Discover Devundara

Posted on
The Dondra Head Lighthouse

At the southernmost tip of the Island lies Devundara, a town small in size but not in stature, where the guardian deities of the land invoke their blessings to protect the island nation…

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Devundara, situated 6km southeast of Matara, is believed to be the abode of *Upulvan Deviyo* or God Vishnu who, according to legend, is the guardian deity of the Island and Buddhism in the country. As such, the town was originally named Devi Nuwara, which translates to the City of Gods, with time, becoming Devundara and Dondra, its English adaptation.

The origin of the town is said to date back to 660AD where historical records show of a flourishing port town and a place revered by many travellers and worshipers seeking blessings of the deity. Further, it is considered that the town of Devundara has ties to King Ravana from the Ramayana as well.

Situated closest to a major shipping lane, more than 250 ships pass by Devundara

daily where the lighthouse acts as a guide.

Devundara Devalaya

The beginnings of the Devalaya, described in the poem *'Panditha Perakumba Siritha'*, is a fascinating narrative. According to the narrative, King Dappula I (661–664 AD) of Anuradhapura, the ruler of the land at the time had seen an unusual dream, in which he was told of the arrival of Upulvan Deviyo in the form of a *kihiri* log (a type of wood) at Devundara. Taking heed, the very next day the King and his entourage has gone down to the shore of Devi Nuwara and lo and behold there was a *kihiri* log. The log was at once taken in to the custody of the King who commissioned it to be carved in relief of the Upulvan deity and then ceremonially enshrined within the Devundara Devalaya, a magnificent temple complex.

> Many Devotees From Around The Island And World Come To The Devalaya Daily To Worship And Seek Blessings From The Guardian Deity

History reveals that the temple complex that once stood in the premise of the current devalaya, is believed to have covered a great area with impressive architecture where the roofs of the complex were adorned in gilded brass, copper and gold, which could be seen glistening far into the ocean. However, during the 16th century the town and the temple complex was completely destroyed and a Vishnu Devalaya was rebuilt by King Rajasinghe II again, reflecting only a shadow of the temple's once magnificent structure.

The Devundara Devalaya that stands today is hued in blue, representing God Vishnu. Many devotees from around the Island and world come to the Devalaya daily to worship and seek blessings from the guardian deity. Ruins of an ancient temple that would have occupied the space, still remains to tell of a legacy that once was.

Dondra Head Lighthouse

A gravel paved pathway leads to the Dondra Lighthouse, which appears white and resplendent through the palm and coconut trees that provide ample shade. Built during the period when the British ruled the Island, the lighthouse was designed by James Douglas and constructed by William Douglas (Imperial Lighthouse Service) in

1889. Though more than 100 years have passed, the Dondra lighthouse, rising to more than 160 feet, remains the tallest lighthouse in Sri Lanka. Prior permission is needed to climb the 196 steps of the lighthouse to reach the top. The lighthouse comprises of seven floors, built with bricks painted white, and with double panel yellow windows. And the beacon of the lighthouse, which reaches more than 28 nautical miles, still guides ships along their naval route.

Outside, a raised corner stone marks the premise of the lighthouse as the southernmost tip of the Island, with no other land between the Antarctic and Sri Lanka. The cove and the beach by the lighthouse is breathtaking in its view with waves crashing along the rocky outcrop and the waters gleaming aquamarine in the sun.

A Gravel Paved Pathway Leads To The Dondra Lighthouse, Which Appears White And Resplendent

Gal Ge

Gal Ge situated in the Galgane Road, near the Galgane Purana Raja Maha Viharaya is presumed to be closely linked to the Ramayana. Some believers claim that the fight between King Ravana and Rama took place in Devundara and Gal Ge is built in the place where King Ravana had died. However, some say that the Gal Ge represents a shrine that was built to worship the Sun God as the entrance to the structure is constructed facing east.

A Town That Is Noteworthy Geographically And Culturally, Dondra Is A Blessed Space

A few stone steps lead to a higher plain where the Gal Ge stands amidst a sizable green field. This structure that remains now is said to be assembled from the ancient stones to represent how the shrine would have been long ago. Inside of the shrine room is empty with no statues or other remnants to provide a clue as to the significance of the edifice. However, on the door pains and at certain points, faint etchings serve as testaments to its age that clearly runs many centuries back.

More…

The Devundara beach and the Sinhasana Devalaya, located close by to the Devundara Devalaya and along the Wella Road are a few more places that would be worthwhile visiting as you travel through Devundara. A town that is noteworthy geographically and culturally, Dondra is a blessed space that is full of legends and intrigue to keep any traveller enthralled in its grasp.