

THE SCULPTURE OF POLONNARUVA

Polonnaruva, the medieval capital of Sri Lanka emerged as the administrative centre of the island in 992/993 A.D. when Colas conquered the major part of the island. Vijayabahu 1 after liberating the island from the Cola yoke made Polonnaruva the permanent capital of Sri Lanka. Since then it continued to exist as the capital until 1235 A.D. Within this short period of time nineteen Sinhalese kings ruled from this capital out of which only three kings namely Vijayabahu 1 (1070-1110 A.D.) Parakramabahu 1 (1153-1186 A.D.) and Nissankamalla (1186-1196 A.D.) deserve mention so far as the sculptural achievements are concerned. In spite of the short duration of the period a considerable amount of sculptural works ranging from Buddha, Bodhisatva images, Hindu Gods and Deities to the ornamentations and embellishments of the buildings with decorative patterns and schemes comprising human, animal, floral and vegetal motifs have been produced.

Buddha Images

Buddha images made during this period were considerable in number, brick and plaster and metal have been used to make these images. The images made of stone, brick and plaster have assumed immense proportions while the metal images were of small in size. They are in three common postures seated, standing and recumbent and the seated images are mostly in Dyana Mudra. The notable Buddha images of impressive proportions are found at Galvihara (Uttarama), Thuparama, Vatadage, Lankatilaka and Tivanka Patimaghara. The Galvihara images are carved in the round from a living rock while the images at Lankatilaka, Thuparama and Tivankapatimaghara are made