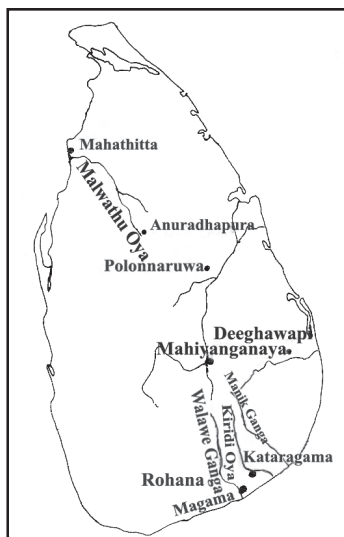




# The Kingdom of Polonnaruwa



In this lesson, we hope to learn about the political, religious and cultural services rendered by the important kings and queens of the Polonnaruwa kingdom and study the reasons that led to its downfall.



4.1 A map of Polonnaruwa

## Reasons for the importance of Polonnaruwa

- \* During the time when Anuradhapura was the capital of the country, Thopa, Minneri and Giritale tanks had been built in the Polonnaruwa region. The agricultural development brought about by these tanks resulted in the migration of people to Polonnaruwa.
- \* The existence of a very fertile agricultural area helped to build the economic strength of kings.
- \* The main road from Rajarata to Ruhuna ran across Polonnaruwa.
- \* The province of Rohana served as a fortress for rebels and leaders. Since it is very easy to reach Rohana by wading across

the Mahaveli Ganga, it was also easy to control Rohana from Polonnaruwa.

- \* It has been recorded that kings such as Aggabodhi III and Aggabodhisena IV had visited Polonnaruwa to rest and there had been palaces built for the purpose. Accordingly, Polonnaruwa appeared to have served as a sub capital even during the Anuradhapura period.
- \* When the Pandyan king Sri Mara Sri Vallabha invaded Anuradhapura, it is mentioned that Sena I went to Polonnaruwa for protection. Therefore, Polonnaruwa was also referred to as 'Kandavuru Nuwara' (the camp city).
- \* Proximity to the harbour of Gokanna provided an opportunity to gain economic benefits through foreign trade. Similarly, it was easier to defeat the foreign invaders at the harbour itself before they could get a foothold in the country.
- \* Location on the banks of the Mahaveli made it a suitable area for irrigation and agriculture.
- \* The Cholas shifted the capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa. The Sinhalese kings who chased away the Cholas too made Polonnaruwa their kingdom.

Other names of Polonnaruwa

- \* Jananatha Puram
- \* Pulathisi Pura
- \* Kandavuru Nuwara
- \* Wijayaraja Pura

## **Vijayabahu I (1055 -1110)A.D.**

- \* King Vijayabahu I was the first king who chased away the Cholas who were ruling at Polonnaruwa and made it his capital.

## Childhood of Prince Vijayabahu I

King Vijayabahu I was known as Prince Kirthi during his childhood.

- \* Maha Moggallana who had a claim to the royal dynasty of Anuradhapura was his father. Mother was Lokitha Devi. He lived in Ruhunu Rata.
- \* He was the eldest of a family of four. His two brothers were known as Rakkhita and Mihindu while the sister was known as Chitra.
- \* Prince Kirthi was courageous, fortunate and intelligent. The Mahavamsa refers to an incident when an astrologer named Ghanaka had made a forecast that he would be able to win not only the whole of Sri Lanka, but also India. Prince Kirthi was determined to capture the capital which was then under the Cholas. For this purpose, even without the consent of his parents, he lived in the jungles of Malaya rata (mill country) engaged in organising an army. In this task, he got the support of a person called Buddharaja alias Budalna. They carried out these activities from a village named Hunuwala (Chunnasala) situated at the foot of the Sri Pada mountain.
- \* Prince Kirthi had an opponent named Loka alias Lokesvara. Prince Kirthi had defeated him once. It is mentioned that he came again to fight. On this occasion, he was killed at a place named Remunugala. In this task, prince Kirthi received the support of two army commanders known as Buddharaja and Devamalla.
- \* Subsequently, prince Kirti was appointed as an Epa.
- \* There was another powerful opponent named Keshadhatu Kashyapa at Kataragama. He was also defeated by prince Kirthi. According to the Panakaduwa copper plate inscription, it was Buddharaja alias Budalna who provided protection to prince Kirthi in all those battles.
- \* According to the Panakaduwa copper plate inscription, although Vijayabahu was born to a royal family, he appears to have been a determined and a courageous person who had a troubled

childhood, but strived hard to attain his objectives.

- \* As a young man, before crushing the Chola power in the north, he was crowned as Vijayabahu I in 1055 A.D. at Mahanagakula and secured his position in Rohana.

