

A Journey Through Anamaduwa...



On the way to Anamaduwa...

On and on we went as the road twisted away to the far distance with pockets of greenery and small towns lining the sides. Gradually we edged on to Anamaduwa in Puttalam to see what lay within to fascinate the inquisitive traveller...

Words Krishani Pieris **Photographs** Damith Wickramasinghe

Upon entering the town of Anamaduwa, we were at once overwhelmed by the countless stalls littering the Anamaduwa Road. We were in the midst of a *Pola* (weekly market) where vibrant colours such as reds, yellows, blues and greens among others posed an attractive sight beckoning the numerous shoppers that swamped the street to stop and examine at every step. Passing through this whirlwind of colours we continued on, our steps carrying us to remote corners of Anamaduwa where peculiar names of villages got us questioning their origins.

Anamaduwa

There are many speculations as to how the name Anamaduwa (අනමඩුව) came to

be. One chronicle relates to how King Dutugemunu had provided valuable gifts to the generals after uniting the country. One such general to receive gifts was Nandimitra, one of the ten giant warriors of the King and the leader of the battalion that comprised of elephants. He was given an area that was to the south-west of Anuradhapura, bordered by the Kala Oya on the south and the Deduru Oya on the north. There he had settled with his battalion of elephants. As such it is believed that the elephants were housed in an elephant kraal or *Ali Maduwa* where in the present day Anamaduwa is situated. As time went by it is said that due to the influence brought in by the Tamil language to the area, *Ali Maduwa* had become '*Anei Madam*' and then evolved to Anamaduwa.

Another version conveys that according to the Sinhala Literature books penned in the Kotte Era *Ana* (අන) means forest. Though the present day lettering of Anamaduwa in Sinhala is written differently, various sources cite showing letters addressed to the area up to 1960's where Anamaduwa was written in Sinhala as අනමඩුව. If this is to be considered then *Ana* means a forest while *Madu* means a pavilion or a hall that is more of a shed with a wooden stage. Therefore many experts believe that the true meaning behind Anamaduwa is hidden in the meaning of Forest Pavilion/platform.

Thonigala

A scenic yet small lake filled with white lotus flowers sets an enchanting backdrop to this famed rock that is home to the longest inscriptions—two to be precise—in Sri Lanka. Railed off by a steel fence, the inscriptions are 100 feet long while each of the letters measure to about one foot height-wise and is engraved one inch deep to the rock surface. Considered to belong to the period of King Mahakuli Mahatissa (76-62BC), the inscriptions detail the donation of a lake and village to a temple by the name of Valaslana, which many believe is the Paramakanda Viharaya located about three miles from Thonigala.

Though many tales exist as to how the name Thonigala came to be, the most fascinating is the one relating to Kuweni, the first consort of King Vijaya. As legend goes when Vijaya sought to become the ruler of his newfound kingdom, many objected as according to the tradition of Dambadiva (India) in order to become king he had to marry a princess from India. Accordingly a princess from Madra was brought down to Sri Lanka and Kuweni with her children were dispelled from the castle. Sorrowed by this unjust treatment, she had gone in

search of her relatives and on her journey had stopped by a particular rock to lament. It is said that Thonigala was this place and it was originally called Lathonigala.

However, another tale reveals how there are many Thonigala rocks in the Island such as in Vavuniya and Mannar to name a few places. Furthermore, the rope that is used to tether bullocks is named *thona* and gives the meaning of end/edge or limit. Even in the Tamil language, which has a significant influence in the area *Thongal* means end. Therefore, many assume that these rocks called Thonigala were utilised in ancient Sri Lanka to demarcate a boundary of an area. As such many experts believe that the name Thonigala was derived from the meaning of *Thona* or *Thongal*.

Paliyagama

A turn along the Puttalam road will take one to Paliyagama, divided as North and South Paliyagama. Being a small village with a few scattered houses and shops, the majority of the area is dominated by paddy fields, greenery and the Paliyagama lake.

A small village with a few scattered houses and shops, the majority of the area is dominated by paddy fields, greenery and the Paliyagama lake

The name Paliyagama is said to have been inspired by Queen Pali, consort of King Pandukabhaya of Anuradhpura. It is said that the Queen had a habit of visiting villages governed by the King and on one such journey, due to an unexpected delay, night had already fallen when the entourage neared Paliyagama. Having not prepared a suitable resting place, the entourage faced a dilemma as to where they could rest during the night. One villager seeing this predicament quickly built a shed with palmyrah leaves and suitable coverings and provided nourishment for the whole group unaware that he was serving the Queen. The next day the Queen thanked the villager and took her leave.

Soon the man was summoned to the King's Court and as a show of gratitude was presented the village as a gift while appointing him as the village chief. And it is believed that afterwards the village was known as the village that Pali came (*Pali Aa Gama*), which gradually became Paliyagama.

Wadakkarawewa

Houses line the narrow road running through the village. Famed as a place for pottery and brick making, most of the families in Wadakkarawewa earn their keep by making pottery and bricks day by day.

In the time of the Kotte Kingdom it is believed that many Hindu Brahmins from South India had settled down in Sri Lanka and they were called Wadakkain. The main advisor of King Seethavaka Rajasinghe of Kotte was a Wadakkain by the name of Arittaki Vendu. As such the King had given permission to establish communities comprising of Wadakkain and Wadakkarawewa is said to be one such place. And the craft of pottery making is believed to have been handed down from generation to generation from that point on.

Ooriyawa

At one point in time Ooriyawa was known as Sukaravapi and *Uriyagomuwa* (forest of the boars). Now remotely populated, the village sits serenely with a lake in its midst while the most intriguing feature of Ooriyawa is the Manikkankanda Temple. Said to be derived from the meaning of *Manik Kanda* or Gem Mountain, the temple's origin is shrouded in mystery as excavations are still under way. Many ruins are still hidden in the forest area surrounding the elevated rock that has a stupa overlooking a lake.

Filled with mysteries and ancient ruins that are yet to be uncovered and explored Anamaduwa awaits for its mysteries to be unravelled by those who are willing to delve deep.

