

If it hadn't been for their larger than life thinking, what is left as our great heritage would have been buried a long time ago without any trace. This is how I choose to look at the making of Aba. It certainly is a mammoth effort in Sri Lankan standards, for which the director as well as the producers should be congratulated for their great efforts in thinking and acting 'Big'. This achievement I am sure is a shot in the arm to the ailing cinema industry in Sri Lanka.

In recreating the chronicle in to cinematic form following epical traditions Jackson obviously had encountered many obstacles 'in completing the tapestry' as Colin de Silva stated.



In the absence of any previous works of similar scale and nature covering this era to relate to, the director probably had sought influence from such works in the west. This is particularly evident in some male hairstyles and costumes (Chittaraja's reappearance) and certain scenes (parading Chittaraja for execution), raising concerns on the films resemblance to a western or Christian setting. Maybe this is the artist's intuitive response given his Christian background.

However, it's unlikely a conscious attempt by him to force such features in as widely claimed. One other question would be if the language spoken at the time was so close to what we speak now as depicted. Does it matter?, somehow, the dialogues need to be understood or otherwise accompany subtitles.

The movie covers the period from the birth of Prince Aba up to his coming of age, to pledge for the protection of mother Lanka. There are outstanding contributions from music direction (Nadeeka Guruge), cinematography (Suminda Weerasinghe) and editing (Ravindra Guruge) especially considering a work of this magnitude within the Sri Lankan context. Art direction and make up are noteworthy. The performances of the great cast of Aba, both veterans as well as newcomers are of very high standard with an exceptional performance from Saumya Liyanage.



The film ends hinting a sequel which probably would portray Aba's harsh journey up to the throne of Anuradhapura Kingdom and his reign as the great king Pandukabhaya.

The cinematic experience presented by Jackson of this chapter of our history was indeed commendable.

**Daily News – 10/30/2008**

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 The Epic Tradition of Sinhala Cinema  
 North American Tour  
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# ABA

The story of Prince Pandukabhaya  
 with English subtitles

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Cast:

- Sajitha Anuttara (Pandukabhaya)
- Ravindra Randeniya (Pandula)
- Malini Fonseka (Bhaddakachchana)
- Sabeetha Perera (Urmaada Chitra)
- Saumya Liyanage (Habara)
- Sriyantha Mendis (Parumukhaya)
- Neil Alles (King Panduvasudeva)
- Lucien Bulathsinhala (Abhaya)
- Kanchana Kodituwakku (Deega Gamini)

**SUNDAY MAY 31ST 2009**  
 @ 10:15 AM

**P & G CINEMA**  
 WESTFIELD (MONTGOMERY)  
 MALL (NEAR MACY'S)  
 7101 DEMOCRACY BLVD  
 BETHESDA, MD 20817.  
 301.767.9555

Limited seats available.  
 Early reservation encouraged.  
 For reservation and confirmation  
 email : lakbima1@hotmail.com

PRESENTED BY: DIAS AMARWARDANA & APEKATTIYA

TICKETS: ADULT \$15.00, CHILDREN (10-SAGES ) \$ 5.00,  
 CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE ADMISSION  
 RESERVED SEATS \$20.00

MORE INFO:  
 DIAS 301 774 5512 SAMAN 240 683 9491  
 SUMEDA : 240 683 0672 HARI: 301 774 5512

FILM TRAILER & MORE INFORMATION AT: APEKATTIYA.COM

## Story

By the fifth century BC, the Yakshas, among the ancient peoples of the island of Lanka, had seized overall power. They were however subdued by the Sinha Clan who arrived from North India. The defeated Yakshas thereafter launched insurrection after insurrection against the Sinha Clan. Vijaya was the first to defeat the Yakshas.

He was succeeded by his nephew, Panduwasdeva, a Prince, who arrived from India. It was from the North East of India also that his consort-to-be, Princess Bhadrakachchana of the Royal line of the Shakya Clan came. Paduwasdeva chose as his seat of power, the City of Upatissa, located north of Anuradhapura. Bhadrakchchayana bore him ten sons and finally a beautiful daughter, Chitra. The Royal Astrologers, perusing her horoscope, articulated a horrifying prophesy. They predicted that a son born to Chitra would slay his ten uncles and assume the throne. The ten princess, complete in their faith in the prophesy, plotted to murder their sister. Chitra thwarted their efforts. Finally, she was imprisoned in a tower where she could not encounter any man. Chitra grows to be a beautiful woman.

