to decorate the surface and it is the first human figure to be used in the decorations.

The main findings of this research reveal that rules and regulations do not apply to decorations and motifs. However, it has a colour theme and mythical beliefs. When designing new things we need to allow theories and beliefs because it is a cultural event. It enhances our identity and our customs because of which it must have limitations.

Keywords: Perahara, Decoration, Motives, Design, Evolution