

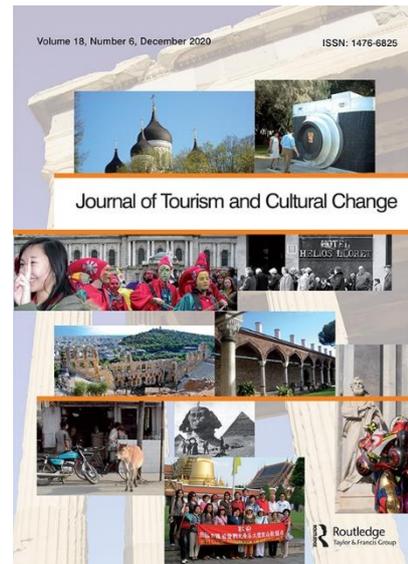
# Author Accepted Manuscript

## Buddhist gaze and power in a post-war destination: case study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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DOI: [10.1080/14766825.2020.1849241](https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2020.1849241)

To appear in: **Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change**



Received date : 01 September 2019

Revised date : 14 October 2020

Accepted date : 04 November 2020

**Citation:** Cheng, Li., Samarathunga, WHMS., & Weerathunga, P.R. (2019). Buddhist Gaze at a Post-war Destination. *Journal of Tourism & Cultural Change* (Taylor & Francis) (DOI: [10.1080/14766825.2020.1849241](https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2020.1849241)).

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# **Buddhist gaze and power in a post-war destination: case study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores how Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism is constructed in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, a post-war reunified state, through post-war travels. Sri Lankan government and the military forces have recreated Buddhist temples and monuments that were destroyed in the war and have re-introduced Buddhist signs and symbols. Thus, Sinhalese Buddhists visiting Jaffna gaze upon the region with a sense of ownership fueled by the triumphalism. This study adopts Michel Foucault's discourse on power to reach its objectives and employs discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis to analyze the descriptive data. The study finds that the Sinhalese Buddhist Gaze in Jaffna is abstracted as omnipresent in a tripartite system extracted from ancient Sinhalese Buddhist notions: *Rata* (country), *Jathiya* (ethnicity), and *Aagama* (religion).

**Keywords:** Buddhist gaze, Foucault, post-war tourism, Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism, Sri Lanka tourism, tourist gaze

## **1. Introduction: Power, Religious Nationalism, Tourist Gazes, and Travel between Separated and Reunited States**

Tourism and power have a distinct relationship. Western tourists travelling to the Eastern world, especially to formerly colonized countries, often gaze upon the places they visit and the people they encounter with a sense of supremacy. Similarly, in domestic travel, different gazes of power occur between the rich and poor, urban and rural, ethnic majority and ethnic minority, and main and minor religious groups. During such travels, prejudice is at times unavoidable due to ethnic and religious nationalism and disparities in purchasing power, education, and literacy. It is difficult to develop a discourse regarding tourism and power without referring to Michel Foucault's theories of power (Foucault 1982, 1991). Although many tourism studies (Huan, 2016; Gelbman & Collins-Kreiner, 2018; Marshall & De Villiers, 2015; Perkins & Thorns, 2001) have been conducted utilizing John Urry's "Tourist Gaze" notion, research that considers Foucault's perspective on "Power and Tourism" is rare, with the exception of works by Cheong and Miller (2000), Hollinshead (1999), and Maccannell (2001). Adopting the "Medical Gaze" theory, John Urry introduced the theory of "Tourist Gaze" in the early 1990s. This theory grew in popularity because of its practical application in the tourism industry. The tourist gaze mainly focuses on identifying tourist's experiences based

on visual encounters (Urry 1990; Urry 2002) and describes how tourists gaze upon or see the sceneries, places, landscapes, and townscapes with which they are not familiar (Samarathunga & Cheng, 2020). However, further research is required on the “power gaze” and “inspecting gaze” as they relate to Tourism and Power discourse that was originally introduced by Foucault (Cheong & Miller, 2000).

As this paper comprises an examination of the ways in which the Sinhalese Buddhist gaze was created in post-war Sri Lanka, it is important to first discuss what Foucault means by “power.” In his book “The History of Sexuality” (1978), Foucault states;

*By power, I do not mean ‘Power’ as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation, which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body (1978, pp. 92)*

This reflects the omnipresent nature of power, which is spread across society.

Ethnic nationalism and religious nationalism are two distinct ideologies through which power is exhibited to other ethnic and religious groups (Premasiri, 2006; Walton, 2016). Since 1970s, new types of religious nationalism have appeared, mainly in Europe, that challenge the notion of civic nationalism (Juergensmeyer, 2019). In his book *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Nation State* (1993), Juergensmeyer questioned whether religious clashes would cause a new Cold War. Twenty-six years later, that question has been answered: Muslim movements in Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries (Voll, 2015); Christian movements in the West (Graziano, 2017; Mislin, 2016; Pattillo-lunt, 2017); and Hindu (Battaglia, 2017) and Buddhist (Devotta, n.d.; Stewart, 2014) movements in South Asia have challenged the notion of a secular state.

A recent study (Shin, 2005) claims that people travel between divided nations for five main purposes: pleasure/holiday, business, visiting friends and relatives, education, and general travel purposes. North and South Cyprus, North and South Korea, Israel and Palestine, and Nicaragua and Costa Rica provide good locations for examples of traveling between separated states (Altinay, 2000; Shin, 2005). However, there are typically no official travel records between separated states due to different types of restrictions (Butler & Mao, 1996) that depend on the type and strength of the relationship between two states. These include normalized inter-governmental relations; unofficial relations; no relations; an absence of restrictions; one-sided restrictions; and two-sided restrictions (Butler & Mao, 1996). The power vested by the controlling group or party decides the nature of the relationship with the rival group, defining the level of travel and tourism.

Travel restrictions, wars, epidemics, and political controls impose barriers to tourists’ travels (Pearce, 1987), limiting their gaze. In such scenarios, power comes to the fore. If one group has the power to influence tourists’ behavior, they are able to disrupt tourists’ gaze. Nevertheless, tourists’ desire to gaze upon a destination tends to increase when a destination is made inaccessible for a long period due to such a power struggle. Travelling between rival states under unfavorable political conditions carries a great risk. However, despite such high personal danger, people continue travelling (Pearce, 1987) for many reasons including economic necessities, religious obligations, family ties, political requirements, and pleasure (Butler & Mao, 1996).

Sri Lanka was a divided nation from 1981 to 2009 under two controlling parties with military power. Out of nine provinces, two were partly controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and the rest of the country was governed by the Sri Lankan government. Butler and Mao (1996) defined a politically divided state as a “quasi-state” that was once a single country but has been subdivided due to both internal and external reasons. They further identify religion and ethnic origin as internal reasons and colonization/ decolonization, occupation, and war as external reasons (Butler & Mao, 1996) for such partitioning. Although Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam did not receive international recognition as an independent state, they established an independent administrative system with police, courts, mass-media, and banks to demonstrate their ability to govern the *de facto* state.

