

# PATERFAMALIAS



A  
CEYLON PRESS  
TINY GUIDE TO SRI LANKA'S  
FIRST KINGS

In a  
Word  
or Two

# The Vijayan Dynasty

543 BCE – 66 CE

The Vijayans were Sri Lanka's first recorded royal dynasty and to all intents and purposes, mark the beginning of documented Sinhalese history.



## FOUNDING FATHERS

Founded in 543 BCE, according to ancient sources (albeit unverified by archaeological or other contemporaneous evidence) by the arrival on the island by Prince Vijaya, a Bengali or Gujarati prince, the dynasty would run (ignoring regnal interruptions) for over 600 years, putting it comfortably ahead of Mings & Moguls, Valois, French Bourbons, German Hohenzollerns, Tudors, Stuarts, & Aztecs.

The very earliest foundation stories of the Sinhala nation start with Vijay, covering 46 reigns (including, that is, more than a handful of extraneous royal interlopers), from Vijaya to the unrelated rogue, Subharaja, ruling 3 ever larger kingdoms - Tambapanni, Upatissa Nuwara and Anuradhapura, facing off three major Tamil invasions, until in the end, they toppled themselves.



## THE ANURADHAPURAN KINGDOM

It was under the rule of one of their earliest and greatest kings, Pandu Kabhaya, in around 437 BCE that the dynasty moved their capital to what became Anuradhapura – the city that would become one of the world’s oldest continuously inhabited cities – and for 1,500 years the capital of the island state.

As the Dark Ages fell across the West and society there returned to wattle and daub, the Anuradhapuran kingdom became the Versailles of the East with an almost inexhaustible tally of spectacular new temples, pools, stupas, gardens, palaces, and dwellings – unpinned by extraordinarily effective utilities and services, not least the cutting-edge hydrology that allowed the correct supply of water throughout the kingdom, necessary to sustain such a sophisticated state.



## BUDDHISM

Under the rule of the great king's grandson, Devanampiya Tissa the country's history took the most definitive turn in its long journey, becoming - and remaining to this day - a Buddhist country first and foremost, with all that this entailed. The rapid growth of the new religion helped to swiftly spread a common language and script across the land, and with it, the power of the centre - for the king was also the formal guardian of the Sangha - the religion.



## INVASIONS

Three invasions of the country from Southern India did much to add unwelcome regal interlopers into the Vijayan list of kings but each time it seemed they had been ousted, they displayed an impressive faciality to regain their throne, none more so that in the victory of King Dutugemunu's against the Chola conqueror Ellalan, in 161 BCE.

Dutugemunu's victory helped sew up the entire island under the dynastic rule of the Vijayans though successive kings displayed an alarming ability to get distracted by an almost unending flood of homemade catastrophes as different sections of the family fought, murdered, and manipulated one another for ultimate control. In total more than half the monarchs were to lose their thrones either by being murdered or killed in battle.



## DISASTER

The dynasty's final collapse in 66 CE under the rule of an intern king, Subha, is bizarrely bathetic – but collapse it did, ushering in a new line of kings, the Lambakarnas. It had taken 609 years for the country's first royal dynasty to start, flourish and finally meet their inglorious end. Despite a rich choice of murderous would-be rulers, kings such as Vijaya, Pandu Kabhaya, Devanampiya Tissa, and Dutugemunu, had been able to establish the confidence, culture, and mindset of an entire nation, giving it the ballast and energy necessary to propel itself forward for centuries to come.





## LEGACY

With a writ running at times across the entire island, they transformed a series of unremarkable warring statelets and villages into a nation.

They bequeathed it with a legacy of literature, architecture, religion, and infrastructure that no other dynasty bettered.

Looking out at water rippling still over the great tanks they built with cutting-edge engineering; sitting in the shade of the magnificent palaces and courts constructed at Anuradhapura, reading inscriptions that point to the bounty of trade routes extending from the island to places as far away as Rome; in the ancient chants of Buddhist priests, the coinage, delicate statutory, frescos and books that survive to this day: in taking all of this in, you take as said an early nation every bit as impressive as any in the ancient world – and way ahead of most.

