

**The Sinhalese Buddhist Diaspora in the United  
Kingdom:  
Negotiating Sinhalese Identity**

By

**Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores  
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2019

## DECLARATION

I, Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm this has been indicated in the thesis.

Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake  
Total word count: **83462 words**

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my first Director of Study, Prof. David Chalcraft, for giving me this opportunity in the first place and guiding me through the first three years of my PhD with his expert knowledge. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Simone Krüger Bridge, who assumed the role of Director of Study in the last year of completing my PhD, for guiding me through the final writing up and examination stage. Sincere thanks also go to Dr Sara Parker for her continuous support of my PhD study and related research. Their guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined of having better supervisors and mentors for my Ph.D. study.

Besides my supervisors, I would also like to thank all the members of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom, including the participants, Gatekeepers and all the resources providers for their kindness and support.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout my PhD study. I appreciate the support from my family. I would especially love to thank my wife Yvonne. I do not believe I could finish this thesis without her support.

## ***Abstract***

*Sinhalese Buddhist people have been living in the United Kingdom for a period spanning over three generations. They have grown in number rapidly over the last five decades and have organized themselves as a distinctive community. This community has never been subjected to a formal study with regard to their diasporic experience, identity negotiations, Buddhist orientation and homeland relations. This research is aimed at filling this gap of knowledge about the Sinhalese Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom and their homeland relations. Firstly, this research is underpinned by a literature review of sources on Sinhala Buddhist history and civilization in Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese presence in the United Kingdom in order to set the background for this research. The review of literature revealed a rich history of Sinhalese Buddhist civilization in Sri Lanka. The written history of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and the mythology provide a perspective of the importance given by the Lord Buddha to the Sinhalese nation and Sri Lanka as the guardian of his pure Theravada Buddhist doctrine. The research also includes a review of discourses on diasporic theory to identify attributes or common features of diaspora in order to fully appreciate the diasporic qualities of the Sinhalese community in the UK. This has formed the basis of the empirical research in the UK, which considered Sinhala Buddhist mythology and heritage in Sri Lanka as a variable in their diasporic identity and homeland relations whilst residing in the UK. The researcher himself is a member of the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom. Therefore, this research has utilised ethnographically-informed qualitative research methods to provide a descriptive analysis of the lived experience, identity negotiations and homeland relations of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom. The findings are presented via grounded thematic analysis and represent several facets of the Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle. They support the existence of a well-established, functional first generation of Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom, whose members are dynamically involved in their identity maintenance in the host land while developing relentless relationships with their homeland.*

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	ii
<i>Abstract</i> .....	iii
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	vii
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1 Overview</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Research Design</b> .....	4
<i>1.2.1 Research Questions, Objectives, Scope and Contribution</i> .....	5
<b>1.3 Structure of the Thesis</b> .....	6
<b>2. The Sinhala Buddhist History and Migration</b> .....	9
<i>2.1 Prehistoric Era</i> .....	9
<i>2.2 The Vijaya Legend and the Sinhalese</i> .....	10
<i>2.3 The Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka</i> .....	12
<i>2.4 The Visits of the Lord Buddha and the Solosmasthana</i> .....	14
<i>2.5 Education and Women in Sinhalese Buddhist Society</i> .....	15
<i>2.6 Sri Lankan Culture and Events</i> .....	15
<i>2.7 British Colonialism and The Revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka</i> .....	18
<i>2.8 Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom</i> .....	19
<b>3. Theories of Diaspora</b> .....	23
<i>3.1 Existing Definitions and Debates on Diasporic Theory</i> .....	23
<i>3.2 Attributes of Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora</i> .....	29
<b>4. Methodology</b> .....	32
<b>4.1 Research Philosophy</b> .....	32
<b>4.2 Qualitative Research Methods</b> .....	33
<i>4.2.1 Document and Literature Analysis</i> .....	34
<i>4.2.2 Participatory Observations</i> .....	34
<i>4.2.3 Oral Accounts and Interviews</i> .....	36
<i>4.2.4 Visual Methods</i> .....	39
<i>4.2.5 Study of Artefacts</i> .....	40
<b>4.3 Approaching the Field</b> .....	41
<b>4.4 Positionality</b> .....	42
<b>4.5 Recording Data</b> .....	43
<b>4.6 The Process of Data Analysis</b> .....	44
<b>4.7 Ethical Issues</b> .....	45
<b>5. Research Findings</b> .....	47