The cessation of the three-decades-long war in Sri Lanka enabled the emergence of a risk-free corridor between the formerly separated North and South (Ranasinghe & Li, 2017; Samarathunga, 2019). The North is still the home of the Sri Lankan Tamils and was also inhabited by Sinhalese and Tamil Buddhists before the war began (Ariyaratna, 2011). The end of the war was an opportunity for Southern Sinhalese Buddhists to travel to Northern ancient Buddhist sites that had long been inaccessible. As a result, busloads of Sinhalese Buddhists flocked to the Northern parts of Sri Lanka. The security forces and the Sri Lankan Government highly encouraged Buddhist pilgrimages to Jaffna to affirm Southern power in the North and to demarcate the unitary status of the country through Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism. However, the literature continues to be silent on the ways in which Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism was created in post-war reunified Sri Lanka. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the creation of Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism through the post-war Buddhist gaze in reunified Sri Lanka. This paper further attempts to identify the ways in which the Sri Lankan government ensured its victory against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam through motivated local activism, and the ways in which Jaffna has been positioned as a Buddhist destination.

### **Study Site: Jaffna, Sri Lanka**

Ethnic discrimination in Sri Lanka is still a deep-rooted problem among the many post-war challenges the country faces. Before terrorism emerged in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Tamil community faced irreconcilable ethnic, linguistic, religious, and political discrimination (Samaranayake 2007; S Perera 2001; Perera 2016; Pieris 2014). Deegale (2006) points out Sinhalese Buddhists' belief that Sri Lanka has historically not only been a Sinhalese Buddhist country but also one country. Veluppillai (2006) argues that while Tamils attempted to share power, the Sinhalese had tried to monopolize it over the previous six decades. This argument is likely motivated by the fact that Tamils requested fifty-fifty parliamentary representation of Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese at the time of the Soulbury Commission in the mid-1940s. However, this was not reflective of the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka at the time, when 70 percent of the population was Sinhalese and 30 percent was non-Sinhalese (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015). Key incidents have fueled the existing ethnic problem in Sri Lanka since the British era. First, the British government purposefully encouraged Tamils to take power and offered higher government positions for them. For instance, in 1948, 30% of government employees were Tamils, which did not reflect the percentage of Tamils (Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil) in the country (18%). In 1956, 30 percent of the Ceylon administrative service, 50% of the clerical service, 60% of engineers and doctors, and 40% of the armed forces were Tamils (Brown, 2003). As a result, much administrative power was vested in the hands of an ethnic minority group.

This situation frustrated Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka (Perera, 2001). Former Prime Minister Bandaranaike tried to take advantage of the situation by raising nationalistic enthusiasm (Veluppillai 2006; Perera 2001; Zuhair 2016); the “Sinhala Only Bill” was passed in 1956 in the parliament, favoring Sinhalese Buddhists and granting them a competitive advantage in terms of power to rule the country. As a result, by 1970, Tamil representation in the Ceylon administrative service, clerical service, and engineering and medical services had plummeted to 5%, 5%, 10%, and 1%, respectively (Brown, 2003). This can be characterized as a systematic decrease of Tamil power in Sri Lanka. The 1971 University Act imposed another major hurdle for Tamils, drastically reducing the number of Tamil students admitted to the national university system. These two actions discouraged many Tamils from entering government service and controlled vast university admissions from Tamil majority areas, making space for Sinhalese students to enter the university system instead. Although Tamil political leaders were constantly engaged in ideological disputes with the government at the time, their voices were suppressed (Dissanayake & Samarathunga, 2020; Veluppillai, 2006). As a result, the separatist war began (Veluppillai, 2006) (Veluppillai, 2006), giving birth to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Whilst the Tamil-speaking minority was facing discrimination, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam recognized fertile ground to take their struggle to the next level. They aimed to be appointed as the sole representatives of Sri Lankan Tamils, challenging the power of the Southern Sinhalese government. To challenge the Southern Government, they assassinated Alfred Duraiappah, the former mayor of Jaffna, in 1975. Since then, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam engaged in many illegal and provocative activities centered in the former North-Eastern Province. Sinhalese politicians motivated the Southern Sinhalese to perceive this “Tamil Spring” as a challenge to their power; as a result, southerners burnt down the Jaffna library in 1981. Destroying a library is unlike killing a person. Destroying a library means destroying access to knowledge. Foucault (1978) clearly pointed out that power is so inseparably wedded to knowledge that one cannot be conceived of without the other. If a community lacks knowledge, their development is restricted for generations, and they eventually run out of power. This is what was expected when the Jaffna library was burnt down.

These events were followed by the infamous “Black July” incident in 1983 that began as a response to the assassination of 13 Sinhalese soldiers by the cadres of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Jaffna. When the bodies were taken to the commercial capital, Colombo, for cremation, the Sinhalese started a violent anti-Tamil campaign that took the lives of thousands of Tamils who were in the southern part of the country, causing vast social and economic costs to the nation. For the Sinhalese majority, the assassination of the soldiers was a provocative, direct challenge to the Sinhalese hegemony as well as the country’s sovereignty. Therefore, thousands of Sinhalese people unleashed their wrath upon the Tamil community living in Sinhalese majority areas. Paradoxically, this event nourished the rapid growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, since most of the victims fled to the North in search of refuge. Therefore, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam grew in power and strength; consequently, Black July is considered to mark the beginning of the Sri Lankan separatist war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Sri Lankan government forces. Although the Sri Lankan government revised the Sinhala Only Bill in 1987, giving equal status to the Tamil language, it was too late to reverse the consequences. Consequently, from 1983 to 2009, Sri Lankan government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were engaged in an open battle. The war came to an end on May 18, 2009 after the death of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

## 2. Post-war Buddhist travels in Sri Lanka

Buddhism places high value on non-violence, peace, and the finding of inner peace. Sri Lanka is one of the few countries in the world in which *Therawada* Buddhism is practiced. Although a vast majority (about 70.2%) of Sri Lankans are Buddhists, there are sizable populations of Hindus (12.6%), Muslims (9.7%), and Christians (7.4%) in the country, as well as people with other religious beliefs (0.1%) (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015). Regarding ethnicity, *Sinhalese* are the largest group with 74.9% of the population, followed by Sri Lankan Tamils (11.2%), Sri Lankan Moors (9.2%), Indian Tamils (4.2%), and others (0.5%) (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015). As the statistics suggest, Sinhalese Buddhists have the power to appoint the leaders of the country. Therefore, since the independence in 1948, all the appointed Presidents and Prime Ministers were Buddhists who took an oath to protect Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Buddhists follow the ancient sacred practice of worshipping the *Solosmasthanas* (sixteen sacred places) and other significant Buddhist sites that are scattered across Sri Lanka. The war between the Sri Lankan security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam limited Buddhist pilgrimages to the Northern part of the country. As a result, the *Bhikkus* and Buddhists eagerly waited for the end of the war to quench their spiritual desires. *Nagadeepa* is one of the *Solosmasthanas* which is located in the Northern cap. The A9 highway, the connector of North and South of Sri Lanka, was reopened on December 21, 2009. According to newspaper reports 58,694 people travelled to Jaffna from December 21 to 29 of that year. The reopening of the A9 highway allowed Sinhalese and Buddhist travelers to flock to Jaffna in a great hurry to become part of the historic moment of the resumption of travel to Jaffna. As a result, during normal weekends in early 2010, 200,000 to 300,000 people visited Jaffna (Tennakoon, 2010). Further, newspapers reported that about 15,000 pilgrims visited Nagadeepa on a daily basis (Kulathunga, 2010). At the end of December 2009, another newspaper reported that about 30,000 tourists visited Jaffna daily after the war. By the end of December 2011, about 3 million Sri Lankans had visited Jaffna (Kalubowila, 2011).