Father	: Prince Moggallana
Mother	: Lokita Devi
His enemies in Ruhuna	: Lokesvara, Keshadatu Kasyapa
Commander who helped him	: Budalna alias Buddharaja

### Exercises

1. What are the reasons that led Polonnaruwa to become the capital of the country?
2. Who opposed prince Kirthi in his attempt to unify Rohana?
3. Write the year in which Vijayabahu I became king of Ruhuna.
4. Write three examples you can take from the childhood of Vijayabahu I.



### Student Activity

Write an account, describing how Vijayabahu's life could be of use in making your life a success.

## **Conquest of Rajarata by Vijayabahu I**

- \* After becoming the king of Ruhuna, the sole desire of Vijayabahu I was to chase the Cholas out of the country and liberate Sri Lanka from foreign domination.
- \* Before the capture of Rajarata, he had to face several other battles.
- \* After Vijayabahu I was crowned as the king of Ruhuna, Cholas became scared of his growing power. Therefore, they mounted a quick attack on Ruhuna. Since Vijayabahu was not prepared to face a battle at that time, he fled the region. The Chola army entered Kataragama and plundered that area. Yet, being unable to establish themselves in power, they withdrew.
- \* By 1065 A.D. rebellions broke out against the Cholas in areas under their control and they considered the uprisings to have been instigated by Vijayabahu. Therefore, reinforced by an army sent by the Chola emperor, they attacked Ruhuna once more.
- \* Among the arts and crafts that still remain in Anuradhapura there are some works which show the influence of the Pallava, Amaravati and other styles. From these creations it is evident that Sri Lanka had relations with these kingdoms.

In this war, two of the powerful commanders of the king named Ravideva and Chala also joined the Cholas. Therefore, Vijayabahu fled to the rock fortress of Palutthagiri (Palatupana) in Rohana and awaited the attack.

- \* As expected, the Cholas invaded the place. At the battle that broke out there, the Cholas were severely beaten by the king. The Chola commander was killed and the king's army that ventured out was able to capture Polonnaruwa.
- \* Enraged by this defeat, the Chola emperor brought an army for the third time and attacked Vijayabahu.
- \* In the battle between the two armies that took place near Anuradhapura, the Sinhala forces were completely defeated. The king had to flee from Polonnaruwa. He sought refuge in the rock

fortress of Vakirigala in Kegalle district and began to organise an army again.

‘Tirumukkudal’ inscription of 1067 A.D. states that the Sinhala army was defeated near Anuradhapura and the king fled to Vakirigala.

- \* At this time, a rebellion arose in Ruhuna against Vijayabahu I. He put down the rebellion and systematically organised the army to attack Polonnaruwa.
- \* In this war, the invasion was launched by the king himself. He planned to attack from three sides and finally to reach Polonnaruwa.
- \* He sent one army from the west. It went across the Dakkhina Desha with the intention of reaching Anuradhapura and if any Indian army arrived, it was ready to proceed to the port of Mahatittha and defeat the invaders at the port itself.
- \* Another army proceeded along the eastern coastal road and turned to the north west to capture Polonnaruwa.
- \* After the western army had reached Anuradhapura and the eastern force arrived near Polonnaruwa, Vijayabahu himself led the third army and invaded Polonnaruwa. This battle was directed very successfully and by 1070 A.D. Vijayabahu was able to capture Polonnaruwa and enter the capital of his ancestors, Anuradhapura.



4.2 Map of the invasion

In this manner, from the time of his childhood, with firm determination and indomitable courage and directing the battles in a highly organised manner, king Vijayabahu was able to defeat the enemies and liberate the land from foreign domination.

- \* Vijayabahu I was a clever commander, warrior, and a hero who saved the country.

## Exercises

Write the qualities that a capable commander should have.



### Student Activity

“Safeguard your country. Safeguard your nation. Safeguard your religion. .... This is your responsibility”

Write an essay or compose a few stanzas on this theme.

### Vijayabahu I is a Great Ruler

Services rendered by him in political and economic fields.

- \* Stabilised power in Rohana before leading the invasion against the Cholas. Liberated the Malayarata from local enemies and united it. Selected Kataragama as his administrative head quarters.
- \* Liberated Rajarata that had been under the Cholas from 1017 A.D. to 1070 A.D. Rescued the country from foreign domination and united Sri Lanka.
- \* For the first time in Sri Lanka he established a coast guard service with watch posts. (Mahatittha). ranking it possible to prevent foreign invasions.
- \* In order to normalise the administrative organisation of the country, the state officials were made aware of their duties.
- \* For the purpose of maintaining the city of Polonnaruwa as the capital of the country, it was provided with all the requirements of a state capital.
- \* Created background for maintaining the country as a united, prosperous land.
- \* Took steps to reconstruct the tanks and anicuts which were destroyed by the Cholas and ensured economic prosperity of the country. He reconstructed Mahagalkadawala, Mahakanadara, Nachchaduwa and other tanks.
- \* Repaired the Elahera canal which had been instrumental in bringing

about the extensive economic progress of the Polonnaruwa region. By this means he rehabilitated the irrigation system that had been established connecting Minneriya, Kavudulu and Kantalai tanks with one another.

