

# Alternative to Dalada Veediya: Bridge or tunnel?

multi-storey car parks, to relocating some of the schools away from the city centre and subsidizing the construction of public amenities such as markets and shopping facilities in the outersuburbs."

It is obvious that there should be some Development Authority for Kandy composed of some local persons who know the problems of Kandy as described in the quote above and not of experts "foreign" to Kandy to plan and enforce these necessities, a Development Authority which can be firm and bring discipline to the city and not allow groups of trades men dictate and run the city.

The trees on the lake fund in Sangaraja Mawatha no doubt add to

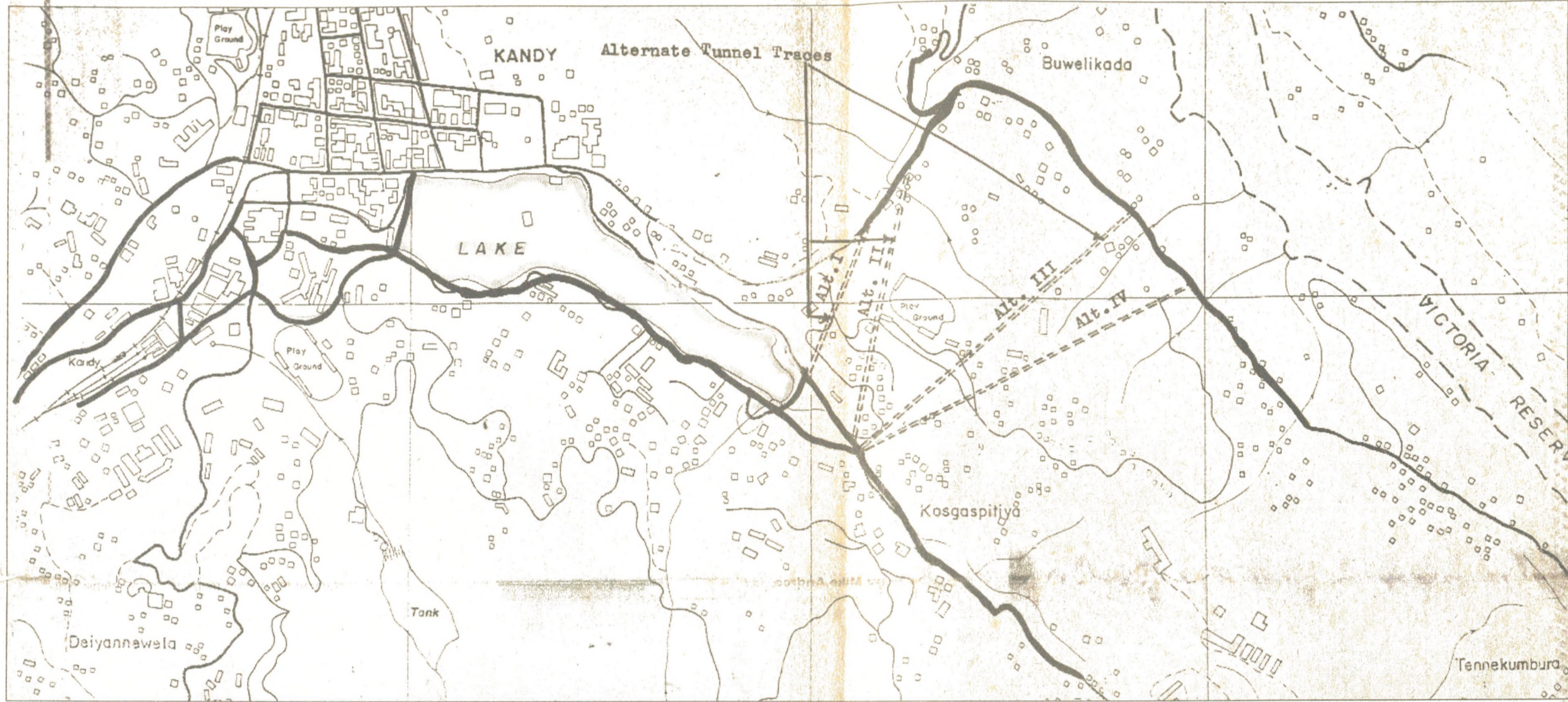
Annona glabra roystonia regia and swietenia macrophylla. Annona glabra, a small tree, appears to be spreading along the margin of the lake".

