



**THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA**

## **“The Building of a ‘New’ Identity: Mandapams of Jaffna Temples”**

by  
**Prof. T. Sanathanan**

**The Monthly Lecture Series No: 163 of the National Trust**

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 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://youtube.com/live/JrXIC-GzWCU?feature=share>)

Although the existing popular discourses on Hindu temple architecture in Sri Lanka assiduously link temple style with South Indian or Dravidian, the Jaffna examples from the colonial era exemplify a rupture. In the last thirty years *villu mandapams* or curvature ceiling halls became the desired popular form. The emergence of this local style coincides with the sweeping changes in the social fabric ignited by civil war, displacement, formation of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Sanskritation of temple rituals, and availability of new building materials and technologies. The *villu madapams* produced through fragmentation, collage, copy and fusion of different style and elements, questions the popular belief associating the Dravidian style with Tamil Identity in architecture. This lecture maps the cultural history and visual idiom of contemporary popular temple architecture with special reference to *villu mandapams*, and portrays Jaffna temple architecture as an eclectic mix integrating colonial, vernacular and South Indian architectural elements, architectural imaginations and memories from popular theatre and cinema. The lecture makes a case that this extravagant architecture is an attempt to make the ordinary, common, low cost, impermanent architecture of occasional use, to produce a permanent visual grandeur and festivity.



Prof. Thamothersampillai Sanathanan is a visual artist and a professor of Art History, Department of Fine Arts, University of Jaffna. He is also a co funder of Sri Lankan Archive of Contemporary Art, Architecture and Design and the founder of Kolam craft initiative.

**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