Then arrives Prince Dighagamani, the son of Queen Bhadrakachchayana's brother. He arrives in the City of Upatissa along with two Yaksha friends, Chittaraja and

Kalawela. Chittaraja is entrusted with the task of guarding the tower. Prince

Dighagamani sets his eyes on Princess Chitra. The two fall in love. In time, Chitra becomes pregnant, the great chronicles report. The brothers, noting that the signs portend the unfolding of the terrible prophesy. They conspire to murder their pregnant sister. However, Queen Bhadrakachchayana prevails on her sons to wait until their sister delivers the baby, requesting them to kill the child only and only if it is a boy. She saves her daughter once again. As her pregnancy closes upon its full term, she prepares herself for a critical political issue. The crown prince is born. His royal uncles are outside the delivery chamber, swords sharpened, ready to murder their nephew. The new born child, Aba, is however spirited away to the distant village Doramadala.

The incensed uncles pursue the scent of royal blood, intent on killing young Aba. They set fire to villages and massacre children of Aba's age in their hundreds. They do not find Aba. The Yakshas of Doramadala protect and nurture the crown prince. And from the village of Doramadala emerged the hero, the liberator of the Motherland. He raises his enormous sword above his head and swears thus: I am committed to the heritage of my Motherland! I will protect my Motherland! I will be at war until I recover my birthright! Aba - The story of Prince Pandukabhaya  
Page Content and Images: Courtesy of aba.lk

## Sri Lanka – ABA a Commendable Presentation



Author, Colin de Silva in his foreword to the book 'Winds of Sinhala' (1982) wrote, "I have woven my novel from the bare threads of facts, introducing the fictitious characters, incidents, customs and ceremonial to complete the tapestry. As for the life and government of early times, I have combined imagination and an assumption of strong Aryan influences stemming from the Indian emperor Chandra Gupta Moriya, with the sparse records available.

What of the story is history then? I do not know, any more than I know what of it is fiction, for it could have all happened just as I have written." Despite its references to Mahavamsa and rock inscriptions, the book created controversy for Colin hinted in his account of the history of Sri Lanka that Velu Sumana, the trusted General of King Kawantissa and Vihara Maha Devi, who later played a key role in the war against King Elara, would have been the father of Prince Dutu Gemunu and not King Kawanthissa.

Almost after a quarter century Jackson Anthony's film 'Aba' has aroused a similar controversy by questioning the paternity of the young prince Aba, who eventually ruled the island as King Pandukabhaya. The film claims that the Prince had 'Yakkha blood-seeds' disputing what's said in Mahawamsa that Deega Gamini was his father. The point Jackson makes here is that it is the very reason for a prince believed to be of Sinha Clan to be protected by Yakkha

Clan. This and several other critiques and allegations have led to an ongoing debate on the production.

It is further alleged that Jackson has deliberately distorted the facts to undermine the origin of the Sinhala race. This I doubt considering his efforts and dedication to research and produce the highly acclaimed TV series 'Sinhala Maha Wansaya', and his consistent comments hailing 'Hela culture'.



Despite all this controversy Aba has been able to draw many a crowd to the theatres in Sri Lanka, breaking all previous box office records. Similarly its Sydney premiere held on 13th Sunday was probably an all-time success, running full house in both shows.

Internationally known Sri Lankan architect late Geoffrey Bawa once told the students of architecture that what he admired most in the history of architecture in Sri Lanka was the ability of the ancient kings to think 'big' in designing and construction.



## Starring

- **Editor** : Ravindra Guruge
- **Art Director** : Udeni Subodhi Kumara
- **Music Director** : Nadeeka Guruge
- **Producer** : Justin Belagamage
- **Actor** : Bimal Jayakodi
- **Make-up Artists** : Wasantha Wittachchi
- **Actor** : Lucian Bulathsinhala
- **Actor** : Sriyantha Mendis
- **Actor** : Neil Alles
- **Director** : Konganige Joseph Malsi Jackson Anthony
- **Assistant Director** : Anura Wijesinghe
- **Actor** : Ravindra Randeniya
- **Main Actor** : Sajitha Anuththara
- **Actress** : Wannu Arachchige Malani Senehelatha Fonseka
- **Actress** : Sabeetha Perera
- **Actor** : Saumya Liyanage