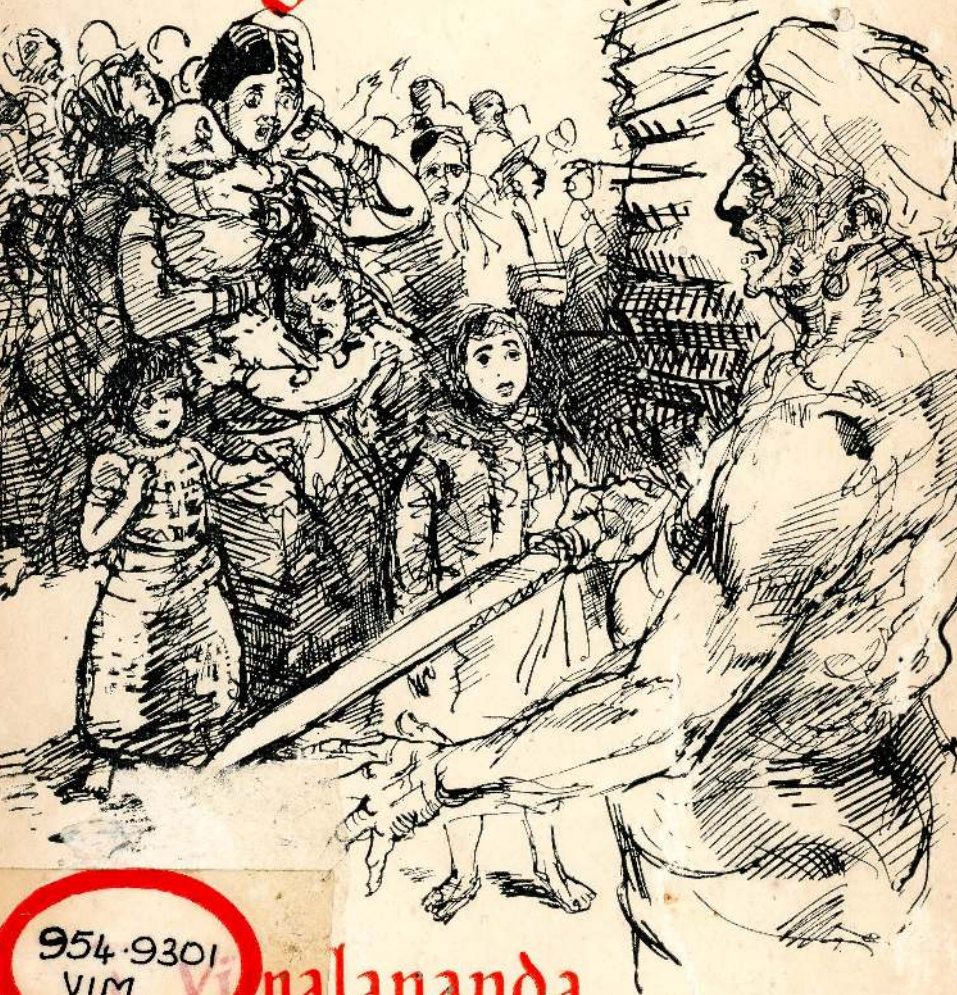


# The Child Hero of Ceylon



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“... Loku Banda, frightened at the sight of the executioners, and falling at the Kumarihamy's feet began to sob. The nine-year old Madduma Banda exclaimed “Elder brother, there is nothing to be gained by tears. They disgrace the Sinhalese race. Therefore it is right to give up our lives for our father.” With these words after performing his religious duties he advanced to the executioners and said “Fellows, you may strike off my head,” and lowered his neck. Loku Banda seeing his brother's head struck off began to scream in deadly terror, whereupon the executioners rushed forward and seized him and struck off his head. Thereat the Kumarihamy fell with imprecations on the King upon the ground, when the executioners rushed and snatched Dingiri Menika who was at her hip and struck off her head and put it into a mortar, whereupon the King ordered the Kumarihamy to pound it, but she continued to lie prostrate and lament. They then snatched the infant child which was in her arms and when they struck off the head the milk it had drunk trickled out.....”