<b>5.1 Language and Identity</b> .....	48
5.1.1 <i>Origins and Development of the Sinhala Language and Buddhism</i> .....	48
5.1.2 <i>The Sinhala Language and Sinhala Buddhist Culture</i> .....	49
5.1.3 <i>Sinhala Language and the Sinhala Diaspora in the United Kingdom</i> .....	50
<b>5.2 Food Culture</b> .....	59
5.2.1 <i>Past and Present Perceptions of Food Habits in the Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora</i> .....	60
5.2.2 <i>Social and Religious Aspects of the Sinhala Buddhist Food Culture in the Diaspora</i> .....	64
<b>5.3 Music and Arts: Aesthetic Expressions of Sinhalese Identity</b> .....	69
5.3.1 <i>Sinhala Music and Songs</i> .....	70
5.3.2 <i>Sinhala Cinema and Drama</i> .....	74
5.3.3 <i>Sinhala Traditional Dance and Concerts</i> .....	77
5.3.4 <i>Aesthetic Aspects of Sinhala Buddhist Traditions</i> .....	78
<b>5.4 Sinhala Events and Celebrations</b> .....	81
5.4.1 <i>Professional Associations</i> .....	96
5.4.2 <i>The Sinhala New Year Festival</i> .....	99
5.4.3 <i>The Katina Ceremony</i> .....	102
5.4.4 <i>The Vesak Festival</i> .....	108
<b>5.5 Culture and Religion: Sinhala Buddhist’s Everyday Practices in the Host Land</b> .....	120
5.5.1 <i>Life of Early Migrants in the Host Land</i> .....	120
5.5.2 <i>Life in the Host Land after the Third Wave of Sinhala Buddhist Immigration</i> .....	123
<b>5.6 Life in the UK: Relations with the Host Society</b> .....	135
<b>5.7 Homeland Relations of the Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora</b> .....	144
<b>6. Discussion</b> .....	156
<b>The Sinhalese Buddhist Diasporic Experience: Homeland and Host Land</b> .....	156
<b>6.1 Homeland Consciousness</b> .....	158
<b>6.2 Migration</b> .....	160
<b>6.3 Life in the Host Land</b> .....	161
<b>6.4 Generational Differences</b> .....	162
<b>6.1 Class and Gender Differences</b> .....	164
<b>7. Conclusion</b> .....	167
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	171
<b>Appendices</b> .....	179
Appendix 1: Interview questions .....	179
Appendix 2: Interviewee Details.....	180
Appendix 3: Gatekeeper Information Sheet.....	181
Appendix 4: Gatekeeper Consent Form.....	183
Appendix 5: Participant information Sheet (one to one interviews).....	184
Appendix 6: Participant Consent Sheet (one to one interviews) .....	185

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet (Use of video recordings and photography) .....	186
Appendix 8: Participant Consent Form (Use of video recordings and photography).....	187
Appendix 9: Field Research Risk Assessment.....	188
Appendix 10: Field Visits.....	190
Appendix 11: Field Notes .....	192
Appendix 12: A Sample of Interview Questions and a Transcription with Colour Coding.....	193

