

DEVELOPMENT OF ART IN CEYLON

A Lecture Delivered by

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Text of a lecture delivered by Kalai Pulavar K. Navaratnam at the Zahira College Hall, Colombo, under the auspices of the Tamil Cultural Society.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Art in Ceylon was very closely connected with the art movements in the neighbouring subcontinent. Religious traditions and ideals contributed a great deal towards the development of Art in India. Likewise, in Ceylon also religion was the main source of inspiration for the growth of Art.

The Art of Ceylon is mainly Buddhistic and its history starts with the advent of Buddhism into the country. The history of Buddhist Art in India begins with the building of stupas by the Emperor Asoka. He is said to have built according to tradition 84,000 stupas throughout the country to spread the Gospel of Lord Buddha. The artistic objects, earlier to the Asokan period of Indian history, were mainly confined to wood and brick structures. Megasthenes tells us that Pataliputra, the capital of the Mauryan Empire, was mainly built of wood.

The popular religion of the Aryans before the time of Buddha consisted mainly of rituals and ceremonies connected with sacrifices. They knew no temples or idols. One can say without much fear of contradiction that the religious practices among the higher strata of the Vedic Aryans did not include the worship of images in the temples or houses. There are no indications of such institutions in the Vedic Literature prior to Lord Buddha. But, Buddhism and Jainism are the two earliest organised religious sects in Aryan society which had institutional worship in the form of temples and images. Therefore, for the appearance of stupas, images and temples in Buddhism, we shall have to look for sources outside the Aryan society. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy writes, "In particular, the popular Dravidian element must have played the major

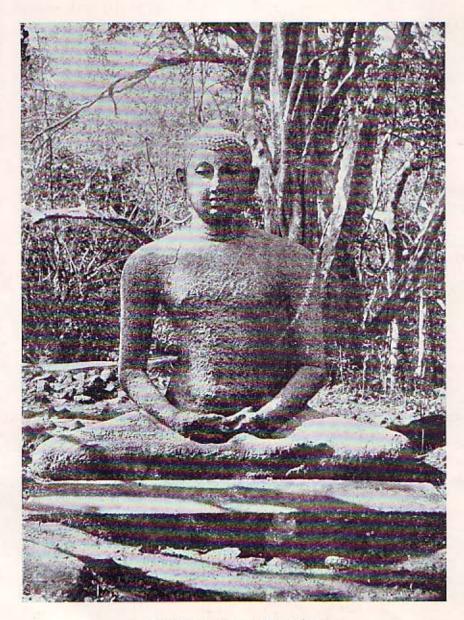
part in all that concerns the development and office of image-worship, that is, of puja as distinct from Yajna. The early books (of the Aryans) afford no certain evidence for the making of images of any kind." Dr. S. K. Chatterji of the Calcutta University writes, "It has been suggested with good reason that Puja is the pre-Aryan, in all likelihood the Dravidian, form of worship, while the Homa is the Aryan; and throughout the entire early Vedic Literature, the Puja rituals with flowers, etc., offered to an image or symbol is unknown." ²

Lord Buddha, true to Upanishadic ideals, emphasized in his teachings, the way of life based on self-control, and the practice of ethics and spiritual virtues, for the attainment of enlightenment. He never encouraged institutional worship or observance of ceremonies and rituals as indispensable aids to spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, we will not be far wrong, when we state that the construction of the stupas as a symbol of adoration, and the other forms of ceremonial worship, instituted after Buddha, must have been borrowed from the non-Aryan religious culture of the country.

After the fall of the Mauryan Empire founded by Asoka, the centre of political power shifted from province to province in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era and after it. Different dynasties ruled India at various periods of her history after Asoka, and they all contributed their best towards the development of Art and Culture. Although, the ideals and principles of Indian Art, throughout the ages, have been the same, yet there were variations in form and details, according to the areas in which it flourished. lars have classified the Art of India taking into consideration the regional variations. The most important schools of Indian Art are: Mauryan, Andhra, Gandhara and Mathura, Gupta and Dravidian. The Dravidian style is divided into: Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara. The Nayaka and Sethupathi styles of South India are the continuation of the Vijayanagara School. In Central India and the adjoining

^{1.} History of Indian and Indonesian Art, p. 8.

^{2.} Vedic Age, p. 160.



TOLUVILA BUDDHA IMAGE

(Archae : Survey-Ceylon).

(See Page 10.)

areas we find the mixture of the styles of North and South India.

Until the Gupta period, the Art of North India was predominantly Buddhist. It was during the Gupta age that the foundation for modern Hinduism was laid and after that the Art and Culture of India, till today, is Hindu in structure and content. Although, the Buddhist Art of pre-Gupta periods and the Hindu Art of Gupta and post-Gupta periods differed in their themes, yet, they had the same aim and employed the same technique to attain perfection. It is these universal characteristics which provided the common basis for Indian Art to be considered as one, irrespective of geographical boundaries and regional variations.

In Ceylon also Art followed the same ideals and aim and employed the same technique throughout the course of its history. Buddhists and Hindus who migrated to Ceylon, Java, Burma, Sumatra, Bali, Siam, Indo-China, Tibet and China from India carried with them the artistic tradition of their respective faiths and implanted them in the countries of their adoption. Because of the Indian origin and the common principles which underlie the art of these countries, scholars have included them in treatises dealing with Indian Art. This does not prevent any one from recognising the peculiar artistic and aesthetic qualities which are found in the Buddhist and Hindu Art of the above Colonies.

Ceylon Art may be studied under four clear-cut historical periods: the first is the Anuradhapura period which begins with the reign of Devanampiya Tissa and ends with the 10th century A.D.; the second is the Polonnaruwa period which begins in the 11th century and ends with the 13th; the third is the Kandyan period which begins in the 14th century and ends with the coming of the British; the fourth is the Colombo period which begins with the British rule in Ceylon.

During the Anuradhapura period Maurya, Andhra, Gupta and Pallava art forms influenced Ceylon. In the Polonnaruwa period Chola and Pandya influence is seen. In the Kandyan period we find the influence of later Pandya and Vijayanagara styles. In the Colombo period we find the Kandyan and modern Madurai styles are being followed.

Nowhere can we study the unbroken record of Buddhist Art in good condition for a period of over 2,000 years than in Ceylon. Ceylon contains some of the masterpieces of Buddhist Art done to perfection. The Nagaraja Guardstones, the Moonstones and the Buddha images have very few equals in the Buddhist Art of other countries. They have won the admiration of the art critics of the world and have found a place among the best art objects of all countries. The ancient Ceylonese artists by producing such magnificent objects, have undoubtedly placed Ceylon in the Art map of the world. Ceylon not only contains some of the finest pieces of Buddhist Art, but also contains some of the masterpieces of Hindu Art, the equals of which cannot be found even in India.