However, as of 2019, there is no great hurry to visit the site, as most people have already visited Jaffna since 2009, satisfying their curiosity. The key motivation for Buddhist pilgrims to visit Jaffna has been visiting the Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya. Since the Sinhalese Buddhist tours to Jaffna takes the shape of a pilgrim tour, the group is typically accompanied by a Buddhist monk on their bus journey who will automatically turn to be the guide and the leader. As a result, most of the descriptions on sites are narrated through the gaze of the Buddhist monk. Additionally, they are assisted by friends, children, or relations who served in Jaffna, probably attached to security forces.

## 3. Buddhism and Other Religions during the War

### 3.1 Buddhism during the war

A vast majority of the population of Sri Lanka (70%) is *Sinhalese* Buddhist (Department of Census and Statistics, 2017). *Mahawamsa*, the ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka, stand as proof of the power vested by Buddhism and *Bhikkus* not only in community-level decision making, but also in appointing and exiling kings. Buddhism became the official religion of Sri Lanka around 200 BC when the Indian emperor *Dharmashoka's* son *Arahant Mahinda* visited Sri Lanka with a religious delegation. Since then, Buddhism has been given the foremost place by the constitution of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The constitution clearly

states “the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha *Sasana*, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by the Articles of the Constitution” (Parliament Secretariate, 2015).

Although being a Buddhist was a requirement to become the Head of the State during the ancient era, it is now simply expected that all presidents of Sri Lanka will be Buddhists and swear to protect the country, as well as Buddhism. As such, immediately after a new president is elected in Sri Lanka, the president is expected to visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, Kandy, and to take a holy vow to protect and promote Buddhism in front of the Sacred Tooth and High Chapters of *Bhikkus* and other Buddhist civil leaders. The *Bhikkus* or venerable *Theros* also have a high recognition in Sinhalese society. Traditionally, Sinhalese start every important thing in their life, such as a business or a new career, after obtaining the blessings of *Bhikkus*. Since the ancient times, whenever Sri Lanka was under the threat of an invasion (local or foreign), the Sinhalese *Bhikkus* and Buddhists have played a pivotal role in protecting Buddhism, *Sasana* (order of the *Bhikkus*), and the *Sinhala* ethnic group. Further, almost every traditional *Sinhalese* Buddhist village is blessed with a Buddhist temple in which *Bhikkus* used to reside and preach for the betterment of the common public. During natural disasters or periods of social unrest, the temple becomes a shelter for those who need it, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion.

Out of many, the foremost challenge faced by Buddhism in contemporary Sri Lanka has been the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic conflict, which later turned into an issue of terrorism. The three-decades-long war between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam caused Sri Lanka to suffer socially, economically, and politically. Although the war mainly took place in the North and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka, there were frequent breakouts of conflicts in the Southern parts of the country that disturbed the normal order of the citizens. The battle grounds – the borders of the Northern Provinces and the Eastern Province – served as a blockade and made it difficult for people on either side to travel across the border. There were many reasons for separatist struggle, and thousands of lives and billions of economic losses were reported during the war. The killing of a large number of innocent Tamil people in 1981 and burning of the Jaffna library in 1989 were among the deadly mistakes made by the Sinhalese mobs. Similarly, when Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had the controlling power, many Buddhist sites have been either unattended or destroyed in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam controlled areas (see Figure 1). Further, its carders massacred many *Bhikkus* and unarmed pilgrims to impose a direct threat to Sinhalese power in the South and to provoke Sinhalese Buddhists. By destroying some of these ancient Buddhist sites and shrines in Jaffna, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam expected claim that Jaffna had been a pure Tamil region since the medieval era (Siriwardana, n.d.).

**Figure 1:** Destroyed Buddhist *Stupas* in Delft Island, Jaffna



However, leaving the past behind, the Sinhalese Buddhist majority are hoping to establish a long-lasting reconciliation after the war with those who fought and those who were affected by the conflict. Thus, travel between the formerly divided states provides a means of peace and reconciliation in modern Sri Lanka. While many scholars (Deegale, 2006; Perera, 2001; Velupillai, 2006) consider that the root cause for this war was the injustice faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka, some foreign scholars and journalists have argued that it was a war between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus (Knipe, 1991; Velupillai, 2006). Further, the Sri Lankan war was perceived as an ethnic war by many scholars (Fox, 2007; Obeysekere, 2006; Sarjooon, Yusoff, & Hussin, 2016). Gombrich (2006) also criticizes the pro-Sinhalese policies of Bandaranaike that fueled civil disorder. Many scholars (Gombrich, 2006; Premasiri, 2006; Tilakaratne, 2006) very clearly state that Buddhism was not responsible for this war.

On the other hand, one cannot safely conclude that the Sri Lankan war was only an ethnic war due to many reasons: a) the Tamil population in Sri Lanka are scattered across the island and the war took place only in the North and Eastern provinces; b) Tamils in the southern parts of Sri Lanka have lived with Sinhalese people with no major incidents after 1983; c) the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam not only targeted Sinhalese Buddhists but also Tamil Hindus, Christians, and Muslims. Thus, it is clear that the three-decades-long war was neither an ethnic war, nor a religious war; it was purely a separatist war that was initially motivated by certain discriminations faced by the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka that lost its course half way through. The main intention of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in targeting Buddhists, *Bhikkus*, and Buddhists religious sites was to challenge the existing Buddhist nationalism that conflicted ideologically with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's separatism. A list of anti-Buddhist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam attacks that were carried out to provoke the Sinhalese Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka are presented in Table 1. The war came to an end in May 2009, accounting for thousands of lives and billions of dollars of economic losses to the country. Even a decade after the war, the country is still struggling to overcome its losses from those three decades.

**Table 1:** List of attacks attributed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam against Buddhists in Sri Lanka

<b>Year</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Source</b>
1985	Assassination of 146 and injuring 86 Buddhist devotees while they were praying at the Sri Maha Bodhi premises (one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka)	Anuradhapura	British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2000)
1985	Killed three Sinhalese Buddhist monks and three civilians while they were praying at the Ruhunu Somavathiya Temple	Thrikonamadu, Polonnaruwa	The Economist (Banyan, 2011)
1986	Torturing and killing of Ven. Bakamune Subaddalanakara Thera and 17 – 20 civilians	Andankulam, Trincomalee	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR, 2000)
1987	Massacre of 33 young Buddhist monks and their chief incumbent Thero	Aranthalawa	British Broadcasting

			Corporation (BBC, 2005)
1987	Attacking 175 civilians and assassination of eight Sinhalese Buddhists who gathered in a Temple to discuss the development of the temple	Godapotta, Polonnaruwa	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR, 2000)
1995	Killing of the Buddhist religious leader Matara Kithalagama Sri Seelalankara Thera ( <i>Dimbulagala Hamuduruwo</i> )	Dimbulagala	Daily News (Nakkawita, 1995)
1998	Bombing of the Temple of Sacred Tooth Relic, the holiest Buddhist site in Sri Lanka	Kandy	British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2000)

### 3.2 Muslim ethnic cleansing by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Since 1976, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fought for a separate state called Tamil Eelam that would predominantly be established for the Tamil ethnic minority of Sri Lanka (Yass, 2014). Over time, they came to see the presence of other ethnic groups in the former North-Eastern Province as a threat to their goal of establishing a separate state. Therefore, they first forced and coerced Sinhalese people living in Jaffna to move away (Sriyananda, 2016). The properties of the Sinhalese who had fled were subsequently captured and managed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Thereafter, they forcibly expelled around 72,000 Muslims from the Northern Province in 1990 (Ali, 1997; Haniffa, 2007). The main reason for this expulsion was that the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress, formed in 1981, was opposed to the Tamil Eelam. The most horrifying act committed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam was the massacre of 147 Muslim men and boys who were praying at the Kattankudi Mosque. This was an attempt at ethnic cleansing with the goal of establishing a “Tamil only state”. A list of attacks against Muslims attributed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are listed in Table 2. Twelve years after the expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province, the political strategist Anton Balasingham called the expulsion a “strategic blunder” and invited Muslims to return. He further mentioned that the Tamil homeland also belonged to Muslims (Haniffa, 2007). However, only around 2,000 Muslims out of 72,000 accepted this invitation and returned to their homeland during the 2002 – 2004 ceasefire period.

