

## **BUDDHIST HOMELAND: LAND OF NATURAL BEAUTY**

Nabiollah Masoumi<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

Sri Lanka as a main Buddhist country is welcoming many people who come to visit beauties of the Island. Buddhist culture and historical traditions such as ceremonies and religious festivals beside attractive nature of Sri Lanka, is motivation for people around the world to come and visit Sri Lanka every year.

Buddhism was introduced into Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BC by Venerable Mahinda, and a branch of the Bodhi Tree was brought to the land and the first monasteries and Buddhist monuments were established.

Visitors of the country most of the time are seeking the trace of Buddhist culture in the way which people behave and in the land which people live.

Hospitality and kindness of Sri Lankan people is remarkable and their characters are considered as Buddhist way of life which trained them to have compassion toward all humans and living beings.

Natural attraction of the Island entitled Sri Lanka as the pearl of Asia. Sri Lankan culture is culture of beauty and Buddhist way of life is the way of perceiving beauty in terms of freshness and aliveness of nature. Even full moon day in Sri Lanka is holyday and it shows that how Buddhist people are fascinated by aesthetic senses.

Preservation of natural beauty is an important task of people with respect to Buddhist tradition. Friendly interaction of human with environment is sign of compassion and gratitude in Buddhist culture toward Mother Nature.

In the Buddha sutras, there are many references which indicate great men appreciate the beauty of landscapes. A Buddhist can look at a scene of nature and perceive truth in calmness. He can see the essence of anicca in the rhythm of nature: falling blossoms, rotting leaves, and seasonal changes.

---

<sup>1</sup> M.Sc. GIS and remote sensing , PGIS ,Peradeniya University , Sri Lanka

Buddhist view on trees and forests are unique in history of thought. Bodhi tree is one of the most sacred symbols in Buddhism. Lord Buddha, was born, enlightened and passed away under the tree. Tree and forest is highly appreciated and well cared in Buddhism. Buddhist temples are built in eyeeful forests, surrounded with amazing landscape.

Lord Buddha in Ariyapariyesanaa Sutra explained how the beauty of forest and landscape idealize the place for a clansman to make effort:

“There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a delightful forest so I sat down there thinking, ‘Indeed, this is an appropriate place to strive for the ultimate realization of that unborn supreme security from bondage, Nirvana”.

### **Objective of research**

This paper is trying to say that beauty of nature in Sri Lanka is the sign of Buddhist compassion toward nature, though protection of environment is not only for its beauty, and even is not only the moral responsibility of human being but it is matter of our survival.

In this view promotion of Buddhism has the best aesthetic way besides being compassionate toward all living beings. This is the best affirmative way of introducing Buddhism to visitors.

People around the world in their visit of Sri Lanka, encounter the Island’s nature. Cleanness and greenness of our home is the start point for their deep exploration in other aspects of our culture.

The question is that how nature and environment is treated in development process or in local activities in Sri Lanka?

And How Buddhist community can help to save natural beauty of the Island?

### **Materials and Methods**

There is two different aspects for this paper which are compliment for each other.

- Research on amount of environment devastation in previous decades in central province of Sri Lanka (for instance) by utilizing remote sensing and GIS (Geographic information system) technics.
- Seeking the way that sangha community can help to protect our natural beauty.

Utilizing GIS and remote sensing (RS) technology shows the amount of devastation but prevention and protection is coming through education.

### **GIS and RS Methodology**

In the first step by classification of two satellite images of “Landsat” which are captured at 2003 and 2013, the amount of deforestation will be identified and visualized. In the next step the cause of deforestation, such as urbanization, development, farming, forest fire, etc. will be analyzed and discussed.

Analysis will be done through GIS software’s by spatial analysis and overlay methods. The amount of deforestation and natural devastation will be mapped and visualized.

### **Required software’s**

Spatial analysis will be performed by Arc Map 10.2 software and image processing and Image classification by ERDAS 2014.

### **Results**

Historical data shows that forest degradation and destruction has increased dramatically in previous decades. In the 1920s, the island had a 49 percent forest cover but by 2005 this had fallen by approximately 20 percent. Only between 1990 and 2000, Sri Lanka lost an average of 26,800 ha of forests per year.

From December 2013 to March 2014 several forest fires occurred in Kandy District. Five forest fires was visible from the premise of Peradeniya University and Kandy city in same period of time. The most disturbing fact is that forest fires in Sri Lanka is manmade.

Hunters start fire for hunting and farmers to have more agricultural land. Rapid urbanization, modernization, industrial development are other main cause of environment destruction.

**Discussion:**

There is an ancient Buddhist tale that tells of a mythic tree whose vast canopy provides shade and whose abundant fruit can be harvested freely by anyone. But when a greedy person stuffs himself with fruit and then breaks off one of the branches, the tree stops bearing fruit<sup>4</sup>.

Lord Buddha was a great teacher and tradition of teaching is well preserved through sangha community.

Preservation of nature is not possible by a little number of people. It is a common responsibility of society. Sangha community can teach our generations to protect nature and to preserve its beauties.

Education is the main solution in protection of nature. Our children should become sensitive about beauty of nature. They should know that it is their right to have clean, green and fresh environment in their old age and for their generations.

Beauty is appreciated in Buddhism and promotion of Buddhism is protection of beauty. And the best way of introducing Buddhism to non-Buddhist people is presenting our home green, clean and beautiful.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Beauty, Forests, Education, GIS & remote sensing.

**References**

[http://www.globalvisionlk.org/publications/Sri%20Lanka%92s\\_Environmental\\_Challenges.pdf](http://www.globalvisionlk.org/publications/Sri%20Lanka%92s_Environmental_Challenges.pdf)<sup>4</sup> Caring for the Earth as Buddhist Practice, Gil Fronsdal September 21st, 2013

Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Wikipedia.

Forest and Buddhism, published in 1965 / Publisher Kim, Hee Ok, available at: <http://www.dgupost.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=500>

Sri Lanka's Environmental Challenges, Ram Alagan available at: