Quarterly Tours



Jayatissa Herath

National Trust – Sri Lanka

10 th September 2016

THIRD QUARTERLY TOUR 2016
SATURDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER
TO

MIHINTALE

Third tour of the National Trust is to visit monastic sites of Mihintale the sacred place where Rev. Mahinda met King Devanampiyatissa in the 3rd Century BC. Monasteries at Mihintale was a place with continuous architectural development which took place for many thousands, of years. Places of interest that would be visited are the Kaludiya Pokuna, Rajagiri lenakanda, Kantaka Chatiya, Indikatu Seya, Ancient Hospital, Archaeological Museum and many other places.

Tour Leader

Prof. Nimal de Silva, President of the National Trust – Sri Lanka

Route

By bus: Colombo – Kurunegala – Dambulla – Mihintale

Return on the same route.

Itinerary

5.00 am	Meet at PGIAR and leave at 5.30 am
10.30 pm	Arrive at PGIAR

The itinerary planned may change depending on factors such as time and weather.



The travel distance to Mihintale from Colombo is around 215 km. Mihintale has become world famous, and a highly sacred place of veneration among the Sri Lankan Buddhists due to the meeting place of the envoy which brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka during 236 BE (in the third century BCE). The envoy led by Arahant Mahinda Thero, the son of King Dharmashoka, the Emperor of India met the then ruler of Sri Lanka, King Devanam Piyatissa at this location which was then known as Missaka Pabbata. The discussion the Arahant first had with the King to testify his intelligence is also still popular and considered as highly logical even in present context. The questions were based on Mango trees in the surrounding. As there were many mango trees, this place was also known as Ambastala at that time.

The area is surrounded by rock boulders with caves scattered in the jungle of native trees. Most of those caves were used by meditating monks as they were located in quiet surrounding, away from the main city of Anuradhapura.

Arahant Mahinda and his companions had come to Sri Lanka as a delegation sent by Arahant Moggaliputta Tissa with the patronage of Emperor Asoka on the 236th year of the Buddha's parinirvana.

The Sinhalese architecture, paintings and sculpture may have taken a deviation to its greater developments



with principles and inspirations as a result of the arrival of Buddhism for nourishment throughout the centuries that followed.

Evidence for architectural feats of Mihintale are still visible in Ancient flights of steps, in Monastery with alms hall and relic chambers, in remains of stone water distribution system, in rock slab inscriptions (dating back to 956 – 976 AD), Kanthaka chetiya and in its Vahalkadas, (stupa dating back to 2nd Century BC having 425 feet circumference of which the height of remaining portion reached to 40 feet, in Minindu Guhava, the cave where the Arahant spent his time while in Sri Lanka, in Ancient Hospital site and in Kalu Diya pokuna .

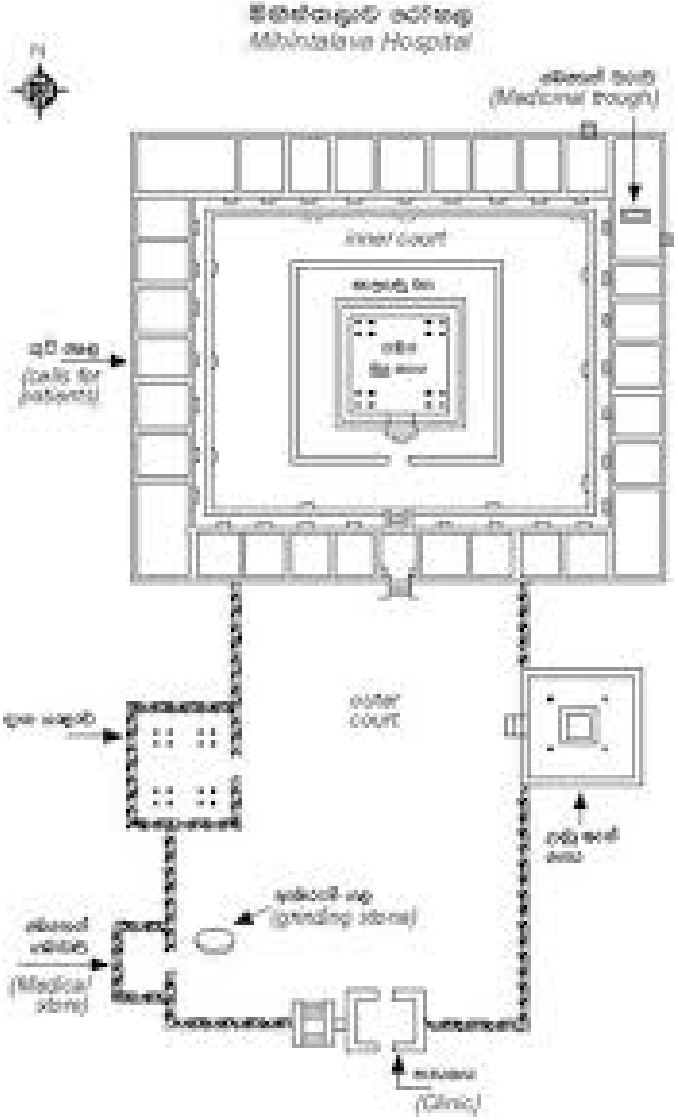
This cave known as Mihindu Guhava was offered to Arahant Mahinda by King Devanam Piyatissa. There had been sixty eight caves offered to the sangha at that time and sixty two have been found so far. Mihindu Guhava cave is situated on a hill slope near Ambastala Chetiya. The cave has been formed by two separate rock boulders so there is an opening on both the sides of the cave. The cave bed is chiselled out to have a flat surface and that area measures slightly over 2m x 1m. It is believed that this flattened area was used by the Arahant as the bed space. Arahant Mahinda lived for 80 years until parinirvana (since he is an Arahant) at Mihintale.