**Table 2:** List of attacks attributed to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam against Muslims in Sri Lanka

Year	Incident	Location	Source
1990	Looting of 93 shops belonging to Muslims	Kattankudy	New York Times (New York Times, 1990)
1990	Assassination of 4 Muslims praying at a mosque	Batticaloa	New York Times (New York Times, 1990)
	Assassination of 10 Muslims praying at a mosque	Sammanthurai	New York Times (New York Times,

			1990)
1990	Assassination of 147 Muslims praying at the Kattankudy Mosque	Kattankudy	New York Times (New York Times, 1990)
1992	Assassination of 285 people in Palliyathidal Muslim village	Palliyathidal	British Broadcasting Corporation (Hosken, 1992)

Although Sri Lankan Muslims played a neutral role at the start of the Sri Lankan war, these attacks spread fear and hatred of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. As a result, the Muslims extended their full cooperation to the Sri Lankan government security forces to combat terrorism in Sri Lanka. Still, Sri Lankan Muslims lament for the loss of their loved ones in the 1990s. Dr. Sheriffdeen, a Sri Lankan writer from Kattankudi, modified an internationally famous poem narrated by Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) about the genocides committed by Adolf Hitler to discuss the massacres committed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sheriffdeen, 2017).

*First they came for the Tamils, and I did not speak out  
-Because I was not a Tamil.*

*First they came for Muslims, and I did not speak out  
-Because I was not a Muslim.*

*First they came for Sinhalese, and I did not speak out  
-Because I was not a Sinhalese.*

*Then they came for me  
-and there was no one left to speak for me*

### **3.3 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Christianity**

Allegedly, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had different policies regarding different religions. Although they maintained clear anti-Buddhism and anti-Islam policies, they encouraged Tamil Christians and Tamil Hindus to join them. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's ideology did not entail a clear religious view but focused more widely on Tamil Nationalism and a secular Sri Lanka. It is believed that Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was born to a low-caste Hindu family and had seen the discrimination faced by his community by higher-caste Hindus in Jaffna. With hatred for caste discrimination, Prabhakaran converted to Christianity, which advocates treating everyone equally irrespective of their caste. As a result, religion did not have a significant role in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's separatist ideology (Eggen & Wilson, 2005).

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has been suspected of having close ties with Christianity for several reasons. First, the top cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, including the leader himself, were Christians (Waduge, 2013). In addition, the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka played the foremost role in protecting Prabhakaran (Mahindapala, 2015). The term "Catholic Church" stands to Christian funding agencies, Christian Governments, Christian countries, and Christian Non-Governmental Organizations. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's actions regarding the Sacred Shrine of Lady Madhu (Virgin Mary) can be considered further evidence of their pro-Christian policies: when Sri Lankan government troops were advancing in 2008, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fled to the Vanni area and thereafter, towards the North and Eastern coastal areas that were under their control. While fleeing, they took the sacred shrine of Lady Madhu with them because they believed they had the blessings of Lady

Madhu (BBC, 2008a). However, at the request of the Sri Lankan government and the international community, the Holy Shrine was later returned to its original location (BBC, 2008b).

#### 4. Materials and Methods

The researchers employed Michel Foucault's discourse of power to reach the objectives of this study. The methods employed to collect the data were participatory observations and informal interviews during five journeys to Jaffna (2010 to 2019) and the analysis of newspaper articles from 2009 to 2019. Further, the study refers to ancient Buddhist discourse and key historical incidents that are recorded in the ancient chronicle of Mahawamse (Ven. Mahanama, n.d.), Sri Lanka. Discourse analysis, ethnographic analysis and photograph analysis were employed to qualitatively analyze the data. Further, the researchers employed an 'interpretivism' research paradigm considering the nature of this study. Interpretivism allows the researchers to interpret the interests of the subjects of the study under consideration. Therefore, Myers (2008) assumes that access to reality is done only through social construction such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments. Interpretivism was successfully done since two researchers belong to the Sinhalese Buddhist group of Sri Lanka. Both of them have extensive experience of both Sri Lankan war and the socio-cultural, religious, and political development aftermath of the war.

In order to answer the key research question of this study, the researchers selected five destinations in the post-war zone purposively: Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya, Dambakola Patuna Sangamittha Viharaya, Naga Viharaya, Kadurugoda Temple and Gamini Kularathne war hero memorial (Figure 2). Those places were visited by the first and third authors five times during the last decade to observe the religious, socio-cultural and political developments and changes in the post-war region through participatory observation. Two researchers travelled to Jaffna two different occasions, separately, with two groups of Sinhalese Buddhist travelers without exposing the true intentions to grasp the original gaze of Sinhalese Buddhist travelers. Although participatory observation is a widely used tool in ethnographic research approaches (Spradley, 2016), we combined the results of participatory observation with informal interviews and photographic analysis findings to increase the reliability of the data collected by means of methodological triangulation (Decrop, 1999; Thurmond, 2001).

**Table 3: Observations and informal interviews**

Time	Observations	Informal interviews	
		Participants	Quantity
2010	Memorial of Gamini Kularathne, Nagadeep Purana Viharaya, Naga Viharaya	Sinhalese Buddhists	18
		Buddhist Monks	06
2012	Kadurugoda Temple, Nagadeep Purana Viharaya	Military personnel	07
2016	Nagadeep Purana Viharaya, Naga Viharaya	Residents of Jaffna	11
		Travelers	08
2018	Dambakola Patuna, Nagadeep Purana Viharaya	Tourism authorities	03
2019	Delft Island, Nagadeep Purana Viharaya, Naga Viharaya		

Informal interviews enabled the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Informal interviews are unequally distributed and unstandardized conversations in which the interviewee is provided with a free range to talk about any subject that is broadly related to the researcher's interests (Bailey, 2007). Accordingly, a total of 53 informal discussions were conducted that include 18 Sinhalese Buddhists, 06 Buddhist Monks, 07 military personnel in Jaffna, 11 residents of Jaffna, 08 foreign travelers to Jaffna, and 03 tourism authorities (Table 3). Questions related to post-war travels made by Sinhalese Buddhists to Jaffna, post-war re-construction of Buddhist temples and shrines, ancient Buddhist stories and mythologies associated with Jaffna, key historic incidents that threatened the well-being of Buddhism in Jaffna, key incidents in the war were presented in front of the respondents.