The majority of these trees are of no aesthetic value, and are exotic trees like Tebebuia Rosea, Ipil Ipil, Araliya and common trees like mango, kotamba, Domba, pol, kithul, puwak, bamboo, andara, Kaputgedi, pines, etc. are the ones among the few worthy indigenous, endemic trees that cover the bank.

I refer to the above because a major reconstruction of Sri Sangaraja Mawatha and the re-forming of the Lake bund will necessitate the removal of some of these unwanted

the landscape and the city now with a vision for at least beyond 5 to 6 years and not for tomorrow. This is the time one should give to repair the lake bund and bring back the greenery, not with Teboibia Rosia and other exotic trees but truly Sri Lankan indigenous trees which can be properly managed.

For the purpose of this development it will be necessary to take every inch of land that is available on the hill side upto street lines which have been allowed to build upon or enclosed with temporary permits. The Maligawa Authorities and the Kandy Municipal Council should co-operate by yielding some of their lands. The next important thing is to mark the original border of the lake



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It was a road through Udawattekele and now it is a bridge over the lake! All to overcome the closure of the road alongside the Sri Dalada Maligawa.

There is much agitation by certain sections of the Kandy population, especially those resident beyond the Maligawa in the Tennekumbura, Lewella and the now elite Balagolla area and some of the business community to open this road. Everybody should appreciate their problem and show their concern to find a quick solution. Even others who want to get across would no doubt wish to go through the shortest route rather than take a devious diversion route.

However, after observing the present operation over the past one and a half years or so and comparing the present traffic flow with what it was in the city traffic congestion, then and considering the re-development programme of Kandy as the heritage City it is meant to be, I am very strongly of the view that the road by the Maligawa should not be a public highway again. All Buddhists will agree that the first priority should be the sanctity of the Sri Dalada Maligawa as much as its security and certainly not the making its neighbourhood a part and parcel of a town which has no controls, discipline or a proper maintenance.

Of equal priority of course is the security of the Sri Dalada Maligawa, certainly not a passage for the carriage of traffic alongside such a sacred edifice like the Sri Dalada Maligawa.

All Buddhists likewise eagerly look forward to the shifting of the courts complex from its present housing in the old buildings which form part of the heritage city.

Obviously the authorities concerned accept this situation. That is the reason why our ministers and city fathers keep thinking of different proposals to pass the Sri Dalada Maligawa on to the Tennekumbura side. The most recent of these is a proposal to have a bridge over the lake which will cut short the distance negotiated round the lake by about one and a half kilometres. This has been decided as a suspension bridge and estimated to cost a rupees 300 million.

A bridge at the proposed point in

my opinion will in no way solve the traffic congestion on the Lake Circuit which is what the people complain about. It could sure make it worse. From an aesthetic point of view and environmental point of view this proposal is worse than the one to cut a road through Udawattekele.

The Kandy Lake and Udawattekele are as much part and parcel of the heritage city and should equally be safeguarded. The maintenance and upkeep of these should therefore truly be functions within the ambit of the Municipality whatever other Ministries or Departments get involved in providing the expertise. As national assets the central government should provide the funds for their upkeep.

It would be worthwhile to digress here for a while and recall why King Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe built the Lake in the year 1818. The king does not appear to have written this anywhere. So far no historian has quoted anything authentic on the matter. But we have heard various attributes to this and all of them lead to the one final conclusion that it was obviously to make the percents of the Sri Dalada Maligawa and thereby the then Kandy serene and beautiful. I have heard it say that the green of the Udawattekele in the background, the cloud effect of the Walakul Bemma and the Lake in the foreground gave such a pleasing and serene effect to the setting of the Sri Dalada Maligawa. Perhaps he created the missing link of the then traditional 'the temple, the tank and the field' concept of ancient Sri Lanka by creating this lake in such fine artistic style.

Unfortunately it is all gone today with a growing live city taking its place. But fortunately a watchful UNESCO and some civic minded citizens have come forward to arrest a further deterioration of the city and preserve whatever could be retrieved. As is common in this type of situation this may pinch and inconvenience some, but they should all rise above personal inconvenience and try to bolster the pride of their city and its heritage.

