

## **2.52 Dona Catrenerina: a weapon to gain political power**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to examine the position held by Dona Catrenerina in the power struggle of the Kandyan Kingdom in the Portuguese period.

Dona Catrenerina (Kusumasana Devi) was the rightful daughter of king Karalliyadde Bandara of Kandy kingdom. Karalliyadde Bandara was defeated by Seethavaka Rajasinghe and he sought protection from the Portuguese. Both the king and his wife died while in Trincomalee leaving their baby daughter Kusumasana Devi and nephew Yamasinghe Bandara in the protection of the foreigners. Being brought up in a convent in Mannar, she became a Catholic. Later she was taken to Kandy and made the Queen of the Kingdom. Thereafter Dona Catrenerina was considered by many an object through which rightful kingship could be gained. The Portuguese wanted to marry her to a noble of their choice and gain political power. But Konappu Bandara defeated the Portuguese and married Dona Catrenerina and became the rightful owner to the throne.

After Konappu Bandara's death a relative of his, Senarath took the hand of Dona Catherina and came into power. Consequently Dona Catherina's elder son of the earlier marriage met with an untimely death. Consumed with grief she suspected Senarath of committing murder. She was 35 years old when she died of this sorrow. It is said that she died cursing Senarath and no doubt her fate as a weapon to power as well. Many believe that she was pregnant at the time of death. However even after death her children gained power not on account of their father, but on account of their mother.

**Key words :** Kandyan Dyanasty, Rightful daughter of the king, Marriage and children, Power struggle.