I ANŪRADHAPURA PERIOD

MAURYAN AND ANDHRA STYLES

Buddhism became the state religion of Ceylon during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa ('the beloved of the Gods'). The first missionary to Ceylon was Mahinda, son of the Emperor Asoka. He was met by Tissa at Mihintale and taken to the capital with great veneration and respect. Later, a branch of the sacred Bo-tree was brought to Ceylon by Sanghamitta, sister of Mahinda, and was planted at Anuradhapura. According to the tradition recorded in the Mahavansa, the sacred Bo-tree was landed at a port in Nagadipa known as Jambukola. Referring to this Dr. Paul E. Pieris makes the following observation: "In Nagadipa, moreover, there was an important harbour, Jambukola; this communicated with Anuradhapura by the trunk road which ran from the northern gate of the capital, and its distance therefrom may be calculated from the fact that a great religious procession starting from the port was fourteen days on the road before it reached the Capital (M. XIX). It was from Jambukola that Devanampiya Tissa's ambassadors started for Asoka's Court, Pataliputra, and it was here they landed on their return (M. XI).

Its chief claim to be remembered by Buddhists arises from the fact that it was here that Sanghamitta, accompanying the Bo-tree, disembarked (M. XIX). In commemoration of this important event one out of the eight shoots which sprang from the first fruit borne by the Bo-tree was planted at Jambukola Pattinama, and Tissa, not long before his death, erected in Nagadipa the Jambukola Vihara at this landing place, the Tissamaha Vihara and the Pacinaramá (M. XX)."

DAGOBAS

The earliest Buddhist buildings in Ceylon were Dagobas (stupas). They were constructed following the example of Asoka who was a great builder of stupas. Tissa built the first Dagoba which was later known as the Thuparama which, according to tradition, contained the collar bone of Buddha. The present Dagoba was subsequently built after the original structure was destroyed. Although the form of the structure has changed, the spot is the same where the original Dagoba of Tissa stood. The Isurumuniya Cave and the Vessagiri Cave were also constructed during this period. Tradition attributes the construction of the Mahiyangana Stupa also to Tissa.²

After Tissa, it was during the reign of Duttha Gamani that Buddhism became a powerful factor in the life of the people. He may be considered as the Asoka of Ceylon Buddhism. At Anuradhapura, he built the Mirisavati Dagoba, the Lohamahapeya known as the Brazen Palace and the Ruwanwelisaya Dagoba or Mahathupa. His greatest work of piety was the construction of the Mahathupa. Before the Thupa was finished, he fell sick and died, leaving his brother Saddha Tissa to complete the structure. The Ruwanwelisaya was built on the model of Sanchi Stupas. The relics enshrined in the stupas were brought from the Andhra country. "Duttha Gamani obtained some relics from Andhra which he enshrined with great pomp. The assembly that he held on that occasion was attended by Mahadeva and by thousands of monks from Pallavaboga which may be identified with Palnad

Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna. Journal of the C.B.R.A.S No. 70— 1917, p. 11.

^{2.} Short History of Ceylon, p. 14.

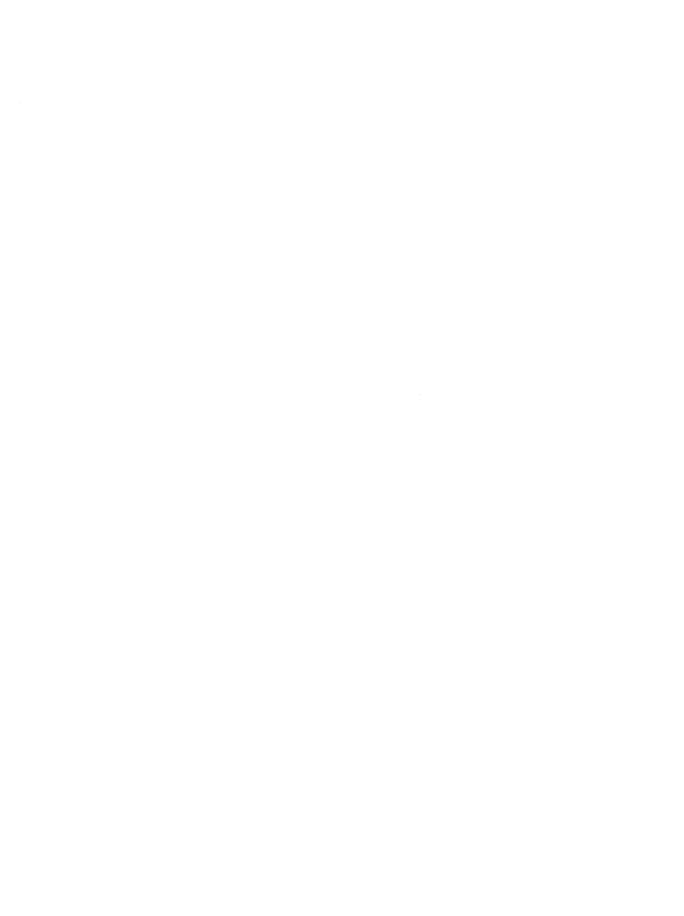
in Andhra. With the relics must have travelled to Ceylon the Art of Andhra, as the ancient Dagobas of the Island were in the Andhra style." ¹

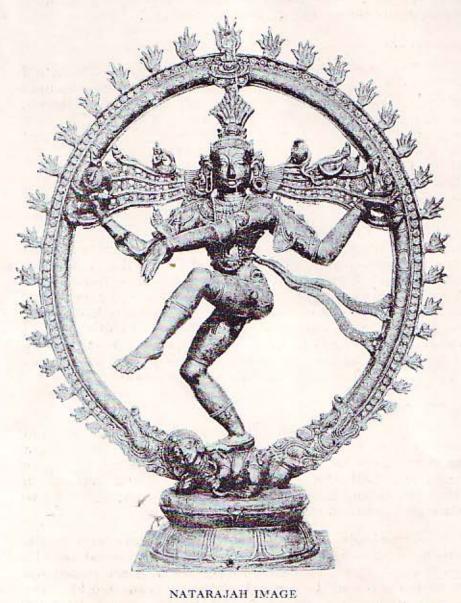
Among the architectural achievements of Duttha Gamani the Lohamahapeya is worthy of mention. This wonderful edifice had nine storeys crowned by a domical roof covered with bronze plates. The whole structure made of wood with 10,000 rooms stood on about 1,600 monoliths covering an area of 250 feet square. Percy Brown makes the following observation about it: "As to the elevational aspect of the Lohaprasada, it may be assessed with a fair amount of certainty that it followed the patterns of a type of monastery building, which was evolved in Southern India, including Ceylon, during the early period of Buddhist monasticism. This pattern may be studied, translated into monolithic stone monuments in the Dharmarajah raths at Mamallapuram (Seven Pagodas) near Madras. Although this rock-cut model is several centuries later than the Lohaprasada, it preserves a tradition, of which the Anuradhapura building is an early example." The Lohamahapeya was destroyed by fire in the reign of Saddha Tissa and he rebuilt it seven storeys high (M. ch. XXXII). Later, the younger brother of Lanjakatissa by name Khallata Naga, who reigned for six years, built thirty-two exceedingly beautiful prasadas (dwellings of smaller dimensions) to make the Lohamahapeva vet more splendid.

