

Temple of tooth

The Temple of tooth or Sri Dalada Maligawa is a temple in the city of Kandy in Sri Lanka. It was built within the royal palace complex which houses the only surviving relic of Buddha, Temple of tooth, which is venerated by Buddhists. The relic which situated Temple of tooth is played an important role in the local politics since ancient times; it's believed that whoever holds the Temple of tooth relic holds the governance of the country, which caused the ancient kings to protect the Temple of tooth with great effort. Kandy was the capital of the Sinhalese kings.

Monks of the two chapters of Malwatte and Asgiriya conduct daily ritual worship in the inner chamber of the Temple of tooth, in annual rotation. They conduct these services three times a day: at dawn, at noon and in the evening.

On Wednesdays there is a symbolic bathing of the Sacred Relic held in Temple of tooth with an herbal preparation made from scented water and fragrant flowers, called Nanumura Mangallaya. This holy water is believed to contain healing powers and is distributed among those present.



What to See in Temple of tooth

On the outside, Temple of tooth buildings is not magnificent or elaborately decorated. White with red roofs, they cluster around Kandy Lake (the island in the middle once housed the king's harem).

Temple of tooth in striking contrast to the plain exterior, the interiors of the temple buildings are richly carved and decorated with inlaid woods, ivory, and lacquer.

Around the entire Temple of tooth complex is a low white stone wall, delicately and simply carved with openings that give a filigree effect. During celebrations, candles are placed in the openings, lighting up the entire front of Temple of tooth.

The relic of the tooth is kept in a two-story inner shrine fronted by two large elephant tusks inside Temple of tooth. The relic rests on a solid gold lotus flower, encased in jeweled caskets that sit on a throne.

Temple of tooth is joined to the Pattiripuwa (Octagon) tower, built in 1803, that was originally a prison but now houses a collection of palm-leaf manuscripts. The king's palace is also in Temple of tooth compound.



Commemorating Posen at the Temple of Tooth (Sri Dalada Maligawa)

The Temple of tooth Relic of the Buddha, the Sri Dalada Maligawa is a hallowed place of worship for all Buddhists the world over. Yesterday, as Sri Lankans marked Posen Purapasalowsaka Poya, The Sunday Times visited the Temple of tooth (Sri Dalada Maligawa) to witness the special Posen programme.

Posen Poya is significant because it was on such a full moon Poya day that Mahinda Maha Thera set foot in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the emphasis is on Mihintale, eight km away from Anuradhapura where Mahinda Maha Thera met King Devanampiyatissa.

Painting depicting Princess Hemamala and Prince Danta bringing the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka which situated in Temple of tooth

The Maha Thera arrived in Mihintale with his entourage comprising theras Ittiya, Uttiya, Sambala, Baddhasala, Sumana samanera and Upasaka Banduka who was the only layman.

Standing atop the Missaka rock, they watched King Devanampiyatissa hunting and aiming his arrow at a frightened and cornered deer. 'Tissa' said Mahinda Maha Thera. A surprised king looked up at the rock wondering who could be calling him thus. Seeing the yellow robed figures in calm silence, he moved to take a closer look. The Maha Thera wishing to judge the king's intellect asked him a few questions which the king answered intelligently. Then Mahinda Maha Thera decided that the king would understand the Buddha Dhamma and its deep philosophy. There was a discourse of the Chullahattipadopama Sutta

which was understood by the king. The reformed king Devanampiyatissa threw away his bow and arrow and embraced Buddhism.

Mahinda Maha Thera was the son of Emperor Asoka who after winning many wars and seeing the great destruction in the Kalinga war realized the futility of it all and embraced Buddhism. With the Buddha's Parinibbhana (passing away) many kings in Dambadiva claimed the Buddha's relics. A Brahmana named Drona resolved this by dividing the relics into eight portions. But, he quietly hid the left canine tooth of the Buddha in his turban. However, he was unable to keep it for himself and finally it was owned by the king of Kalinga. With many wars in the country and the insecure situation in Kalinga and realising the possibility of the Sacred Tooth Relic being lost, King Guhasiva decided to send the relic to Sri Lanka through his daughter princess Hemamala and her husband prince Danta. They brought it to Sri Lanka disguised as travellers and arrived in Anuradhapura. Meeting the king Kirtisri Meghavanna also known as Kitsiri Mevan, they gifted the Temple of tooth Sri Dalada (the Sacred Tooth Relic) to him. The Relic was venerated and taken in a Temple of tooth perahera (procession) to the palace.

With many wars and various kings ruling the country, the Sacred Tooth Relic which now in Temple of tooth was shifted to Polonnaruwa, Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, Kurunegala, Gampola, Kotte. It is stated that in 1592, King Wimaladharmasuriya I brought it to Kandy Temple of tooth from Seethawaka Delgamuwa Raja Maha Viharaya in Kuruwita, Ratnapura.

The Sinhala as well as the Nayakkar kings who ascended the Kandyan throne guarded, revered and paid homage to the Relic placing it in a shrine in the precincts of the royal palace in Temple of tooth.

Even during British rule, the administrators agreed to continue to protect the Tooth Relic in Temple of tooth and conduct religious rituals and ceremonies. In 1853 the British handed over the custody of the Sacred Tooth Relic, Temple of tooth to the most Venerable Mahanayakes of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters and the Diyawadana Nilame. From that time the Tevava'(religious service) was conducted alternately by the Asgiriya and Malwatte viharas. The change and handing over of the duties are done on Esala Poya day every year when the 'Vas' season begins. The Temple of tooth (Sri Dalada Maligawa) conducts festivals and peraheras (processions) for the Aluth Sahal Mangalya in January, New Year festival in April, Vesak perahera and Upasampada(high ordination) ceremony and Waahala Naaga perahera in May, Poson perahera in June, Esala perahera in July/August and Karthika Mangalya -Aloka pooja in November. Every Wednesday, the Nanamura Mangalya is performed in Temple of tooth.

On Poson Poya at the Temple of tooth (Sri Dalada Maligawa), a 'Sila Vyaparaya' was conducted for about six hundred 'Ata Sil' (Eight precepts) observers. The early morning 'Tevava' was conducted by Ven. Hunupalagama Vajira Sri Maha Nayaka thera and Ven. Naranpanawe Ananda Thera. 'Bhavana' (meditation) was conducted by Ven. Ketakumbure Dhammarama Thera. There was a Dharmadesana (sermon) by Ven. Dr. Kotapitiye Rahula Thera of the Malwatte Chapter who is a lecturer at the Peradeniya University. The Diyawadana Nilame and Mr. M. Meegahakumbura discussed the activities of the Temple of tooth (Sri Dalada Maligawa).

At 4.00 in the afternoon, 'Seth Pirith' was chanted and after 'Sil Pavaaranaya' the sila vyaparaya was concluded. Students from the Temple of tooth (Sri Dalada) Daham Pasala, Asgiriya Buddhist Centre sang 'Budhu Guna Gee'.

To conclude the Poson Poya activities, later in the evening, a Temple of tooth perahera with about ten elephants, dancers, drummers, flag bearers and torch bearers paraded three times round the Temple of tooth Palace square. Hundreds of devotees came to venerate and pay homage to the Sacred Tooth Relic at the Sri Temple of tooth (Dalada Maligawa) on this day.

The Mihindu Perahera commemorates of the visit of Maha Thera Mahinda who introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka on a Poson Poya day.

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