

DHARMA PARĀKRAMABĀHU IX

- The Fake King of Ceylon Inflated by Portuguese Historians- - A Historiographical Perspective -

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Prof. S. Paranavitana, the Chief Editor of **The University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon, Volume, 1**, concluding political history of the relevant period has made the following observation.

“Couto calls this King Jayavira Parakramabahu and gives him a reign of three years: According to **Rājāvali**, however, he reigned for twenty years. In actual fact, the reign of Vira Parakramabahu VIII, must have lasted for more than twenty years, for his sons and successors, Dharma Parakramabahu IX, and Vijayabahu VI, on the authority of contemporary records, began their respective reigns in 1508 and 1510. But already in 1505 before the reign of Vira Parakramabahu VIII had drawn to a close, the Portuguese had landed in Colombo and this is the limit set for the first Volume of the History.”¹

According to this statement Prof. Paranavitana has introduced Vira Parakramabahu VIII as the last king belonging to the relevant period, assigned him a reign of twenty four years (1484- 1508 AD.) and has accepted him to be the king of Ceylon, at the time of the arrival of Portuguese in 1505 AD. This position taken by Paranavitana is in accord with the common view generally held by historians of the day, when the **History of Ceylon Volume I**, was concluded in 1960.

The common view was that the ruler of Sri Lanka, at the time, Lorenc de Almeida arrived in Ceylon, was Vira Parakramabahu, but his son Dharma Parakramabahu, looked after state affairs on behalf of his father and that he was the person who dealt with the first Portuguese visitors to Sri Lanka.²

Untill 1960, almost all text books on Sri Lankan history used in schools and even in Universities had the same story - that the King of Sri Lanka at the time of the arrival of Portuguese was Vira Parakramabahu with his son Dharma Parakramabahu assisting him.

This was the History taught not only at school levels but also at University level for more than half a century. Even Professor Paranavitana in his **University History of Ceylon** accepted the same view in 1960, as we saw earlier.

1. The Historical problem created by Prof. Paranavitana

However in the following year, 1961, Prof. Paranavitana made a surprising turn by eliminating Vira Parakramabahu VIII from the political scene in Sri Lanka around 1505AD., in his exhaustive paper entitled '**The**

Emperor of Ceylon at the Time of the Arrival of Portuguese in 1505', published in 1961, in the **University of Ceylon Review**, XIX. He pushed back Vira Parakramabahu's reign from 1484 - 1508, as given in the UCHC. to 1477 - 1496AD., while assigning Dharma Parakramabahu 1491-1513, almost the period of reign previously assigned to Vira Parakramabahu.³ This adjustment has been done on the basis of a reinterpretation made by him about the date of the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**.

2. The Kelani Vihara Inscription

This Kelani Vihara Inscription was brought to the notice of the scholars for the first time in 1871, by Mahamudali Louis de Zoysa. He presented the text and translation of this slab inscription of Kelaniya, before the **Royal Asiatic Society**, in 1871.

He interpreted the King in the record as Dharma Parakramabahu and the year 2051 BE, (1508 AD.) as the accession year of the King. Accordingly the 19th year of the King's reign mentioned in the record was reckoned to be 1527 AD. counting from 1508 AD. By doing so de Zoysa remarked, that "according to Turnour, Dharma Parakramabahu ascended the throne in 2048 BE, 1508AD. but according to the inscription the date of his accession was 2051BE, 1505AD. three years later.⁴ This interpretation of Louis de Zoysa in 1871, has come down unquestioned until 1960. Up till that time all historians and their text books on history of the period, including Paranavitana and his **University History of Ceylon**, had taken 1508 as the established date of the accession of dharma Parakramabahu IX.

The relevant part of the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** runs as follows:

*“gautama sarvajna rājōttamayānan vahansēta dedās ek paṇasvanu,
Lankā rājasriyāta pāmiṇi Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Parākramabāhu
cakravarti svāmīn̄ vahansēta dasa nava vanu navayā pura ekolos
vaka”*

The English translation rendered by de Zoysa and later by H. C. P. Bell; was as follows,

“On the eleventh day of the month Navam in the 19th year of the reign of His Imperial Majesty, Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabahu, who ascended the throne of Lanka in the year 2051 of the Era of the omniscient and supreme Gautama Buddha”. Prof. paranavitana's new translation was,

“On the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of navam of the year two thousand and fifty one unto Gautama the omniscient supreme lord; and the year nineteenth unto His Majesty, the Imperial Lord, the illustrious Sirisangabo, Sri Parakramabahu, who has attained to the regal splendour of Lanka.”

The first part *gautama sarvagna rājottamayānan vahansēta dedās ek panas vanu*,⁵ *Lankā rājjasriyāta pāmīni* in the original text has been translated by de Zoysa and Bell as “who ascended the throne in the year 2051 BE,” thus adopting 2051 BE, 1508 AD. and the 19th year of the King as two separate years: 2051 BE. 1508 AD. as his year of accession, and 19th year of his reign as 1527 AD.

Prof. Parnavitana having rendered the phrase *Lankā rājjasriyāta pāmīni* as ‘who has attained to the regal splendour of Lanka’ instead of “who ascended the throne” rendered by de Zoysa, and Bell; treated 2051 BE. and 19th year of the King as one and the same, equating 2051BE, 1508 AD with the 19th regnal year of the King, which was the year of executing the document. Parnavitana supported his premise by quoting similar instances from contemporary epigraphic records.

