

# **Attitudes of Local Communities towards Heritage Management and Tourism at the Sacred City of Anuradhapura**

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## **Introduction**

It is believed that the sustainability of heritage sites lies in a healthy mutual relationship among three key aspects. Ideally, the heritage resource, local community and tourism may each contribute positively to the others well being. Ross and Wall's Ecotourism Paradigm (1999) also emphasizes that the tourism planning and management should ensure ideal relationship among above mentioned three variables. Scholars of heritage studies have long identified the significance of local community as owner and custodian of the heritage and they often identified as the key stakeholders in heritage tourism (Nuryanti, 1996; Serageldin, 1986). The host community living in and around heritage sites is increasingly afforded the opportunity to make decisions over their own heritage resources and livelihood infrastructure (Cochrane & Taper, 2006). Therefore, their perception among many other stakeholders is a strong factor in determining successes and failures of heritage policy and plan implementation. The main issue in most developing countries, in the process of heritage conservation and heritage tourism, some outside stakeholders gain more advantages while local community compensate too much. Therefore, achieving the balance between heritage conservation, tourism and local public aspirations is a tremendous challenge facing in world heritage sites today.

Using the Sacred City of Anuradhapura (SCA), a UNESCO world heritage site and a main religious tourist destination in Sri Lanka, as a case study, taking local community perspective, this research empirically examine the nature of linkage of heritage resource conservation and tourism development at the particular site.

## **Methodology**

This research was based on one case study and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. An ethnographic approach and methods such as interviews, field work and questionnaire survey was employed, as the study focus is the local residents. To measure perceptions and attitudes of local

residents, questionnaires with a 7-point Likert scale was designed and administered in the field among villagers. In addition to these methods mapping and photographs were also used. Field research was conducted from 2009-2010 on four occasions. All activities during these occasions included: collection of secondary data; conducting interviews; questionnaire surveys and observations. Major interested parties identified were local villagers, including local owners of tourism related businesses, laborers of conservation projects and government officers and general public. The questionnaire survey was conducted applying Likert scale in five selected villages in and around the city including: *Kurunegala* junction (to the south of the city), *Jafna* junction (to the East of the city), *Devanampiytissapura* (near *Tissawewa*), the Citadel (centre of the ancient city), peasant settlements north of *Abhayagiriya* area, and *Mihindupura* resettlement scheme. Two hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed, of which 232 were returned and 216 were suitable for analysis.

### Key Findings

**Table 1: Community Attitudes on Heritage Conservation at SCA**

	Percentage						
	Totally disagree	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Hard to say	Agree	Agree Strongly	Totally agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1).I have high sense for safeguarding the Buddhist heritage resources & wish to be more aware and engage in heritage resource conservation and tourism of SCA and express my views.	8.3	6.2	10.2	19.3	<b>17.5</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>23.2</b>
2).I think the	<b>25.7</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>15.2</b>	10.5	12.5	3.4	8.3

past development plans of SCA have reflected our needs							
3).I am clear of the future plan direction.	<b>28.5</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>19.3</b>	12.3	5.8	4.2	5.4
4).I Think cultural and natural environment of SCA has been disfigured by developments.	<b>25</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>27.8</b>	7.3	6.2	6.3	5.2
5).I am happy about the way that monuments and sites have been conserved.	3.5	5.2	6.3	10.5	<b>21.5</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>25.9</b>
6).Authorities are listening to us concerning heritage conservation.	<b>32.2</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>20.4</b>	8.2	7.3	6.6	4.9

Source: ?

Various types of quantitative and qualitative data obtained through surveys, interviews and field observations were analyzed from three viewpoints of heritage sustainability: heritage resource safeguarding, heritage tourism, and local community well-being.

