

## Mural Paintings: as a Historical Source With Special Reference to the Temple Paintings of the Kandyan Tradition

**Ms. Dilma Thushari Koggalage**

Lecturer, Department of History, University of Kelaniya.

Literary and archaeological sources constitute the backbone of historical research. Mural paintings are generally considered as a source of art and cultural history. However, referring to the murals at Degaldoruva Raja Maha Viharaya, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy noted another aspect of the value of mural paintings. He says:

The value of these paintings lies not merely in their beauty and charm as decoration, but in the fact that they are priceless historical documents...<sup>1</sup>

This is true not only of Degaldoruva murals but also other such temple paintings. However; there are certain limitations with regard to the use of murals as a historical source. One is that compared to the large number of sources available for historical studies, such as literary sources, the murals are considerably limited in number. Besides, at present they remain in a poor condition. In some cases it is difficult to have access to them too. In these circumstances historians tend to use literary sources rather the murals for their studies.

However, it should be stressed that the value of mural paintings for research in social history is immense. In order to prove this point I shall be using women's costume depicted in these paintings to identify certify certain changes that took place in the contemporary society.

Paintings, when compared to other forms of art in Sri Lanka, had occupied a central place in the religious life of the people of the island. The introduction of Buddhism in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the conversion of both the rulers and the ruled to this new ideology had a special effect on the