

**Stone Statues and Hollow Statues: The Search for Authenticity in Sinhala Nationalist Discourse**  
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**Abstract**

Authenticity is an abiding concern visible in much of nationalist discourse, especially anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalisms. While modernist theorists of nationalism such as Hobsbawm, Gellner, Kedourie and Anderson tend to highlight the inauthenticity of nationalism - highlighting its modern provenance as opposed to its self-professed antiquity - postcolonial theorists of nationalism such as Chatterjee have been more sensitive to the conditions of its production. The possibility of (re)discovering, (re)animating and deploying authenticity becomes a crucial element in the cultural imaginary of anti-colonial nationalism. While it is important to contest and deconstruct such discourses of authenticity, it is equally, if not more important to be attuned to the contextual factors that shape the desire for authenticity. This paper attempts to trace the discourse of authenticity as it manifests itself in the writing of Anagarika Dharmapala and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who can be considered 'father figures' in the Sinhala nationalist imagination and in turn how the writing of Gunadasa Amarasekara perpetuates this discourse while selectively appropriating the legacies of the father figures.

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