

# A place to heal the mind

A calm and peaceful building, built on water and embracing nature, the Seemamalakaya at Mahindaramaya Temple at Ethul Kotte is a place to heal the mind and rejuvenate the soul



Architects: Dharshini Gamage and Lal Gamage | Structural Engineer: Deepal Wickramasinghe



A Seemamalakaya is traditionally built as a place of meditation and worship for the monks of the temple as well as for the devotees. It is also used by the monks as a venue for discussions on temple matters and forums with other clergy. Thus it is usually built as a detached structure, away from the main temple and surrounded by water.

The seemamalakaya at Mahindaramaya was declared open in February 2006. Today the building stands on the waters of the Diyawanna oya surrounded by its serene, natural environment and is being used by the monks and the devotees of the temple. Tranquility of the built environment coupled with natural setting provides a 'stress-releasing' feeling, allowing the visitor to push away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The creation of this building has incorporated traditional building forms with modern materials and technology. This is reflected in the use of rough-cut natural stones, marble, timber, aluminium roofing and cladding, moulded aluminium and brass. A pedestrian bridge, stretching over the water, links the Seemamalakaya to the grounds of the temple.

The architects have paid special attention to lighting in order to enhance the peaceful environment by creating a glow of soft illumination, 'as if traditional clay oil lamps are being lit in a rural temple,' as described by the architects. This has been achieved by using yellow and white LED lights.

The temple paintings by veteran artist Karunasiri Wijesinghe also symbolise nature, with line drawings in a single colour creating a new tradition in temple paintings.