The decision to build a bridge over the lake to ease traffic congestion, although as bad as the decision to cut a road through Udawattekele (aesthetically and environmentally), and although it may not solve the traffic congestion but could make it worse by

the construction of a bridge itself, it brings us closer to a more sensible and realistic all time solution. We see a light in the distance!

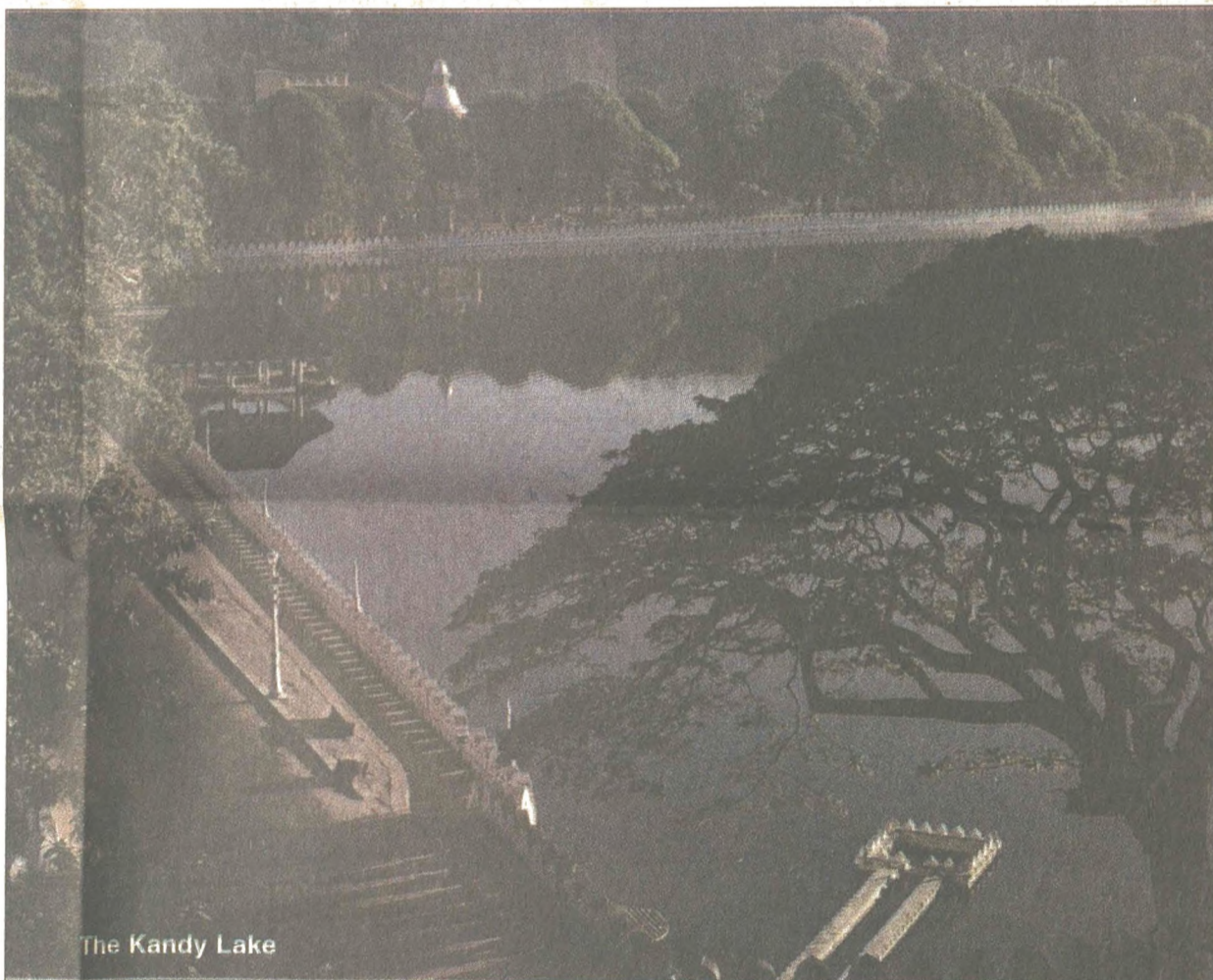
The intrinsic value of this proposal is the acceptance of the closure of the road by the Sri Dalada Maligawa and that being bestowed to the Sacred Temple. The revelation of the acceptance of this parameter gives the basis for planning of any alternate system of roads and communication.