The researchers paid particular attention to the verses exhibited at the data collection sites selected, and the narrations published by Sri Lankan newspapers (2009 – 2019). Selected verses have been translated in English and analyzed using an interpretive approach. As the last data collection method, the researchers employed photographic analysis (Bateson & Mead, 1942) to support the arguments. Accordingly, the researchers analyzed over 500 photographs taken during the five journeys to Jaffna that depicts the post-war re-construction of Buddhist discourse in Jaffna. Key selected images have been presented and discussed in this paper. Finally, the study also employed a retrospective approach to elucidate on the post-war socio-political and religious developments immediately after the war.

**Figure 2:** Selected Buddhist sites and war memorial in Jaffna, Sri Lanka



## 5. Results

Buddhists' travels to Jaffna are predominantly influenced by Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism (Perera, 2016; Pieris, 2014). Travelling to Jaffna is special for Sinhalese Buddhists because Jaffna once belonged to the Southern government, was captured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam for three long decades, and was then taken back by the Sri Lankan security forces. Thus, Jaffna is a place in which Southern Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism was openly challenged and criticized. Visits to Jaffna by Sinhalese Buddhists involve a mixture of triumphalism, scarifications, and Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism (Perera, 2016; Pieris, 2014).

However, it should be emphasized that the Sinhalese Buddhist gaze is not homogeneous and vary notably according to the purpose of the travelers and the time of the travel (Samarathunga, Cheng, & Weerathunga, 2020). The subsequent sections present an analysis of construction of Sinhalese Buddhist gaze during the post-war travels in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

### 5.1 Scarification of a Sinhalese Buddhist soldier

After entering the former war-zone, the tourists' observations begin at the memorial of the war hero *Gamini Kularathne* (popularly known as *Hasalaka Gamini*), who was from *Hasalaka* village, at the Elephant Pass. This is one of the very first stops in the former war zone. On June 10, 1991, the Elephant Pass Army Camp that hosted around 600 soldiers was attacked by over 5,000 carders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, as it was an easy target for them. However, when they were advancing to the government Army Camp with a modified bulldozer to attack the garrison, Corporal *Hasalaka Gamini* launched a suicide mission, saving his fellow comrades and the army camp. Since then, Corporal *Hasalaka Gamini* has been treated as a hero in Sri Lanka. His brave action is seen as the ultimate sacrifice one can make on behalf of the motherland to protect the country, race, and religion. It can be also identified as an occasion of the use of extreme power against intruders in recent Sri Lankan history. By jumping into an armed tank, *Hasalaka Gamini* not only stopped the progressive attack of the separatists but showed them and the entire world the extent to which one can go to protect their beloved motherland. A mural was constructed to honor and remember the brave action of Corporal Gamini at the neck of Jaffna, Elephant Pass (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Mural depicting the heroic action of Corporal *Gamini Kularathne*



*Hasalaka Gamini Kularathne* was a former Buddhist monk who witnessed the infamous massacre of Aranthalawa, in which 33 Buddhist monks were killed by the carders of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Pieris, 2014). After seeing the massacre of his fellow *Bhikkus*, he left his robes behind to join the Army. The act of young Gamini Kularathne repeats the ancient Buddhist discourse of securing Northern Sri Lanka from the South Indian *Chola* invader prince *Elara (Ellalan)*, who ruled the Northern part of Sri Lanka from 205 BC – 161 BC. The Elara

King is commonly identified by Sinhalese as a Tamil King because he sailed to Sri Lanka from South India. The great Sinhalese Buddhist King *Dutugemunu* (161 BC – 137 BC) who fought against King Elara had ten commanders who are known as *Dasa Maha Yodha* (ten great warriors). One of these ten commanders, *Theraputthabhya*, was also a former Buddhist monk who fought in King *Dutugemunu*'s war at the king's invitation. *Theraputthabhya* also disrobed himself, fought in the war, and then returned to life as a monk according to *Mahawamsa*, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka. This implies Buddhists' patriotic feelings towards the country, ethnicity and religion, as this story is still remembered and admired. Therefore, the memorial of *Hasalaka Gamini* symbolizes Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism and patriotism in post-war tourism.

Thousands of domestic tourists travelling to Jaffna take a break at this memorial to read or hear about the patriotic and brave actions of Hasalaka Gamini. The statue of Gamini Kularathne also stands for the 23,790 soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the war. Ninety-nine percent of the Sri Lankan security forces at the end of the war were reported to be Sinhalese Buddhists (Sriyananda, 2016), which led some authors to refer to the security forces as a Sinhalese Buddhist army (Kawanami, 2016). The reason for this overwhelming Sinhalese Buddhist majority is that Tamils that were employed by the Sri Lankan security forces were threatened by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and forced to vacate their posts (Sriyananda, 2016). Thus, the vast majority of Sinhalese Buddhists believe that it was them who saved the country, race, and religion from separatist terrorists. In this notion, Gamini Kularathne's war memorial is emblematic.

Corporal Kularathne's heroism is narrated as a heroic verse in freestyle written in Sinhala. Perera translated it to English as follows:

*In the name of the motherland  
To sacrifice their lives  
Many great men  
Were born in this land.  
When such great men  
Numbering in hundreds and thousands  
Were on the ready  
To sacrifice their lives  
For the land of their birth.  
To protect such great heroes  
By sacrificing your own self  
For the motherland's freedom  
You are that great hero  
Oh son, born in this land. (2016, pp. 90-91)*

During the peak seasons, Sri Lanka Army occasionally employs a site guide, who is again a military officer to educate the visitors on the victory monument and the story of Corporal Kularathne. Apparently, the script is pre-written highlighting the scarifications made by the Sri Lankan Army and the heroic actions of the thousands of soldiers including Corporal Kularathne. This short demonstration is sufficient enough to pull the religious and ethnic strings which have long been suppressed.

## **5.2 Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya, the place visited by the Lord Buddha**

*Mahiyanganan Nagadeepan Kalyanan Padalanchanan*

*Diwaguhan Dheegawapee Chethiyan cha Muthiyanganan  
Thissamahawiharan cha Bodhin Marichawattiyān  
Sonnāmalee Maha Chethin Thuuparama Bhayagirin  
Jethawanān Selachethin Thatha Kacharagamakan  
Ethe Solasathanani Ahan Wandami Sabbada*

The above Buddhist *Gatha* is chanted by Buddhists and includes the sixteen most sacred places for Buddhists in Sri Lanka, which are also must-visit places for Buddhists. The second word in the stanza, *Nagadeepan*, refers to Nagadeepa, which is located on Nainathivu Island in Jaffna district. The term *Nagadeepa* means “Island of Snakes.” The *Mahāvamsa* stands as evidence of four groups of clans that once controlled Sri Lanka before the arrival of Prince Vijaya, an *Aryan*, from South India: *Yakkas* (demon-worshippers), *Rakshasas* (non-believers), *Nagas* (snake-worshippers), and *Devas* (spirit worshippers). The *Nagas* of the pre-Vijayan era lived both in the Northern islands, particularly in Nainathivu (*Nagadeepam*), and the Western part of ancient Sri Lanka. Lord Buddha visited *Nagadeepa* to settle a dispute between two *Naga* chieftains, Chulodara and Mahodara, over a splendid throne of gems. According to *Mahāvamsa*, the Lord Buddha appeared cross-legged in the sky and performed a miracle to put an end to the growing battle between the two groups. The settled *Naga* kings then listened to the *Dhamma* preached by Lord Buddha, became Buddhist devotees, and offered the gem-throne to the Lord Buddha, which was the root cause for the dispute (see Figure 4). The kings buried the gem throne in the name of Lord Buddha and built a Pagoda for religious purposes (Nagadeepa Viharaya, 2015). Since then, the Nagadeepa frequently received royal patronage. In addition to *Mahāvamsa* (Ven. Mahanama, n.d.), the famous Tamil Buddhist script *Manimekala* also mentions a gem-studded throne and a stone with Buddha’s footprints that were venerated by both Sri Lankan and Indian Buddhists (Ariyaratna, 2011). This is clear evidence of the significance of this holy place not only for Sri Lankan Buddhists but also for Buddhists in India.