- \* Putting an end to the acts of plunder under the Cholas, he took effective steps for the collection of revenue and reorganised the system of tax collection.
- \* Constructed the Buduguna tank in Uva.

### Religious and Cultural Services

- \* Vijayabahu I renovated many temples and stupas in various parts of the island. Maha Vihara, Abhayagiri, Jetavana and Sri Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura are a few of them.



4.3 Sripada (Adam's peak)

In the south, he renovated Viharas such as Sandagiri Viharaya at Tissa Maharama and Devi Nuvara and rebuilt Mahiyangana stupa.

- \* He sent Bhikkus to Ramanna (Myanmar), got down Bhikkus who received Upasampada (higher ordination) and re-established Upasampada in Sri Lanka. It is also recorded that he sent offerings to Sri Maha Bodhi in India.
- \* Rejuvenated the Bhikku Sasana (order of Buddhist monks). Built a three storeyed palace for the Dalada (the sacred tooth relic) in Polonnaruwa and held a festival for the Dalada.



- \* It is also recorded that the king gave ‘Tula bhara dana’ (alms equal to his body weight) to the poor on three occasions. He built resting places on the way to Sri Pada for the convenience of the pilgrims. He also donated the village of Gilimale for the maintenance of Sri Pada. The information about these services are found in Ambagamuwa inscription of Vijayabahu I.
- \* The king was a learned person as well as a poet. He took steps to improve several Pirivenas.
- \* Encouraged learned men who came from foreign countries to engage in literary activities.

### **The Foreign Relations of Vijayabahu I**

- \* Vijayabahu I established relations with South Indian states which were hostile to the Cholas. Hence, marriage alliances played a prominent role.
- \* King Vijayabahu married princess Tilokasundari who was a daughter of the ruler of Kalinga. His sister, princess Mitta was given in marriage to a Pandyan prince. It is recorded that he maintained friendly relations with the Chalukya rulers as well. Due to these relations with South Indian states, it appears that there were no foreign invasions during the reign of Vijayabahu.

### **The Greatness of Vijayabahu I**

- \* King Vijayabahu I saved the country, the nation and the religion from Chola rule that had lasted for 53 years.
- \* At a time when the country's economy had declined, he undertook steps to transform Polonnaruwa into a prosperous capital.
- \* Took steps for the development of Buddhism, Bhikku Sasana (order of monks) and literature.
- \* Encouraged learned men who had come from abroad to engage in literary activities.
- \* According to Dr. Senarat Paranavithana, Vijayabahu I was the greatest ruler of this country. He has said, “If not for king Vijayabahu I, the Sinhala nation would not have lasted”.

For you:

It has to be understood that the responsibility of safeguarding the country, the nation and the religion will fall on you the younger generation. Accordingly, with a deep love for the country, let us protect our heritage.

### Exercises

- (1) Write two services performed by king Vijayabahu I to each of the given below fields
  - i Political
  - ii Economic
  - iii Religious
  - iv Cultural
- (2) Name two countries with which king Vijayabahu I established diplomatic relations.
- (3) Mark the following places on a map of Sri Lanka: Magama, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Rohana (Ruhunu rata), Malvatu, Mahaveli, Gokanna and Matota.
- (4) Complete the following paragraph:

The eldest son of Mugalan and Lokita was known by the name ..... With the intention of expelling the Cholas from this country, that prince took up residence in ..... and organised an army. This prince had two opponents named ..... and ..... Similarly, he also had a very faithful friend named ..... Later, he defeated his opponents and became ..... of Ruhuna in 1055 A.D. Still later, he led the army in a very organised manner, gained an easy victory and became the king of Sri Lanka with ..... as his capital.



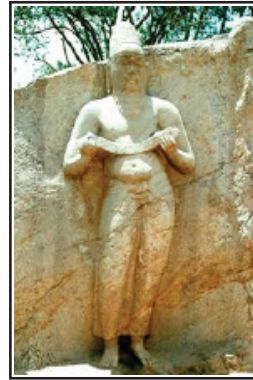
#### Student activity

“Vijayabahu I is a great ruler”

Write an article on this topic to a wall newspaper.