Based on this, parnavitana has adjusted chronology of Kings as follows.⁶

Vira Parakramabhu VIII	1477 - 1496
Dharma Parakramabahu IX	1491 - 1513
Vijayabahu VI	1509 - 1521

After reading this exhaustive article, the present writer felt that, in the event of the new interpretation and the chronology, presented by Prof. Parnavitana, proved to be correct and established, the entire political history of the period from the demise of Parakramabahu VI, in 1467 AD, to the end of Vijayabahu VI, in 1521 AD, given in the text books used in schools and Universities until 1960, would call for an urgent revising process. Having this in mind the present writer made a thorough and analytical study on the afore said paper of Prof. parnavitana. His study revealed that Professor’s interpretation of the date given in the document is quite correct and convincing, but his acceptance of the King figuring in the document as Dharma Parakramabahu IX, - the identification originally attributed by Louis de Zoysa, - was completely wrong and the chronological order proposed by Prof. Parnavitana based on that wrong identification, was also equally wrong. The present writer’s study has proved beyond doubt that the King figuring in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** was not Dharma Parakramabahu but his father Vira Parakramabahu VIII.

As such the question of a drastic revision of the relevant history would not arise. However the present writer still entertained a caution, that a future researcher with inadequate command on local sources such as literary and epigraphical records pertaining to the period, would follow Prof. Parnavitana’s proposed chronology, and based on which will distort political history of the period.

As a safeguard he recorded the findings of his study on Prof. paranavitana's paper, in two chapters, chapter 5, ***Kotte Raja Parapura, 1467 - 1592*** (The Dynasty of Kotte Kings - 1467 - 1597) and chapter 6, ***Udarata Raja Parapura III, 1483 - 1514***, "The Dynasty of Kandyan Kings - 1483 - 1514", in his book ***Asgiriye Talpatin Alutvana Lankā Itihāsaya***, History of Lanka in the Light of Asgiriye Talpata (The manuscript from Asgiri Vihara in Kandy) which he published in 1972.

His instinctive caution proved to be correct when he read the **Political History of the Kingdom of Kotte** by G. P. V. Somaratne, published in 1975. This was the research thesis for which Somaratne, was awarded Ph. D, by the University of London. However Somaratne seems to have not seen the present writer's book which was published in Sri Lanka in 1971.

Prof. P. V. G. Somaratne has accepted Paranavitana's interpretation in totality and observed "This use of both the regnal year and the Buddhist year in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** of Dharma Parakramabahu has been the deciding factor in solving many problems regarding the chronological order of events in the 16th century."

With this deciding factor of the wrong attribution of the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** to Dharma Parakramabahu Somaratne has further advanced Dharma Parakramabahu's reign by assigning 1489 AD. as the first regnal year of the King, relying on Paranavitana's new interpretation, although he has failed to mention his source.⁷

Somaratne's chronological list is as follows:

Vira Parakramabahu	1477 - 1489
Dharma Parakramabahu	1489 - 1513
Vijayabahu Vi	1513 - 1528

Prof C. R. de Silva in **chapter I and II; University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka, Volume II**, has taken Somaratne's chronology as authoritative and interpreted history during the period accordingly.⁸

This new chronological order adjusted by Paranavitana in 1961, and followed by Somaratne and C.R. de Silva, both specialized on so-called Portuguese period of Ceylon History, for their PhDs in London University, has not only eliminated Vira Parakramabahu from the political scene in the country around 1505, but also has projected Dharma Parakramabahu as the only king and paramount King to meet the first Portuguese visitors.

However, as also mentioned earlier, all school text books and University books, such as father S. G. Perera's **The Portuguese and Dutch periods, History of Ceylon**, H.W. Codrington's, **A Short History of Ceylon** and even Paranavitana's **University History of Ceylon**, the most popular

books of the day have portrayed Dharma Parakramabahu as only a regent looking after state affairs on behalf of his father Vira Parakramabahu, the paramount King of the day.

This position will no doubt poses a series of questions for the students of Sri Lankan history today and future. They will be faced with the problem of revising history of the period, until 1960. The pioneer historians, who dealt with the period under discussion and whose contribution gifted us the present knowledge, may even be accused of adopting wrong history with wrong chronology.

“This absurd position”, using Prof. Paranavithana’s own words, with minimal alterations- **“to which historians have been led by ‘Paranavithana’s new chronology, makes it necessary to question whether the new chronology is correct, or whether a different chronological order based on Paranavithana’s new interpretation itself which does not give rise to such a strange historical problem is not possible.”**” The present writer’s study on this subject revealed in his book mentioned above seems to have not been attentively read by Somaratne and C. R. de Silva, perhaps because it was written in Sinhala. As such an attempt will be made in this paper, to discuss the whole problem afresh and more comprehensively.

We have already accepted that Paranavithana’s rendering of the relevant part in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** - his equating 2051 BE, 1508AD. with the King’s 19th regnal year, and not with the first year - as absolutely correct. with this correction the King figuring in the inscription should have ascended the throne in 1489 / 90AD.

The King figuring in the inscription is, **“*Srīmat Sīri Sangabo Srī Parākramabāhu Cakravartī Svāmin Vahanse*”**. Paranavithana has merely accepted the view of de Zoysa that the King was Dharma Parakramabahu. He seems to have not been concerned with the question whether this King could not have been another Parakramabahu; and why he could not have been Vira Parakramabahu VIII, whom all historians including Paranavithana, accepted, until 1960, as the sovereign King of Sri Lanka about the time of the Portuguese arrival in 1505 AD.

Let us examine how and why Paranavithana was compelled to accept the King with the epithet ***Srīmat Sīri Sangabo Sri***, as Dharma parakramabahu, whereas there were two more Parakramabahus during this period who used this **‘*Sīri Sangabo*’** epithet; namely, Parakramabahu VI and Vira Parakramabahu VIII. When one carefully reads through Paranavithana’s learned paper on this problem, one would feel that the author’s prime concern behind that exhaustive article was to correct the erroneous interpretation given to

the year mentioned in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the author was not much concerned as to which 'Parakramabahu' was mentioned in the record.

On the other hand, that this King was Dharma Parakramabahu, had been the unanimously accepted view among scholars upto that time. Dharma Parakramabahu was the giant figure in the minds of the historians who specialized on the so called "Portuguese period of Ceylon history". With this prejudice and the preoccupation of his mind on the correction of the wrong interpretation of the dates given in the record, Paranavitana would not have felt it necessary to query over the identity of the King. He seems to have accepted the existing view and glossed over other circumstantial facts which would have pointed to a different identity, if they were re-examined.