**Price Rs. 1.90**

# THE CHILD HERO OF CEYLON

*The Story of Sri Wickrama Rajasingha's  
vengeance on Eheylepola Kumarihamy and  
the Manner of the Execution with appalling  
cruelty.*

*By*

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## PREFACE

It is not often in recorded history that one comes across examples of child heroism as moving as that of Madduma Banda. For this reason alone, the story of the brave lad of ten years, who by his courage put to shame the brutal executioners of the wicked and raving Tamil tyrant who was fated by a strange turn of fortune to occupy the Sinhalese throne, and who by his arbitrary rule and barbaric conduct paved the way to its destruction, deserves the widest possible publicity wherever children foregather to sing and dance, to jostle and play, or to exhibit their tender skill and prowess. That "the child is father of the man" is a trite but none the less true and valuable saying. For there can be no greater wealth that any nation could desire than a disciplined, industrious, and patriotically minded youth, and examples such as those of the brave Madduma Banda serve to kindle the ardour that burns deep in these little human souls and help to give purpose and direction to their natural impulses.

From Bengal and Orissa where, year after year the alluvial bearing flood waters of the Ganges and Mahanadi refresh the unending length of fertile plains from where time and time again the peace loving Indian peasant toiling patiently and contentedly at his daily task in the field with his hoe and wooden ploughs stirred to his emotional depths by the sight of the invading horde, of Maurya and Mogul, girded his loins and put to rout the rapacious foe until, worn out by the double task of cultivating the soil and holding the enemy at bay, he succumbed at length to the weariness of his body and soul, there comes a story equally moving, of a different kind of courage and devotion — In the depths of the terrible Orissa famine of 1863-64, so runs the story, in a village lived a poor peasant family who, having exhausted what little store of food they possessed, had finally eaten up all the available grass and green leaves on the surrounding trees, and now reduced to the last extremities they decided to part and go in different directions in search of any kind of food they might chance to come by. The little child in the family, coming to the house of the Zamindar in the neighbourhood, was given a morsel of food just sufficient to hold in his little hand. But in spite of his famished and dying condition, the boy would not eat the food but turned back to go the way he had come. The Zamindar kept looking on in wonder until the child was out of sight. A short while later his men reported that the boy was found dead on the roadside still clutching in his hand the little food which he had denied himself in order that it might be given to his parents.

The highly ethical and pacific character of these stories, different as they are in the circumstances in which such sacrifice and valour were shown, illustrate the general attitude of philosophic resignation and elevation of soul rather than of defiant

aggressiveness in the face of adversity which characterise the entire Eastern outlook and approach to life.

The Virgilian exhortation to his countrymen:

“Thine, O Roman remember,  
to rule over every race”

or the Shakespearean,

“O England model to the inward greatness,  
like little body with a mighty heart!”

or

“This Royal throne of Kings  
This sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty,  
This seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-Paradise”

or the more recent Kiplingesque

“God of our Fathers,  
Known of old,  
Lord of the far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold,  
Dominion over palm and wine,  
Lord God of Hosts! be with us yet,  
Lest we forget, lest we forget!”

“If drunk with aught of power we lose,  
Wild tribes that hold thee not in awe,  
O guard them as the Gentiles choose,  
And lesser tribes without the Law”

sounds as far away as ever from the pious incantation which the Buddhist hears every morning.

“Let the sovereign be ever virtuous”

It is in that spirit that little Madduma Banda defied the tyrant, whose ungovernable temper left him without power to judge between justice and cruel inhumanity. May the sweet and fragrant memory of Madduma Banda remain for ever engraved in the mind and heart of every child and youth of Sri Lanka!

**T. Vimalananda**

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*Peradeniya.*

20.8.65.

**An account of the matchless courage and bravery  
of the child-hero Madduma Bandara, son of  
Ehelepola Maha Nilame and Ehelepola Kumari-  
hamy, executed by the wicked and brutal tyrant  
Sri Wickrama Rajasinha.**

The story of the child-hero Madduma Bandara who, aged ten, challenged and put to shame the brutality and iniquity of the Government of that demented Monarch of foreign origin whose last days on the Kandyan Throne closed the unique chapter of an Island Kingdom which lasted continuously for over two thousand years and nurtured one of the most advanced civilizations which the world has known, is surely one of the most ennobling stories of heroism to be found anywhere in the history of nations.