Secondly the fact that the proposed bridge is almost half way on the Sri Sangaraja Mawatha — Ampitiya road junction reveals the acceptance of the use of Sri Sangaraja Mawatha as the East — West link road on this particular proposal even to this extent. There can be no doubt that engineers, if any, who planned this should have in their proposal suggested improvements to at least this stretch of Sri Sangaraja Mawatha from Wace Park to the proposed bridge.

The proper development of Sri Sangaraja Mawatha is one of the greatest and most important development projects for the City of Kandy today. It is not only linked with the problem of traffic, but equally with the development and preservation of the Lake, the development of the much spoken of Heritage City, Cultural Triangle activities, the development of the suburbs beyond Lewella and Tennekumbura, Tourism and a complete face lift to Kandy Town.

A properly widened and streamlined Sri Sangarajah Mawatha, with proper bus halts out of the traffic lanes, restricted parking, etc. is quite essential. The erosion of the banks of the lake must be stopped and for this, as an immediate first step, joy rides in speed boats which by itself is a security risk to the Maligawa must be banned. Kandy News Editorial of July 2000, last para well indicates that the people have got the message of the professionals right. It is worthwhile quoting:

"If such a large sum of money is available to ease the traffic congestion in Kandy, it is better to consider other more cost-effective alternative solutions that may be available. These range from simple yet effective steps such as regulating parking around the Lake and widening that road, to constructing alternative roads to divert long-distance traffic away from the city and construction of one or more



the greenery which beautify the landscape. But all these trees will be fallen in the lake in the next five to six years if the corroding of the lake bund is not arrested forthwith. Most of them now are in a precarious situation, leaning onto the lake. Some are already in the water. There are some concerned citizens and organisation in Kandy which take great pain and campaign to preserve these trees as if they are a national asset. Good upto a point but not all the way. What do you get in them. According to a listing in an article in the Wild Life and Nature Protection Society Journal "LORIS" by Gamini Hittinayake, Colin Peiris and Upali Ekanayake of the Department of Crop Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, titled "Nature on the Lake — Will the Kandy Lake retain its beauty" it says:

"Over 450 individual trees are present around the lake's perimeter. These belong to 58 species, the most common of which are Tabebuia roaca, Acacia auriculiformis, Mangifera indica, Peltophorum pterocarum,

trees. The public that may raise a hue should be educated regarding the project in hand. This is most important. They should be shown how and in what time it will be brought back. And as important is to see that the public will be least inconvenienced during the construction period which should be as short be as possible — perhaps one year the most.

It is not an equal width parallel sided road that we will expect from the highway engineers but a streamlining of the existing road by removing the unnecessary curves, converting them to bus bays and parking bays, getting some aesthetically pleasing short bridges over well developed silt traps thus eliminating the many curves and with a pedestrian walk along the waters edge on the lake side.

It will be necessary to enlist the expertise of the University of Peradeniya and the Department of Agriculture (Botanical Gardens Division) to preserve the "Nature on the Lake" and "retain its beauty". Foreign Experts are not necessary.

What is required is to plan a road,

and reclaim every inch that has been washed off and eroded by the lake. On an eye estimate it is obvious that at least 10-12 feet have eroded in most places. If necessary at certain points encroach a couple of feet into the lake where no harm will be done to its appearance. Mark the trees which need to be preserved, if at all, and so adjust the road at such points. Aim on a four lane road with a centre, well lit median, planted up in Bonzai style, and a pedestrian walk on the waters edge under a green canopy.

Finally, tunnel through Dharmaraja Hill to Tennekumbura road from a suitable point at the Ampitiya road junction to join with Tennekumbura road preferably at a point above the Lewella Road junction where it will come level on the same contour with the Ampitiya Road junction on Sri Sangaraja Mawatha. This will give easy access to Sirimalwatte and Polgolla areas also through the recently developed Lewella Road and Bridge. The trace of this tunnel, the start and the end, and the design of