

# A Comparative Analysis of Characteristics Buddhist Civilization and Buddhist Culture

*Sandamali Udeshika Dissanayaka*

*Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Ruhuna. Sri Lanka.*

[dissanayakasandamali1996@gmail.com](mailto:dissanayakasandamali1996@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Buddhism, one of the world's oldest and most influential religions, has significantly shaped the cultures and civilizations of many countries across Asia and beyond. Originating in the 6th century BCE with the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, Buddhism's teachings rapidly spread from its birthplace in India to regions as diverse as Central Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Southeast Asia. Over centuries, Buddhism evolved not just as a spiritual tradition but also as a driving force in the development of civilizations, leaving a profound impact on art, literature, politics, and societal norms. Understanding the interplay between Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture is essential for comprehending how this religion has adapted and persisted through the ages. Buddhist civilization encompasses the large-scale social, political, and economic structures shaped by Buddhist principles and institutions. It includes the historical development of Buddhism, its spread across different regions, and the establishment of monastic institutions and educational centers that played crucial roles in societal governance and cultural preservation. In contrast, Buddhist culture refers to the everyday practices, rituals, values, and social norms influenced by Buddhist beliefs. It is the lived experience of Buddhism as manifested in the daily lives of individuals and communities. This includes meditation practices, ethical guidelines, ritual ceremonies, and the communal activities that bind Buddhist communities together. This research aims to explore the dynamic relationship between these two dimensions of Buddhism-civilization and culture. By examining historical influences, regional adaptations, and the impact of modernization and globalization, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Buddhist practices are maintained and transformed in contemporary contexts.

### Aims and Objective

To analyze the historical evolution of Buddhist civilization and its impact on present-day Buddhist practices. To investigate the role of local cultures in shaping contemporary Buddhist practices. To examine the effects of modernization and globalization on Buddhist civilization and culture. To explore the relationship between institutional Buddhist structures and individual practices.

## 2. Research Methodology

This paper is founded on conceptual research relying on a qualitative research approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the difference between Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture. Primary sources rely on the Tripitaka, supplemented by secondary sources of data provided through scholarly journals, encyclopedias, and acceptable online sources. Besides, it has been highly utilized during the research work by Google Scholar and Google Academia to source various peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and theses that can be expected to undergird a sound scholarly foundation for this research. This methodology, directed toward a qualitative research design, interprets and explains the main ideas, patterns, and thematic elements in Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture. Google Scholar and Google Academia offer a wide range of perspectives through various regions and time periods, thereby helping to define trends, regional adaptations, and how globalization affects practices in Buddhism. This will not only provide an in-depth analysis but also bring forth new insights into the connectivity and distinction of Buddhist civilization and culture.