**Figure 4:** A painting of Lord Buddha preaching Dhamma to *Naga* tribes



The story of Nagadeepa is widely popular in Buddhist society. At Nagadeepa, Buddhist travelers can see the *Bo* Tree, the *Stupa* (pagoda), the *Sanghawasa* (place where *Bhikkus* reside), and the *Dharmashala* (sermon hall) that was built in the 1950s. Although *Mahāvamsa* and *Manimekala* provide historical evidence of an ancient, majestic temple that once stood at

the site, continuous South Indian invasions and recent armed struggles have destroyed it. What matters to the Southern pilgrims are the stories, beliefs, and the courage of the *Bhikkus* and military to protect this must-visit place. Further, the photos exhibited in the temple brings pilgrims' attention to the difficulties the temple faced during the war period. This helps the *Buddhist* pilgrims gaze back and visualize the destructive actions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The journey to the Nagadeepa is somewhat adventurous, and pilgrims have an opportunity to gaze upon the rural areas of Jaffna that exhibit traditional lifestyles, the fishery industry, poor developments of infrastructure with bumpy roads, lack of drinking water, or places to stop and rest. Further, after arriving at the Kurikattuwan jetty, the pilgrims must take a shaky old fishing boat to Nainathivu Island to visit the Nagadeepa *Purana Vihara*. However, none of these obstacles discourage millions of Buddhists from visiting Nagadeepa.

Immediately after the war, thousands of Buddhist pilgrims venerated Nagadeepa. Since the Island can only be accessed by boat, they waited in queues for hours, reflecting on Buddhism and the long-fought war. On the way to the temple, the Buddhists speak with other Buddhists visiting Jaffna from different parts of the country. Typical topics of conversation during such travels are the challenges faced by Buddhism during the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam controlled period, destruction of Buddhist monuments and shrines, Sinhalese Buddhist soldiers' fights against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to protect the country, race and ethnicity, and sacrifices made by Sinhalese Buddhist soldiers. Further, they share their personal stories and experiences from the war, or those they have heard from their sons, brothers, and husbands who served. They may also speak about the terror they felt in the Southern region and how they lamented over the loss of their loved ones. As a result, the pilgrims not only develop a collective gaze on Buddhism but also about war and destruction. Examined carefully, it is clear that that every topic is fueled with power, Buddhist hegemony, and Sinhalese nationalism. It is not rare to spot the young Sinhalese Buddhist travelers trying to avoid the controversial topics of the past and enjoying the scenic beauty of the island. Food tasting, shopping, learning Tamil and making new friends seems to be more favored than engaging with contentious dialogs. However, overall, it should be highlighted that the host-guest relationship is not as strong as the guest-guest relationships. Figure 5 shows the number of Sinhalese Buddhists pilgrims waiting to board a passenger boat to visit the sacred Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya.

**Figure 5:** Passengers lined up at the Nainathivu Jetty to travel to the main island by boat



The significant influx of Buddhist pilgrims to Nagadeepa demanded that infrastructure be

developed on the island. Immediately after the war, the main access point to Nainathivu Island was located in front of the Naga Pooshani Amman Kovil (a Hindu Kovil). The second access point was located in front of Nagadeepa Temple, which was relatively small and unable to receive many boats. Thus, the Buddhist pilgrims were required to walk around 500 meters from the jetty to Nagadeepa temple and then return to the same jetty to take the boats back, which they found to be very uncomfortable. As a result, with the support of the government and the security forces, the second jetty (Figure 6) in Nainathivu Island was expanded to systematically handle the incoming traffic.

However, one can also argue that the Nagadeepa temple and the government wanted to create a very strong Buddhist gaze at the Nagadeepa temple by presenting it first, instead of gazing at a Hindu Kovil and then proceeding to the Buddhist temple. Regardless, the new access point was well-embraced not only by the Sinhalese Buddhists, but also the residents of the island. In the meantime, the management of the Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya launched a project to build a Buddhist museum at the Nagadeepa temple for which Buddhists make donations. The proposed museum will ensure the preservation and exhibition of the ancient Buddhist gaze on Nagadeepa for future generation. Further, in order to maintain the Buddhist gaze within this Buddhist site, the Chief Incumbent *Thero* has introduced a behavioral code for pilgrims. Although visiting Nagadeepa is now purely religion-oriented, Sinhalese Buddhists also consider Nagadeepa as one of their best strongholds during the three-decades-long war. Although it was challenged several times, Buddhist power was well-secured in Nagadeepa island with the untiring efforts of the *Bhikkus* residing there and the government’s military forces. As such, almost all the Buddhists highly acknowledge and respect this place in the Jaffna peninsula.

**Figure 6:** Recently expanded jetty at the Nagadeepa temple and the proposed Buddhist museum



Immediately after the war, the southern leaders took the opportunity to venerate the Nagadeepa Purana Vihara even before the infrastructure was developed. Motivated by seeing the Southern leaders in the North, the Southern Buddhist pilgrims planned their travels to Nagadeepa. To strengthen Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism, the Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya still displays photos of Southern leaders, including Presidents, Prime Ministers, Speaker of the House, Cabinet Ministers, and high-ranking military officers visiting the Nagadeepa (Figure 7). This public display of photos of national leaders in the temple emphasizes Sinhalese power in the Northern peninsula and gives Southern tourists a clear image of Sinhalese Buddhist control over the North Province of Sri Lanka. As indicated by Figure 7, both Sinhalese

Buddhist leaders are accompanied by local politicians from Tamil minority groups who support the Southern government. In this sense, the Tamil politicians also use this as an opportunity to show their loyalty to the Southern leaders and their respect for Buddhism and the Nagadeepa temple.

**Figure 7:** Former President and Prime Minister visiting Nagadeepa temple



### 5.3 Recreating the Buddhist history through reconstructed Dambakota Patuna Sangamittha Temple

*Dambakola Patuna Sangamittha* Temple is located 20 km away from Jaffna town. Buddhists visit this ancient place due to its importance in Buddhist discourse. It is believed that *Theri Sangamiththa* landed at *Dambakola Patuna* with a sapling of a Bo tree (*ficus religiosa*) under which the Lord Buddha attained *Nibbana*. *Theri Sangamiththa* is the sister of *Arahath Mahinda* who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Ancient records stand as evidence that King *Ashoka*, the Emperor of the *Maurya* Empire in ancient India, sent his son *Mahinda Thera* to introduce Buddhism to the Sri Lankan King, *Devanampiyathissa* (307-267 BC). This religious mission ended successfully with King *Devanampiyathissa* embracing Buddhism. This ancient incident also stands as an illustration of the close linkage between Buddhism and power in Sri Lanka. Since then, subsequent Sri Lankan Kings have taken every action to protect and promote Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Further, elites in ancient Sri Lanka studied at temples under the guidance of *Bhikkus* to learn how to govern the country following Buddhist philosophies.