Kantaka Chetiya



Ancient Hospital


Mihintalaya Hospital
(Medicinal trough)
inner court
(cells for patients)
outer court
(grinding stone)
(Medicine stone)
(Clinic)



Ambastala Dagoba



Rock cut irrigation system



Mihindu Guhava above and
the Rock cut bed below





Monastery Site



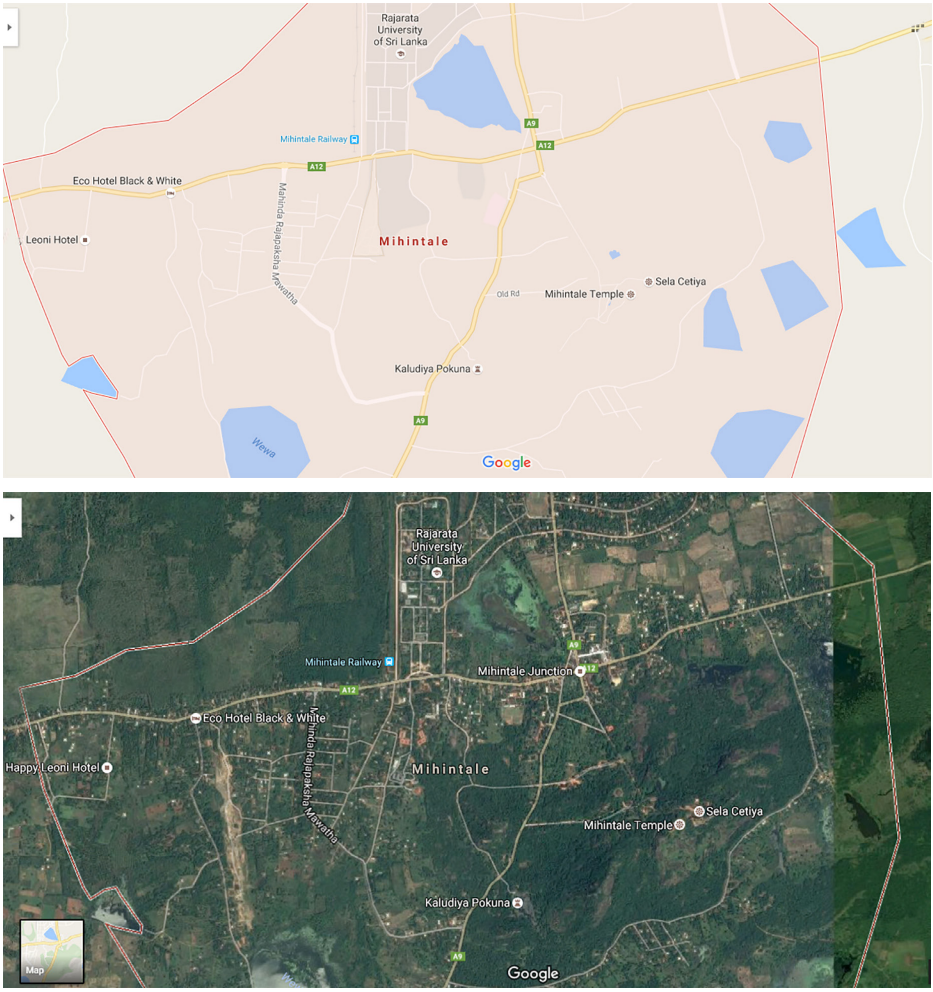


Kaludiya Pokuna



Today all these remains are more of a historic value. They stand witness to our forefathers' skills in many aspects of engineering and especially the hydraulic engineering blended with landscaping and the fine art of sculpture.

Kalu-diya pokuna, literally means the black water pool is said that the name derived out of respect to the sombre reflections of trees and boulders of the neighbouring forests and mountains, and is true to its description at most times of the day. This is an artificial pond where the water is collected from the surroundings during the rainy season. Kaludiya Pokuna is a monastic complex surrounding a water pond of 200 feet in length and 70 feet in width. It is thought that the monks had mainly used this complex for meditation purposes.



Google Maps showing Mihintale and its surroundings

Credits:

1. *http://www.srilankaview.com/Mihintale.htm*
2. *http://amazinglanka.com/wp/kaludiya-pokuna-mihintale/*
3. *www.google.lk/maps*