The main outlines of this tragic story are now well known, but its origin and significance can be traced to the era of the decline and fall of the Sinhalese Kingdom in the early years of the 19th century.

The main line of succession of the hereditary Sinhalese monarchy had by this time come to an end, and the vacant throne was now filled by members of a Saivaite Hindu Royal line hailing from South India, namely the Nayakkars of Madura in the Dravida country, the most notable of whom, ascended the throne in 1747 as Kirthi Sri Rajasingha. Dying childless in 1780 Kirthi Sri was succeeded by his brother Rajadhi Rajasingha, whose sudden death in 1798 without leaving a successor, started the story of intrigue and rivalry at the Kandyan Court which ended with the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom and the occupation of the entire country for the first time in 2358 years by a foreign power.

Both Kirthi Sri Rajasingha and his brother Rajadhi Rajasingha, a well known scholar and man of piety, faithfully observed the Sinhalese customs and laws and won the hearts of the people by their devotion to the general welfare and prosperity of the nation.

The untimely death of Rajadhi Rajasingha left the country quite unprepared for the task of selecting a successor. The general expectation was that Muthusamy the brother of the queen would be appointed successor, but the powerful First Adigar, Pilima Talauwa, succeeded in having Kannasamy, a youthful claimant from the Royal family, who had for some time been under his care and tutelage, acclaimed King. The moment Muthusamy learned that Kannasamy had been appointed King, he managed to escape the vigilance of the armed guard which Pilima Talauwa had put over him, and fled to Colombo where he offered to place his services at the disposal of the British who had just replaced the Dutch as the Rulers of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon.

The establishment of the Nayakkars on the Throne of Sinhale was sooner or later to prove the undoing of the Sinhalese. Almost the first acts of these kings, even when they were forced by public opinion to observe the established customs and conventions of Government, was to plant in the Capital hordes of Tamil relatives brought from South India, and to give them key positions in the Government. The beneficent rule of Kirthi Sri Rajasingha and Rajadhi Rajasingha succeeded for a time in staving off the people's anger at the wholesale importation by the new dynasty of their Nayakkar relatives from South India.

With the enthronement of Sri Wickrama, however, popular indignation broke out into open hostility against the king. Sri Wickrama's unconcealed adoption and encouragement of Saivaite Hindu Customs, ceremonies, and forms of worship at the Court, alienated both



chiefs and the common people, while the open slaughter of goats for the consumption of King's and Queen's relations and their retinues near the precincts of the Dalada Maligawa provoked the bitter antagonism and disgust of the Sinhalese Buddhists and the members of the Sangha.

The enthronement of Sri Wickrama Raja Singha in the interval between 16th Feb. 1796 when the Dutch East India Company evacuated the Fort of Colombo, and 12th Oct. 1796 when Frederic North arrived in Colombo as the first British Governor of Ceylon, set the stage for the intense drama of back-biting, slander, and intrigue which ushered in the last days of Sinhalese Independence and sovereignty. From this time forward until the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom and the signing of the Kandyan Convention between the British Government on the one hand and the Kandyan Chieftains on the other, acting in the name of the people of Sinhale, events moved in an unceasing and inexorable sequence to their inevitable climax. While on the one side the representatives of the British Crown in Colombo came and went, the chiefs of the Sinhalese at the Kandyan Court rose to favour, and then lost it and were beheaded, only to be succeeded by others who suffered the same fate, until at length the greatest of them all, the King himself, driven into greater and greater isolation and separation from the people, in the end became lost to all sense of reason or justice, and growing suspicious and fearful of everyone about him, became an easy target for the wily enemy from across the ocean.