3. Historiography of Dharma Parakramabahu's entry

Before we explore the evidence for the identify of the real King figuring in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, it will be useful to critically look into the back ground and the circumstances which led the scholars believe that Dharma Parakramabahu was the King at the time of the first Portugues arrival, and that his accession year was 1508AD. How and when did this view originate and develop in the minds of the English educated scholars of the day?

The first modern writer to introduce Dharma Parākramabāhu in between Vira Parākramabāhu VIII and Vijayabāhu VI in the list of Sri Lankan Kings, was George Turnour, who translated **Mahāvamsa** into English Language in 1837.¹⁰ His source at that time would have been the **Rajavaliya** which categorically says that Portuguese arrived at Colomtota during the time of Dharma Parākramabāhu.¹¹ The **Rājaratnākara** written in the middle of the 16th century, therefore more contemporaneous than the **Rājāvaliya**, does not have Dharma Parakramabahu in the list of Sinhala Kings.¹² The fifth part of the **Mahāvamsa** written in the middle of the 18th century, has also not given a place for Dharma Parakramabahu.¹³ Wjesinghe who translated the **Mahāvamsa** into English, in 1917, has not included Dharma Parakramabahu in his geneological list of Sinhala Kings,¹⁴ although he was aware of Turnour's assumption that Dharma Parakramabahu was the king at the time of the arrival of Portuguese. It is therefore, obvious that Turnour's view put forward in 1837, was based only on **Rājāvāliya** information. But on what basis Turnour gave 1505 as Dharma Parakramabahu's year of accession is not clear, for his source **Rajavaliya** categorically says that Portuguese ship came to Colombo in 1522 AD¹⁵. It is possible that Turnour would have been aware of Queyroz's information that Lorenzo de

Almeida discovered Ceylon in 1505¹⁶. It would however be noted that the English translations of Portuguese documents on Ceylon were not at the disposal of Sri Lankan writers by 1837.

However, Turnour's inclusion of Dharma Parakramabahu in the list of Sri Lankan Kings of the time, with 1505 AD as his accession year, has created a "Strange historical problem" for Rhys Davids in 1870, when he discovered the **Devundara Inscription**, which says that Vijayabahu, became King in Saka Era, 1432, 1509 AD, contradicting Turnour's 1527 AD, as Vijayabahu's accession year. "It can scarcely be disputed that, unless this discrepancy can be satisfactorily explained away, our present days must yield to the authority of this undoubtedly contemporaneous record"¹⁷ says, Rhys Davids.

This "Strange historical problem" of Rhys Davids was given a more compromising shape by Mahamudali Louis de Zoysa, who presented the text and translation of the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, for the first time before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1871. De Zoysa identified the King "*Sri Sangabo Sri Parākramabāhu cakravarti Svāmin Vahanse*" in the document as Dharma Parakramabahu, the 152nd sovereign King in the Turnour's list, during whose reign Portuguese first landed in Ceylon and were permitted to trade. De Zoysa interpreted 2051 BE. 1508 AD in the record as the accession year of the King. "According to Turnour, King Dharma Parakramabahu ascended the throne in the year BE.2048, 1505 AD. three years later" said, de Zoysa. With regard to the "Strange historical problem" of Rhys Davids, de Zoysa's compromise was "that the assumption of the sovereignty by Dharma Parakramabahu was disputed by his brother Vijayabahu and at least for a time one part of the nation (probably those of the south) while acknowledged the latter as their King, the rest adhered to his brother and this derives support from Turnour's statement that Dharma Parakramabahu's reign was disturbed in the early part by the competition of his brothers, whom he succeeded in reducing to submission"¹⁸.

It will now be clear that it was Mahamudali Louis de Zoysa who assigned **Kelani Vihara Inscription** to Dharma Parakramabahu, going by Turnour's view and also it was de Zoysa who interpreted 2051 BE in the document as the year of the King's accession. That was the position in 1871.

H. C. P. Bell, who also edited the same inscription later in 1882, accepted de Zoysa's identification of the King figuring in the Kelani Inscription as Dharma parakramabahu and 1508 as his accession year.¹⁹ All historians from de Zoysa including Bell, Donald Ferguson, P. E. Peiris, E. W. Perera and many others accepted de Zoysa's identification of the King Parakramabahu mentioned in the Kelani Inscription with Dharma Parakramabahu and that his enthronement was in 1508 AD. This was the historical background of Dharma Parakramabahu's connection with the

Kelani Vihara Inscription. When Paranavitana's mind was at work for the task of correcting the year 2051BE, 1508,AD given in the inscription as the 19th year of the King, and not the year of his accession as had been accepted by scholars from 1873 up till 1960, Paranavitana would not have been concerned about the identity of the King, due partly to his obsession with the correction of the date and partly to his prejudice on the high projection of Dharma Parakramabahu by the historians for more than half a century.

Let us therefore bring back the earlier question whether King *Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabāhu cakravarti Svamin Vahanse* in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** could be Vira Parakramabahu VIII, whom all historians including Paranavitana until 1960, had accepted as the overlord of Lanka at the time of the first Portuguese arrival.

The best way to ascertain whether this King who's 19th year becomes 1508, was Parakramabahu VIII or Parakramabahu IX, is to arrange the chronological order of Kings from the end of Parakramabahu VI in 1467 upto 1490, the initial year of the King figuring in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**.

4. From Parākramabāhu VI to Parakrāmabahu VIII.

The reign of Parakramabahu VI was closed in 1467 according to all sources. After him the grand son, the son of Ulakudaya Devi was enthroned as Jayabahu, II. Prince Sapumal who was in Jaffna at the time rushed to Kotte, killed Jayabahu and became King as Buvanekabahu VI.

