

Influence of the South Indian Paintings on Murals in a few Buddhist Temples of the Kandyan Period

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1. Introduction

Since Sri Lanka is an island located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, it plays a fundamental point in conducting correlations with other countries of the world. After the arrival of Arahat Mahinda thero in 237 BC, Sri Lankans who were referring to religious beliefs such as tree worship and rock worship were freed from those myths and Buddhism was nurtured in Sri Lanka. As a result, Buddhist temples were gradually built and in connection with that, mural art was created based on Buddhist themes. The special moments of Buddha's character, jataka katha, Lakdiva and related historical events were the basis there (Bandaranayale, 1986). After the eras of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Gampola, etc., the art of mural painting underwent various changes and was created during the kingdom periods that entered the Kandy period. Mr. S. A. Wickramasinghe states in the book *'History of Hela Art'* that the painting style born in the Heladiva hills is the art of 'upland paintings' like the art style produced in the Indian art of 'Pahari' or 'Mountains' (Ghosh, 1982). During the period of the Kandy kingdom, which began around the 18th century, the temples with paintings of the Kandyan tradition are Dambulla Cave Temple, Kurunegala Ridee Vihara, Degaldoruwa Rajamaha Vihara, Medawala Tampita Vihara, Lewella Gangarama Viharaya, Temple of the Tooth Relic etc. can be mentioned as examples. After King Sri Weera Parakrama NarendraSinghe, who reigned during the Kandy Kingdom period, King Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe, the brother of queen Pramila, the king's concubine, succeeded to the throne. Since then, the Nayaks clans gradually held the throne of the kingdom in Sri Lanka. There they maintained relations with their motherland, India, and information is disclosed in historical sources that South Indian painters were also employed in the temple industry. Commenting on the Indian influence that can be seen in the murals of the Kandy era, Kotagama Wachissara thero says that the art of Kandy was nurtured through that style of art as a result of the relationship with the Nayaks clans.

In India, Hinduism was primarily believed to be a religion, and there was a pantheon of gods headed by the great god or Lord Shiva (Bernier, 1982). This concept of God has been integrated into the art of Sri Lankan paintings and the paintings of Kandyan tradition, highlighting the above mentioned research theme. Furthermore, aspects such as clothing, household appliances, as well as human and animal figures, have been continuously influenced by South Indian art through this research. As the research problem of this study, how did the Kandyan tradition mural paintings of the Kandy era get inspiration from South Indian art? Was identified. Did it create a South Indian art that was combined with Sri Lankan art? According to this background, it is important to first identify the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism and to assess how South Indian art was inspired through the murals and artistic elements of the temples and shrines of Sri Lanka and India.

2. The Methodology

The primary focus of this research was the investigation of the literature. A preliminary study was conducted on Kandyan traditional paintings and the temple murals in India. When the relevant research problem was discussed based on the primary and secondary data (books,

magazines, articles related to literature, cultural and visual arts information) and facts. The facts were discovered through participatory and observational methods. Also, based on questionnaires and interviews, the basic background needed to solve the research problem was prepared. Finally, collecting the quantitative and qualitative data, the necessary steps were taken to solve the research problem using morphology and semantics analysis methods.

3. Results and Discussion

Looking at Sri Lankan history, there is evidence that Indian tourists visited Lakdiva. Legend has it that the beginning of the Sinhalese nation was born from Prince Vijaya, who came to Lakdiva on the day of Buddha's Nirvana. Also, sources such as the Mahavamsa show that Sri Lanka and South India were mixed through invasions such as the seven Dravidians invasion, the Elara invasion during the Anuradhapura period and the Kalinga Magha invasions during the Polonnaruwa period. Also, during the Kandyan Kingdom, Sri Lankan kings appointed South Indian princesses as their consorts, where Nayaks clans also had the opportunity to join the royal family. (John,1996). Kandy paintings provide examples of Sri Lankan art and South Indian art blending through events such as Dravidian invasions of South India and becoming a state.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the art of Indian painting came to our country through the Dravidians and Nayaks who came to Sri Lanka. The paintings of Weera Bhadra Viharaya, Lepakshi, a site of Indian paintings created contemporaneously with the Kandy Kingdom period, provides excellent examples. Human and animal figures have been created in perspective according to the continuity method of those paintings. The similarities between the temple paintings of the Kandy tradition are shown through trees, floral designs and buildings to fill the space, and red and brown colors for the background (Redy, 2023). A few of the carvings in the Vishnu temple at Hanguranketha also show a South Indian influence. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the paintings of Kandy tradition received inspiration from South Indian paintings as the clothing and hairstyles of the female and male figures show the similarity of the painting arts of the two countries.

Images of Gods - An ancient temple located in the Kurunegala district, Ridee Vihara has three parts namely *Maha Vihara*, *Uda Vihara* and *Waraka welandu Vihara*. Among the frescoes in the upper temple, one can see how the Ramayana, a Hindu epic, has depicted some scenes. Ramayana is one of the most popular Hindu epics in South India. Characters like Rama, Sita and Ravana can be identified as its main characters. Here characters like Rama and Sita are Hindu devotees. The paintings here were created by *Devaragampola Silwath thena*. And on the right side of the upper temple, the image of Lord Vishnu, one of the main deities of Hinduism, has been painted. Lord Vishnu is one of the Dasavatars, one of his avatars is Rama (Kulendiren, 2012). Thus, the fact that Hindu religious stories and characters were created in the Sri Lankan temple reflects the South Indian influence that influenced it.

Animal images - The craftsmen were also keen to use the image of the lion, the vehicle of the goddess Durga, who is the main goddess in Hinduism, as an artistic decoration in Sri Lankan Buddhist temples. It can be seen that the lion statue, which is called by the Dravidian word *Sinha*, was created at the Ridee Vihara. Next to that lion figure, another lion figure holding a flower in its mouth is also painted. (Ranathunga, 2013). Also, the artisans have not forgotten to add a cow figure to the temple's decoration, symbolizing the Nandi cow, the vehicle of Lord Shiva.

4. Conclusion

Through these facts, we can recognize that the mural paintings with the Kandyan tradition of the Kandy era, which began in the 18th century, were inspired by South India and that the social, economic, and political factors that existed at that time helped. In addition, the main deities of Hinduism such as Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, and Pattini, as well as the main animals of Hinduism. Cows, lions, elephants, etc.(Sastri, 1958) are included in the murals of the Kandian traditional temples. Also, the human figures found in the South Indian murals, the use of red color to paint the background, and the techniques applied on the wall in the same way in the Kandian traditional murals have successfully solved the problem of this research. It can be concluded that it has been received immediately. Acknowledgment

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6. Keywords

Kandyan Kingdom, morphology, murals, South Indian painting

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