The reign of Sri Wickrama which was thus almost coincident with the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom, may be divided into two fairly distinct periods. During the first of these, culminating with the failure of North's expedition into the Kandyan Territory in 1803, Sri Wickrama was successful in maintaining formally

correct, if not particularly cordial, relations with the Chiefs, who were ministers of state, the Provincial Governors, and with the people at large. But the Chiefs, and especially Pilima Talauwa Maha Adikaram Nilame, viewed with no little uneasiness the continuance of the King on the Throne, although at the same time, it is very clear, that nothing was further from their thoughts at this time, than the handing over of the country into subjection to a foreign power. Of this there is the most ample and unquestionable evidence in the despatches and correspondence of the high officials and dignitaries posted at Colombo with the Home Government, as well as in published declarations and statements. In these it is repeatedly declared that on no account were the invitations of the Sinhalese Chieftains to various foreign governments to intervene in the affairs of the country to be trusted, since it had always been their practice to invite the assistance of one foreign power only to oust a power already in occupation, and not to give it any security of enjoyment of power thereafter.

Pilima Talauwa's influence over the young king whom he had helped to place on the Throne was for the moment very great, and he used it with signal effect to bring about the downfall of the *Nayakkar Party* which had been so hostile to him and the Sinhalese Chieftains generally during the previous King's reign. A large number of his opponents he caused to be imprisoned or even put to death. How utterly ruthless the King could be in his conduct is shown by the willingness with which he imprisoned his uncle Gampola Nayakkar and at the same time married his two daughters!

Meanwhile North who at first had recommended to the East India Company Directors that the best course for the British in Ceylon was to hold aloof from the Kandyan Court while trying to maintain good relations with it, began soon after to toy with the idea of subduing the Kandyan Kingdom as offering the only stable basis

for the security of the British occupation of Ceylon. With this object in view he not only began giving harbourage in Colombo to the King's enemies but also kept under British protection at Jaffna, Muthusamy, the disappointed claimant to the Throne, in readiness to be installed as a puppet king on the Kandyan Throne, should the circumstances so require.

Meanwhile North entered into prolonged negotiations with Pilima Talauwa as Chief Minister of the King with regard to the proper relation which should exist between the Kandyan Court and the seat of the British Rule over the maritime districts in Colombo. The whole tenor of the complicated discussion was directed towards creating discord between the King and Pilima Talauwa on the one hand, by offering to elevate Pilima Talauwa to the Throne, while at the same time disclaiming any desire or willingness to acquiesce in any act designed to depose or destroy the reigning monarch. The diabolically Machiavellian character of North's conduct was such as might have driven any man, even of mild and restrained disposition, into intemperate fury. What its effect must have been on the haughty, masterful, and crafty personality that Pilima Talauwa was, is easily imaginable. The rest of the story, therefore until the ignominious defeat of the British in their expedition to Kandy in 1803 and the recall of Governor North, is the story of Pilima Talauwa's easy and resounding success in outwitting North's simple and foolish attempt to steal a march on the astute and veteran political leader who controlled the destinies of Sri Lanka during this fateful period.

Several meetings held at Sitawaka between Pilima Talauwa and the emissaries of the British Government in 1799 and 1800 turned out to be little more than a battle of wits in which each party sought to outdo the other in equivocation without revealing their real intentions or plans. Pilima Talauwa wished to secure British support to strengthen his hand against that of

the King, though the precise extent of the power and position which he desired for himself is not known for certain and was probably not very clearly formulated in his own mind. What concessions he was prepared to make to the British in exchange for such help, was either not quite explicitly disclosed, or did not satisfy the expectations of the British representatives. North and his agents likewise who came to negotiate at Sitawaka not only carried to the point of ludicrousness their hypocritical professions of concern for the welfare of the peoples in the Kandyan area, but at the same time would make no commitment as to the extent of the sacrifices they were prepared to make in such an undertaking as was being asked of them. The mutual reticence and duplicity ended at length in deadlock, and the parties broke off negotiations in 1801 with an expression of hope that an embassy would be sent to Kandy to negotiate directly with the king. When after going through the arduous and exasperating formalities which they were required to comply with before they reached the King's presence, the Embassy, led by no less distinguished a figure than Major General Hay Mac Dowall, commander of the British Forces stationed in the country, presented itself before the King, they found to their discomfiture that the reply of the king was no different from what Pilima Talawa, the Maha Nilame of the Court of Kandy and the other Emissaries of the King had previously suggested during the various negotiations.

