

Temple on pillars: A study of the *TämpitaVihāras* in the Kurunegala District

Ganga Rājini Dissanayake

Postgraduate Research Student, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya

The structures built on a wooden platform resting on short granite pillars or stumps is a unique type of image houses from the 17th to 19th centuries. Among the *Tämpita Vihāras* focused on in this project some have also been used for other purposes. They also are repositories of art. At the *Tämpita Vihāras* statues, murals and decorative motives from the pre-Kandyan and Kandyan period of art can be studied. As some temples are in a bad state of preservation, this project aims to document the work of architects and craftsmen of *Tämpita Vihāras*. While such viharas can be found in the Gampaha, Kandy and Matale districts, the majority are located in the Kurunegala District.

For the initial documentation and analysis, the following sample of *TämpitaVihāras* located in Inguruwatta, Kaluhenadiwala, Kolambagama, Kōduruwapola, Nakkāwatta, Dambaneniya, Galgamuwa, Dātawa, Dīkikāwa, Dorabāwila, Panduwasnuwara, Bihilpola, Kaṇugala and in Dambadeniya have been selected. The study of each vihara focuses on the period it was constructed with an attempt to create a periodisation of the *TämpitaVihāras* and its evolution. The study will also include the basic characteristics as well as the special features of these structures, the uniqueness of their roof construction, the construction of the ambulatory, and their paintings, wood carvings and statues. Still photography and video documentation will be presented, while data will also consist of interviews conducted in situ. The study hopes to offer new insights into the discourse communities that constructed and used the *TämpitaVihāras*.