## King Parakramabahu I (1153 -1180)A.D.

Although Sri Lanka was united by Vijayabahu I, it broke into several parts due to the weak rulers who came after the great king. It was king Parakramabahu I who reunited Sri Lanka and brought peace and prosperity to the country. When we consider the local and foreign political victories he has achieved and the economic, religious and cultural contribution he has made, he really deserves the title ‘Great’. Therefore, he is known as king Parakramabahu the Great.

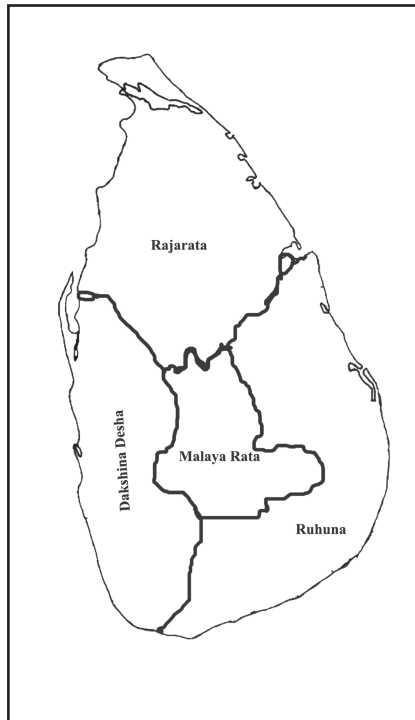


4.4 Statue in front of Potgul Vihara

### Childhood of king Parakramabahu I

- \* Mother was princess Ratnavali. Father was prince Manabharana.
- \* He was the ruler of Dhakkina Desha. Prince Parakramabahu was born at Dedigama in the Kegalle district. His father died when he was very young.
- \* Queen Ratnavali went to Ruhuna with her son and sought refuge with her cousin Sri Vallabha who was ruling there.
- \* After the death of Manabharana, the father of prince Parakramabahu, Manabharana's brother Kirthi Sri Megha became the ruler of Dakkhina Desha. Prince Parakramabahu came under his protection and Kirtisri Megha gave proper education to the prince and brought him up.

Prince Parakramabahu grew up in the company of his uncle and studied all arts and sciences including the art of war.



4.5 Map showing the political divisions of Sri Lanka during Polonnaruwa era

Prince Parakramabahu

Mother : Princess Ratnavali

Father : Prince Manabharana

Born in : Dakkhina Desha

Brought up by : Uncle Kirthi Sri Megha

### Exercises

(1) On a map of Sri Lanka, mark the following:

The district in which your school is situated and the following districts Colombo, Kegalle, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Hambantota.

(2) Give the names of prince Parakramabahu's mother, father and uncles.



### Student Activity

- \* Compose a short play depicting the childhood of Parakramabahu I.

### Uniting the country by Parakramabahu I

\*At the time of king Parakramabahu's childhood, Sri Lanka had been divided into several administrative divisions namely, Dhakkhina desha, Dolosdahas Rata and Atadahas rata.

\*After the death of his uncle Kirthi Sri Megha, he became the ruler of Dakkhina Desha and it was the initial step of his political career. He decided to stabilize his power in Dakkhina Desha. Its administrative centre was Parakrama Pura. At present it is known as Panduvas Nuwara.

\*His next step was to capture Rajarata. He adopted several strategies for that purpose.

I. He became friendly with king Gajaba II who was ruling Rajarata at that time and collected information about Rajarata.

II. Finally he invaded Rajarata and defeated Gajaba. However, with the intervention of the Bhikkhus, an agreement was signed according to which the throne of Rajarata would be inherited by Parakramabahu after the death of Gajaba who was an old man at that time. This agreement is recorded on the Sangamu Vihara inscription.

\* Accordingly, after the death of Gajaba in 1153 A.D., prince Parakramabahu became the ruler of Rajarata as Parakramabahu I.

The next phase in the unification of the entire country was the capture of Ruhuna. Its ruler, Manabharana II launched an attack against Parakramabahu I from Ruhuna. It was not successful. Therefore, his mother Queen Sugala also organised an army and launched an attack against Parakramabahu. This also was not successful. King

Parakramabahu was able to defeat her at a place called Uruvel in Udundora area and to carry away to Polonnaruwa the tooth relic and the bowl relic of the Buddha which had been in the possession of queen Sugala. According to tradition, the throne is to be inherited by the person who was in possession of the sacred tooth relic. Accordingly, king Parakramabahu I was crowned as the chief monarch of Sri Lanka.

This is how king Parakramabahu gradually became the chief monarch of Sri Lanka.