Meanwhile the constant conflicts on the border between the Kandyan and British controlled areas, not infrequently encouraged and fomented by Pilima Talawa, were causing considerable anxiety and irritation among the British representatives, and after some exchange of correspondence resulted in a second embassy, this time to Colombo, but with little difference to the ultimate result. North's patience was now being strained. On the one hand the border incidents were beginning to

cause very great irritation. On the other hand, inspite of the somewhat sharp differences which North knew to exist between ministers and the King, he was unable to achieve the bloodless victory for which he had hoped so much, and the acceptance by the Kandyan authorities of a treaty which would have meant virtual submission both politically and economically to the British Crown and the stationing of a substantial British army in Kandy, in exchange for the external semblance of the exercise of governmental authority by the King and Chieftains. In sheer despair North, presented an ultimatum that if the treaty were not signed within ten days, the British would have to consider more direct means of achieving their aims.

North had by now realized that to hope for a real cleavage between the King and his ministers was vain, and decided to abandon support for either, and instead to sponsor the claims of Muthusamy. A convenient excuse for the declaration of war was found in the complaint of a number of traders from the Maritime Districts who said that on their return from the Kandyan Country with arecanuts purchased there, they were robbed of their stock of arecanuts near Puttalam. The British Governor North protested to the Kandyan Court against this conduct and demanded punishment of the miscreants and restitution of the goods to the aggrieved persons or compensation for it. After prolonged negotiations in which North not only demanded compensation for the merchants whose arecanuts had been forcibly taken, but also the signing by the King of a treaty giving the British extensive power and control over the Kandyan Territories, Pilima Talauwa stated that since the current crop of arecanuts had been sold and the season was now over, the claimants would be given their compensation from the next crop.

Meanwhile North had been going round the coastal areas examining the state of preparedness of the British Forces. When the representatives of Governor North,

protested that the Kandyans were assembling troops at Batugedera, the Maha Nilame replied that this was because the British had been assembling their forces at Matara. Hostilities began on the 31st January, with the despatch by the British of two contingents, one of 1700 men under the command of Major General Mac Dowall from Colombo, and the other of 1200 men under Lt. Col. Barbut from Trincomalee. Muthuswamy was kept in readiness at Fort Mac Dowall to be proclaimed King. To the utter surprise of the commanders, Kandy was entered with only very little resistance encountered on the way, and in this mood of elation Muthuswamy was brought to the capital and proclaimed King. But when for a whole month or more the streets of Kandy remained deserted, and no one came to greet the new King, Major General Mac Dowall discovered to his horror that he had been made the victim of a very successfully organised ruse. The Reigning Monarch had retreated to Hanguranketa and when on receipt of the information the British Troops followed him there, they found the king had left and the place desolate. As they turned to go back, however, the British found their path blocked, and almost their entire Force was decimated at Wagolla.

Mac Dowall now realised that the entire Expedition to Kandy had been ill-advised, and that the British had fallen into a trap cunningly devised for them by Pilima Talauwa and the King. The rainy season was now setting in, and the British troops sorely tired and their numbers heavily depleted through death from Malaria, lacking supplies and faced with increasing desertions of the Malays and Sepoys, and the wholesale disappearance of the Coolies, found a grim prospect awaiting them. Under these conditions Mac Dowall readily accepted the offer of the Maha Nilame to meet him and the Governor at Dambadeniya for negotiations. At Dambadeniya North was compelled to submit to extremely humiliating terms of protocol when Pilima

Talauwa, as the representative of the Kandyan King, demanded that due recognition of the King's authority be made to him. North who had already proclaimed the Sath Korale as having come under British Sovereignty, was now compelled to eat his own words and to accord to the Maha Nilame a salute by two British Regiments. Disappointed and dismayed North hurriedly left the negotiations and returned to Colombo while Pilima Talauwe likewise returned to Kandy. The Second Adigar who was left in charge of the negotiations feigned illness during the whole remaining period of the conference. The result once again proved as inconclusive as before. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation Mac Dowall returned speedily to Kandy from where, having arranged to hand over the command of the Troops to Major Davie who, it is quite clear, accepted the assignment with the utmost reluctance, he made his way back to Colombo. Davie and his men now found themselves surrounded and heavily attacked, and capitulated on the promise of an unobstructed passage for himself, his troops and King Muthusamy, to Trincomalee. They began their journey back, but were forced to rest the night at Watapuluwa ferry just outside Kandy, owing to the River Mahaveli being in spate. The King meanwhile, revoking his earlier promise of safety, demanded that Muthusamy be given up, while Major Davie was inveigled to an unknown destination. The whole of the British Force was thereupon disarmed and brought back to Kandy where Muthusamy was tried and executed. The Malay Troops deserted and the remaining British were either killed by the Malays, who now joined Sri Wickrama's army, or died of sickness.