Budugunālankāraya was written when the third year of Buvanekabahu was expired in the year 2015 BE. 2472 AD.²⁰ On this evidence Paranavitana counted and established that Buvanekabahu VI's accession year as 1469.²¹

This king having subjected the leaders of the Satara Korale, set up the **Dedigama inscription** on the 13th day of the bright half of Pōson (June) in his 9th year.²² He also issued **Arankele Sannasa** on the full moon day of the month Medin (February) in 2021 BE, 1479AD²³ and no information as to how long lasted his reign after this date.

The Portuguese writer do Couto informs us that after Buvanekabahu, his son "Caipura Bandara" became king. According to Couto he has not crowned more than four times when he was slain by the King of Satara Korale (Prince Ambulugala) and made himself emperor by force, calling himself Jaya Vira Paracura Mabago, Pandar²⁴, Jaya Vira Parakramabahu. Paranavitana who gave four years to Buvanekabahu's son Pandita Parakramabahu in 1960, **University History of Ceylon**, perhaps going by

this Couto's information, however, in the following year 1961, had to reduce his reign to even less than one year, making him almost a nonentity, in his lengthy paper which created the strange historical problem referred to above. Giving his reason for this sudden change, "The trend of the narrative in the "**Rajavaliya**" gives one the impression that Pandita Parakramabahu did not wield the scepter for even a year, at any rate Vira Parakramabahu would have considered himself the legitimate successor, and counted his regnal years from the demise of Buvanekabahu" says Paranavitana.²⁵ This obviously seems only a defensive excuse and a clumsy explanation.

But his genuine reason for this sudden change, one can clearly see, is to accommodate the 20 years reign of Vira Parakramabahu which had to be pushed back beyond 1490, as he merely accepted the wrong identification made by previous writers that the King in the Kelani Vihara record was Dharma Parakramabāhu.

Had the king been identified as Vira Parakramabahu VIII, that king, as well as Paranavitana, could have come back to their former places held prior to 1961, while Somaratne who blindly followed Paranavitana and C. R. De Silva, who in his turn blindly accepted Somaratne would not have distorted Sri Lankan history of the latter part of the 15th century to that extent as has been done by chapters 5-7 in **Political History of Kotte** of Somaratne and chapters I and II of C. R. de Silva in the **University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka, Volume II**.²⁶

Referring to Pandita Parakramabāhu, Paranavitana says that the **Rajavaliya** is silent on the duration of that King's reign. But **Rājāvaliya** version edited by Vatu Vatte Pemānada Thera, says that this King enjoyed authority for nine years.²⁷ It implies that Pandita Parakramabāhu VII lived upto his 10th regnal year.

Queyroz writing almost contemporaneously with the author of the **Rājāvaliya** informs us that Buvanekabahu's son and the heir was of tender age. His mother **Danamanica Ratnavali** ruled for a span of six months, but troubles usual in the government of women increasing, they elected regents to rule until the Prince was ten years old, when he taking possession of the government; he was called Pandita Parakramabāhu.²⁸

This Portuguese historian seems to have mixed up age and reign with each other when he refers to Sri Lankan Kings.²⁹ Queyroz, in this instance seems to have conveyed that after Mother Danamania's six months rule the regents looked after state affairs until the Prince was in his tenth year of "reign". Ten years of "age" in Queyroz's statement has to be treated as tenth year of king's reign.

When so taken it becomes clear that Parakramabahu lived till his tenth year - agreeing perfectly with **Rājāvaliya** that he enjoyed authority for nine years and with Queyroz that his reign ran upto tenth year under the protection of his mother and regents. These regents of Queyroz, could be “**Sirivardhana Patirāja**” of Kekulandola, and **kuragama himiyāna** who were released from the prison by Buvanekabahu, possibly to give protection to his heir young Prince. When we consider the performance of these two war lords during the ‘**Sinhala Sangaya**’ and the decisive battle they fought against Prince Ambulugala, to protect Pandita Parākramabāhu,³⁰ it is quite possible that this Prince King with the protection of these two regents, could have lived up to his tenth year, when he was slain by Prince Ambulugala who ascended the throne as Vira Parakramabahu VIII; and when he ascended the throne will be revealed later.

Thus Pandita Parakramabahu’s regnal years have to be counted from 1480, on the death of father Buvanekabahu VI. Earlier we noted that we did not have evidence to decide how long Buvanekabahu lived after his **Aramkele sannasa** dated in February of 1479AD. Now we know that he lived till 1480, his eleventh regnal year from 1469AD.

Queyroz’s information that Buvanekabahu’s son and heir Prince was at his tender age when he became King as Parakramabahu, gains support from **Attanagaluvamsaya** which was written by a pupil of Vidāgama Maithreya Mahāsvāmi, while it was being dictated by the Mahāsvāmi. The present writer’s research on **Māhasāmi Sangharājas of Jayawardhanapura** has revealed that Vidagama Maithreya, became Mahāsvāmi only after 1479 AD. possibly in 1480.³¹

As Makuluduwe Piyaratana Thera has quite correctly pointed out Vidāgāma Mahāsvāmi had to dictate the book, because he would have been in extreme old age, at the time of writing the book. The Mahasvāmi had been invited to write the book by the then king “**Srimat Sri Parakramabahu**”.³² This Parakramabahu also has been identified as Parakramabahu VI, by many scholars.³³ But considering the strong evidence that Vidāgama Maithreya was not referred to in any source as Mahāsvāmi prior to 1480, and more such evidence, the present writer fully agrees with Makuluduwe Piyaratana Thera’s view that King Parakramabahu who invited to write the **Elu Attanagaluvamsaya** was Parakramabahu VII and not Parakramabahu VI.

The king has been introduced in the **Attanagaluvamsaya** as “**Kandarpa Darpapramathita Nava Yavvana Sri Niketa**” The word “**Navayavvana**” is the most suitable sinhala word for "teen - age." This agrees fully with Queyroz’s information that Parakramabahu came to throne at his tender age.