Chapters XVIII and XIV of *Mahawamsa* (Ven. Mahanama, n.d.) speak of the arrival of *Sangamiththa Theri* and her followers to Sri Lanka along with the *Bo* sapling and King *Devanampiyathissa*'s reception of both of them at *Dambakola Patuna*. The King planted this *Bo* sapling at *Mahamewna Uyana* (park) in Anuradhapura, which is still treated as the second-most respected Buddhist religious site in Sri Lanka after the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. The aforementioned *Bo* sapling is now treated as the "*Sri Maha Bodhi*" and is highly protected with full government support. *Sri Maha Bodhi* is a must-visit religious site and is frequented by almost all Buddhists that visit Jaffna. The road to Jaffna lies through Anuradhapura, which enables Buddhists to stop over and venerate the sacred *Bo* tree on their way to Jaffna. The fame of *Sri Maha Bodhi* has motivated the Southern Buddhists to visit *Dambakola Patuna* to gaze at the place where Buddhism first touched Sri Lanka. This is the same reason why Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam carders selectively attacked both *Sri Maha Bodhi* and the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (BBC, 2000) to challenge Buddhist power in Sri Lanka.

While *Dambakola Patuna Sangamittha* Temple is not as popular as *Naga Viharaya* or

*Nagdeepa Purana* Temple, it is frequented by hundreds of Buddhists every weekend. This may be because it is located around 20 km from Jaffna and there is no *Bhikku* residing in the temple. However, the temple is well looked after by Sri Lankan Navy soldiers. Further, the soldiers volunteer to narrate the story of *Sangamiththa Theri's* visit to Sri Lanka with the Bo sapling. The three decades war completely destroyed the temple leaving nothing. Therefore, Sri Lankan security forces planted a sapling from the *Sri Maha Bodhi* at *Dambakola Patuna* premises in 1997, ensuring that the expectations of the Buddhist gaze are met at *Dambakola Patuna*. Further, the statue of *Sangamiththa Theri* and a monument (Figure 8) that depicts King *Devanampiyathissa* receiving the Bo sapling at the sea have been constructed very recently to secure the Buddhist gaze. However, the lack of archaeological evidence at the site is not questioned by anybody due to the Buddhists' great respect for the Buddha and his doctrine.

**Figure 8:** The memorial of the receipt of the Bo sapling by King *Dewanampiyathissa* from *Sangamiththa Theri*



#### 5.4 Naga Vihara temple

Naga Vihara is the first Buddhist temple one finds after entering Jaffna. It is located approximately two kilometers away from the city center and is a popular Buddhist site among Sinhalese and Buddhist travelers. According to the *Mahawamsa*, while King *Devanampiyathissa* was accompanying the sacred *Bo* sapling and escorting *Sangamiththa Theri*, a local *Naga* tribe had requested the king's permission to keep the *Bo* sapling and venerate it for one week. The king agreed and they kept the *Bo* sapling at *Naga Vihara*. Although there is no archeological evidence to identify the exact location, the Sinhalese Buddhists that frequent the existing *Naga Vihara* refer to these ancient records.

Even during the ceasefire travels (2002 – 2004), the *Naga Vihara* was patronized by the Buddhists both as a religious place and as a safe house in which travelers could stay overnight. Since the temple did not have enough space to accommodate all the travelers, the pilgrims would sleep under the *Bodhi* tree. The *Bodhi* tree has a special place in Buddhism because it was under the shade and with the support of the *Bodhi* tree that Prince *Siddhartha* attained *Nibbana*. The great chronicle of *Mahawamsa* states that the Lord Buddha offered his respect to the great *Bodhi* tree by gazing at it for seven days without moving his eyes. Thus, Buddhists have great respect for *Bodhi* trees and hold strong beliefs about the *Bodhi* tree. In this discourse we can argue that the Sinhalese Buddhists were searching for the security and care that the

*Bodhi* tree rendered to Prince Siddhartha some centuries ago. Further, the Buddhists believe that the *Bodhi* trees in Temples have a special power to protect them from any harm. As a result, when they visit Jaffna in which they have no friends or family, the only care and shelter they expect is from the temple and from the *Bodhi* tree. Further, it is also a practice of Sinhalese Buddhists to worship and pray at the *Bodhi* tree whenever they are faced with problems in their personal lives. Further, in ancient Sinhalese Buddhist villages, temples were located at a higher elevation, overlooking the village. The villagers always happened to climb up steps to go to the temple in order to seek the *Bhikku*. When there was any kind of a threat or a natural disaster, the villagers found refuge at the temple and the *Bhikkus* used to look after the Buddhist victims. In this notion, even now, Sinhalese Buddhists are searching for shelter in the Buddhist temples and therefore *Naga Vihara* has become a popular shelter where Sinhalese Buddhists to stay overnight even today.

However, religious restrictions forbid women to stay on temple premises and the increased and uncontrollable demand for accommodation at the Naga Vihara has given birth to a *Vishrama Shala* (cheap hall for travelers) with cooking facilities for larger groups. During the ceasefire agreement period, the temple expanded the small *Vishrama Shala* that existed before the war to cater to the influx of tourists' demands. In addition, since *Naga Vihara* is the only Buddhist Temple in Jaffna city (Figure 9), the government wanted it to stand strong because it represents Buddhism in a non-Buddhist region. As a result, both Sri Lankan security forces and the Sri Lankan government sponsored and assisted in the construction of the *Vishrama Shala*. Regarding the government and military sponsorship, Perera (2016, pg.32) states, "this was mostly because the temple was seen as an extension of the state's and the military's Sinhala-Buddhist identity and power."

**Figure 9:** Buddhists venerating the Buddha at Naga Vihara



### **5.5 Kadurugoda Temple, archaeological evidence that supports the ancient Buddhist state**

The ancient *Bhikku* burial mounds of Kadurugoda were first recorded in 1917 by the Jaffna District Magistrate, Paul E. Pieris. Pieris reported the presence of 56 *Dagoba*- or *Stupa*-shaped structures in the area, only 20 of which are still present. This is also a must-see destination for

Buddhists visiting Jaffna since it provides clear evidence of Buddhism's presence in ancient Jaffna (Figure 10). Sinhalese Buddhists can only receive blessings when a *Bhikku* resides in temple. While *Kadurugoda Viharaya* hosts no such *Bhikku*, Buddhist pilgrims continue to visit the site with the intention of gazing upon ancient Buddhist heritage. As of now, the Archeological Department of Sri Lanka has taken necessary actions to conserve the site with the support of security forces. Thus, the site is spotless and well-maintained. Further, there is no information board written in English or Tamil, which clearly depicts to whom the site caters. The security forces have built two shrine rooms with the statues of Lord Buddha in the site, allowing the pilgrims to attend to their religious deeds.

**Figure 10:** The *Bhikku* burial site at *Kanthanrodi* (Kadurugoda Viharaya)



The caretakers (security forces) give a short site demonstration about Kadurugoda in Sinhala language to pilgrims to enhance their knowledge. During this demonstration, they also develop empathy towards the expired *Bhikkus*, highlighting the hardships they underwent by being in the Northern part of the country without the support of the ancient Sinhalese Southern Kings. The folklore says that these *Bhikkus* were harassed by the Tamil King Sangili and as a result, the *Bhikkus* decided to move away. On the way, the *Bhikkus* had been offered some food (alms-giving) by the residents of that area. The food had poisoned the *Bhikkus* and as a result, they had passed away. However, during the short demonstration, the first part of the story is not told to the Sinhalese Buddhists, probably with the intention of letting go of the past and to avoid creating any negative attitude among the Buddhists towards the ancient Tamil Kings. However, the ancient Tamil Kings saw the existence of Buddhism in Jaffna as a threat to their power within the Jaffna peninsula, since Jaffna was once a Buddhist region (Ariyaratna, 2011).