North's tragic misadventure proved to be so terrific in its results both in the loss of men and materials sustained, as well as the shock to British prestige and morale, that North pleaded for large supplies of troops from India, with which the British might save face.

Thus re-inforced North started out on a campaign of indescribable brutality and vindictiveness upon the people in the Kandyan border areas, the real character of which is borne out by Maitland's very first order to the armed force immediately after North's departure. "It is against the Armed Force of an Enemy that war is carried on not against the peaceable inhabitants of the country whom it has been at all times and in every situation the wise and humane policy of the British Nation to conciliate and spare.

This, however, was the most in the way of satisfaction for his costly defeat, which North was able to secure. During his short remaining period of office, not only did he desist from any further engagements with the Kandyans, but the strained character of the British exchequer owing to the cost of the war, forced him to abandon most of the measures of administrative reform and economic development which he had planned.

The successor of North, Thomas Maitland, carried the policy making peace with the Kandyan Kingdom even further, and it was not till the conclusion of the war with France in 1813, that the British Government attempted once more to return to the aim of securing the capitulation of the Kandyan Kingdom.

Meanwhile there ensued a short period of uncertainty within the Kandyan Dominion. Relations between the King and the First Adikar, which had become strained during the war with the British, were temporarily patched up until the proposed marriage in 1805 of Pilima Talauwa's son to the daughter of Mampitiya Wahala Bandara, an illegitimate son of Kirthi Sri Rajasingha, once more roused the suspicions of the King. Pilima Talauwa was now charged with maladministration, but was pardoned by the King and restored to office. Shortly thereafter, however, he was once more accused of official maladministration, imprisoned for eight days and thus forced into retirement.



Chafing under these humiliations, Pilima Talauwa conspired to have the King assassinated, and for the purpose won over the Malay Muhandiram and the guard of sixty Malays who attended on the King at Night, to murder the King in his sleep. The plot failed and Pilima Talauwa and Ratwatte, the first and second Adigars, were tried and executed.

Notwithstanding these alarming disclosures Pilima Talauwa's influence was still so great that his nephew Ehelepola was elevated to the office of Maha Nilame. But the rift between the King and the Chiefs from now on grew wider and wider. The charges made against the King were many and grave. In the first place he was accused of desiring to establish with the help of the French a Saivaite Hindu Government in which the Laws of Manu would replace that of the Dasa Raja Dharma which, by their oath of Rajabhisekha taken at their coronation, the Sinhalese monarchs were pledged to observe. In furtherance of this object it was stated that the King was bringing into the country Malabars at an average rate of 70 a month from South India, as sly immigrants, to be trained as soldiers by Dutch and French officers. Further it was alleged that the King was seeking to remove the Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters which had become an eyesore to him, to Peradeniya on the outskirts of the city. At the same time the four Devalayas, too, were to be moved there in order that the Temple Square might be converted into a palace yard. Furthermore, other Hindu observances such as the slaughter of goats, which was openly carried out at the upper end of Dalada Vidiya in view of the Maligawa itself, constituted a provocation and a challenge to the Sinhalese Buddhists. The establishment of a harem, again, was a practice brought down from Dravida Desa, and offended the good taste and sense of propriety of the Sinhalese, who resented even more the introduction into the harem of young girls from South India even before they had come of age, and of Sinhalese

girls drawn from the nobility. These pleasure loving habits of the King were further encouraged and promoted by the British who liberally supplied the King, through the British agent D'Oyly, with liberal gifts of liquor. Again, in order to add to the natural beauty of the palace surroundings, Sri Wickrama embarked upon the massive project of artificially constructing the Kandy Lake and for this purpose exacted forced labour in addition to the usual Rajakariya from the inhabitants of the districts in the immediate vicinity of Kandy, namely Yatinuwara, Udunuwara, Dumbara and Harispattu. The disagreeableness of these tasks to the Sinhalese who were thus compelled to render services to which they were not obliged, was heightened by the appointment of Tamil relatives of the Queen as overseers to supervise and direct their labour, while they were also, in addition, required to provide themselves with their own food.