We noted earlier that King Parakramabahu, whose 19th year as 2051BE, 1508/9AD. in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** should have ascended the throne in 1489/90AD. we also noted that after 1479, the year of granting Aramkele sannasa, no information about Buvanekabahu VI as to how long his reign lasted. As we saw earlier that his successor lived upto his 10th year, when he was slain by Prince Ambulugala who succeeded him as Vira Parakramabahu; Pandita Parakranabahu's last year and Vira Parakramabahu's first year becomes 1490 AD, which we saw was the year of accession of the King Parakramabahu, whose 19th year given as 2051BE, 1509AD, in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**. Now two problems are solved. Firstly the view held by historians from Louis de Zoysa, H. C. P. Bell through Paranavitana, Somaratne to C. R. de Silva, that the King figuring in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, was Dharma Parakramabahu IX has to be rejected and that he was Vira Parakramabahu VIII has to be established. Secondly the assumption made by us that Buvanekabahu's last year and his successor Pandita Parakramabahu's first year was 1480 AD, and he was succeeded by Vira Parakramabahu VIII in 1490 AD, has become a firm conclusion.

5. Vira Parakramabahu VIII.

Let us now turn to Vira Parkramabahu VIII. Fortunately we have enough source material, mostly his own epigraphical records which help us to arrange chronologically the activities of this important king who ruled the country as the paramount sovereign of Jayawardhanapura Kotte, being second only to his father Parkramabahu the VI. Unfortunately just as in the case of the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, two more of his most important records have been taken away from him and attributed to other Kings by scholars. They will be dealt with in the ensuing discussion.

Let us first examine information from Sinhala sources about Vira Parakramabahu VIII. **Oruvala Sannasa** dated in the 4th year of a King "*Srimat Siri sangabo Sri Parākramabāhu cakravarti Svāmin Vahanse*" has been attributed to Vira Parakranabah VIII, by H.W. Condrington after a long discussion on its internal evidence both paleographical and historical.³⁴ It should be noted that the name and the epithets used for the King in this inscription are exactly the same as those used for the King in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** in question. It is therefore, clear that the King in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** was also Vira Parakramabahu VIII. Only other Parakramabahu who was introduced with the epithet "*Srimat Siri Sangabo*" in the 15th century documents, was Parakramabahu VI, the most famous King of the century. His reign has been precisely decided as 1412 - 1467 AD. He therefore cannot be the Parakramabahu, referred to in the **Kelani Vihara**

Inscription, whose 19th year was 1509 AD. The King in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, therefore, is Parakramabahu VIII. The date of the **Oruvala Sannasa** becomes 2035 B.E. 1492 A. D.

“Srimat Siri Sangaabo Sri Parakramabahu cakravarti Svamin Vahanse” figuring in the **Kudumirissa Inscription**, also has been identified as Vira Parakramabahu, based on the internal evidence. It records that the King granted some lands to improve the *“Agrahāra dāna”*, ordered by his father, the great King, Parakramabahu for various Brahmins. Vira Parakramabahu in the **Kudumirissa Inscription** proclaimed the donation while he was seated on the throne in full regal grandeur attended by Kings, sub Kings and ministers in the *“Chitra Kūṭa Mandapa”* in front of *“Sumangala Prāsāda”* at Jayawardhanapura. The date was, *“Vesanga Pura Dolosvaka”*, the 12th day of the bright half of Vesak (April/May) in the tenth year of the King’s reign.³⁵ The similarity of the epithets of this King with that of King Parakramabahu in the **Kelani Inscription** would suggest that both are one and the same King. The date of the **Kudumirissa Inscription** is 2042 B.E. 1499A.D

It is interesting to note that *“Vesanga pura Dolosvaka”*, the date of the donation in the **Kudumirissa Inscription** has been introduced as the *“Svarṇābhisheka Mangalya dinaya*, the Golden Coronation Day of the fifth year of a King called *“Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Jayavira Parakramabahu chakravarti Svāmin Vahanse”* in a slab inscription at Gadaladeniya.³⁶ It is apparent that the Kings of Sri Lanka in the ancient and medieval times reckoned their regnal years from the day of their first coronation and that they performed coronation ceremony annually on the same day. The Portuguese writer Do Couto was aware of this custom when he says, referring to rulers after Parakramabahu VI “those Kings were accustomed to be crowned once every year on the same day as that on which they were first crowned and for this reason the years of their rule were counted by the number of times that they were crowned.³⁷ It seems to have been customary that the ancient Kings commemorated their Golden Coronation Day, *Svarṇābhisheka Mangalyaya* by performing meritorious acts such as making donations to religious persons and places and granting amnesties to his subjects just as is done today. Just as King Parakramabahu in the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** was busy in proclaiming amnesty for those who asked for it, when he subjugated the hill country prior to this very day, **12th of the bright half of Vesak**, which was also his Golden Coronation day in his 5th year, Parakramabahu in the **Kudumirissa Record** performed a meritorious act by enhancing his father’s *agrahāradāna* donation to Brahmins on this particular day, **12th of the bright half of the month of Vesak in his 10th year.**

These circumstances readily offer the conclusion that the two Parakramabahus figuring in the **Kudumirissa** and the **Gadaladeniya** records are one and the same. The King in the **Kudumirissa Inscription** has been precisely identified, on internal evidence as parakramabahu VIII, and therefore Parakramabahu in the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** too, easily could be identified as Vira Parakramabahu VIII. The date of the Kudumirissa record is 2042 BE. 1499 A.D.