Its laws regulated a dynamic state, its armies and weapons defended it with a rigour that was effective. Even as they disappeared from history, the achievements of the Vijayans lay before them, the indispensable foundations of an entire island-nation state.

# PRINCE VIJAYA

King of Tambapanni.

Reign: 543 – 505 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

1st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

Founding King of the Vijayan Dynasty.

# REGENT UPATISSA

King of Upatissa Nuwara.

Chief Minister to Prince Vijaya.

2nd monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 505 – 504 BCE.

1st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have abdicated.

# KING PANDU VASUDEVA

Nephew of Prince Vijaya.

2nd King of Tambapanni and Upatissa  
Nuwara.

3rd monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 504 – 474 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

2nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have died a natural death.

# KING ABHAYA

Son of King Panduvasudeva.

3rd King of Tambapanni and Upatissa  
Nuwara.

4th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.  
Reign: 474 - 454 BCE.

2nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to  
have abdicated.

# KING TISSA

King of Tambapanni and Upatissa Nuwara.

Son of King Panduvasudeva and brother of King Abhaya.

4th King of Tambapanni and Upatissa Nuwara.

5th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 454 – 437 BCE.

Nature of Death: Killed in battle.

1st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

1st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle.

# KING PANDU KABHAYA

Grandson of King Panduvasudeva, and nephew  
of Kings Abhaya and Tissa.

1st King of Anuradhapura.

6th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 437- 367 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

3rd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a  
natural death.

One of Sri Lanka's greatest king's, and real  
founder of the Anuradhapura Kingdom.



# KING GANATISSA

Elusive Son of Panduvasudeva.

2nd King of Anuradhapura.

7th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 367 -? BCE.

Nature of Death: Unknown.

A mystery king: there is debate about his very  
existence.

# KING MUTASIVA

Son of King Ganatissa or King Pandu Kabhaya.

3rd King of Anuradhapura.

8th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 367 – 307 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

4th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Little is known about his long reign.

# KING DEVANAMPIYA TISSA

Son of King Mutasiva.

4th King of Anuradhapura.

9th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 307 – 267 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

5th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Noted for being the king to introduce Buddhism into Sri Lanka.

# KING UTTIYA

Son of King Mutasiva, and brother of King  
Devanampiya Tissa.

5th King of Anuradhapura.

10th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 267 – 257 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

6th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a  
natural death.

A short reign about which little of importance is  
reliably known.

# KING MAHASIVA

Son of King Mutasiva and brother of Kings  
Devanampiya Tissa and Uttiya.

6th King of Anuradhapura.

11th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 257 – 247 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

7th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a  
natural death.

Another short reign about which little of  
importance is reliably known.

# KING SURATISSA

Son of King Pandu Kabhaya.

7th King of Anuradhapura.

12th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 247 - 237 BCE.

Nature of Death: Killed in battle.

2nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

2nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle.

# SENA AND GUTTIKA

Tamil invaders and the first non-Vijayan invaders interlopers to penetrate the Vijayan dynasty.

Joint 7th Kings of Anuradhapura. Joint 13th monarchs (albeit interloper) of the Vijayan Dynasty. 1st and 2nd non family-related monarchs of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 237 - 215 BCE.

Nature of Death: Highly likely to have been killed in battle.

3rd and 4th reigning Sri Lankan monarchs to have been murdered for the succession. 3rd and 4th reigning Sri Lankan monarchs to have died in battle.

# KING ASELA

Son of King Mutasiva, and brother of Kings Devanampiya Tissa, Uttiya and Mahasiva.

8th King of Anuradhapura.

14th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 215 – 205 BCE.

Nature of Death: Killed in battle.

5th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession. 5th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle.

