

Quarterly Tours – No. 18



National Trust – Sri Lanka

28th May 2011

Compiled by Nilan Cooray

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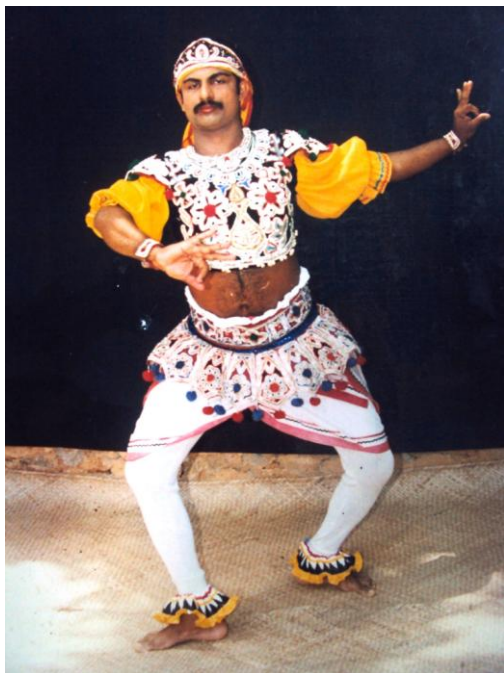
Quarterly Tours – Saturday, 28th May 2011.

Programme

0700 hrs.	Leave PGIAR
0745 - 0845 hrs.	Visit Olaboduwa Dance School
0900 –1045 hrs.	Visit Kodigahakanda at Olaboduwa
1045 – 1115 hrs.	Visit Estate Bungalow of de Soysa Family
1145 – 1215 hrs.	Visit the Martin de Porres’ Church at Horana
1230 – 1330 hrs.	Visit ‘Gamagedara’ at Gurugoda, Horana
1345 – 1445 hrs.	Lunch at Horana Rest House
1515 – 1600 hrs.	Visit Horana Raja Maha Vihara
1615- 1700 hrs.	Visit the citadel of the Raigama Kingdom at Bandaragama
1715 - 1800 hrs.	Visit Veedagama Temple at Bandaragama
1900 hrs.	Arrive PGIAR

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Olaboduwa Dance School



Located off the Colombo-Horana B5 Road, the village Olaboduwa, Gonapola in Kalutara District, is the home of the Raigama family of the low country folk dance tradition (the other two families of this tradition being at Matara and at Bentara). The *Guru Karunadasa*

Olaboduwa is the leading figure of this hereditary family who is committed to preserving this age old folk tradition. Apart from transmitting the traditional knowledge and skills of this art to his own children, he runs a dance school to popularize dance among the children in the village. Masked dancing is one of the characteristic features of the low country folk art tradition and interestingly this family still produces the masks in the traditional manner for their performances. These masks, on their own, are superbly turned out works of art.



A visit to the house of *Guru* Karunadasa Olaboduwa will give the team an opportunity to view some of the demonstrations of his dance troop and to even to see the array of masks that are being used for dancing.



Kodigahakanda at Olaboduwa

The Kodigahakanda or the trig-station is located in the village of Olaboduwa, Kodigahakanda is an 18 acre secondary scrub jungle on top of a hillock, with its highest point being 115 meters above mean sea-level. It was once part of the 600 acre coconut plantation belonged to Olaboduwa Estate, a property of the ancestral family of Cyril de Soysa. According to the local residents, 'Kodigahakanda' (literally meaning: the flag bearing hill) derives its name from the earlier practice of flying a flag from its summit whenever the proprietor was in residence. A trigonometric station was also established later at its summit.

There were two other similar hillocks nearby, Wawulkanda and Bathalakanda. After the breakup of the Estate due to the implementation of the Land Reform Act of the 1970's, the natural rocks have been blasted largely by illegal quarrying. By 1994 most of the surrounding area had been extensively quarried and deforested, resulting in the streams and wells running dry. The villagers then realized the value of the forests and the hillock in the storage of ground water, the local settlers formed on their own a Society called the 'Mihithala Mithuro' (earth-friends) to help the present owner, Mr. Rohan de Soysa to protect this patch of forest in order to conserve the few remaining natural water resources.

This patch of ground consist of 133 species of flora, 18 species of reptiles, 4 species of amphibians, 16 species of fish, 45 species of butterflies, 72 species of birds and 17 species of mammals indicating its richness in bio-diversity scene.



The summit of the hillock offers an extensive panorama covering all directions including the Arabian Sea to the west, the flat coastal belt to the north and south, and even Adam's Peak and the hill country to the east.

At the Visitor Information Center of the Society, 'Mihithala Mithuro', which is still in its infancy, is positioned at the foot of the hillock to provide a brief introduction to the natural values of this site and the nature conservation work being carried out by this Society. There, they will provide a guided tour through the forest to the summit of the hillock.

Estate Bungalow of the de Soysa Family



Located halfway up the foot of Kodigahakanda, stands the estate bungalow of the de Soysa family, who owned the one thousand acre estate including Kodigahakanda. The bungalow, said to have been built in the 1920's by Charles Henry de Soysa, is a single storey structure overlooking the estate seen down below. At present it is owned by an outsider, not related to the de Soysa family, and the building is in a dilapidated condition. The front garden that is overgrown with trees still retains some of the decorative elements such as the elaborate fountain reflecting a Baroque style. The garden is surrounded by a parapet that is faced with dressed stonework and a few elaborate gates. Most of the decorative cast iron work that

adorned the parapet is now missing. The building has a spacious front verandah and a porch. It has large living and dining halls, a ball room and other service areas such as the kitchen and stores. The spacious quarters for the caretakers have been built separately.



