

## **Vidyalankara Pirivena of 1940s; is it an alternative monastic model?**

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Vidyalankara Pirivena was founded in 1875 and subsequently it developed into one of the two leading monastic education centers in Sri Lanka. The zenith of its development as an education center was marked by its promotion into a full pledged university in 1959. Apart from the contribution made for the development of education in Sri Lanka this particular monastic institution was engaged in direct 'political activities' particularly after 1940s. This very 'unconventional political engagement' of the monks of this institution has been interpreted by researchers either as a 'deviation from the original role of the monks' or as 'doing justice to the historical nationalist role of the monks'. However, in this present research the above intervention by the monks of Vidyalankara is looked at afresh in a different angle. All the available literature produced by the Vidyalankara monks and their opponent schools and groups, biographies of the relevant people, literature produced by the leftist political parties, relevant reports and proceedings of State Council and the newspaper articles are the major sources used in this research. Apart from that certain audio and visual material would also be utilized. The vision and the mission proposed through all the engagements of the Vidyalankara monks in 1940 are tested against different Buddhist monastic models that have been inferred through historical researches and deduced the conclusion that it is not just a mere 'political engagement only' but a profound monastic modal that can be understood as an alternative to the monastic systems existed at the time.

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