## Table of Figures

Figure 1 A Traditional New Year Table of the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool, 23.04.2016 .....	65
Figure 2 Thirty-two varieties of cuisines prepared to offer to the Lord Buddha and the Buddhist monk at Suranga's residence in Liverpool, 06.08.2017 .....	68
Figure 3 Food offerings to the Lord Buddha as alms during the Katina Ceremony in Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	69
Figure 4 Traditional instrument players at 'Katina' Ceremony in Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	79
Figure 5 An organised party in Liverpool, 09.08.2015 .....	85
Figure 6 Ceremony of Offering of a Golden Fence to the Bo Plant at the Sri Sambuddha Vihara, Liverpool, 19.08.2016	87
Figure 7 Festival of Cricket 2017, London, 16.07.2017 .....	88
Figure 8 A get-together of Sinhala community members in one of their houses, 26.10.2017 .....	90
Figure 9 Worshipping Parents, 18.03.2017 .....	91
Figure 10 Opening ceremony of the Leeds Buddhist Vihara in Leeds with the patronage of the Chief incumbent at the Manchester Kethumathi Buddhsit Vihara, Manchester, 12.06.2017 .....	93
Figure 11 A handmade portrayal of the arrival of Buddhism to Sri Lanka displayed at the Leeds Buddhist Vihara on Posen Poya Day, 12.06.2017 .....	95
Figure 12 Opening Ceremony of the Stupa at the Jethavana Vihara in Birmingham, Birmingham, 16.05.2017 .....	96
Figure 13 Association of Professional Sri Lankans (APSL) Charity event held in Manchester, 26.03.2018 .....	98
Figure 14 Inauguration of the New Year Celebrations in Liverpool by lighting the traditional oil lamp, Liverpool, 23.04.2016 .....	100
Figure 15 Playing traditional games at the New Year Festival in Liverpool, 23.04.2016 .....	101
Figure 16 Opening of the Dining Table for the Sinhala New Year in Liverpool, Liverpool, 23.04.2016 .....	102
Figure 17 The invitation of the Buddhist monks to spend the Rainy Season at The London Buddhist Vihara by the devotees, London, 16.07.2017 .....	104
Figure 18 Offering alms to Lord Buddha, Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	105
Figure 19 Offering alms to the Buddhist Monks at the Katina Ceremony, Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	106
Figure 20 The Katina Procession in Liverpool, Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	107
Figure 21 Performing ritualistic rites with the Katina robe, which was offered to the Buddhist monks, Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	108
Figure 22 Anagarika Darmapala Statue at the London Buddhist Vihara, London, 16.07.2017 .....	110
Figure 23 A Vesak Lantern Making Competition at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017 ..	113
Figure 24 Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool organising the Vesak festival, Liverpool, 28.05.2017 .....	114
Figure 25 The Vesak Pandal on Display at the Sinhala Buddhist Temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017 .....	115
Figure 26 A free food stall at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017 .....	116
Figure 27 Vesak Cards Displayed at AAs house in Liverpool, Liverpool, 07.10.2017 .....	117
Figure 28 Distribution of Buddhist Statues among the Sinhala Buddhist Communities in the United Kingdom, 14.11.2015 .....	122
Figure 29 The Large Buddha Statue donated to the Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara in Glasgow, Glasgow, 04.08.2017 .....	123
Figure 30 Dr. Welhengama along with Ven. Sugatharathana Thero, overseeing a Buddhists devotional song session. They have given a prominent place to the children with future in mind, Liverpool, 28.05.2017 .....	124
Figure 31 An Up-country Kandyan Dancer performing at the annual Katina ceremony in Liverpool, Liverpool, 08.10.2017 .....	125
Figure 32 A wall hanging depicting an elephant carrying the sacred relics, 07.10.2017 .....	127
Figure 33 A Buddhist statue and other related artefacts in AA's House, 07.10.2017 .....	127
Figure 34 Children guided by the Buddhists monks and elders in Liverpool participating in the 'Katina' Procession, Liverpool, 06.11.2016 .....	130
Figure 35 Children participating in a special spiritual and meditation program at the temple in Liverpool, 28.05.2017 .....	131
Figure 36 Cultural and religious heritage as displayed at Upul's house in the diaspora, 15.03.2018 .....	133
Figure 37 The Buddhist statue and some souvenirs displayed at AM's House, 23.09.2017 .....	138
Figure 38 Kapila shows a family picture taken at 'Somawathi' temple in Sri Lanka, 22.03.2017 .....	150