Codrington who edited the **Gadaladeniya Inscription**, having considered the possibility of identifying its King with Vira Parakramabahu VIII, later abandoned that idea, because Vira Parakramabahu in the Kudumirissa and Oruvala documents did not have the epithet "**Jaya Vira**" with which the King in the Gadaladeniya record was introduced. However Codrington himself has pointed out that Parakramabahu VIII was introduced as Vira Parakramabahu by the **Rajaratnakaraya**, the **Culavamsa**, the **Rajavaliya** and also by Queyroz. Couto calls him "**Javira Pracura Mabago**" that is "**Jayavira Parakramabahu**" identical with the King in the Gadaladeniya record.³⁸ When all these sources have introduced Parakramabahu VIII with 'Vira', or **Jaya Vira** it is strange that Codrington refused to identify "Jaya Vira Parakramabahu" in the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** as Vira Parakramabahu VIII, simply because he did not have 'Jayavira' only in two records. On the other hand it is still strange that Codrington, who was ready to accept "**Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabahu**", without "**Jaya Vira**" as the name of Vira Parakramabahu VIII, had totally forgotten the fact that the King in the Kelani Vihra record in question, was also "**Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabahu**" and that therefore, there is a strong possibility for identifying him as Parakramabahu VIII.

"In spite of the difficulty caused by the name, Codrington has been inclined to identify the King in the Gadaladeniya record as Dharma Parakramabahu", for one reason that the subjugation of the Hill Country, recorded in the inscription, fits in with the information attributed to Dharma Parakramabahu in the **Rajavaliya**.³⁹

One has to Keep in mind that the **Rajavaliya** is extremely unreliable with regard to the chronology of events recorded therein pertaining to this period, the best evidence in support of which is the report on the first arrival of the Portuguese.

According to the **Rajavaliya** this event took place in 1522 AD. but it has been unanimously agreed on the authority of Portuguese documents that the date of the first Portuguese visit was 1505/6AD. The **Rajavaliya** date is 17 years later than the correct date. It can therefore be reasonably argued that

the events attributed to Dharma Parakramabahu, by the **Rajavaliya** should be pushed back 17 years beyond 1505. If we identify Parakramabahu whose 19th year of reign is given as 1509 in the **Kelani Inscription**, with Vira Parakramabahu VIII, most of the events recorded in the **Rajavaliya** as events that took place prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, could easily be attributed to Parakramabahu VIII and not to Dharma Parakramabahu as the **Rajavaliya** wants us to believe.

Thus the subjugation of the hill country, the killing of pearl fishing Muslims, fall within the reign of Vira Parakramabahu VIII. According to **Rajavaliya** the King of Kotte invaded the hill country because a certain personage having declared him self king, revolted against the King of Kotte. Some of the offences committed by this self proclaimed ruler of the hill country against the King of Kotte, were creating riots, refusing to pay tax, announcing his self enthronement and "*Panam Ran Gäsveema*", issuing coins.⁴⁰ The King of Kotte who reacted to this situation by invading the hill country, can very well be Parakramabahu VIII whose activities have been erroneously attributed to Dharma Parakramabahu by the **Rajavaliya**.

According to the Gadaladeniya record, the leader of the people in the regions of the hill country, who were granted amnesty by the king was **Menavara Tunayā**, the son-in-law of *Dodamvāla Parakramabā hu Äpā*. In the second part of the inscription this *Menavara Thunaya* has accepted the grant by making a number of promises, such as, to be in complete loyalty to the King, and to refrain from riding on elephants, "*Ran Panamgäsveema*" issuing coins, conferring titles, and digging for precoious stones etc.⁴¹ The offences committed by the Kandyen leader against the King of Kotte, according to the **Rajavaliya** are almost the same; note the special mention of "*ranpanamgäsveema*", in both sources. It is therefore, obvious that both sources speak on one and the same event, namely the subjugation of the hill country by the King of Kotte. The self proclaimed King whose name was not given in the **Rajavaliya** can be known from the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** as *Menavara Tunaya*, the son-in law of *Dodamvala Parakramabahu Äpā*.

Paranavitana has attributed the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** to Parakramabahu VI and identified Dodamvala Parakrama Äpa With Parakrama Äpā, defeating whom Parakramabahu VI came to the throne in 1410 AD.⁴² It should be noted at this point that there appears a "*Dodamvala Parakramaya*" in two slab inscriptions at Alutnuvara, set up by *Senā Sammata Wickramabahu*. It is quite probable that "*Dodamvala Parakramayā*" was the same person figuring in the Gadaladeniya Inscription as *Dodamvala Parakrama Äpā*. *Dodamvala Parakramayā* is one of the leaders of Satara Korale, who pledged loyalty to Wickramabahu, the King of the hill country.

Codrington who made a thorough study on *Senāsammata Wickramabahu's* epigraphical records, decided his initial regnal year to be 1472 or 1473.⁴³ However, the present writer also made a careful study on *Senā Sammata Wickramabahu* and *Dodamvala Parakrama Āpā* making use of new information found in the **Asgiriye Talpata**. His study has revealed that Senā Sammata's first year of reign as 1463 AD. and that the dates of the **Alutnuvara Inscriptions** to fall within 1472-1474.⁴⁴ It is therefore, impossible that the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** which mentions *Dodamvala Parakrama Apā* falls within the reign of Parakramabahu VI, (1412 - 1467AD). The leader who pledged support to King Parakramabahu of the Gadaladeniya record was not *Parakramabahu Āpā.*, but his son-in-law, *Menavara Tunayā*⁴⁵ of the next generation. His date, therefore should be still distant to Parakramabahu VI. Under the circumstances we have to reject Paranavitana's identification of the King Parakramabahu of the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** as Parakramabahu VI.

The foregoing discussion has made it clear that there are no valid objections to identifying "*Siri Sangabo Sri Jayavira Parakramabahu*" in the **Gadaladeniya inscription** as Vira Parkaramabahu VIII, on the strength of both **Kudumirissa** and **Oruvala Sannasa**. We can now conclude that the '*Svarnabhiseka*' day, 12th day of the bright half of Vesak, was the date of the first consecration of Vira Parakramabahu and that was the first day of any regnal year of that king. The date of the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** is 2037 BE, 1494 AD. October

Let us now turn to another inscription which seems to be attributable to Vira Parakramabahu VIII. That is the **Keragala Inscription** of "*Srimat Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabahu chakravarti Svāmin Vahanse*"⁴⁶ The inscription records a decree issued by the king in his 11th year to protect some lands including Keragala which were inherited to "*Sri Rājaguru Vanaratana Mahāsvāmīn Vahanse*".