In order to meet the cost of these undertakings, as well as of building up a vast foreign army composed of South Indians and mercenaries, the King began to impose new taxes, the chief of which were a revival of the marala tax (death duties) and increased payments to be made by the recipients of new appointments from the King. When to all this was added the unpardonable crime, in the eyes of Buddhists, of the execution by the King of two Buddhist monks — Suriyagoda and Paranathala Theros, Sri Wickrama's unworthiness to enjoy his high office was completely proved.

It is true that the chiefs themselves were not without blame, and often exercised a harsh and arbitrary authority. But these could not compare (in their enormity) with the greater crime of the King.

For a time, however, the King succeeded in playing off one faction of the chiefs led by Molligoda the new Second Adigar, against the Ehelepola faction.

But when, in his attempt to weaken the authority of his opponents, Sri Wickrama sought arbitrarily to divide and split the Dissavannies, and to transfer their occupants from district to district, the chiefs came to feel that their common interests were at stake. Moreover, the chiefs were nearly all heavily indebted to the Tamil relations of the King who were in addition being appointed to new offices in place of their former Sinhalese holders, and thus came to resent the privileges and power which these Nayakkars were beginning to exercise in the Government.

After the execution of Pilima Talauwa in 1812, the chiefs once more entered into secret communications with the British, who were assiduously engaged in fomenting disaffection against the King with the ultimate object of capturing the Government. But after the failure of 1803, the British authorities were doubly cautious not to be drawn into an open conflict in which the odds would be against them. They, therefore, kept up a pretence of disinterested concern for the prosperity and welfare of the Kandyan peoples, whilst giving the chiefs the impression that their help would be available should the circumstances warrant it.

Events meanwhile were moving to a climax. The occasion of Sri Wickrama's second marriage in 1813 was used as the moment to charge Ehelepola with having failed in the proper exhibition of his loyalty by giving the King presents of an adequate amount. He was also charged with mismanagement of the affairs of his province of Sabaragamuwa, but exonerated. He returned to Sabaragamuwa in 1814, but was summoned again to Kandy to face charges of misgovernment.

Ehelepola, whose correspondence with the British up to now was couched in general terms and disclosed no specifically disloyal motives, from now on became

more explicit in his overtures to the British for military aid to overthrow the king who had been guilty of grave oppression of the people, and urged the British authorities to act quickly. D'Oyly, the British official intermediary through whom the correspondence was conducted was willing to go to the assistance of the chiefs, but the Governor Brownrigg advised caution and delay until, on the one hand, there was more specific evidence of the extent of the people's disaffection and rebellion, and on the other hand both parties, namely the King and the chiefs, had been sufficiently exhausted, and would be more ready to accept British terms and conditions of support. In order to strengthen his pleas for help Ehelepola also despatched Ekneligoda Kodituwakku Nilame to meet D'Oyly and explain the need for swift action.

Meanwhile the King, learning of Ehelepola's mission decided to deprive Ehelepola of his Dissavany and appoint Molligoda to it, but was forestalled by Ehelepola who on the 27th April 1814, set up the standard of revolt at Batugedara in Sabaragamuva, and sent word to the other chiefs to follow. Sri Wickrama replied by despatching Molligoda to occupy Sabaragamuva before the rebels could go there. Ehelepola's men, however, were delayed at Ruanwelle by the flooding of the river and thus Molligoda was able to occupy Sabaragamuva without encountering any opposition. Dispirited and exhausted Ehelepola's men fell back to Sitawaka. At other points too, the rebels fell back and finally retreated into British Territory. Ehelepola himself, took refuge in the British area and was given accommodation in Colombo.