- I As a first step, became the ruler of the Dakkhina Desha.
- II Next, established power in Rajarata.
- III Thirdly, was able to spread his power in Ruhunurata.
- IV Finally, acquired the Sacred Tooth relic and became the chief monarch of the country.

### Exercises

- (1) Mark on a map of Sri Lanka the political divisions of Sri Lanka during the childhood of king Parakramabahu I.
- (2) Prepare a table showing the closest relatives of king Parakramabahu

### **Economic Service rendered by king Parakramabahu the Great**

- \* King Parakramabahu the Great was well aware that the most important measure that should be taken to bring about economic prosperity to the country would be the construction and maintenance of irrigation systems essential for agricultural development.
- \* To bring about economic prosperity in the Dhakkhina Desha, as its ruler, king Parakramabahu took steps to construct dams at three places on the Deduru Oya and provide water for agriculture.



4.6 Parakrama Samudra

- \* Repaired Panda wewa near Parakramapura. Drained the marsh lands and took steps to develop those areas and improve agriculture. eg. Pas yodun rata
- \* After becoming the king in Polonnaruwa, Parakramabahu the Great, constructed and repaired tanks and anicuts in both Rajarata and Ruhuna. He constructed the Parakrama Samudra by integrating several tanks such as Topa Wewa, Dumbutulu Wewa, Erabadu Wewa and. This is considered to be the largest reservoir built by him. To obtain water to fill the Parakrama Samudra, he constructed the Angamedilla project.
- \* Under this project, a dam was built across the Amban Ganga at Angamedilla and the water collected was directed to Akasa Ganga alias Angamedilla Ela and carried to the Parakrama Samudra.
- \* In addition, king Parakramabahu also reconstructed a large number of small as well as large reservoirs such as Minneri, Giritale, Kala Wewa, Kavudulu Wewa etc.
- \* The reference to the export of rice at this time indicates the high level of progress achieved in the field of agriculture by Parakramabahu the Great.

Statements made by king Parakramabahu the Great

“I will not allow a single drop of water falling from the sky to flow into the sea without serving the world”

“Let there not be a single plot of land even as small as the floor area of a hut that has not been put to use”.

During the time of king Parakramabahu the Great, Sri Lanka was known as the ‘Granary of the East’. This clearly shows that irrigation and agricultural activities had reached the apex of development at that time.

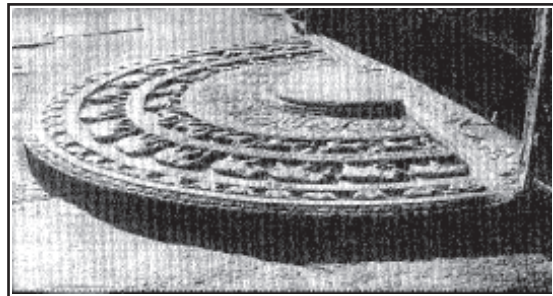
### Religious and Cultural Service of king Parakramabahu I

- \* He held a ‘**Katikavata**’ to unite the Sangha sasana that had deteriorated at the time and prepared a code of discipline. Information about these activities has been recorded on a stone inscription near Galvihara at Polonnaruwa. According to this record the katikawata was compiled under the guidance of the chief priest of Dimbulagala.

A large number of stupas and temples were constructed by king Parakramabahu. Among the more important monuments are: Uttararama, Lankathilake image house, Kiri Vehera at Polonnaruwa, Damila Maha Seya, Pabulu Vehera and Kota Vehera at Dedigama (Sutighara Seya). Steps also were taken to develop Alahana Pirivena as an educational institution.



4.7 Palace of King Parakramabahu  
“Satmahal Prasada”



4.8 Sandakadapahana at Polonnaruwa



- \* Construction of a magnificent seven storeyed royal palace with thousand rooms and the image house of Lankathilake shows that highly advanced architectural methods had been employed at the time of king Parakramabahu the Great.

### **Foreign Relations of king Parakramabahu I**

The outstanding feature of the foreign relations of king Parakramabahu I is their successful completion. He was engaged in two foreign invasions.

\* His first expedition was against Burma. King Parakramabahu I invaded Burma in about 1164 A.D. For a long time, there had been friendly relations between Sri Lanka and Burma. However, the Burmese king who was in power at that time, named Alavungsitu acted in a hostile manner towards Sri Lanka. He harassed a group of merchants who had gone there and abducted a Sinhala princess who was on her way to Cambodia through Burma. This was the provocation that led to the Burmese invasion.