Many Dagobas were constructed during the reign of Vattagamani Abhaya (B.C. 43-17). He built the Abhayagiri, Lankarama and the Dakkina Thupa. The last of the great builders of Dagobas and patrons of Buddhism was Maha Sena (362-89). Jetavanarama Dagoba, the largest stupa in the island and in the Buddhist world, was built by Maha Sena.

The Stupas built during this period, although constructed on the models found in India especially in Magadha and Andhra, unlike the Indian ones, were large in size and magnificent in appearance, and had architectural embellishments, all their own, peculiar to Ceylon. Whatever sculp-

^{1.} Buddhist Remains in Andhra, p. 141.





(Colombo Museum.)

(See Page 14.)

tural ornamentations found on them today appear to have been added during the succeeding periods.

SCULPTURES

The earliest sculptures of the Andhra period found in Ceylon belong to the later Andhra style. The examples extant belong to the style of Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda and are carved on limestone not found in Cevlon. two pieces available—The Great Miracle of Sravasti, and Maya Devi's Dream—are now found in the Colombo Museum. At the Jetavanarama Dagoba are found two sculptures—Naga Raja—seven-hooded cobra and Bodhisatva in the attitude of preaching. They were carved in Ceylon, following the Andhra style of the period. The three standing images excavated around the Ruwanwelisaya Dagoba betray the influence of the later Andhra style. Two of these images represent Buddha and the third, traditionally identified as Duttha Gamani, is more likely a Bodhisatva. These are Ceylonese adaptations of Amaravati figures. In their general style and particularly in the treatment of the drapery with its schematic folds, these images exhibit a close relationship to the Buddha type of Amaravati. In dating them Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy writes, "They may not be earlier than the first or second century A.D. and can hardly be later than the third or fourth."

GUPTA STYLE

After the Andhras, the Guptas came to power and dominated the political and cultural life of India. The Gupta Age is said to be the Golden Age of Indian culture. It may be safely said that this period produced the best authors in almost all branches of literature including even sciences like astronomy and mathematics.

The Gupta Age made admirable contributions in the domain of art. Some of the sculptures of this period and the paintings of Ajanta executed during this time are considered as masterpieces of Indian art throughout the world. The artistic productions of this period set the model for later ages to follow and develop.

In the field of religion Buddhism, Saivaism and Vaishnavaism took the new form in which they developed later.

Vedic Gods receded into the background. The austere and rigid morality of early Buddhism gave way to devotion to concrete objects of worship. Puranic Hinduism became the popular faith of the people and the Puranas took the place of Vedic Samhitas and Brahmanas. The older form of Buddhism lost its hold upon the people and gave way to a new movement, the Mahayana which captured the imagination of the people by the scope it afforded for worship and devotion. This change removed Hinayana out of the scene and made Mahayana an all-India movement, rather an all-Asian movement.

The Buddha image of the Gupta period was characterised by its refinement, by a clear delineation and definition of features, by the softness of its limbs and the serenity of its appearance. This classical type inspired all later images both in India and outside it.

The influence of the Buddhist culture of the Gupta period on Ceylon was very remarkable. "Buddhism, too, made great advance during this period. Probably as a result of the influence of Mahayanism it took a more popular turn, and satisfied the needs of the laity better. There was a great increase in the number of shrines, and the use of images as an aid to worship became popular." It was during this period that many Bodhisatva images were used in Ceylon. Spread of Mahayanism also gave an impetus to the study of Sanskrit in Ceylon.

The building of Dagobas gave place to construction of Viharas with images for worship during this period in Ceylon. Festivals and rituals formed a part of the daily life of the people. Some of the best sculptures found in Ceylon belong to this period of her history. In them we clearly see the influence of the Gupta style. The bas-relief of 'The Couple' at Isurumuniya Vihara, the seated Dhyana Buddha of Toluvila, and the Moonstone in front of the Queen's Palace, all at Anuradhapura, betray the clear influence of Gupta technique. Writing about the Toluvila Image, Mr. Benjamin Rowland states, "In few other representations of the Buddha in Yoga trance do we get such a sense of the complete self-absorption

^{1.} Early History of Ceylon, p. 57.

and serenity of the Enlightened One. This impression of the perfect embodiment of the idea of Samadhi is conveyed through the very simplicity of the conception; the perfect material equilibrium of the figure connotes the perfect mental state of Sakyamuni through the massive stability of the triangular base formed by the locked legs, surmounted by the erect columnar body which supports the perfectly impassive mask-like face." In the Toluvila Image, the inner look and calm poise of the limbs show how the person has retired into the depth of his own personality. Not only is the person immersed in bliss, the whole body is saturated with this inner bliss. There are in the Colombo Museum two heads identified as those of Bodhisatva and Maitreya which belong to the 4th century Gupta style, discovered at Anuradhapura. In the field of painting also, we find the influence of Gupta style on Sigiriya.

PALLAVA STYLE

It was the Pallavas who had connections with Ceylon after the Guptas. During the period of the later Guptas, Buddhism gradually declined and there was a complete Hindu Renaissance in India. Saivaism and Vaishnavaism became the important religious sects of the country. The Pallavas inherited the Sanskrit culture of the Guptas. The early Pallavas had a distinct leaning towards Sanskrit, but in the latter part of the Pallava rule, Tamil literature received a good deal of attention. The Devarams and Nalayira Prabandha Hymns were produced during the Pallava period and they inspired the development of Bhakti as an aid to religious realisation.

The Pallavas were the originators of structural stone temples in South India. The earlier buildings in South India were all in bricks. Although Gopurams, Vimanams and Mandapams are spoken of in Tamil literature of the Pallava period, nothing has come down to us, because of the perishable material out of which they were constructed. The beautiful Gopurams and Vimanams of today are the modern representatives of an ancient tradition that was prevalent in the early centuries of the Christian era.

^{1.} Art and Architecture of India, p. 214.

Pallava Art and Culture crossed over to Ceylon during the reign of Narasimhavarman I. Manavarman (Manavamma) son of Kasyappa II (641-650) who was overthrown by Dathopa Tissa II (650-658) fled to India and served under Narasimhavarman I. He fought for him against Pulakesin II. As a reward for his service Narasimhavarman helped him to regain his throne. Manavarman failed in his first attempt. But, Narasimhavarman helped him a second time by giving an army bigger than before, he himself accompanying the army as far as the harbour (Mahabalipuram). In the second attempt Manavarman succeeded and Ceylon, by this act, came under the influence of the Pallavas.

