

**Special characteristics of image houses in temple architecture of British period
Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka**

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In 1796, when British commenced their rule in the coastal region of Sri Lanka, the ecclesiastical status of the colony was uncertain. The people of the littoral region of Sri Lanka started facing a huge suppression regarding the religion, when the Portuguese assumed rule in the 16th Century, which was followed by Dutch in the 17th century. The Colonialists' belief that the Christianity is the one and only true religion in the world and the rest of the religions pagan and false, made practising a religion of their choice freely and unhindered, impossible for Buddhists as well as Hindus in the Coastal region of Sri Lanka. However, when British started their rule in the late 18th century, the Governor was instructed to give freedom of practising a religion of their choice to the natives. Yet with educational reforms carried out by the British, Buddhism began to experience another wave of indirect conversion, to which the revivalists of Buddhism began attacking by rebuilding disused temples and establishing a school system for Sinhala Buddhists. Hence throughout the 19th Century a clear rejuvenation can be seen in the Buddhist Temple Architecture of Sri Lanka. Buildings for various purposes were built at temples, of them, Image House was a prominent monument constructed by devotees. These Image houses may look so different to a visitor, with their clear influence of European architecture which made these image houses more close to resemblance of Christian Churches. But in essence these Image houses were not so diverted from their medieval Kandyan counterparts or their predecessors. Hence the aim of this research is to identify the reasons that made devoted Buddhists of this period to adapt and incorporate such Colonial features into Buddhist Temple architecture and the ultimate motive behind that adaptation. Also through this research, an attempt is taken to review and deconstruct the popular belief that Buddhism suffered severely during the British rule in Sri Lanka.

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