\* The expedition led by commander Nagaragiri Kitti alias Kith Nuwara gal was victorious and according to the stone inscription of Devanagala a village was gifted to him by king Parakramabahu as a reward. King Parakramabahu's second expedition was concerned with the kingdom of the Pandians, one of the states in South India close to Sri Lanka. The occasion was a dispute about the right of succession in the kingdom. Maintenance of friendly relations with Pandians in order to face the threat of the Cholas was one of the key objectives of Parakramabahu's foreign policy. Around 1169 A.D. a person named Kulashekhara with the support of the Cholas, attacked the Pandians and captured power. Therefore, Parakrama Pandya, the king of the Pandians requested help from Sri Lanka. Accordingly, king Parakramabahu I dispatched an army under general Lankapura to Pandya. It is said that the Sinhala army succeeded in its mission and re-instated the Pandyan ruler and built a fortress named Parakramapura at Rameshvaram. According to Mahavamsa, the Chola prisoners cap-

tured in the battle were brought to Sri Lanka.

\* According to a stone inscription found in South India, while preparing for the Pandyan invasions, Parakramabahu the Great had caused ships to be built at Uratota(Kayts). Similarly, the Mahavamsa state that while the preparations for the Burmese invasion were under way, the whole of Sri Lanka's coast line appeared as a ship building factory. These statements bear witness to the fact that king Parakramabahu the Great was in possession of a substantial navy and the art of ship building had reached a very high level at that time.

### Exercises

1. Prepare a table indicating the political, economic and religious services, rendered by king Parakramabahu the Great.
2. List out the irrigation schemes constructed and renovated by king Parakramabhau I.
3. Identify and write down the architectural creations that came into being during the time of king Parakramabahu I.
4. How much the character of Parakramabahu I be helpful in building up your own character.



4.9 Galvihara Rock Inscription

## **Nissankamalla 1187-1196 A.D.**

After the death of king Parakramabahu the Great, once again, the country faced a period of political confusion. One of the most important features of the reign of king Nissankamalla is the attempts made by him to bring about peace and order in the country. He is considered as the most powerful king who ruled at Polonnaruwa after Parakramabahu the Great.

Accession of Prince Nissankamalla.

“Like attempting to plant poisonous trees in a place where there had been wish conferring trees earlier, (kapruka) non Buddhists should not be placed in power in Sri Lanka to which the Kalinga dynasty was the rightful heir”  
(Galpotha stone inscription of king Nissankamalla)

- \* Prince Nissankamalla belonged to the Kalinga dynasty.
- \* He started a new line of kings.
- \* King Nissankamalla's parents were Sri Jayagopa Maharaja and Parvati Devi of Sinha Pura in the state of Kalinga.

### **The service rendered by king Nissankamalla**

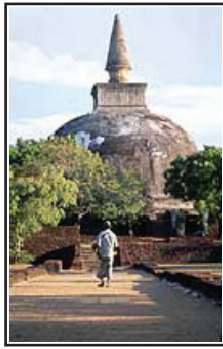
Most of the information about king Nissankamalla is obtained from his stone inscriptions. Sometimes facts have been exaggerated. However, since his inscriptions have been found at places such as Polonnaruwa, Dambulla, Panduvas Nuwara, Hambantota and Devundara it proves that his power had extended islandwide.

- \* King Nissankamalla took steps to eliminate the political instability that arose in the country after king Parakramabahu I and to restore peace and prosperity. Acting in a very pragmatic and intelligent manner, he secured the right of succession to the throne for his dynasty.

- \* Because there were no foreign invasions or any internal rebellions etc. he was able to contribute much to the welfare of the people.
- \* Very frequently, he travelled in regions like Ruhuna which had often been a source of trouble in the past. Thus he was able to fulfil the needs of the people of these areas and win their loyalty.
- \* King Nissankamalla declared that none other than a Buddhist had any right to the throne of this country and took steps to stabilize the Sinahala Buddhist heritage.

King Nissankamalla also rendered a significant service to the economic development of the country. Although his inscriptions speak of a large number of tanks built by him, none of them has been identified. It is very likely that what he did was to repair a large number of small tanks rather than to construct large tanks. Although his inscriptions contain exaggerated claims, it can be assumed that he reorganised the system of revenue, taxation and reduced the tax burden of the people. It is recorded that he had suspended certain taxes for a period of five years.

- \* A special feature of his economic activities was the provision of alms for the poor and the needy. Katugahagalle stone inscription says that the poor were provided with clothing, food and money through presents such as ‘Tulabhara’ (provision of alms equal to the weight of the body).
- \* As a ruler who rendered a great service to Buddhism, king Nissankamalla constructed many Buddhist stupas like Rankothvehera, Hetadageya temples and also strived to maintain the unity among the Buddhist monks.
- \* Making gifts of land, cattle, clothing, food etc. to the Bhikkus, Brahmins, the disabled and sick people etc. of all levels are some of his welfare activities.