Because of the close contact of Manavarman with the Court of the Pallava King, cultural and social communications between both the countries increased and as a result of this Pallava art forms also spread in Ceylon. The Gedige (Temple) at Nalanda is entirely of stone in the Pallava style. "This temple might have been built for the use of Hindu troops who were stationed at this place," writes Dr. Mendis. The carvings of elephants on either side of the cleft in the rock in front of the tank at Isurumuniya Vihara, reminds one of the rock carvings found at Mahabalipuram. The figure of the man and the head of the horse are of Pallava technique. the rock slopes bordering a tank near the Tissawewa lake bund. there are found carvings, in low relief, groups of elephants amongst lotus and fish. These also show the influence of the Pallava style. Writing about the Isurumuniya sculptures Mr. Benjamin Rowland observes, "Not only are the properties of the figure of the holy man remarkably close to the work at Mamallapuram, but the suggestion of the form's emergence from the matrix of the rock is in the same technique that we have analysed in the account of the styles of the Hindu Renaissance. Presumably these works date from the period immediately before the final retreat from Anuradhapura in the eighth century." 2 Laurence Binyon writes, "The rock-carved 'Kapila' (holy man) in Ceylon is a tremendous work, impossible to forget when once seen." Commenting on Pallava influence in Ceylon, Mr. Percy Brown writes, "The art of the Pallavas, as already indicated, may have affected the style of

^{1.} Early History of Ceylon, p. 64.

^{2.} Art and Architecture of India, p. 216.



ST. THIRUGNANA SAMBANDHAR

(Colombo Museum.)

(See Page 14.)

the Singhalese monastery buildings when these began to be erected at Anuradhapura. These, however, were peaceful penetrations brought about by the demand on the part of the people for a constructional procedure to aid them in their building projects." ¹

With the fall of the Gupta Dynasty, the religious and cultural influence of North India on Ceylon came to an end. After the Pallavas, Ceylon came very frequently under the political influence of South India.

The architecture of Ceylon in the very early period must have been wooden. This was followed by brick structures. Except the Dagobas, stone foundations of monasteries and stone built tanks, we have nothing remaining in Anuradhapura today which is worthy of mention as an architectural edifice. There are some graceful pillars found near Dagobas and monasteries, which must have carried on them beautiful structures with ornate workmanship.

The sculptural remains of Anuradhapura are the few Buddha images, Guardstones and Moonstones. Mention must be made of the sculptures of human forms which adorn the flights of steps of ancient buildings. The balustrades on both sides of the steps are carved with ornamented figures of Makara, a mythical animal, found in Indian Art.

II POLONNARUWA PERIOD

CHOLA STYLE

The Cholas came to power in South India after the decline of the Pallavas. The Saiva revival started in the Pallava period, reached its peak in the age of the Cholas. The Chola period may be considered as the golden age of Tamil Literature and Saiva Religion in South India. Saiva devotional literature was arranged and classified in eleven canonical books during this period. Sekilar's Peria Puranam

^{1.} Art and Architecture in India, p. 216.

which forms the 12th book of the Saiva canon was composed during this period. The popularisation of the Saiva religious hymns created a wave of Saiva devotion in the country which resulted in the building of magnificent temples and the creation of beautiful images both in stone and metal. Chola architecture reached its perfection in the temple of Rajarajeswaram at Tanjur, built by Rajaraja, and the temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram built by Rajendran, his son. The Chola bronze images attained their excellence in the figures of Natarajah and the Saiva saints. In the images of the Saiva saints, 'Bhakti is given an expression which had to be withheld from the cult-images of divinities. They showed the readiness of the devotee for his divinity, as an act of inner hearing which is not a listening to the within. It is a receiving of vibrations which touch upon, or have entered into the figure, now tremulous, now already within the orb of what it hears. Bhakti is expressed in plastic terms in the figure of the devotee.'

Mr. O. C. Gangoly, writing about the Chola Bronzes, observes:—

'In the absorbing serenity of expression, in the rhythmic sways and the dynamic symmetry of the poses, above all in the moving and generalised forms of an original yet artistic anatomy, the bronzes of this school translate the abstruse conceptions of Brahminic philosophy, into which the artists have skilfully mingled their own meditations, their prayers, and all the hopes of their lives. To know them and to appreciate them is to receive an initiation into a new world of plastic dreams not revealed in any of the masterpieces of Greek or Renaissance bronzes.'

Rajaraja the first conquered the Northern part of Ceylon and established his capital at Polonnaruwa. With the advent of the Cholas, Saivaism and Tamil Culture also re-entered the country. The Cholas were great Saivaites and promoted Saiva Literature, Art and Religion. The first act of Rajaraja was to build a Sivalayam at Polonnaruwa which is now known as Siva Devalayam No. 2.

^{1.} Southern Indian Bronzes, p. 23.

Though the Cholas were Saivaites, it cannot be said that they persecuted the non-Saivaites. Rajaraja is said to have been a tolerant monarch and it is recorded that he patronized not only Saivaism but also helped and promoted the interests of Vaishnavaism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Mr. Nilakanta Sastri writes:

"Himself an ardent follower of Viva, Rajaraja was, like all the great statesmen of India, tolerant in matters of religion, and all creeds received equal favour at his The decorative sculptures on the walls of the Tanjur temple, the construction of some Vishnu temples by him in Mysore and his gifts to other Vishnu temples recorded in his inscriptions are proof of his liberal religious policy. The celebrated Levden Grant records how he encouraged the erection of the Cudamani Vihara in Negapatanam by the Sailendra King, Sri Mara Vijavottunga Varman, the lord of Sri Vijaya and Kataha across the sea. This Vihara, which was built in the twenty-first year of Rajaraja, was named after the father of its founder, and the Chola monarch, with whose permission the construction was undertaken, dedicated to Lord Buddha dwelling in this Vihara, the village of Anaimangalam, and his son Rajendra confirmed the grant after his father's death and caused it to be engraved on copper plates." 1

It is also appropriate to quote what Dr. G. C. Mendis writes on this point:

"Though the Chola soldiers attacked Buddhist Shrines in times of war, it is not likely that the Chola Governors deviated from the usual custom of Chola Kings and persecuted Buddhism... In culture the Cholas did not differ much from the Sinhalese."²

Vijayabahu I, freed Ceylon from the domination of the Cholas and paved the way for the revival of Buddhism and Buddhist Culture. He did not achieve much as his reign was

^{1.} The Cholas, Vol. 1, p. 224.

^{2.} Early History of Ceylon, p. 68.

interrupted by local rebellions. Vijayabahu also showed a tolerant spirit towards Hinduism and the "kings after him who were children of princes and princesses of Pandya and Kalinga not only observed Hindu rites, but also built Hindu temples." During this period "the Hindu Devalas were maintained as before, and the accustomed offerings to them continued to be given," writes Mr. Blaze.

After Vijayabahu, Sinhalese rule was gradually reestablished in Ceylon and it was Parakrama Bahu the Great who completely recovered the country from the Cholas and made his influence felt even in South India, Cambodia and Siam. Parakrama Bahu, during his reign of 33 years, fortified Polonnaruwa and adorned it with many beautiful buildings both religious and secular. He built a very beautiful palace for himself and the religious edifices known as the Watadage, Lankatilaka, Tivanka Temple, Uttara Rama or Gal Vihara, the Mahathupa or the Damila Mahasaya, Potgal Vihara, and Giri Vihara (Dagoba) and the Audience Hall or the Pavilion.