An unlucky king, who had to kill the Tamil invaders who had stolen his throne, before being himself killed by another one, after he had regained his throne.



# KING ELLALAN

A Chola prince and the second non Vijayan invading interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

9th King of Anuradhapura.

15th (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.  
3rd non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 205 – 161 BCE.

Nature of Death: Killed in battle.

6th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession. 6th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle.

Nicknamed "The Just King."

# KING DUTUGAMUNU

A Vijayan cousin.

10th King of Anuradhapura.

16th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 161 – 137 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

8th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

Nicknamed “The Great” for unifying almost the entire island into his kingdom.

# KING SADDHA TISSA

Brother of King Dutugamunu.

11th King of Anuradhapura.

17th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 137 - 119 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

9th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A reign noted for its ambitious new constructions.

# KING THULATTHANA

Son of King Saddha Tissa.

12th King of Anuradhapura.

18th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 119 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

8th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

His dramatically short reign left him no time to achieve anything, including survival.

# KING LANJA TISSA

Son of King Saddha Tissa and brother of King Thulatthana.

13th King of Anuradhapura.

19th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 119 – 109 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

10th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

His short reign left him little time to achieve anything, and very little is known about this period.

# KING KHALLATA NAGA

Son of King Saddha Tissa and brother of Kings  
Thulatthana and Lanja Tissa.

14th King of Anuradhapura.

20th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 109 – 103 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

9th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been  
murdered for the succession.

His short reign left him no time to achieve much  
- including survival.

# KING VALAGAMBA

Son of King Saddha Tissa and brother of Kings Thulatthana, Lanja Tissa and Khallata Naga.

15th King of Anuradhapura.

21st monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign (part 1):103 BCE. Reign (part 2): 89 -77  
BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

11th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death. Quite probably Sri Lanka's pluckiest king, whose first reign was terminated by the Tamil invaders he then spent most of the rest of his life fighting, in order to regain his crown for a final 9 years.

# KING PULAHATTA

1st of the 7 Dravidian Invaders and an interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

16th King of Anuradhapura.

22nd (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 4th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 103 – 100 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered. 10th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

1st of the Tamil “Colleague Kings”, whose collegiate nature was to murder one another.



# KING BAHIYA

2nd of the 7 Dravidian Invaders and an interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

17th King of Anuradhapura.

23rd (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 5th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 100- 98 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

11th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

2nd of the Tamil "Colleague Kings", whose collegiate nature was to murder one another.

# KING PANYA MARA

3rd of the 7 Dravidian Invaders and an interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

18th King of Anuradhapura.

24th (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 6th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 98- 91 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

12th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

3rd of the Tamil "Colleague Kings", whose collegiate nature was to murder one another.

# KING PILAYA MARA

4th of the 7 Dravidian Invaders and an interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

19th King of Anuradhapura.

25th (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

7th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 91 – 90 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

13th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

4th of the Tamil “Colleague Kings”, whose collegiate nature was to murder one another.

# KING DATHIKA

5th of the 7 Dravidian Invaders and an interloper into the Vijayan dynasty.

20th King of Anuradhapura.

26th (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

8th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 90 – 88 BCE.

Nature of Death: Killed in battle.

14th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession. 7th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died in battle. Last of the Tamil “Colleague Kings,” whose collegiate nature was to murder one another.

# KING MAHAKULI MAHATISSA

Adopted son of King Valagamba.

21st King of Anuradhapura.

27th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 77 – 62 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

12th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A short reign about which little of importance is reliably known; and during which it is unlikely much of significance had time to be done.

# KING CHORA NAGA

Son of King Valagamba and step brother of  
King Mahakuli Mahatissa

22nd King of Anuradhapura.

28th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 62 – 50 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

15th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been  
murdered for the succession.

A brief and unhappy reign about which little is  
reliably known.

# KING KUDA TISSA

Son of Mahakuli Mahatissa.

23rd King of Anuradhapura.

