

Architectural significance of Seegala Purana Tampita Viharaya at Weeraketiya

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The image house is of special significance in a vihara. Tampita Viharaya occupies an important place in Sri Lanka in terms of its architectural, artistic and cultural aspects in addition to the religious value.

There are seven viharas which have been built in the Kandyan period. There are also seven viharas in the Southern Province. Most of them are not in a good condition at present. The only viharage that is in good condition and has preserved the original character is the Seegala Tampita Viharaya. It is located 500 km from the Buddhiyagama Junction and approximately 1 km from the Weeraketiya Junction on Walasmulla Road. The temple is situated in a thick green estate and surrounded by the Udukirivila Wewa from three sides.

The viharage consists of an inner and outer chamber and a *mandapa* in the front. It is built on an elevated plinth and placed on 17 rectangular shaped stone pillars. The whole structure is placed on a timber deck which rests on a frame of large timber beams. The walls are made out mud based on 'wattle and daub' technology. There is only one access door. Level differences create a calm atmosphere. The pathway from the *mandapa* to the inner sanctum enhances the darkness and the gloom. The seated

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and the two standing statues of the Buddha and the paintings belong to the Kandyan period.

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