4.10 Rankot  
Vehera



4.11 Nissanka Latha Mandapaya

- \* Nissankalata Mandapa with seven columns shaped like lotus flower stalks and the Nissanka Rajasabha Mandapaya (Royal council Pavillion) can be considered as two excellent works of king Nissankamalla that display the advanced architectural features of the Polonnaruwa period.
- \* Among the foreign relations of king Nissankamalla, there are records of his invasion of the states of the Pandians and the Cholas. It is also said that he received tribute from them.
- \* It is mentioned that the Sinhala army won the war with Pandians and a Kovil was built at Rameshwaram to commemorate it.
- \* King Nissankamalla maintained friendly relations with countries such as Karnata, Andhra, Gujarat, Burma and Cambodia. He also maintained marriage relations with Sri Vijaya dynasty, Vangi, Chalukya, Gujarat and other countries.

### Exercises

1. Mention the two sources that provide information about king Nissankamalla.
2. Prepare a table showing the services rendered by him in political, economic and religious fields.
3. Identify and list out the qualities that are useful for a ruler from the lives of Vijayabahu I, Parakramabahu the Great and Nissankamalla.
4. "Nissankamalla was a pragmatic and an intelligent person". Write an essay on the above statement with examples.

## **Women's Leadership in the Polonnaruwa Kingdom**

In the history of Sri Lanka the longest period during which queens occupied the throne of the country is found in the Polonnaruwa period. After the death of king Nissankamalla, the political situation of the country became confused on three occasions. Emergence of struggles for power among various factions was the cause of this state of affairs. It was in this background that the queen of king Parakramabahu I, Leelavati, came to power.

### **Queen Leelavati**

- \* Queen Leelavati was the Daughter of Jagathipala of the Pandyan dynasty.
- \* Chief queen of king Parakramabahu I.
- \* She came forward to protect kingship during the political turmoil that emerged after Parakramabahu the Great.
- \* She reigned at Polonnaruwa on three separate occasions.
  - 1197- 1200 A.D.
  - 1209- 1210 A.D.
  - 1211- 1212 A.D.
- \* She was supported by a general named Kirti.
- \* She had to face three Chola invasions.
- \* Even in the face of these problems, she worked for the development of Buddhism.
- \* Queen Leelavati strived to promote artistic and literary works and provided patronage for the composition of the two poems Muvadevdavata and Sasadavata. It has also been stated that coins were issued during her reign.

### **Queen Kalyanavati (1202-1208 A.D.)**

- \* Queen Kalyanavati was a princess of the Kalinga dynasty.
- \* Chief queen of king Nissankamalla.
- \* Occupied the throne of Sri Lanka for six years with Polonnaruwa as capital.

- \* During the struggle for the throne, the leading role in deposing king Sahasamalla and enthroning queen Kalyanavati was played by a commander named Ayasmanta.
- \* Queen Kalyanavati worked for the development of Buddhism. It is said that inspite of the political confusion that prevailed in the country, she constructed a Pirivena named Rajakulavaddhana at Weligama and donated lands and requirements etc. for its maintenance.

### **Queen Sugala**

- \* Queen Sugala never ascended the throne, but was a female leader who exerted a powerful influence on royal power during the Polonnaruwa period.
- \* She was the queen of Sri Vallabha of Ruhuna.
- \* She belonged to the dynasty of king Vijayabahu and therefore, strived to secure the throne for her children.
- \* She was the mother of Manabharana II who was the ruler of Ruhuna at the time when Parakramabahu I ascended the throne at Polonnaruwa.
- \* She rose against king Parakramabahu I.
- \* At that time the sacred Tooth Relic was in her possession. Therefore, she came forward to fight Parakramabahu I claiming that her son Manabharana had the right of inheritance to the kingship of Sri Lanka because of her possession of the sacred tooth Relic. King Parakramabahu I had to make serious effort to defeat her on the battle field. However, at the end, she was defeated and she had to hand over the sacred Tooth Relic to king Parakramabahu I.

### **Princess Mitta**

- \* Queen Mitta was the sister of King Vijayabahu I.
- \* According to historical sources, she was given in marriage to a Pandyan prince.

- \* Because of this marriage, Vijayabahu was able to maintain friendly relations with foreign rulers and thereby protect the country from foreign invasions.
- \* She had three sons namely Manabharana, Kirti Sri Megha and Sri Vallabha.
- \* They obtained power in Ruhuna and ruled as sub kings.
- \* Subsequently, they divided Ruhuna into two regions named Atadahas Rata and Dolosdahas Rata and ruled over them.
- \* King Parakramabahu the Great who unified the whole country, was her grandson.

A remarkable feature of this period is the support given by army commanders for the ladies to ascend the throne.

### Exercises

Select the appropriate statement for column A from column C and write it in column B.

A	B	C
Queen Sugala Queen Lilavati Queen Kalyanavati		was the queen of king Nissankamalla was the wife of Sri Vallabha was the wife of king Parakramabahu I



### Student Activity

“Womens’s leadership is essential for the development of a country”. Write an article to a wall newspaper on this topic.



## **Invasion of Magha and its nature**

The Polonnaruwa kingdom came to an end after the invasion of Magha. As a result of the struggle for power between various persons, the authority of the government became weak. This situation provided a good opportunity to foreign invaders. The invasion of Magha can be shown as one example for the utilisation of such a situation by a foreign invader. In 1215 A.D. Magha landed in Sri Lanka with a powerful army and conquered the country.

- \* Magha blinded king Parakrama Pandya and became king at Polonnaruwa in 1212 A.D. He plundered the wealth of the leading persons of the country and distributed that wealth among his soldiers. Demolished Chaityas, Temples and Pirivenas and burnt their books and valuables. He set fire on houses and farms of the ordinary people and also destroyed tanks and anicuts. Because of the cruel policy of Magha, the Sangha, the leading persons and the common people fled to Ruhuna and Malaya Rata in search of protection. Thus, the invasion of Magha became very cruel.
- \* Magha and his army who have been described as the warriors of Mara, in the Mahavamsa destroyed Pirivenas, temples and Devales and gave their land to army camps.

## **Fall of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom**

Reasons that led to the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom can be considered under two headings: long term and short term causes.

Long term causes for the weakening of Polonnaruwa.

- \* Weakening of the administration due to internal power struggles.
- \* Disunity among the leadership of the country.



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- \* Lack of foresight among the leaders.
- \* Absence of suitable heirs who could take over the government.

### **Short term or Immediate causes**

The most immediate cause for the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom was the invasion of Magha. His invasion destroyed human resources including the leaders, ordinary people and the Bhikkhus as well as physical resources such as Chaityas, temples, tanks, anicuts and books.

- \* With the destruction of the culture, core values and technology that established the identity of the nation, Polonnaruwa declined in a manner that made its restoration impossible.



### **Student Activity**

Prepare a Booklet including information on the Kings of Polonnaruwa and the tanks and religious buildings constructed by them.

Let us pay our attention to the causes that led to the fall of Polonnaruwa

- \* Competition for the throne between the two dynasties, Pandya and Kalinga.
- \* Absence of capable kings.
- \* Destruction caused by the invasion of Kalinga Magha.
- \* Collapse of the irrigation system of Rajarata.
- \* Epidemics.
- \* Abandoning of Rajarata by the people and fleeing to Ruhuna and Malaya.

The fall of Polonnaruwa clearly shows that the absence of unity and struggle for power among the leaders of the country would pave the way for foreign domination and the destruction of the entire nation.

### **Special features of the Polonnaruwa kingdom**

- \* Liberation of the country by a courageous, determined ruler like Vijayabahu I.
- \* Building of a politically, economically and culturally great nation by Parakramabahu the Great who was a skilled ruler as well as an accomplished warrior.
- \* Remarkable influence of women leaders.
- \* Influence of Hinduism on indigenous culture was greater than that during the Anuradhapura period.
- \* The figure of the bull seen on the moonstones of the Anuradhapura period is absent in those of Polonnaruwa the reason being the veneration of the bull by the Hindus.
- \* There are two Hindu shrines at Polonnaruwa named Shiva Devale No. 1 and No. 2. They had been constructed according to Chola architecture. The bronze figure of Nataraja is an exquisite artistic creation.
- \* A large number of fine artistic works have been made in the time of the Polonnaruwa kingdom.
- \* Chief among them are the Nissanka Rajasabha Mandapa and Nissanka Latha Mandapa.

- \* Satmahal Prasada is another unique building. To a great extent, it has the shape of a Stupa. In all the floors of this building there are divine figures in arch shaped cavities on the walls.
- \* The rulers of Polonnaruwa paid special attention to the construction of cities. The palace of king Parakramabahu the Great and its environs have been meticulously planned.
- \* Very large tanks as well as beautiful ponds bear testimony to the advances in hydraulic technology achieved during the time. Parakrama Samudra and Lotus pond are examples.
- \* Examples of art during the Polonnaruwa period are seen at Lankathilake image house and Gal Vihara.
- \* Ruins of a hospital have been discovered among the buildings of Alahana Pirivena. Among the findings are a medicine canoe and medical equipment.