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

People of Sri Lankan origin have been migrating to the United Kingdom for over a considerable period of time. They have been able to establish and maintain a lifestyle and institutions that support their South Asian culture and religious activities. Sri Lankans belong to four main ethnic groups, namely Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers (Euro Asians) (Reeves, 2014). Out of these four ethnic groups, the Sinhalese provide a unique case study as a predominantly Buddhist community. A comprehensive study of the Sinhalese diaspora, especially on account of its Buddhist religious orientation, provides a profound case study to place alongside other studies of diasporas, filling a critical gap in knowledge due to a lack of research on this community. This thesis will provide valuable socio-cultural, economic and religious information about the minority Sinhalese ethnic group in the United Kingdom, which will be of value in improving our knowledge about the Sinhalese living in Sri Lanka and specifically about the Sinhalese living in the diaspora. The researcher himself is a member of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom with ten years of lived experience in the host land. Based on the researcher's own experience as a member of the Sinhalese community in the UK and the study of relevant literature, perceptions of home and homeland relations will be considered as important variables for studying Sinhalese diasporic identities. Since culture and religion can play an important role in expressing and creating diasporic identities and homeland relations of any diasporic community, these dimensions of the Sinhalese will be of great significance in this research. The research comprises of ethnographically-informed research methods, including semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, observation and participatory techniques in order to provide a rich description of the religion, culture and lived experience of the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK. The researcher has lived in the community for several years to gain access and complete field research in the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom (Robson, 2002; Brewer, 2000).

The research studies the lived experiences, perceptions, identities and socio-cultural homeland relations of the ethnic Sinhala Buddhist diaspora currently living in the United Kingdom. Firstly, the thesis presents a comprehensive literature review of existing sources about Sinhalese history, culture and religion, whilst discussing the features of diaspora and the diasporic theory to meaningfully approach the lived experience of the Sinhalese community in the United Kingdom. Secondly, the thesis will present the findings with descriptive, critical and thematic analyses from the researcher's qualitative research experience in the Sinhalese diaspora, gained by living with and participating in the events of the Sinhala Buddhists' communities in the United Kingdom. Finally, the qualitative

research findings are subjected to critical analysis and compared against the qualities of the features and the theories of diaspora to reveal further insights into the qualities of the Sinhalese Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom with the aim of contributing new knowledge about the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom.

The study of the history of the Sinhala Buddhist culture and people, both in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom, is important as it sets the background for this research. The Sinhala Buddhist heritage of this community influences the process of constructing and reconstructing their identities in the host land. It shapes their lived experience in the host land and also the relationships that they build up with their homeland. The written history and mythology of the Sinhala Buddhist people in Sri Lanka reveal a rich culture that developed over 2500 years (Gieger, 1912). The introduction of Buddhism over 2300 years ago has nurtured Sinhalese culture with Buddhist values, which has created an inseparable bond between the Sinhala people and Buddhism. The Buddhist influence is present in every aspect of Sinhala Buddhists' lives, making it one of the most prominent factors in their identity construction and negotiation in the host land.

The early Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom was centred around a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple called the London Buddhist Vihara in London (Webb, 2004). While the reasons for migration of the Sinhala Buddhist people to the United Kingdom are varied (Told, 2014), most of them have actively been involved in constructing their identities in the diaspora. Sri Lankan Buddhist culture plays a significant role in this respect. At present, there is a network of Sinhala Buddhist temples all over the United Kingdom bringing together the Sinhala Buddhist communities for a common purpose, which is to reconstruct and sustain their Sinhala Buddhist cultural heritage in the diaspora. This helps to construct new identities and social relationships. Socially constructed institutions and activities along with individual actions result in vibrant Sinhala Buddhist diasporic communities and reciprocal relationships with the homeland that benefit both the homeland and diaspora.

