

## Temple Painters in the Kandyan Period

Ven. Miriswaththe Wimalagnana,

In temples such as Degaldoruwa, Gangaramaya, Hindagala, Ridivharaya Dambulla, Sāsseruwa we find paintings in a totally different style from those belonging to the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa Periods. There are different views regarding the origin of this tradition of paintings. However, this article will not deal with that issue but is about the life and social status of painters and the fundamentals of his art. Taking the style into account, scholars have given such identifications as 'folk art', 'primitive art' or "an art of peasant painters"<sup>1</sup> to the paintings in Kandy. However, one may misunderstand that these connotations relate not only to the work of the painter but also to his social life. Therefore, this article is to produce appreciation of that aspect of the Kandy-period painter.

### 1. Social Status of Painters:

The term '*sittara*' has been used to designate those who dealt in the art of painting. From older times the kings had employed the artists who got lands and sometimes food articles for their compensation for painting works in the temples. Whether these artists come down through family succession to the Kandy Period is a matter of doubt. The Nilagama Sittara School in the kandy period claims to have descended from the time of King Devānampiyatissa in whose time occurred the introduction of different classical arts to the Island by *Arahant* Mahinda. This cannot be proven because what we know about the old classical schools of painting is not sufficient. According