



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

“Temple Paintings during Colonial Period”

by

Prof. Chandanie Wanigatunge

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 158 of the National Trust

Thursday 29th February 2024 at 6.00 pm

at the Auditorium of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka,

No. 6, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7.

(For those who join online: <https://www.youtube.com/@nts19627>)

Paintings are a fundamental way to give a message effectively. The patterns, lines, images and colours create a visual message easily grasped by people, especially those with little in-depth knowledge of the subject. Sri Lanka’s temple paintings have been effectively used over centuries to propagate the message of the Buddha, especially to the laity. Sri Lanka has been under three colonial powers, each doing its fair share of controlling the people following Buddhism, the majority religion of the Country. During the 18th century, in the Kandyan kingdom, Buddhism flourished under the King’s patronage and many temples were renovated and built. The older traditions of temple paintings were revived but the style differed significantly from the classical style seen during the 5th to 13th centuries. Narrative art was the style adopted and the Kandyan School of Temple Art was thus born. When the Country came under British rule, the power balance shifted and the temples in the former Kandyan Kingdom struggled to survive. However, the colonial-educated people in the maritime and southern regions of the Country revived Buddhism and its practices in these parts of the Island. Newer temples were built, older ones revived and a variant style of the Kandyan school of temple art developed and flourished in these regions. This Southern school of Temple Art underwent further changes during the “transitional period” to what is seen today. This lecture will analyse the development of temple paintings during colonial rule.



Prof. Chandanie Wanigatunge is a Physician by training. She is the Senior Professor and Chair of Pharmacology of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura and the Deputy Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo. Her research interests are in rational prescribing and medicines use in older adults. Chandanie enjoys reading, wildlife, history and photography. Her hobbies and passions have led her to study archaeology and temple paintings, and she has delivered talks on varying topics based on her interests.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929