THE THUPARAMA

Some of the important religious buildings of Polonnaruwa are found in the Quadrangle. At the south-west corner of the Quadrangle is a vaulted brick structure now known as the Thuparama. This is the best preserved Buddhist Vihara of the Polonnaruwa period in Ceylon. The inner-cell—Garbagraha—is very small when compared to the size of the whole building and the corridor which leads to the cell is proportionately narrow. The plan of the Vihara resembles that of a Saiva shrine with the Garbagraha and the Arthamandapa. There is even a Gomuki on the northern side of the Garbagraha, similar to the type found in Hindu temples, for water to flow out.

The exterior of the walls of Thuparama are ornamented with miniature shrines in stucco separated by pilasters. The stone base consists of tiers with friezes of animals. The structure of the base has a close resemblance to that of the Pavilion. The general appearance of the temple, with its vaulted roof,

^{1.} Early History of Ceylon, p. 85.

resembles that of a South Indian Temple of the Chola period. Mr. Benjamin Rowland observes:

"The exterior decoration of the Thuparama at Polonnaruwa shows a similar importation of Chola motifs, used here to decorate a Buddhist shrine."

Commenting on the Thuparama, Mr. Percy Brown writes:—

"One aspect of this may be seen in the Thuparama temple at Polonnaruwa of the twelfth century, built by the greatest of all the kings of this line, Parakrama Bahu, and to whom much of the architectural glory of the capital was due. In the main obviously of Dravidian extraction inspired no doubt by the style of those Siva temples of the Cholas which preceded it, yet it differs from its archetype in one important constructional particular, it is not built of stone, but of the Sinhalese mason's favourite material, brick. Apart, however, from the changes brought about by this difference of technique, the Thuparama is obviously a provincialised conception, an attempt to reproduce a classical type of building without the finished knowledge and experience necessary for such an effort . . . In its mass there is a certain dignity and a sense of proportion, with an imposing tower-like structure surmounting the whole, but the surface treatment is inclined to be crude and un-The Thuparama is significant because convincing. it marks a stage in the course of the building art of Ceylon, not exactly a transition but the finale of an architectural intrusion which both directly and indirectly affected to a degree the arts of the island generally."1

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy writes:-

"The Thuparama is a rectangular brick temple in Dravidian style."

^{1.} Indian Architecture, Vol. 1, p. 205.

LANKATILAKA VIHARA

The Lankatilaka Vihara, popularly known as Jetavanarama, is the largest shrine in Polonnaruwa. It is built of bricks and measures 170 feet in length and 66 feet in breadth. The height of the walls which are now standing is 55 feet. In the shrine room there is a standing Buddha image with the head broken. Adjoining the Lankatilaka Vihara, is the Dagoba known as Kiri Vihara. Though this Dagoba is smaller in size when compared to those in Anuradhapura, it is the best preserved ancient Dagoba in Ceylon today.

The ornamentations found on the walls of the Lankatilaka resemble those found in the Thuparama. They look like miniature South Indian shrines with vimanams. Describing the Thuparama and the Lankatilaka, Dr. Vogel observes:—

"In their present ruinous condition both these temples are still imposing piles of brickwork bearing traces of profuse decoration in which the influence of Dravidian architecture is noticeable."

TIVANKA IMAGE TEMPLE

Another brick-built shrine of the type of Thuparama and the Lankatilaka is the Tivanka Image Temple. The image of this temple is in the Tribhanga pose (Three bends). The image is headless and is very tall. The outer surface of the walls contains the same type of ornamentations in stucco like those at Thuparama and Lankatilaka.

Commenting on the style of architecture of the Tivanka Image Temple, Mr. Benjamin Rowland writes:—

"The exterior of this large rectangular brick edifice was originally completely ornamented in stucco, with a series of niches housing statues of deities and separated by attenuated pilasters reminiscent of the style of Chola architecture. The decor is strikingly suggestive of the exterior ornamentation of such monuments as the Rajarajesvara Temple at Tanjur."

^{1.} The Buddhist Art in India, Ceylon and Java, p. 87.

^{2.} Art and Architecture of India, pps. 220, 221 and 223.

THE WATADAGE

The circular shrine known as the Watadage, found in the Temple Quadrangle is the most beautiful structure in the whole of Polonnaruwa.

In the centre of the Shrine there is a stupa. At the four corners of the stupa facing the four entrances, there are four images of the Buddha in a sitting posture. The facade of the base of the second terrace contains friezes of lions and dwarfs separated by short pilasters. Above this basement, rise the railings divided into panels of floral designs. On these ornamented circular railings are found pillars with carved capitals which must have carried the wooden domical vimana of the temple.

The flight of steps at the four cardinal points are adorned by figures of dwarfs. The steps are flanked on both sides with stone makara, balustrades which end with Nagaraja guardstones. In front of the steps of each entrance are found moonstones. The Nagaraja guardstones of the Watadage are of exquisite workmanship. The joyful expression in the face, the graceful bent of the body, the delicate carvings of the ornaments, the rhythmic balance of the figures with the poorna kumbha with flowers, all make these guardstones masterpieces of Sinhalese stone sculpture.

Mr. Percy Brown, commenting on the beauty of the Watadage, writes:—

"Such an exquisite example of the building art was evidently intended to contain some very precious and sacred emblem, and it is accordingly presumed to have been the edifice known as the Dalada Maligawa built by Parakrama Bahu, the Great, to enshrine the immortal tooth relic. This relic reposed in the votive stupa within the building, and it may have been the rounded shape of this dagoba which suggested the circular treatment of the structure as a whole. Not only is the Watadage an architectural conception of a notably graceful kind, well executed while originally the interior wall surfaces were decorated with paintings. One of the most attractive monuments throughout the entire

range of Sinhalese building art, although of no great size, it was not only the conception of a genius, but it was evidently carried out in its mass as well as in its detail by the leading master-craftsmen of the time." 1

GAL VIHARE

This shrine is referred to in the Mahavansa as Uttararama. It is a rock-hewn shrine with three beautiful Buddha images, one in the recumbent posture (Parinirvana) measuring 44 feet in length, and the other two are in the sitting posture. The image inside the cell is placed on a platform decorated with carvings below a circular canopy. The fan-bearers behind the image remind one of the poses of Nagaraja figures found in the guardstones of Polonnaruwa. The aesthetic quality of the image is better than the sitting image found to the right of the cell.