29th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 50 - 47 BCE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

16th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

An even briefer and more unhappy reign about which little is reliably known.

# KING SIVA I

Lover of Queen Anula, the wife of King Kuda Tissa.

24th King of Anuradhapura.

30th monarch (albeit, interloper) of the Vijayan Dynasty. 9th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. Although termed 'monarch,' it is questionable whether people at the time saw this transitory figure as anything approaching a king.

Reign: 47 BCE. The length of his reign and its corresponding dates are historically uncertain.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

17th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.



# KING VATUKA

- Lover of Queen Anula, the wife of King Kuda Tissa.
- 25th King of Anuradhapura.

31st (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 10th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. Although termed 'monarch,' it is questionable whether people at the time saw this second transitory figure as anything approaching a king.

Reign: 47 BCE. The length of his reign and its corresponding dates are historically uncertain.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

18th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

# KING DARUBHATIKA TISSA

•Lover of Queen Anula, the wife of King Kuda Tissa.  
32nd King of Anuradhapura.

14th (albeit, interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 11th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. Although termed 'monarch,' it is questionable whether people at the time saw this third transitory figure as anything approaching a king.

Reign: 47 BCE. The length of his reign and its corresponding dates are historically uncertain.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

19th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

# KING NILIYA

Lover of Queen Anula, the wife of King Kuda Tissa.  
27th King of Anuradhapura.

33rd (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. 12th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty. Although termed 'monarch,' it is questionable whether people at the time saw this fourth transitory figure as anything approaching a king.

Reign: 47 BCE. The length of his reign and its corresponding dates are historically uncertain.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

20th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

# QUEEN ANULA

Wife of King Chora Naga.

1st Queen and 28th monarch of Anuradhapura.

34th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 47 - 42 BCE.

Nature of Death: Burnt alive.

21st reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

Sri Lanka's first female head of state, albeit not its finest role model.

# KING KUTAKANNA TISSA

Brother of King Kuda Tissa.

29th King of Anuradhapura.

35th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 42 – 20 BCE.

Nature of Death: Natural

13th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A long (by the standards of the time) and blessedly uneventful reign.

# KING BHATIK ABHAYA

Son of King Kutakanna Tissa.

30th King of Anuradhapura.

36th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 20 BCE – 9 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

14th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A short reign about which little of importance is reliably known.

# KING MAHADATHIKA MAHANAGA

Brother of King Bhatik Aabhaya.

31st King of Anuradhapura.

37th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 9 - 21 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

15th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A short reign about which little of importance is reliably known.

# KING AMANDAGAMANI ABHAYA

Son of King Mahadathika Mahanaga

32nd King of Anuradhapura.

38th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 21 - 30 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

22nd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

A reign during which the seeds of a later civil war would have become noticeable.



# KING KANIRAJANU TISA

Son of King Mahadathika Mahanaga and brother of King Amandagamani Abhaya.

33rd King of Anuradhapura.

394th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 30 – 33 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

16th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A short reign about which little of importance is reliably known. A reign characterised by the start of civil war.

# KING CHULABHAYA

Son of King Amandagamani Abhaya.

34th King of Anuradhapura.

40th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 33 – 35 CE.

Nature of Death: Possibly Natural.

17th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death, if indeed that could be verified.

A reign characterised by incipient civil war.

# QUEEN SIVALI

Sister of King Chulabhaya.

2nd Queen and 35th monarch of Anuradhapura.

41st monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 35 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

23rd reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

A reign characterised by total civil war.

35 – 38 CE  
INTERREGNUM  
& CIVIL WAR

# KING ILANAGA

Nephew of Queen Sivali.

36th King of Anuradhapura.

42nd monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 38 – 44 CE.

Nature of Death: Natural.

18th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have died a natural death.

A reign – characterised by civil war; and one that waws unable to halt the dynasty's ultimate gallop to extinction.

