



**THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA LECTURE ON THURSDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2018**

**“GIRIKUMHIILATISSA PABBATHA VIHARAYA –  
POPULARLY IDENTIFIED AS RAJAGALA MONASTERY COMPLEX”**

**By Professor P.B. Mandawala**

The 109<sup>th</sup> Session of the Monthly Lecture Series of the **National Trust - Sri Lanka** will be held at the HNB Auditorium, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, HNB Towers, 479 T.B. Jayah Mawatha, Colombo 10 at 6.30p.m. on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

Rajagala Archaeological reserve is located in the Ampara district of Eastern Sri Lanka. It is located in a mountain identified as Rajagala which may be approached through Ampara Mahaoya highway near the Rajagalatenna village. The first identified name of Rajagala is the “Girikumhiilla” depicting the name of Crocodile Mountain as the mountain looks like a lying crocodile in the distance. The monastery was named later as “Grikumhiila Tissa PabbathaViharaya” using part of the name of the King Lajjatissa. According to the ancient sources this monastic complex has been build and donated to the monks in between the year 116 – 109 BC.

The monastic remains in the Rajagala could be identified on the mountain which is about 346 meters above the mean sea level spread in about 381 hectares declared as an Archaeological Reserve. The approach to the flat plain of the mountain is through beautifully built two stone stairways through the dense forest blending with the slope of the mountain. The common buildings such as Stupas, Refectory, Uposathagra (Building devoted to religious observances), Hot Water Bath House, A house built to collect spring water for cooking purposes with two large stone bowls, a small tank and several other unidentified buildings are scattered in this area. This area could be identified as the areas where the ordinary people were gathered to carryout religious observances and to offer various donations to the meditation monks of the monastery. The dwelling units of the mediation monks who were residing in this monastery were located in the rocky hill above this area, converting the caves into dwellings. As much as about 50 such dwellings could be identified in this area together with stone walls built during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC still intact. Accordingly it has been identified that about 50 such cave dwellings are scattered in this area and about 500 monks would have lived in these cave dwellings. It is interesting to note some of these caves have inscriptions as “Seethalena” which is depicting the name of a cool cave. The interior of these caves are cooler than outside even today due to the flow of natural air according to the construction methodology. There are several stone inscriptions scattered in the reserve. According to the remains in the archeological reserve the monastery could be identified as a category of PabbathaVihara type with cave dwellings depicting an ancient mediation monastery. This monastic complex has been vacated due to the South Indian invasions in 1215 AD; since then it has gradually deteriorated due to natural causes and also due to the vandalism by treasure hunters in the near past. According to the survey carried out in the entire monastic complex the total monuments identified are 561.

During the 800 years of neglect the monastery has decayed due to natural causes and man-made intervention especially as result of treasure hunting. Almost all the monuments including approach stairways have been destroyed due to the accumulation of earth and root penetration. The treasure hunters have dug holes in all monuments including stupas and caves and some of these holes are about 15 m deep. Since the department of archaeology felt that it is now the correct time to commence archaeological activities in this great exceptional monastery, they commenced a project of carrying out the archaeological investigations, archaeological and architectural conservation, landscaping, layout, maintenance and the provision of infrastructure facilities with the participation of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura with the financial assistance of the Government of Sri Lanka and the American Ambassadors Fund for the Cultural Preservation Large Grant Programme.



Prof. Mandawala graduated as an Architect and has also completed his Post Graduate Degree and became a Chartered Architect from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. He completed his post graduate degree in Archaeological Heritage Management in the University of York, UK and has undergone professional training in the Fields of Stone Conservation in Venice - Italy, Wood Conservation in Norway, Architectural Conservation in ICCROM- Rome, Tourism Development in Singapore and Post Graduate Diploma in Heritage Management in IHS, Netherlands.

He has held the post of President, ICOMOS Sri Lanka, President of Sri Lanka Council of Archaeologists and Vice President of the Organization for Professional Associations of Sri Lanka.

Prof. Mandalawa began his career as a Heritage Manager in 1981 by joining the UNESCO-Sri Lanka Cultural Triangle programme managed by the Central Cultural Fund as an Architect and worked for 21 years as a Resident Architect, Project Manager, Assistant Director (Administration & Development), Deputy Director (Development) and Director Development. He also served as the Director Conservation of the Projects of the Central Cultural Fund namely – Alahana Parivena, MahaVihara and JetavanaVihara.

He joined the University of Sri Jayewardenepura as a Senior Lecturer in 2002 and currently holds post of Professor in Archaeology.

He also held the posts of Head of the Department of History and Archaeology, Head of the Department of Engineering Technology and the Dean of the Faculty of Technology, Director of the Operational Technical Secretariat of the World Bank Project of Higher Education for Twenty First Century, Coordinator of the Establishment of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Director of the 2011 US Ambassadors Grant Project of Galle and as the Conservation Consultant Architect of the Conservation of Ancient Dutch Fort of Jaffna.

Prof. Mandawala currently holds the posts of Director General of Archaeology and Director of the 2013 and 2015 US Ambassadors Grant Project of Rajagala and Conservation Director of Rajagala Project.

He has attended several International Conferences, Seminars and Workshops as a resource person and a participant and submitted several papers. Published several articles in international and national books and journals and also published publications on conservation and archeology.

**The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures on the last Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the public at a nominal fee. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.**

**Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel 2682730 / 0778081214 at the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology, 407, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.**