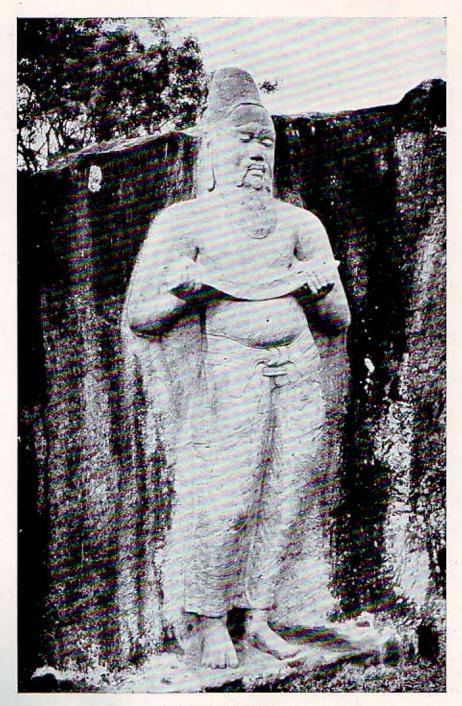
The image on the right of the cell is carved on the open rock with a makara torana behind it. On both sides of the makara torana behind the image are found miniature shrines with very small images. They are exactly similar to the corner structures (Karnakudus) found on the vimana of the Siva Devalaya No. 2, built by Rajaraja.

Near the head of the recumbent Buddha, there is a standing figure carved on the rock with two hands crossed and pressed against the chest, with a sad expression on its countenance. Tradition identifies this figure as Ananda, sorrowing over the passing away of the master. But Dr. J. Ph. Vogel and Dr. Paranavitane consider this figure as that of the Buddha.

The recumbent Buddha and the figure of Ananda are excellent pieces of sculpture illustrative of the Polonnaruwa period at its best. Mr. Benjamin Rowland comments on the figure of Ananda as follows:—

"More unusual and of great impressiveness is the standing figure of Ananda, nearly twenty-five feet high, which is carved from the rock next to the head of the Nirvana Buddha. The figure has very much the same

^{1.} Indian Architecture, Vol. 1, p. 206.



PARAKRAMA BAHU I. Polonnaruwa

(Archae: Survey-Ceylon.)

feeling of grandeur through the massive plastic realization of the form that characterizes the Buddha statues of the earlier period: the representation of the disciple, his arms folded, one leg slightly bent at the knee, has an extraordinary feeling of serenity and strength, qualities which, as we have already seen, are always notably present in the Sinhalese sculptor's realisation of the peace of Enlightenment." ¹

THE SAGE

To the north of the Potgal Vihare, we find a colossal sculpture which tradition identifies as the statue of Parakrama Bahu the Great. The figure is holding a palm-leaf-like object in the two hands and looks like a Rishi. Scholars have differed as to the actual personality which the image represents. "The figure with its simple dress, imposing beard and braided hair shown in the act of reading a palm leaf book, can hardly be a royal personage: but has the aspect of a Brahminical Rishi," writes Dr. Vogel. The figure may be said to represent the Sage Pulastiar, the patron-saint, of Pulastianagar, (Polonnaruwa). The sculptural treatment of the figure resembles that of Agastya found in Java. It has all the finer aesthetic qualities of the Chola bronzes and may be considered as one of the finest works of art in the Chola style done in Ceylon.

After Parakrama Bahu I, the king who devoted his attention to the construction of Dagobas and Temples was Nissanka Malla (1198-1207). Buildings ascribed to him are: the Hatadage, a stone-built structure which housed the Tooth Relic, the Rankot Vihara (Dagoba) and the Lata Mandapa built in stone. The Mandapa consists of a stone platform on which are found stone pillars carved in the shape of lotus stems. It is surrounded by a stone railing constructed in the form of a wooden fence, with an entrance.

From the inscriptions found on the walls of the Watadage, it is inferred that Nissanka Malla must have made some repairs and additions to it. He is also said to have built a Hindu shrine at Rameswaram and called it Nissankeswaram.

^{1.} Art and Architecture of India, p. 217.

This shows him to be a liberal monarch who respected even the non-Buddhist sects of his time.

The standing Buddha image of Avukana also belongs to this period and is said to have been constructed by Parakrama Bahu I. The shrine which is next to the Hatadage is most probably the Tooth Relic shrine built by Vijaya Bahu I.

Before concluding the review of the Polonnaruwa period, I like to make a few observations on Chola influence on the Art of this period. The author of "The Art and Architecture of Ceylon: Polonnaruwa Period," published by the Arts Council of Cevlon, tries to make out that the art of the Polonnaruwa period was the continuation of the earlier Anuradhapura period, and that the Chola influence did not materially affect the construction of the shrines. Sinhalese builders during the Polonnaruwa period would have certainly followed the Buddhist traditions of the earlier periods in constructing the Dagobas, Monasteries and Images of the Buddha, but that would not have prevented them from copying the detail patterns and designs of Chola Architecture and Sculpture which formed a part of the culture of the people of that period. Disinterested foreign Art critics and students of Art who have visited the ruins of Polonnaruwa and have studied the evolution of design and plan of buildings, have recorded that the Buddhist architecture of Polonnaruwa clearly shows the influence of Chola Art.

The Cholas occupied Ceylon without a break for nearly 80 years and it cannot be maintained that they did not influence the Art forms of the people. Parakrama Bahu I is said to have employed Tamils in the construction of his buildings. "Hindu influence did not disappear with their (Chola) expulsion," writes Dr. G. C. Mendis. It does not require extraordinary scholarship and training to note the similarity that exists between the so-called Parakrama Bahu Image and the Image of Agastya which is in the Chola style.

Because of the fact that Sinhalese kings built the structures at Polonnanaruwa, it is no argument to maintain that the style of Architecture also was purely indigenous without any other influence. No one will dare to assert

that because the Taj Mahal was built in India by Hindu craftsmen, it is Hindu and Indian in style and form. Nor can we say that because the Saiva bronzes of Nataraja and Sundaramoorthi are found in Ceylon, they are not South Indian or Chola in style. Political domination of a country by an alien power, always brings about a change in the cultural and artistic outlook of the subject people. This is the verdict of history. The cultural outlook and life of the people of Ceylon today are an example of this universal fact.

The influence of Saiva Art and religion in Cevlon which started with the Chola invasion, may be said to have continued till the arrival of the Portuguese. "The great stone buildings whose remains attract so many visitors to the buried cities were probably erected with Indian assistance and partly by Indian workmen. It is most probable that most of the gal-vaduvo actually living in Ceylon as subjects of the Sinhalese kings in later times, were of South Indian blood," writes Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in Medieval Sinhalese Art. He also states that the best Kandyan painters followed the Sanskrit book named Rupavaliya which was of Hindu origin and belonged to the 11th century A.D. 1 Dr. Andreas Nell writes, "These Polonnaruwa paintings show, as much as in its architecture and sculpture, the effects of the permeation of South Indian influences; the exterior of the buildings is more of South Indian character." Therefore, to deny the influence of South Indian Art on Ceylon during the Polonnaruwa period and after, is to read history from a wrong angle.