### **3. Literature Review**

The paper is concerned with the fine differences between “culture” and “civilization”, with special reference to Buddhist concepts and Sri Lankan culture. It relies on major writings by well-known scholars in the field of Buddhist Studies. The title goes as “Buddhist Civilization: Principles and History”, by H.M. It is a fundamental reference by Moratuwagama and Emeritus Professor Chandima Wijebandayan, 1990, especially the section titled “Civilization, Culture, and Religion”, where it outlines Unique characteristics of “culture” from a Buddhist perspective. Complementary insight into the exploration is the work of Professor W.S. Karunaratna, entitled “Buddha Drshanaya and Charanay” (1787), an authentic commentary which contributes to the scholarly definitions of culture that will enrich this study. Drawing from these seminal works, the present research attempts to explain the intrinsic differences and interdependencies that exist between “culture” and “civilization”. In addition to these traditional sources, modern material sheds further light on the dynamics at work in Buddhist culture. “The Buddhist Culture of Sri Lanka” by Sirisaman Wijetunga and Dr. Premadasa Sri Aladavattage (2012) dwells on various aspects of Buddhist culture in different stages of Sri Lankan history. The book is organized on a chapter-by-chapter basis of the many differing aspects observed in Buddhist culture. While Chapter One leads the reader through a history of Buddhism, subsequent chapters move on to literature, the monastic community, arts and crafts, folk art, and the revival of Buddhist traditions. These jointly reinforce the idea that in Sri Lanka, Buddhist culture has taken new shapes and forms with the passage of time and thus influenced the national identity. Ruwei Wei's article “Civilization and Culture” published by Shenzhen University in 2011, further informs the comparative framework. A historical analysis of how scholars like Oswald Spengler, Fernand Braudel and Philip Bagby defined "civilization" and "culture" will be presented in the article. Wei does suggest a conceptual model in which “civilization” represents the general socio-historical structure, including a wide geographical area, shared institutions, and values, whereas “culture” represents specific beliefs or practices of the larger civilization. Wei's model provides a good theoretical framework from which to examine the interrelationships and distinction of Buddhist “civilization” and “culture”, especially in Sri Lanka. Synthesizing these resources, this research outlines an intricate framework through which Buddhist culture and civilization can be understood-what attributes uniquely belong to or define each. Combining this historical insight with the contemporary perspective, therefore, provided a better interpretation of the contribution of Buddhist civilization toward molding the cultural identity of Sri Lankans. These findings are important in underlining the fact that “culture” and “civilization” are complementary yet still different concepts, with one serving the purpose of the other in the Buddhist heritage and with a lingering continued impact on society. The study also uncovers emergent trends and lacunas in the literature through comparisons, hence laying a foundation for further research into the interrelationship between “Buddhist culture” and “civilization” in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

### **4. Result and Discussion**

Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture, while intrinsically linked, refer to distinct but overlapping concepts. Understanding the nuances of each term requires an exploration of their origins, development, influences, and manifestations in different contexts.

#### **Buddhist Civilization**

The word civilization came from the Latin adjective *civilis*, a reference to citizen. Citizens willingly bring themselves together in Political, Social, economic, and religious organizations-they merge that is in the interests of the larger Community. Over time the word civilization has come to imply something beyond Organization refers to a particular shared way of thinking about the world as well as a reflection on that world in art literature drama and a host of other cultural happenings. Its original meaning is the manner or condition in which men live together as citizens. Definitions “A Civilization is a complex society or culture group characterized by dependence on agriculture, long-distance trade, state form of Government, occupational

specialization urbanism and class stratification”. Along with these core elements, civilization is often marked by a combination of several secondary elements, including a developed transportation system, writing, standards of measurement, formal legal system, great art style, monumental architecture, mathematics sophisticated metallurgy, and astronomy. (Karunaratna W.S.,1987) “An advanced state of intellectual, cultural and material development in human society marked by progress in the arts and sciences, that extensive use of record keeping, including writing and the appearance complex political and social institutions. According to Albert Schweitzer, “It is the total of all progress made by man every sphere of action and from every point of view in so far as the progress helps towards the spiritual perfecting of individuals as the of all Progress” According to Oxford English Dictionary civilization is “the action or process of civilizing or of being civilized, developed or advanced state of human society (Karunaratna W.S.,1987).