Paranavitana and many other scholars have identified this King as Parakramabahu VI, because "*Rājaguru Vanaratana Mahāsāmi*" figuring in the inscription was eulogized in the *Hamsa Sandesaya*, which according to those scholars, was written in the reign of Parakramabahu VI. These scholars have mistaken that the Vanaratana Māhimi in Jayawardhanapura during the reign of Parakramabahu VI, was the same as Keragala Vanaratana Māhimi. The present writer's research on "**The Sangha Rajas of Jayawardhanapura**" has revealed that *Rājaguru Vanaratana Māhimi* who resided at Keragala and who was eulogized in the **Hamsa Sanadesaya**, became Mahāsvāmi Sangharāja only after 1500 AD.⁴⁷ Some scholars who

did research on history of Sinhala literature, have argued strongly that Keragala Vanaratana Māhimi mentioned in the **Hamsa Sandasaya** was not the Vanaratana Māhimi mentioned in the **Parevi Sandesaya** and **Jinkālamāli**. The latter resided in jayawardhanapura during the reign of Parakramabahu VI, (1412 - 1467) whereas Rājaguru Vanaratana Māhimi resided at Keragala during the time of a different Parakramabahu, i.e. Parakramabahu VIII. Munidasa Kumaratunga was the first to advance this argument and the other scholar who strongly supported this view was Rapiyel Tennakoon.⁴⁸

Paranavitana who strongly believed that the king eulogized in the **Hamsa Sanadasaya** was Parakramabahu VI, has made a very unsuccessful attempt to analyse a verse in the poem which gives the geneology of the King. Apparently he seems to have interpreted the verse to suit his theory. The verse in question is given below:

dala pārakum buja suratureka siri ga ta
dula buvaneka buja kaptura eyin pa ta
yala me nirindu ehi kanda siri gata dimu ta
pāla in ātiva vādenuya me siri lak ke ta

Paranavitana has taken “*Dala Pārakum*” as Parakramabahu V of Gampola, “*dula Buvanekabuja*” as Buvanekabahu V of Gampola. In order to maintain his theory that Parakramabahu VI (1412 - 1467) was the King in the **Hamsa Sandesaya**, he had to bring in two previous kings with similar names disregarding the qualifications attributed to them in the poem.⁴⁹

When king Parakramabahu eulogized in the **Hamsa Sandesaya**, is considered to be Vira Parakramabahu VIII, the kings mentioned in the verse become more meaningful and fit in with the metaphorical expressions attributed to them by the poet. Then “*Dala Parakumbuja*” is Parakramabahu VI, the greatest King of the era, who founded the daynasty, as such was like a “*suratura*”, celestial tree. “*Dula Buvanekabuja*” then becomes Buvanekabahu VI, Prince Sapumal, adopted son of the former, who was like “*kaptura*” one variety that comes under “*suratura*”, he was the next important king of Kotte. Finally “*me nirindu*” the King “*Parakumbuja*” the brother of Buvanekabahu VI, who was like the stem of the “*Kaptura*”, Buvanekabuja. Under these circumstances the present writer strongly advocates that the king eulogized in the **Hamsa Sandasaya** was not Parakramabahu VI, but Parakramabahu VIII. Therefore the king Parakramabahu mentioned in the **Keragala Inscription** who ordered protections to Keragala lands of **Rājaguru Vanaratana Māhimi** who was also eulogized in the **Hamsa Sandasaya** was the same Parakramabahu VIII. The date of the inscription is 2043BE. 1500AD.

We initiated this discussion in order to ascertain which Pakramabahu was the King mentioned in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** as “*Siri Sangabo Sri Parakramabahu*”. Up to this point we have not seen any valid objection to identify him as Vira Parakramabahu VIII. On the contrary we have valid grounds to identify him as Vira Parakramabahu, while agreeing fully with Paronavitana’s correction, that 2051 BE. 1509 is the 19th year of the King and disagreeing with his identification of Dharma parkramabahu IX as the king mentioned in the inscription. We can now conclude that the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** was set up by Vira Parakramabahu in his 19th year, 1509AD.

We concluded that the amnesty granter in the **Gadaladeniya Inscription** was also Vira Parakramabahu VIII. We also noted on the strength of information furnished in both Kudumirissa and Gadaladeniya records that the King’s “*Svarnābhiseka mangalyaya*” the **Golden coronation day**, in other words, the date he was consecrated as the paramount King, was “*Vesangapura Doḷosvaka*”. We know, now, on the strength of evidence from the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** that **King Parakramabahu VIII ascended the throne in the 12th day of the bright half of Vesak (April / May) in the year BE 2032.(1490 AD.)**

6. The Reign of Vijayabahu VI.

We saw that 1509 was the 19th year of Vira Parakramabahu VIII. The **Rajavaliya** gives him 20 years of reign. Going by the **Kelani Vihara Inscription**, Codrington calculated, the Golden Coronation Ceremony day, the “*Svarnābhiseka mangalyaya vesangapura doḷosvaka*”, 2051 B. E. of the king mentioned in this record to be 1st May 1509.⁵⁰ He also decided that the year of the accession of Vijayabahu was 1509 A. D.⁵¹ This yeilds the result that Parakrmabhu VIII died some time after 1st, May, 1509. In other words, Vijayabahu VI ascended the throne within the period between 1st, May and 31st, December, 1509. Going by the calculation made by Codrington, using the dates mentioned in the **Kelani Vihara Inscription** of Vira Parakeamabahu VIII, and **Kadirana Sannasa** of Vijayabahu VI, **it can be calculated that Vira Parakramabahu VIII died on the 7th of june, 1509, and Vijayabahu ascended the throne on the following day 8th, june, 1509 AD.**