PANDYAN STYLE

From the reign of Vijaya Bahu III (1232-1236) till that of Parakrama Bahu VIII (1484-1509) Ceylon came frequently under the political influence of South India. Polonnaruwa was abandoned because of constant attacks from the north and the capital was, therefore, shifted from place to place. There arose in the Jaffna Peninsula a Tamil Kingdom which spread its power as far as Kotte in the South. The Sinhalese kings were not able to keep the Nallur kings

^{1.} Medieval Sinhalese Art, p. 114.

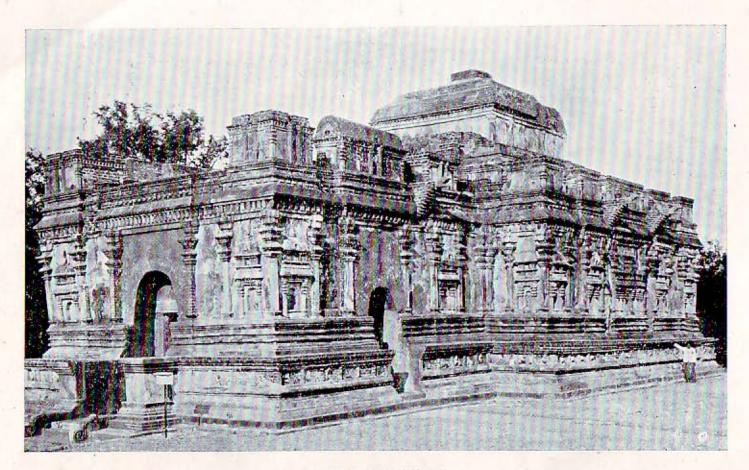
of the North under control or prevent invasions from South India.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan (1253-1270) is said to have invaded Ceylon, killed one of the two kings of Ceylon, captured his army, chariots, treasures, throne, etc., planted the Pandya flag with the Double Fish on the Konamalai and the high peak of Trikuta mountain, and received elephants as tribute from the other king.¹ The first king whom he is said to have killed must have been the ruler of Sinhapura in the Jaffna Peninsula and the other must have been Parakrama Bahu II. The Double Fish Pandyan emblem is still seen on either side of the main entrance to the Trincomalie Fort. These stones originally belonged to the temple of Koneswaram. The Temple was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1622 and the stones were used to build the Fort.

The Siva Devalaya No. 1 at Polonnaruwa must have been built during the period of Pandyan contact with Ceylon or immediately after it during the reign of Parakrama Bahu III. Another building in Pandyan style found in Ceylon is the palace at Yapahuva. It contains some fine carvings of dancing figures. The Gaja-Simha balustrade is different in pattern and execution from the Makara balustrades of the earlier period.

The bronze images which are in the Colombo Museum were discovered at the Siva Devalayas of Polonnaruwa. They belong to the Chola and Pandyan periods of South Indian history. Some of the images which belong to the Chola period are considered as masterpieces of South Indian sculpture. They might have been made by South Indian Stapathis who lived in Ceylon at that time or might have been imported into Ceylon from South India. Even now there are families of Tamil sculptors living in Jaffna and other parts of Ceylon engaged in the art of making images for the use of Hindu temples.

^{1.} Pandyan Kingdom, p. 176.



THUPARAMA VIHARE Polonnaruwa



KANDYAN PERIOD

VIJAYANAGARA AND NAYAKA STYLES

During this period the capital of the island shifted to Kurunegala, Gampola, Kotte, Sitawaka and Kandy. The prominent architectural style of this period is known as the 'Kandyan Architecture.' Kandy was the last capital of Ceylon and with its fall, Ceylon lost her independence. The last dynasty that ruled at Kandy was a Nayaka Dynasty from South India.

After the fall of the Pandyans in South India, there arose another Hindu Empire which defended the ancient Hindu Culture till the middle of the 16th century, against the Mohamedans. Hari-Hara II (1379-1406) is said to have conquered Ceylon first. Again in the reign of Krishna Deva Raya (1438) Ceylon was invaded, and the Jaffna peninsula came under his rule.

The Vijayanagara Kings were great patrons of Art and Culture, and they built great temples with magnificent Mandapams. The Nayaka kings of Madurai, and Tanjur followed their great example and built the temples at Madurai, Sri Rangam and other places in South India. The Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple is a complete example of the Nayaka style of Architecture. Under the Nayaka dynasty, the Dravidian style of architecture assumed its final form. The modern style of architecture in South India is a direct descendent of the Nayaka style. Thirumalai Nayaka who ruled from 1623-1659, was a great builder and patron of Art.

The influence of Vijayanagara and Madurai styles on Ceylon Art is seen on some of the buildings erected during the Gampola period of Ceylon history. Buildings, worthy of mention, constructed during this period are the Lankatilaka Vihara and the Saddharmatilaka Vihara, popularly known as Gadaladeniya Vihara, both at Gampola, erected during the reign of Bhuvaneka Bahu IV (1344-1354).

The Lankatilaka is a brick-built structure of the pattern of Polonnaruwa buildings. The shrine-room has two small rooms in front, serving as corridors and this is enclosed by an outer wall. The inner temple is Buddhist, but in the surrounding corridors there are the images of gods.

The Gadaladeniya Vihara was built by Thera Dharma Kirti I, with the help of a South Indian Stapathi (architect) known as Ganeswara Achary. The whole structure is of stone and is built in the Vijayanagara style. This Vihara is smaller in size than the Lankatilaka, but the workmanship is finer and better. The exterior ornamentation is much more elaborate. In both temples the original walls appear to have had a coating of plaster, and this, at one time, must have been painted. There is a frieze of stone running round the upper part of the wall of the main building, under the eaves, composed of a chain of lions. Along the base, and on the shrine, this type of ornamentation is changed into figures of dancing females playing on musical instruments, executed in an active and rhythmic manner. In the ante-chapel, there are stone corbels of sculptured lions, two on each side. entrance porch has huge monolithic pillars, two slender pillars. flanking the large ones. These pillars are of South Indian style belonging to the Vijayanagara period.

KANDYAN STYLE: - EMBEKKE DEVALAYA

The Embekke Devalaya at Gampola, dedicated to Kartikeya or God of Katirgama, is a typical example of Kandyan architecture. This temple is said to have been built by Vikrama Bahu III, who reigned at Gampola (1371-1378). The Drumming Hall contains the finest example of Kandyan craftsmanship in wood. There are four rows of seven wooden pillars in each row, with four additional pillars at the entrance. In these pillars are carved figures of Goddess Lakshmi, warriors armed with swords, dancers and wrestlers, mythical animals, lions, half-bird and half-human figures, birds with two heads, the sacred geese in various attitudes and lotus flowers in different patterns. All the pillars are surmounted with the usual drooping lotus capitals.

KANDY AUDIENCE HALL

The audience hall of the kings of Kandy is of the same style as that of the Embekke Devalaya at Gampola. It is later than the Devalaya and is said to have been commenced in 1784 by King Rajadhi Raja Sinha (1780-1798). The pillars are richly carved in different patterns and are in shape partly square and partly octagonal. They support heavy beams and a kingpost roof. The capital is carved with a drooping lotus. Devendra Mulacharya is said to have been the architect of the building.