# KING YASSALALAKA TISSA

Son of King Ilanaga and brother of King Chandamukha Siva.

38th King of Anuradhapura.

44th monarch of the Vijayan Dynasty.

Reign: 52 – 60 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

25th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.

The last true Vijayan monarch.

# KING SUBHARAJA

A lookalike intern king, unrelated to any Vijayans.  
39th King of Anuradhapura.

45th (albeit interloper) monarch of the Vijayan  
Dynasty.

13th non family-related monarch of the Vijayan  
Dynasty

Reign: 60 - 66 CE.

Nature of Death: Murdered.

26th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been  
murdered for the succession.

The Vijayan dynasty bows out of history at this point.

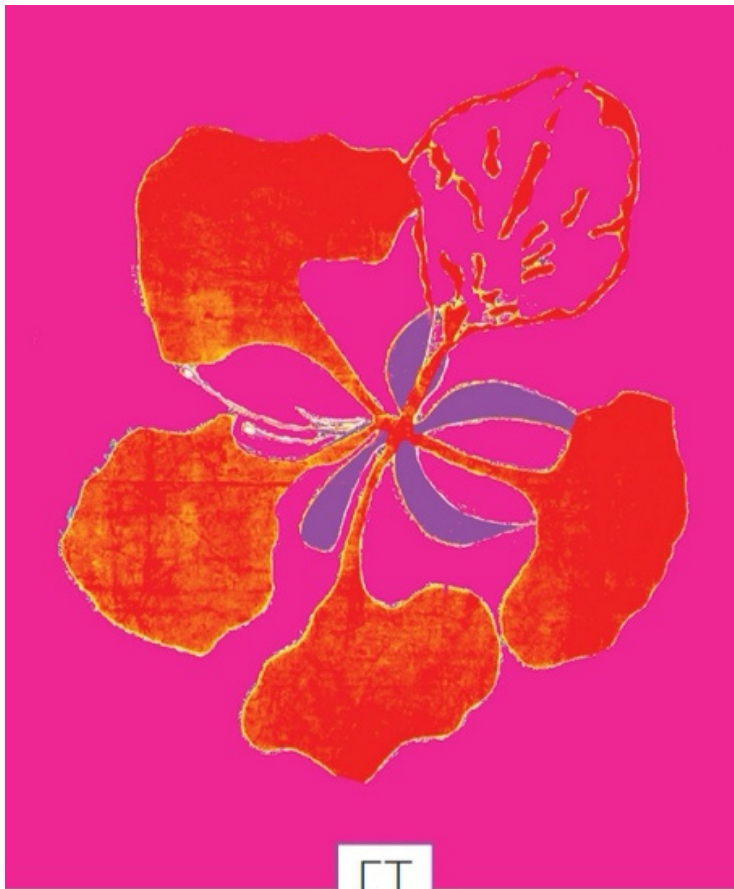


## DISCOVER MORE

A small island surrounded by large oceans, Sri Lanka is a mystery to many: remote, hard to place; a well-kept secret. The Ceylon Press aims to make its complicated story more accessible.

Read its story in *A History of Sri Lanka*, or hear it as a podcast. The *Companion to Sri Lanka* makes visible more of the whole. The digital Museum of Sri Lanka unites the island's artefacts – scattered around the world – into a single exhibition. Its downloadable eBooks cover all Sri Lankan subjects. Its podcast, *Poetry from the Jungle*, presents the work of 80 poets to reset the literary canon. And in case it all gets too serious, enjoy the off-grid *Jungle Diaries* blog and Podcast. All these works are added to weekly and available free at [theceylonpress.com](http://theceylonpress.com).





# The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel

[flametreestate.com](http://flametreestate.com)

The Ceylon Press is based at and partially funded by The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel, a jungle luxe retreat abandoned in war, reclaimed by nature, and now, gorgeously restored and there to be enjoyed by anyone in search of utter peace.

Visit [www.flametreestate.com](http://www.flametreestate.com) to learn more.