Diasporic theory has evolved over time from representing features and qualities of a handful of diasporic communities, such as the Jewish diaspora, to encompass a wide range of diasporas in the modern world with a range of different features (Cohen, 2008; Tsagarousianou, 2004). The review of literature has revealed common features (Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991) and ideal types (Dufoix, 2008) of diaspora. The researcher has adapted a definition of diaspora in this research (see Chapter 3) as an abstract hypothetical concept to use as a benchmark to appreciate the diasporic qualities of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom. The 'ideal types' or 'common features' of diaspora are subjective elements and related to the literature review, the researcher's personal experience and the

epistemological position in this research.

The study of social functionality and interactions among the individuals are important in order to understand the views and dispositions of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora to produce a descriptive analysis of their lived experience. Therefore, both functionalist and symbolic interactionist theoretical approaches are used in this research. The functionalist approach is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. Social behavioural patterns give shape to our lives. Families, communities and religious groups are shaped by these behavioural patterns. And certain rituals, such as a handshake or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. The operation of these social structures results in social phenomena such as diasporic identities. The symbolic interactionist approach, on the other hand, looks into how we use language, gestures and other repetitive and ritualistic acts to proclaim social and individual concepts and thoughts. Such acts lead to the development and maintenance of social groups and institutions (Giddens, 2006: 20-24). Considering the subjective nature of the research based on the researcher's personal experiences, the research methodology is based on constructive epistemologies and relativism (Hammersley, 1993; Van De Ven, 2007). The descriptive ethnographic writing along with the visual illustrations allow for participants' voices to be heard through the presentation of the interview responses.

Fieldwork is an embodied activity (Coffey, 1999: 59). The researcher is concerned about how he or she presents his body and activities alongside others as he undertakes participant observation. Ethnographic approaches to social research involve the direct participation of the researcher in the social events and the processes being researched (Brewer, 2000: 59). Therefore, in addition to the subjective nature of the social functions to their own social actors, the entire process of reading, analysing and interpreting the social process for the research purpose is subjective to the researcher's own upbringing, experience and cognitive world. As already mentioned, the researcher was born and grew up in Sri Lanka as a Sinhala Buddhist for thirty years before arriving in Europe as a migrant and has spent ten years in England by the time this research was conducted. Therefore, the researcher's own experience as a Sinhala Buddhist migrant in the United Kingdom, and the ability to speak the Sinhala language, puts the researcher in an advantageous position in participatory research to collect data. However, the researcher's position has also resulted in highly subjective description and analysis of the results of ethnographic research.

The field research component consisted of ethnographically-informed qualitative research methods. The researcher has been living with the community for an extended period of time observing,

participating and collecting data via interviews, photography, audio and video recordings and note keeping of the Sinhala Buddhists' communal activities in the diaspora (see also Brewer, 2000; Robson, 2002; Hammersley, 1993). The research findings were subjected to a descriptive thematic analysis based on the identified themes during the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The outcomes of the thematic analysis were utilized to relate to the working definition and diasporic theories introduced in the literature review. Findings were compared and contrasted against the common features and ideal types of diaspora in order to establish the diasporic qualities of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom.

## **1.2 Research Design**

The research design is based on the recognition that the Sinhalese people living in the United Kingdom, who are predominantly Buddhist, form a distinctive community through their religious, cultural and social activities built around Sri Lankan Buddhist temples and organizations. This thesis grew out of a formal, descriptive and critical analysis to study and understand the nature of their lived experience, and it provides a comprehensive case study as to what extent the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora negotiate and maintain their identity in the host land. The discussions were developed with the analysis of the data collected from ethnographically-informed field research of the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK, alongside theories in the existing literatures and based on the epistemologies in this thesis in order to analyse against and appreciate the qualities of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora as emerged from the field research data.