Buddhists do not visit the ancient Kadurugoda Viharaya to engage with religious activities. Rather, they visit this place with the intention of witnessing ancient Buddhist Heritage in Jaffna district. As discussed earlier, there is power gathered around Buddhist Temples in Sri Lanka and most temples are located among its devotees and followers. Therefore, the Sinhalese Buddhists take pleasure in visualizing the strong Buddhist civilization that once existed in Jaffna and developing a sense of ownership and be proud about it. However, during the long disappearance of Buddhists from the area, local Tamil people occupied the village, encroaching

the Buddhist archaeological site from 20 acres to 02 acres. This again indicates the power transition in Jaffna from Buddhists to Hindus. However, as of now, the government and security forces ensure that the premises are well-maintained and occupied with soldiers to meet the needs of the Southern Sinhalese Buddhists.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

The major aim of this paper was to contribute to the body of literature on the creation of Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism through the post-war Buddhist gaze in reunified Sri Lanka. The researchers adopted Foucault's ideas on power and gaze (Foucault, 1980a, 1980b, 1982) to reach the study's objective. The study further answers questions regarding the ways in which the Sri Lankan government ensured its victory against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam through motivated local activism and the positioning of Jaffna as a former Buddhist region.

Power is exhibited and spread through different agents of society. These agents, as identified by Foucault, are responsible for repression or exclusion (Foucault, 1980c). Such agents may be formal bodies that include governments, institutions, and organizations or informal bodies of agents that represent different communities, religious groups, or ethnic groups. Ad-hoc groups with power are also formed temporarily. Foucault (1978) identified this power as a "certain strength." The pilgrimages conducted by Sinhalese Buddhists to post-war damaged and restricted areas can also be identified as a "Tour of Power." In this study, we identified the agents that exhibit power as domestic Buddhist pilgrims who visit post-war destinations with a sense of triumphalism and autonomy backed by Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism and state support. They perform power via a "Buddhist gaze" and "local activism" and try to visually claim what they believe was originally theirs. According to Cheong and Miller (2000) seeing is a part of the tourist experience; therefore, gaze is especially relevant in measuring the power held by different agents of the society.

The cessation of the three-decades-long war in May, 2009 resumed civilian mobility between formerly inaccessible parts of the country, the North and South. Apart from the two ceasefire periods, people were not allowed to travel in between the two separated states of Sri Lanka. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam treated Buddhists and Muslims ruthlessly and showed their power through massacres of Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders, followers, and devotees and through bombing religious sites. Other ethnic and religious groups were afraid of visiting the North after seeing the dead bodies and destruction, which helped the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to keep them far from their territory. Therefore, even after the end of the war, the Buddhist gaze is expected to be met with the destruction and ruins of ancient Buddhist sites.

The recent surge in Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism is supported by the Sri Lankan government and security forces through murals, memorials, signs, and symbols; as Urry (1990) proposed, the "tourist gaze is created through signs and symbols." Through recreating Buddhist signs and symbols, one may also question whether the government is practicing Foucault's Panopticism (1977) over the Tamil people to convince them of the ancient Buddhist ownership of Jaffna. The post-war tourist gaze encompasses witnessing destruction, triumphalism, and becoming a part of history that is yet to be written (Perera 2016), and war is one of the main reasons that destinations change their shape and identity (Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2011; Pieris, 2014; Samarathunga et al., 2020). Therefore, among the ancient heritage, the tourists continue to witness completely new things when visiting a post-war destination after being separated due to political reasons. In the event of Jaffna, the post-war gaze was created through government-supported Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism.

Glassner and Harm (1989) identified both World War II and decolonization as the main reasons for the emergence of new states in the recent world history (Glassner & Harm 1989). However, many new states were further subdivided based on ethnicity (North and South Cyprus), religion (India and Pakistan), and political reasons (North Korea and South Korea) (Butler & Mao, 1996; Chao, 1995; Chiu, 1991; Yu, 1997). While some divided states are unifying (Vietnam and Germany), others remain divided (North and South Korea; India and Pakistan) (Yu, 1997). In the case of Sri Lanka, while political ideologies mainly contributed to the conflict, religion and ethnicity also greatly affected the temporary divisions of the country.

The study is not without limitations. First, it only considers the mass Sinhalese Buddhist pilgrims advocating ethno-religious nationalism. Thus, the future researchers should also consider the other groups of travelers to the post-war zone who are motivated by pleasure, education and curiosity. Second, the study is limited only to Jaffna District out of many post-war zones in Sri Lanka. Therefore, to develop a broader picture on re-construction of ethno-religious nationalism other post-war areas are also need to be considered.

This study also contributes to the growing body of tourist gaze literature in different aspects. First, the study addresses the dearth of literature on the Eastern tourist gaze, as most tourist gaze studies are centered on the Western tourist gaze (Larsen & Urry, 2011; Pagenstecher, 2003). Further, this study is the first to examine the domestic tourist gaze, a topic that has long been ignored in tourism literature. In addition, this study is also one of the firsts to explore the post-war tourist gaze that is developed alongside ethno-religious nationalism.

Sri Lanka was unified after three decades of war, removing all travel restrictions. As indicated in the introduction section, people travel between divided countries for pleasure/holiday, business, visiting friends and relatives, educational, and other (Shin, 2005). The present study identified that, in the case of Sri Lanka, Southern tourists travel to the North mainly for religious purposes and to reinstate Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism, which was once openly challenged by a terrorist group. Thus, in the study of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, “Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism” in the reunified state is created through the famous ancient Sinhalese Buddhist discourse: “*Rata, Jathiya, Agama*” (country, ethnicity, and religion) through highlighting Buddhists’ ancient ownership of land, Buddhist artifacts, sacrifices made by Buddhists to uproot terrorism in the country, rebuilding the destroyed temples, constructing new temples and statuses, facilitating Buddhist pilgrim travels to the formerly inaccessible state, and demonstrations done by security forces to the Buddhist pilgrims. It should, however, be emphasized that to derive true conciliation in post-war Sri Lanka, the harmonious coexistence of Buddhism with other religions is paramount. Hollinshead (1999) also stated that tourist gaze transform people and places. Therefore, the recent “Buddhist gaze” and their “inspecting gaze” could eventually impact the cultural and religious values of the Jaffna Tamil people. Thus, both the central government and regional governments should pay more attention to establishing civic nationalism rather than ethnic nationalism policies while giving due recognition to the religion that is practiced by the majority. Otherwise, the hard-earned peace will be a missed opportunity to reach long-lasting reconciliation and sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

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**Acknowledgement:** This study was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation (No. 40971297), National Social Science Fund of China (18FGL015), Innovation Spark Project of Sichuan University (2018hhf-65, 2018hhs-57), Sichuan University Cluster for Regional History and Frontier Studies (2018- 0332), Major Projects of the National Social Science Foundation (17ZDA044), Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation Project of Sichuan University (XKQKXK04), and Rajarata University of Sri Lanka Research Grant (grant number RJT/R&PC/2018/FMGT/R/04). The study was also supported by the Department of Tourism & Hospitality Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.