### **Characteristics of Civilization**

Civilization distinguished by traits Civilization has been distinguished by its means of subsistence, types of livelihoods, settlement Patterns, forms of government, social stratification, economic systems, literacy, and other cultural traits. All human Civilizations have depended on agriculture for subsistence. Growing food on farms results in a surplus of food, particularly when people use intensive agricultural techniques such as irrigation and crop rotation. A surplus of food permits people to do things besides produce food for a living and also results in a division of labor and a more diverse range of human activity. Different Settlement Patterns Civilizations have distinctly different settlement patterns from other societies. Complex Political Structure Compared with other societies civilizations have moved to a complex political structure namely the State. There is a greater difference among the social classes. The ruling class normally concentrated in the cities, has control over much of the surplus and exercises through the actions of a government or bureaucracy. Display more complex patterns of ownership. Living in one place allows people to accumulate more personal possessions than nomadic people. Some people also acquire landed property or private ownership of the land. Development of Writing - Writing, developed first by people in summer, is considered a hallmark of civilization. Trader’s bureaucrats relied on writing to keep accurate records. Like money, writing was necessitated by the size of the population of a city and the complexity of its commerce among people who were not personally acquainted with early others. Elements of civilizations, Urban Society, Religion Literature, Government, Specialization, Social classes, Tool making, Leisure Education / Criticism Benefits of Civilization Administrative system. Various laws, Protection from chaos (Complete disorders) Protection from hunger, shelter, etc. Sewage system. (Wastewater and excrement conveyed in sewers.) Technological invention, Innovation, learning, etc, People working towards a common goal to survive. People are not independent, so everyone works, forming an economy, and making a group self-department, People can work together to solve problems and create new things. (Yasassi P., 2020). Definition and Scope Buddhist civilization refers to the large-scale social, political, and economic structures influenced by Buddhist principles and institutions over centuries. It encompasses the historical development, spread, and impact of Buddhism as a major world religion.

### **Buddhist Culture**

What is Culture The customs, traditions, beliefs, and values that a group of people share. It includes language, what they do, eat, make, believe, and how they dress. Groups that share these traits are called cultural groups. The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share, and transmit from generation to generation. Ralph Linton: Therefore, Culture has two essential qualities: firstly, it is learned, and secondly it is shared. Culture defines accepted ways of behaving for members of a particular society. Such definitions vary from society to society. Every society has certain common problems to deal with for example the problem of dependent members

such as the very young and the very old. However, solutions to such problems are culturally determined. It is to be noted that the solutions provided in one society may well be regarded as indefensible by members of other societies, e.g. under certain circumstances, “infanticide and geronticide” have been practiced by certain groups of Australian aborigines, Eskimos, and Caribou Indians. Whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor E.B.,1872).

### **Comparative Analysis**

Interconnectedness Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture are deeply interconnected. The structures and institutions of Buddhist civilization create a framework within which Buddhist culture flourishes. Monasteries, supported by state patronage, serve as centers of cultural life, preserving and propagating Buddhist practices. Differentiation While Buddhist civilization refers to the broader historical and structural aspects, Buddhist culture is more focused on daily life and individual practice. Civilization encompasses the political and economic dimensions, whereas culture is about personal and communal expression of Buddhist values. Evolution and Influence Both Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture have evolved, influencing and being influenced by local traditions. The spread of Buddhism to new regions led to the development of unique cultural practices, even as the core teachings remained consistent. Modern Context In the contemporary world, the distinction between Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture can be seen in how Buddhism adapts to modernity. (Chandima.W, Moratuwagama H.M,1990)

### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Buddhist civilization and Buddhist culture represent two interwoven dimensions of Buddhism's impact on societies. Buddhist civilization encompasses the historical, political, and structural aspects, illustrating how Buddhism shaped and was shaped by large-scale social dynamics. It highlights the role of Buddhist principles in governance, economic structures, and monumental contributions to art and architecture. Buddhist culture, on the other hand, focuses on the lived experiences, daily practices, rituals, and values of individuals and communities. It reflects the adaptability and diversity of Buddhism as it manifests in various local contexts and personal practices. Together, they provide a holistic understanding of Buddhism's influence over time. While Buddhist civilization offers a macro perspective on the institutional and societal transformations driven by Buddhist thought, Buddhist culture provides a micro view of the personal and communal expressions of Buddhist life. Their interplay underscores the richness and complexity of Buddhism, showcasing its ability to sustain profound spiritual practices while contributing to the development of civilizations across the world. Through this comparative analysis, we appreciate the depth and breadth of Buddhism's legacy, from grand historical achievements to the intimate details of daily devotion.

### **6. Keywords**

Buddhist Civilization, Buddhist Culture, Characteristics, Religion

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