Many distinguished and eminent personalities have visited this place. The local leaders such as Sir Baron Jayatillake, Sir John Kotalawela, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Thomas More and Robert Horton among the English elite, Rabindranath Tagore the Indian Poet, Crown Prince Akihito of Japan are some of those said to have been among the well known visitors. The Asoka tree planted by the Crown Prince in 1958 is still to be seen in the garden. This bungalow is also associated with an event of national importance, when the residence became the venue for the first meeting of the Sinhala Literary Federation which was started by Sir Baron Jayatillake with the participation of many national leaders.

Martin de Porres' Church



Not far away from the Horana Town and along the Panadura-Ratnapura A8 Road, is the church dedicated to Saint Martin de Porres, the first black saint to be canonized. The saint was born in 1579 in Peru his father was a Spanish aristocrat while his mother was a freed slave from Panama. The church is located on a hillock overlooking the surrounding landscape with gently rolling hills. Designed by the famous architect Velantine

Gunasekera, the design of the church has an innovative form and an interior which is fundamentally different from the conventional architecture of the Roman Catholic churches in Sri Lanka. Using concrete and glass as Velantine's media of architectural expression, he has designed a non-hierarchical spatial composition which effectively incorporates the outer landscape with the interior of the shrine.



However, the additions that are being carried out at present to the edifice are neither compatible to the original architectural design nor sympathetic to the natural setting offered by the site.

‘Gamagedara’



Situated at Etagala-kande at Gurugoda, about 6 km from Horana along the Panadura-Ratnapura A8 Road, ‘Gamagedara’ is a center run by the Committee for People's Rights, a private initiative, to engage a program of rush and reed conservation and diversification. The objective of this program is to help restore the biological diversity (of birds, fish, insects and microorganisms) and ecological processes in paddy fields (wetlands) that were decimated during the Green Revolution. The group works to revive the traditional values and methods of rush and reed production as a cottage industry for poverty reduction and cultural revival. The Rush and Reed

Conservation and Diversification Program works through a process of raising awareness, establishing self-help groups, in training sustainable agricultural practices, craft consciousness, and in establishing marketing strategies to make paddy cultivation attractive for farmers, to rejuvenate traditional micro-land practices, adopt and encourage organic agricultural practices, assist to diversify reed beds, help promote gender equality, ensure food security, and finally to develop the rush and reed industry as a poverty reduction strategy.



A visit to the center will provide the over view of the efforts taken to conserve the craft of reed and rush weaving, together with the traditional skills and original designs. The center also has nurseries for endemic reeds, sample beds for vegetables and fruits using traditional systems and modern eco-friendly organic agricultural practices and to provide training including



lodging during learning to develop the rush and reed industry. The center has a sale's out-let of the products that comes out as a welcome surprise.

Horana Raja Maha Vihara

Although the local traditions ascribe the establishment of this monastery to the reign of Kitsiri Mevan, of the late Anuradhapura period, no archaeological evidence has been found so far at the site to establish its historical link with Anuradhapura period. The ancient decorative stonework at the site suggests that they belong to a period of 15th -16th centuries. One of the interesting stone sculpture found at the site is the *balu-simha* figure (a combination of dog and lion figures), whereas, *gaja-simha* (a combination of elephant and lion figures) is common in most other instances.

Citadel of Raigama Kingdom



Located off the Panadura – Ratnapura A8 Road about 3 km from Bandaragama town, the rectangular precinct that is fortified by a thick rampart of laterite (cabook) masonry was the 15th century citadel established by Rayigam Bandara for the regional kingdom of Raigama. It was from here that the father of Parakramabahu VI (1412 – 1467) was taken captive to China, as he refused to hand over the sacred Tooth and Bowl relics to the envoy, Zhen Ho, of the Chinese Emperor. The citadel is about 4.5 acres in extent and the rampart is 2.5 m wide at its base. Due to the presence of a large rectangular pond located to the north-east of the citadel, the only structure that has survived from the historical period is the large pond also built of laterite. Consequent to this large bathing pool the site is presently referred to as the *Pathahawatta* (literally meaning: the land with the pond) by the village folk. This

pond, which could have been a royal bath, was constructed upon a raft foundation using large timber beams as the foundation.



At present, the site is occupied by a modern Buddhist temple with an image house and a large preaching hall of the mid 20th century, built in the architectural style of the period. Carved stone elements such as an elephant gargoyle, a urinal cum latrine slab etc. are some of the sculptural embellishments of the historical period, seen within the citadel.

The former palace base seems to have been used for the preaching hall.

Veedagama Temple



Located about half a kilometer from the Bandaragama junction, on the Panadura – Ratnapura A8 Road is Veedagama Temple, a thriving monastic college during the 15th century. This is where the scholar monk, Veedagama Maitriya Thero, once resided and headed this monastic institution. The 15th century Sinhala classics such as *Buduguna Alankara*, *Lo-Veda Sangarava*, *Kavya Lakshana Mini Malava*, *Hansa Sandeshaya*, *Elu Attanagalu Vanshaya* were all written by this monk. It is also the location where the four year old prince, later King Parakramabahu VI, grew up after the king Vira Alakeshvara was taken captive to China. The site was a monastic college mentioned in the chronicles and is believed to be affiliated to the Mahanethpa Mula, which was one of the four faculties that

existed at the Abhayagiriya monastic university in Anuradhapura. The monastic college was later destroyed by the Portuguese. The present temple, however, dates from the early 19th century. Unfortunately, there are no buildings that can be attributed to the historical period at the site except a few stone columns, moonstones, *makara* wingstones, etc. The other attraction is the recently sculptured life-size statue of Ven. Veedagama Maitriya Thero, in an attitude of composing a literary work, which is seen at the entrance.