The Embekke Devalaya has a greater variety of designs carved on the central squares of the pillars than the Audience Hall.

TOOTH-RELIC TEMPLE

Vimala Dharma Suriya I, the first king of Kandy, on ascending the throne, built in Kandy a two-storeyed temple for the Tooth Relic. Vimala Dharma Suriya II, according to the Mahavansa, is said to have rebuilt and converted it into a three-storeyed one, resplendent with all kinds of artistic work. King Narendra Sinha, the last Sinhalese king of Lanka, seeing that the Tooth Temple built by his father had fallen into decay, rebuilt it with two-storeys and had thirty-two Jatakas painted in colours on the two walls of the courtyard. The present inner temple is said to have been built by Kirti Sri Rajasinha.

In the temple of the Tooth, we have pillars in stone similar to those of the Audience Hall. The carvings are much less but in their place there are paintings on the square portions of the pillars.

The wooden pillars of the Audience Hall, the Embekke Devalaya, and the stone pillars of the Tooth Temple are similar in shape and style to the stone pillars of South Indian temples. In Kandyan wooden pillars, the square surfaces and the octagonal portions are carved with elaborate patterns of conventional floral and other artistic designs. Because of these characteristics, these pillars are known as

"Kandyan Pillars," and they are found mostly in the temples in the Kandyan Districts.

The influence of South Indian Art during the period of the Kandyan kings is seen in the unfinished vihara at Galmaduwa near Kandy. This was started by Kirti Sri but later abandoned. The temple, square in plan, is built of stone, and has a Vimana like that of a Hindu Temple. The basement has deep and heavy mouldings like those of Lankatilaka and Gadaladeniya. The Vimana has seven stages and is built of bricks. "The Galmaduwa Vihara probably enjoys the unique distinction of being the most Hindu-looking Buddhist temple in existence." The appearance of the Galmaduwa Vimana resembles that of the Ullasa tower of the Tanjur Palace in South India.

Before closing this section, mention must be made of the great stone edifice of Sitawaka, known as Berendi Kovil dedicated to Siva by King Rajasinha I (1554-1593). This magnificent temple of architectural beauty was completely destroyed by the Portuguese.

IV

COLOMBO PERIOD

MADURAI AND KANDYAN STYLES

Kandy was occupied by the British on February 14th, 1815, and four days later, Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha (1798-1815), the last king of Kandy, was captured and ultimately sent to India where he died on the 30th January, 1832. The Octagon attached to the *temple of Tooth Relic and the Lake were built by the last king of Kandy in 1803. After the fall of Kandy, Ceylon lost not only her political independence, but also her cultural independence.

Introduction of English as the state language compelled the people to learn it for economic benefits, which act practically killed the national languages. The knowledge of English became the hall-mark of culture and many, not only



SIVA DEVALAYAM No. 2. Polonnaruwa

(Archae : Survey-Ceylon.)

took up to the study of the English language, but also adopted the Western standard and mode of living as a sign of civilization. The British rule created a new type of individuals in the country who were not ashamed to look down upon their culture and art with contempt. The so-called educated gentry of the country practically lived as foreigners in their land as regards their culture and civilization.

The country was flooded with cheap and machine-made articles with the result that all the traditional arts and crafts gradually died out. Secular architecture followed the British models. Even religious buildings, though built according to the traditional religious plan, followed the Western designs in matters of ornamentation. Art teaching in schools and institutes followed the Western technique. In the sphere of Art and Culture, Ceylon became a 'little England in the Indian Ocean.' Mr John Still very aptly describes the effect of foreign rule on the Arts of Ceylon. He says:—

"Another thing to weigh against material prosperity is the decay of art in Ceylon: art in its widest meaning. There were famous Sinhalese poets in the past. are none now; they read English instead. sculpture is dead, too. In the ruined cities one finds solemn stone images of Buddha and godlike forms with cobra heads encircling their head: and figures of animals, elephants, horses, lions and bulls. More charming still are the bands of merry little dwarfs who play and dance round the capitals of the stone pillars. Now all this art is dead, or nearly dead. The motive has gone. Buddhist kings have been succeeded by Christian Governors: mass produced commodities have ousted the artist, and even the village craftsman, from all his markets. One may say that this is less our fault than our joint misfortune, but it was we who introduced into Cevlon the machine-made goods that ruined the artists."1

In the early part of the 20th century there was a wave of national revival in Art and Culture, and this inspired the Buddhists and Hindus towards a national regeneration pro-

^{1.} B.B.C. Broadcast, January 26th, 1934.

gramme. The writings and speeches of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy and Colonel Olcott created a desire on the part of the people to revive their arts and crafts. Buddhist and Hindu educational institutions were started in the Island, and societies for the restoration of religious monuments were also formed. The Ruwanwelisaya was restored completely. The old Kelaniya Vihara was rebuilt in the Kandyan style of architecture with the assistance of stone-masons (sculptors) from South India.

The Kelaniya Vihara has all the beautiful characteristics of the Art of the Kandyan period. It consists of two shrines on a rectangular base of 150 feet long and 90 feet broad. The base and the steps leading to the front Mandapam are built of stone. The octagonal tower over the new shrine is constructed in the Kandyan style.

The outer walls of the Temple from one end to the other have ornamented niches like Vimanas, with makara thoranams wherein beautiful images of Gods are placed. There are three friezes which run round the walls below the shrines, containing delicately carved figures of sacred geese, dwarfs and elephants with finely carved trappings. The stone steps leading to the front Mandapam of the main shrine are flanked on both sides with Gajasimha balustrades. They are carved in stone. On either side of the main door are two figures of Dwarapalas standing on one foot with the other foot raised and resting on the back wall. The wooden doors and door-frames are all in the Kandyan style and contain elaborate and delicate carvings.

The old paintings at Kelaniya Temple are in the old shrine room. The new mural paintings are found in the new portion of the Vihara and they are by Soliyas, a gifted Sinhalese painter with a 'Sigiriya touch.'

The new Vihara at Kelaniya is the only Buddhist temple in the island built completely in the traditional architecture of the country during the British period.

Sri Ponnambalavaneswaram

The other architectural edifice worthy of mention built, during the British period, is the Siva Devalayam at Kochchikade, Colombo, by Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, the great patron of Hindu Art and Culture in Ceylon. The temple is built of stone in the modern Madurai style of South India. The pillars and sculptures are of the type found in the modern temples of South India. The temple of Ponnambalayaneswaram may be considered the 'architectural gem of South Indian Art' in Ceylon today.

After the attainment of independence, attempts are being made by Buddhists and Hindus to restore their old shrines and to build new ones. It is desirable that those, who are endeavouring to do this, should build them in the purely traditional architecture of the respective faiths, instead of mixing up local styles with those of the West.

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