A Day in Anamaduwa

Posted on



The colorful stalls of Sathi Pola, line the Anamaduwa Road and is open from early morning to evening.

Anamaduwa is a bustling town, where modernity gives way to history as you begin to uncover the secrets of the area.

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Photographs Anuradha Perera.

Colorful stalls lined along the bustling Anamaduwa Road, and vendors were

carefully arranging the products on display; we have arrived on the sathi pola (weekly market) day. At first glance, it became clear that the extensive market offered everything from fruits, vegetables, fish and meat, groceries, toys, clothing, accessories, plants as well as the betel leaves, arecanut, chunam and tobacco that make up the ever popular ‘bulath vita’ (a chew of betel). A traditional Sri Lankan market is organized chaos; friendly inquiries as to our presence and good-natured teasing of fellow vendors followed us as we slowly walked around.

Near the newly built Anamaduwa Sathi Pola – where the market would eventually be shifted – a vendor was proudly displaying earthenwares. A chat with her revealed that pottery is the primary trade for the residents of a nearby village called Kumaragama. The glittering waters of Kumaragama Wewa held us spellbound on our way to Kumaragama in search of a potter. Cheerful smiles greeted us as we eagerly visited the house of Jayakodi Arachchilage Siriyalatha, a potter who had been busily engaged in her work even before our arrival. As blocks of clay brought from Awulegama turned into pots and kala (water pitchers) under her skillful hands, she spoke to us of the village, where pottery is an industry that had passed down through the generations.

While in Kumaragama, we heard of the Paramakanda Rock Temple, which is built under a large rocky outcrop. Believed to be constructed during the reign of King Walagamba, the temple emanated peace under the midday sun. Several Image Houses dating back to the Kandyan era were built directly beneath the rocky overhang.

Inside one such Image House, a replica of the Thonigala stone inscriptions adorned the outer wall of the inner chamber. Within the inner chamber were colorful temple art and images of two seated Buddha, gazing serenely at us. Within, the low ceiling was vibrantly painted in floral motifs and a traditional drawing of entwined swans.

The stupa too was protected from rain by the rocky outcrop; however, off in the distance, we could see a second stupa built on top of another rock. The sprawling Bo Tree provided cooling shade while we gazed at this second stupa.

In Thonigala, a short distance away from the Paramakanda Rock Temple, visitors can find the two longest stone inscriptions in Sri Lanka.



Jayakodi Arachchilage Siriyalatha uses clay blocks brought from Awulegama to make
pots and water pitchers.

The inscriptions describe in early Brahmin letters the donation of the nearby tank to the Thero by Lord Tissa, son of Lord Abhaya and the donation of Achanagaraka and Tawirikiya – two ancient cities – by King Gamini Abhaya in the first century A D.

The first inscription overlooks the wide tank and is etched on the stone in a gentle curve. A short walk along the bund of the tank took us to the second inscription – the longest, deepest and largest stone inscription in the island.

While walking under the shade of the trees on either side of the bund, we discovered a small shrine dedicated to God Ayyanayaka. A feet away, we saw a family of cormorants resting on a log half-submerged in the tank. Thonigala, in

addition to these valuable inscriptions, also has a wonderful legend.

It is said that Kuveni, banished by Vijaya, expressed her grief on top of the rock. Reputedly, in Sinhala, ‘Kuveni lathoni dunna gala’ (the rock where Kuveni expressed her grief) was called ‘Lathonigala’ which became Thonigala.We reached Anamaduwa with the rising sun; as the sun began to set, we too departed from the area after a day of exploration and discovery.

Anamaduwa is ideal for travelers to discover the history of the island as well as its legends and myths.