The British were now looking forward to achieving their long awaited goal. The temporary victory of Sri Wickrama Rajasingha's forces deceived no one as to what the final outcome would be. For, on the one hand, the people were only waiting for a better organised opposition before coming out in open revolt,

and, on the other hand, Sri Wickrama, alarmed and angered by the defections of the chiefs exacted from all and sundry among his subjects upon whom the least suspicion lay, a terrible vengeance. Wholesale imprisonment, execution, and dispossession became the order of the day. It was no longer the rule of a heartless despot, but of a raving lunatic, whose thirst for the blood of those he accounted his enemies seemed to know no limits. The height of his insanity was reached when he ordered the execution of Ehelepola's children with indescribable brutality and the drowning in the Bogambara lake of their mother, Ehelepola Kumarihamy, and her sister and sister-in-law. A contemporary account *Ehelepola Daruwan Marawima* reads thus:—

“Molligoda Adikar advanced with his soldiers but learning that Ehelepola Mantri has escaped, returned and reported “O King, Ehelepola has escaped to Colombo with the intention of seizing the country with the help of the Ingrisi”. The King was enraged like a cobra struck with a stick and exclaimed “How can I trust the Sinhalese Ministers?” and inquired from the Diyawadana Nilame what the Sinhalese law was in respect of those who were guilty of treason against the King but had escaped. The Nilame read out the law as follows: “In the case of those who have committed treason against the King the remaining members of their family shall be arrested and the males beheaded and the females put to death by drowning: such is the law” he said.

Thereupon the King sent for the executioners and ordered them to go speedily and fetch Ehelepola Kumari and her children as well as Puswella Kumari and her daughter. They went and fetched them all to near the *Wal Bodhiya* where the Diyawadana Nilame read out the law. On hearing it the Kumarihami beat her breasts and imprecating the gods cried aloud “Am I and my children to answer for the wrong of

my lord and husband!" To this the King replied "Thy husband is an ungrateful and despicable dog. As the fellow is not here the penalty will be exacted from thee and thy children". Thus saying he entered the Pattirippuwa and looked on. Loku Banda, frightened at the sight of the executioners, and falling at the Kumarihami's feet began to sob. The nine year old Madduma Banda exclaimed "Elder brother, there is nothing to be gained by tears. They disgrace the Sinhalese race. Therefore it is right to give up our lives for our father". With these words after performing his religious duties he advanced to the executioners and said "Fellows, you may strike off my head", and lowered his neck. Loku Banda seeing his brother's head struck off began to scream in deadly terror whereupon the executioners rushed forward and seized him and struck off his head. Thereat the Kumarihami fell with imprecations on the King upon the ground, when the executioners rushed and snatched Dingiri Menika who was at her hip and struck off her head and put it into a mortar, whereupon the King ordered the Kumarihami to pound it, but she continued to lie prostrate and lament. They then snatched the infant child which was in her arms and when they struck off the head the milk it had drunk trickled out. The King exclaimed to the mother "If thou wilt not forthwith pound the children, I shall order thee to be given over to a Rodiya". At that Molligoda Adikar said to her "Younger sister, do so and avoid the disgrace to your birth". She took the pestle in her hand and let it fall into the mortar and immediately collapsed. The King shouted out and commanded that the women should be forthwith removed and drowned in the Wewa. As the executioners came near, the Kumarihami would not permit them to touch her person and she and the other three proceeded to Bogambara Wewa. There she exclaimed "May the blessing of the gods be with my lord and husband, Ehelepola Adikar. May the country pass before long from the wicked, cruel and

worthless King who now rules over it to another Government", and all three plunged into the Wewa. "On that day the whole country became as one funeral house. The radiance of the Divine Sun was diminished. The entire land was drowned in tears".

Little wonder that a horrified people preferred even a foreign ruler to such insensate wickedness in its King. Brownrigg, the unscrupulous and power-hungry British General, found it simple to achieve with the support of a people what the might of his Empire had failed to gain in the face of their resistance. On 2nd March 1815 the Convention ceding the Government of Kandy to the British was signed by the chiefs on behalf of the people of Sinhale. But above the horror and cruelty, the intrigue, treachery, and greed for power and place rises, with the serene and sublime beauty of graceful innocence, the unflinching courage and heroism of the child Madduma Banda, whose name will live enshrined forevermore in the hearts of every dutiful and patriotic son and daughter of Sri Lanka.





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