The **Devundara Inscription** which records a grant to “*Nagarīsa Nīla Kovila*” in Devundara, is dated 5th waning moon of Poson of Vijayabahu’s 5th year, 1513⁵² **Kudagama Inscription**⁵³ records 15th bright

half of the month “**Hila**” (Nov) of Vijayabahu’s 6th regnal year 1514. The 15th of bright half of the month ‘*Bak*’ (April) of the 7th year, 1516AD, is mentioned in the **Veragama Sannasa** in which King Vijayabahu ordered grants to Pepiliyana Pirivena for the maintenance of scribes who wrote books.⁵⁴ The **Kadirāna Sannasa** records a grant made to a Brahmin on 15th waning moon of the month of poson of the king’s 9th year, 1517 June 18, when a full solar eclipse was sighted.⁵⁵ The **Keragala Inscription** set up in his 11th year 1520, having recorded the genealogy of *Rajaguru Vanaratana Māhimi*, mentions, about the order issued by the king to protect Angoda Village, which was inherited by Vanaratana Māhimi.⁵⁶ Another inscription from Devundara records a grant of Hittatiya Village to Upulvan shrine, on 7th waning moon of poson (June) of 12th year of Vijayabahu. 1521,⁵⁷ while the 13th year 1521 AD. is mentioned in the Kappagoda inscription which was attested by Vijayasinghe Ekanayake perumal.⁵⁸ This Ekanayake Mudali was one who was on the side of his Lord Vijayabahu in the conspiracy which resulted in the death of Vijayabahu during the incident called ‘Vijayaba Kollaya’ which took place in 1521.⁵⁹

The above Discussion revealed that there were two paramount kings, in Sri Lanka during the period of 31 years from 1490 to 1521, one after the other with no interregnum. They were Vira Parakramabahu VIII and his son Vijayabahu VI. Parakramabahu VIII, having ascended the throne on “*Vesanga Pura Dolosvaka*” 12th of the bright half of vesk (May) 1490A.D., exercised his authority until 4th of the waning moon of poson, 7th June, 1509, issuing royal decrees in 1492, 1494, 1500, and 1509. After the father’s death, Vijayabahu having ascended the throne on the following day, 5th waning moon of Poson, 8th June 1509, ruled until 1521 when he was slain in the “Vijayaba Kollaya”. He has issued royal decrees in 1513, 1514, 1516, 1517, 1520 and 1521. It is therefore clear that there was not even a day of interregnum between the two kings.

Thus Vira Parakramabahu VIII was the paramount sovereign of Sri Lanka around 1505 A. D. in full regal glamour not being a bit concerned of those white coloured handsome Portuguese sailors roaming hither and thither in Colomtota as the **Rejaveliya** wants us to believe, but being occupied in performing his royal duties such as ensuring protection and maintenance of religious establishments like Kelaniya and Keragala.

We are now in a position to arrange events which took place during the reigns of two successive Kings Vira Parakramabahu VIII and son Vijayabahu VI from 1490 - 1521, which is given at the end as appendix 1.

7. Who Was This Dharma Parakramabahu?

-Only a nominal Figure head of no consequence, who led a shadowy and inglorious existence - H. W. Codrington-

In the light of the facts revealed in the foregoing discussion a question arises as to where Dharma Parakramabahu IX could fit in the geneological order of the consecrated King's of Sri Lanka in the beginning of 16th century. He was supposed to be a son of Vira Parakramabahu VIII, and a brother of Vijayabahu VI. He was supposed to have dominated the Sri Lankan political scene around 1505 according to the **Rajavaliya**, Portuguese historians and Sri Lankan historians from 1834 - up till 1995. ie, from G. Turnour through Paranavitana to Somaratne and C. R. de Silva. But we saw in the above discussion that there was no interregnum between the demise of Vira Parakramabahu VIII on 7th June 1509 and the accession of his son Vijayabahu VI on the following day 8th June 1509 AD.

The only epigraphical record, the **Kelani Vihara inscription**, which has been presumed to give him recognition on a wrong interpretation now has been conclusively alienated from him. His only savior is the **Rajavaliya** which has created him and given him undue credit by attributing to him most of the heroic deeds of his father Vira Parakramabahu VIII. Without the **Rajavaliya** Dharma Parakramabahu becomes a nonentity. We can now understand why the **Rājaratnākara** written during the latter part of 16th century, and therefore, the more contemporaneous source than the **Rajavaliya** of the late 17th century, and also the relevant part of the **Mahavamsa** have not even mentioned the name of Dharma Parakramabahu.

However, it should be noted that during the discussion on Donald Ferguson's excellent paper, **Portuguese in Ceylon** presented before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1907, E.W. Perera mentioned about a **Munnesvaram Sannasa** issued in BE 2060 12th year of a king Parakramabahu. According to E.W. Perera, the Sinhala tradition attributed this Sannasa to Dharma Parakramabahu and according to the Sannasa his year of accession was 1504 A.D. The translation of the Sannasa had been filed in P.C. case, Chilawa, No. 15,482. In his final reply, referring to E.W. Perera's Munnesvaram Sannasa, Donald Ferguson put the question back "Is this genuine"? Thereafter this Sannasa was treated as a condemned source.⁶⁰ The **Asgiriye Talpata** has also mentioned the 10th year of Dharma Parakramabahu as 2057 B.E. 1514 A.D. This makes his accession year 1504 A.D.⁶¹ the same date given in the **Munnesvaram Sannasa**.

If there is any substance in this information furnished by the **Munnesvaram Sannasa** and the **Asgiriye Talpata**, there is a slight possibility of Dharama Parakramabahu's existence during 1504 - 1514, the tail end of his father, Vira Parakramabahu's reign and the initial regnal years of Vijayabahu VI. Even so "he would have been only a nominal figure head of no consequence, who led a shadowy and inglorious existence" as Codrington has correctly assessed him.⁶²