Majority of community believed they had a high sense of responsibility towards safeguarding the Buddhist religious heritage of SCA. When asked if they wish to be more aware about the situation of heritage resources and tourism and to engage and express their views, 56 percent indicated they would like to be more aware about the situation, while 19 percent did not express their opinion, and 24 percent expressed their reluctance. They are not happy with the authoritative approach of government officers involved in conservation and tourism related activities. Qualitative interviews shed some light on the reason why a considerable number of villagers lack interest about getting informed and engaged in conservation and

tourism and express their views. “Authorities would not listen to us; it is merely a waste of time and energy”. When asked whether past development programs have reflected their wants and needs, most of them indicated that past programs had not reflected their requirements and neither were they clear about future plans. Only 17 percent agreed that natural and cultural environment had been disfigured by development. They are happy with the appearance and presentation of monuments and sites after conservation (specially *Abhayagiriya* and *Jetavana* monastic complexes). As far as tourism is concerned, results show they were always friendly towards visitors (90%). Many of them (70%) indicated their interest to work in the industry. Majority (78%) did not think visitor behavior adversely impacted their life style. These results very clearly indicated that community at the site have positive perception and expect tourism will bring about increased quality of life. When we put these results of SCA in to Doxy’s Index of Irritation (Doxy, 1975) and Buttler’s Tourism Destination’s Life Cycle (Butler, 1980), we noticed that locals are psychologically in between *Euphoria* (local enthusiasm for tourism, curiosity, mutual feelings of satisfaction for both hosts and guests) and *Apathy* (indifference to tourists who become a familiar sight and tourists targeted for profit-making) and in the development stage. However, majority of them either disagreed (43%) or felt it hard to say (19%) when asked if they felt their quality of life was positively changed by tourism.

**Table 2: Community Attitudes on Heritage Tourism at SCA**

	Percentage						
	Totally disagree	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Hard to say	Agree	Agree Strongly	Totally agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1).I am always friendly towards tourists and happy with tourism	2.2	3.5	1.1	3.5	25	33.3	30.4
2).I think tourism is a better source of income	13.3	16.2	19.5	19.3	11.9	10	10.2

and it has improved quality of our life							
3).I would like to work in tourism industry	3.2	8.8	10.2	5.4	<b>27.5</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>20.3</b>
4).Visitors behavior do not make any disturbance to our life style	3.4	5.8	5.5	7	<b>26</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>25.8</b>
5).Tourism is a best means of securing income to meet the cost of heritage conservation	8.3	10.5	5.7	10.5	<b>27</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>23.8</b>
6).We have opportunities to participate in heritage & tourism planning	<b>31.5</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>25.9</b>	4.4	3.3	5.4	2.2

The data also provided useful information for local benefits and local engagement, many respondents held government or private sector jobs related to heritage conservation or tourism, but only a small proportion (31%) was satisfied with their income. Their involvement in heritage and tourism planning at decision making level was very low and many respondents felt that they did not have effective mechanism to get their views heard. These local residents (76%) know very well all the mega heritage conservation projects are run by resources generated through tourism and international donations. Complaints could be heard constantly about the consequences on their life resulting from the implementation of relocation and resettlement programs. Most of relocation started after the UNESCO designation of Anuadhapura as a world heritage in 1982, and it has not been completed until the time of the research as was indicated in three plans: Anuradhapura Preservation Plan (1942) Anuradhapura Sacred Area Planning Scheme (1984)

and Greater Anuradhapura Development Scheme (1998). Asking if the villagers were willing to move from the site, most of them were agreeable to move although there were a few residents in the Citadel who had some problems such as loss of means of living, dissatisfaction with compensation and equity issues.

### **Conclusion**

The local community attitudes about heritage conservation and tourism in SCA have been studied in this research. Judging from the feedback of the quantitative and qualitative information, certain conclusions could be drawn. With regards to the heritage resource conservation, they held interest and enthusiasm and they believe that tourism would provide an incentive for the conservation of their heritage. However, a considerable number of them worked in conservation and tourism related jobs directly or indirectly and only a few of them were satisfied with the economic gains. They seemed to lack motivation to take part in heritage and tourism planning and decision-making since there is no proper mechanism. However, overall impressions reflect both positive and negative attitudes towards heritage conservation and tourism at SCA. Therefore, sustainability of the site is an issue to be addressed by the future plans.

**Keywords:** Anuradhapura; Conservation; Heritage; Local Community; Tourism;

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