



Stamp

Bulletin No. 171

Commemorative Issue

Ven. VARIYAPOLA
SRI SUMANGALA THERO



1985. 03. 02

Philatelic Bureau

Department of Posts

Ceylinco House

Colombo 1

SRI LANKA

Stamp Bulletin No. 171

Ministry of Posts and
Telecommunications,
Lotus Road,
Colombo-1.
Sri Lanka.

02nd March, 1985.

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications issues today, a commemorative postage stamp to the value of cents .60 in honour of Variyapola Sri Sumangala Thero, who involved himself in the Great Uva Rebellion of 1818 to redeem the Land of his Birth from the bondage of British rulership.

Most of the information pertaining to the life history of this heroic priest, who opted to risk his life in the Independence Battle, remains shrouded in the misty past. Born in the hamlet of Variyapola in Kurunegala District, his lay name was Variyapola Herath Mudiyanseelage Kirihamy. He received ordination as a pupil under Idavalugoda Sri Dhammapala Maha Nayake Thero, the chief incumbent of the Asgiriya Raja Maha Vihara between 1778-1807 with the name of Variyapola Sri Sumangala. In course of time, he rose to be the Anunayaka of that institute as well as the Chief Incumbent of the Suduhumpola Raja Maha Vihara in Kandy.

The last King of Kandy, Sri Vikkrama Rajasingha, who was of the Vaduga Stock, spent his time in intense suspicion and fear of the patriotic Kandyan Chiefs and the clergy. On the assumption,

that, even the High Priest of the Malwatta Maha Vihara too was opposed to him, the King debarred him from the ritual services of the Sacred Tooth Relic which was assigned to him and appointed Variyapola Sri Sumangala Thero to fill the vacancy.

The Sinhala portion of the famous Kandyan Convention, upon which, the Kandyan Kingdom was transferred to the British on 2nd March, 1815 with the secondary motive of recovering back the Sinhalese Throne from drifting to permanent ownership of non-Sinhala rulers, was also drafted by Sumangala Thero. But, before both parties signed for it to be lawful, the tradition maintains that, when a British soldier unfurled the British Flag on the soil which until then sustained the last breath of national sovereignty, the boiling blood of this valiant priest forced him to jump forward and pull down and even trample it.

Since the common acceptance of the people was, that the custodian of the Sacred Tooth Relic alone possessed the right to govern the Country, in order to nullify the British authority on the Kandyan Kingdom, Sri Sumangala Thero secretly removed the Sacred Tooth Relic in May, 1818, from the Temple, and delivered it to Monaravila Keppitipola, who was leading the Rebellion. There is also the belief, that, in fact, he himself, after its removal, secretly retired with it to Dambulla Forest and lived there with untold hardships to protect the relic. However, on 2nd November, 1819, he was caught by the British in the forest ;

but Sri Sumangala did not divulge any information of the Sacred Relic. Yet, upon realisation of the futility of his attempt, after obtaining certain pledges from the authorities, he showed forth the Tooth Relic which was with him. Thereafter, it was brought back and enshrined in the Temple and kept under heavy military guard.

Instead of punishing him for removal of the Tooth Relic, the British who were astonished at his dynamic courage and honesty offered him the Darane Temple as a personal gift. A current story however claims, that Sri Sumangala Thero was one of the many priests who was jailed at Jaffna Prison being responsible for the disappearance of the Tooth Relic and active participation in the Uva Rebellion and that he died there a pitiful death on 5th February, 1831.

SENARATH PANAWATTA
Kandy National Museum

Technical Details

<i>Date of Issue</i>	: 1985.03.02
<i>Value</i>	: 60 cts.
<i>Colours</i>	: Three colours
<i>Designer</i>	: G. S. Fernando
<i>Printers</i>	: Kultura, Hungariyan Foreign Trading Co. Budapest
<i>Format</i>	: Vertical
<i>Size</i>	: 24 × 29 mm
<i>Printing Process</i>	: Offset Lithography
<i>Sheet Composition</i>	: 100 stamps per sheet
<i>Paper</i>	: 100 G.S.M. Swiss Fritch Chrome Security paper
<i>Gum</i>	: Super Tropical
<i>Quantity Printed</i>	: 1,010,000

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