



Mulkirigala Rock Temple History



The Rock of Mulkirigala rises about 676 feet from the surrounding land mass. There are seven cave temples situated in five Terraced areas of different altitudes. They are the Lower Terrace (Patha Maluwa), Bo Tree Terrace (Bodhi Maluwa), Great King's Temple Terrace (Raja Maha Vihara Maluwa), Upper Bo Tree Terrace (Uda Bodhi Maluwa) and Chetiya Terrace (Chaitya Maluwa). These terraces can be accessed comfortably through well paved granite paths and steps going right up to the Dagoba Terrace. Situated in Giruwa Pattu of Hambanthota District of Southern Sri Lanka, Mulkirigala is also called as Mulgirigala but the former is more prominently used at present. There are many earlier names used for this rock temple such as 'Samudda Pabbatha', 'Muhunadra Giri', 'Muhudu Giri', 'Giriba Vehera', 'Giriba Lena', 'Dhakkina Giri', 'Dakkina Pabbatha', 'Muwatirigala', 'Mukirigalla' and 'Mulangiriya'.



The Bo tree at the Upper Terrace is considered to be a shoot from one of the 32 saplings of Anuradhapura Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi planted at the said terrace during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. Mulkirigala temple is also considered to be one of the 64 temples constructed by King Kavantissa and was called as 'Muhudu Gira' then which dates back to the 3rd Century BC. The Chetiya at Uppermost Terrace is considered to house Lord Buddha relics offered by the King Saddhatissa. According to Historical manuscripts, King Mahanaga, King Kavantissa, King Dutugemunu, King Parakramabahu the Great, King Saddhatissa, King Valagamba, King Jetta Tissa I, King Parakramabahu I are credited with construction work of the temple during their reign.

The temples remaining at present belong to the Kandyan era and the Buddha images and many cave paintings depict magnificent examples of Kandyan era arts and crafts. Mulkirigala Rock Temple is one of the few 'Raja Maha Vihara' or the 'Temples of the Great Kings' (of the Kandyan Kingdom) found out of the then Kandyan Kingdom. King Keerthi Sri Rajasinghe (1747 AD) gave his patronage to reconstruct this temple after being neglected for centuries since the reign of the Parakramabahu the Great.



The Cave temples numbering seven consist of Reclined Buddha, Seated Buddha and Standing Buddha Images, paintings of Buddhas, Arhats, Gods and Jataka Stories.