The term 'negotiation' in Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) refers to the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages between two or more communicators in maintaining, threatening or uplifting the various socio-cultural group based or unique personal based identity images of the other in situation (Ting-Toomey, 2015). The term is used in this thesis to discuss the various communication methods used by members of the Sinhala Buddhists diaspora to communicate with one another in order to reconstruct and establish their ethno-religious identity in the host land, as well as their communications with the host land's macro society to gain acceptance and security from it. The research discusses several verbal and non-verbal (symbolic) communicative acts performed by this diasporic community to achieve these objectives. These discussions are categorised into seven themes such as language, food culture, music, events and celebrations, culture & religion, homeland relations and life in the diaspora.

The cultural and religious heritage of Sri Lanka remains important for the Sinhalese community in the United Kingdom (Reeves, 2014:115). People's commitment to negotiate and maintain their identity in the host land by means of persistent social, religious and cultural activities are the focus

of this study in order to understand their lived experiences and identity negotiations with respect to their ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Research into their life stories, social, religious and cultural activities, memories, narratives and attachments to sacred and nostalgic places in the homeland will help to answer the question of how the Sinhalese negotiate and construct their identities in the United Kingdom and relate to their homeland.

Previous studies of diasporic communities have found that second and third generation migrants hold different homeland perceptions, and these perceptions have in turn been found to impact on attitudes towards their culture, religion, social relationship and degrees of assimilation in the host nation (Huang et al, 2012; Garbin, 2005). Similarly, first generation migrants and subsequent generations that comprise the Sinhalese diaspora in the United Kingdom have differing levels of experience of life in Sri Lanka, and this generational difference is illustrated through possible differing imagined ideas of their new home country and perceptions about their country of origin. This will help to understand the Sinhalese people's perceptions and attitudes towards Sri Lanka, and how such perceptions influence and affect their diasporic experiences and status in the United Kingdom.

### *1.2.1 Research Questions, Objectives, Scope and Contribution*

The following questions underpin this research, and are based on the research context and the design:

- What is the historic, cultural, social and religious background of the Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom?
- What are the diasporic qualities in regards to the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK?
- How do Sinhalese diasporic people negotiate and maintain their socio-cultural and religious identities in the United Kingdom?
- What role do homeland relations play in Sinhalese migrants' attitudes towards assimilation in the UK and their perceptions towards their homeland?

In order to address the above research questions, this thesis will firstly undertake a historical and sociological study into the organisation of the Sri Lankan community in the United Kingdom; secondly it systematically reviews and discusses the concept of diaspora, common features and ideal types for the analysis of the Sinhalese diaspora in the United Kingdom; thirdly it illustrates how Sinhalese migrants negotiate and maintain their identity in the United Kingdom by providing a rich description and exploration of their way of life in terms of religion, culture and society; and finally it critically examines and shows the potential linkage between attitudes to homeland and attitudes to

assimilation, making use of research findings, previous studies, theories and common features of diaspora.

In general, this research provides a comprehensive study of the cultural and religious history, characteristics and lived experiences of the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom, and sheds light into the way that Sinhalese migrants engage in identity negotiation, express their lived experience, perceive their homeland relations and express the collectively shared features of this diasporic community. The ethnographically-informed research helps to reveal the functionality and attitudes of this social group in the host land. The researcher's own experience as a member of this diasporic group has contributed to the originality and subjectivity of the research outcome.

The importance of this research is shown in the fact that this is the first study of its kind conducted on the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. It provides a comprehensive insight into one aspect of the United Kingdom's diverse society with a specific view on the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora, which will be of importance to social researchers, anthropologists and others interested in this ethnic group. It will also provide a useful case study to consider alongside studies of other diasporic communities, making an important contribution to debates on diasporic theory by providing a descriptive and critical analysis of the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhists diaspora in the United Kingdom, which can be used in future references. Being a member of this community in the host land, the researcher contributes subjective and unique experiences and insights to go along with the voices of the participants as presented and discussed in the thesis.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

The organisation of the thesis consists of an introduction, literature review, methodology, research findings, discussion and conclusions. The ethnographically-informed nature of the research has meant structuring Chapter 5, Research Findings, according to thematic sections or subchapters with ethnographic descriptions that present different facets of life experience of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. Therefore, each section or subchapter presents unique descriptions and analyses of the social aspects of this unique community. Each subchapter also relates its descriptive analysis to the common features of the diasporas in terms of identity negotiation, lived experience and homeland relations.

Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 examines sources about the history of Sri Lanka, the history of the people in Sri Lanka, their culture, religion, lifestyle and the history of their migration to the United Kingdom. A particular importance is given to 'Mahawamsa' (the Great Chronicle), which was translated into English by Geiger in 1912, considering its value as an influential record of the Sinhala

Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka.

Chapter 3 presents an analytical review of literatures on diasporic theory and history, while developing and discussing a working definition and attributes of diaspora, which will be used for analysing the qualities of the Sinhala Buddhist communities. The review of the literature was instrumental in finding a gap of knowledge with regard to the Sinhala diasporas (Told, 2014). There is an emerging flow of literature about the Tamil diasporas and their political and social struggles (Brun & Van Hear, 2011). However, little research has been done in regard to the Sinhala diasporas and their lived experiences in the host lands.

Chapter 4 presents an extensive description of the research methodology used in the research. It describes the research philosophy and the methods used in this research. The ethnographically-informed research methods of participatory observations and techniques, informal and formal interviews, visual methods and the study of artefacts are discussed in this chapter. The researcher's own experience of conducting field research in the community and the challenges of conducting ethnographic research as a member of the community are presented in this chapter. The ethical issues and ethical procedures of this research are also discussed.

As already mentioned, Chapter 5 presents the research findings under seven themes identified during the analysis stage. Subchapter 5.1 provides a comprehensive description of the Sinhala language, opening with a brief description of the origins of the language, and then describing how the language impacts the development of the Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka. It then illustrates how the use of the Sinhala language by members of the community contributes to the identity, lived experience, religious practices and homeland relations of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. Subchapter 5.2 presents a descriptive analysis of food culture in the Sinhala Buddhists community in the United Kingdom, explaining how food culture influences the Sinhala identity maintenance and homeland relations. This is important since food culture contributes to social cohesiveness as a diasporic community. The need to maintain their food culture in the host land and the nostalgia of homeland food compels Sinhalese people to develop persistent relationships with the homeland, and its links with religious aspects of Sri Lankan food culture. Subchapter 5.3 presents Sinhala arts and music, illustrating how Sinhala music, cinema and other forms of arts contribute to identity negotiations in the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora. The memory of homeland music and arts and the nostalgic longing for that experience leads to the recreation of art and music in the diaspora. How art and music contribute to religious events is also discussed in this subchapter. Subchapter 5.4 presents an extensive description of the annual and spontaneous social, religious and cultural events conducted by Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom, presenting ethnographic research findings in relation to the lived experience of the community. The chapter describes how individuals in the

Sinhala Buddhist community negotiate and maintain their identity in the host land, while developing relationships with the homeland by means of events and celebrations. Subchapter 5.5 presents an analysis of how people in the diasporic community practise their culture and religion at an individual level. It describes people's relationship with Sinhala Buddhist temples, domestic life and their attempts to maintain a Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the diaspora. Subchapter 5.6 presents Sinhala people's relationship with the host land communities, and also addresses the social issues, acts of identity negotiations, construction and expressions in the host land. Subchapter 5.7 discusses the Sinhala Buddhists Diasporas homeland relations, and addresses this in terms of their religious needs, family and friends, and their cultural needs based on their lived experiences. The impact of the written historical stories and the mythology is considered as an important source of creating a homeland consciousness in this analysis.

The Discussion Chapter relates the research findings to diaspora theories. It critically analyses the overall field research findings in relation to the literature, diasporic theory and the common features of diaspora. It attempts to analyse the diasporic status of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom and relate this to existing literatures. This is done under three broad categories of 'Homeland Consciousness', 'Migration' and 'Life in the Diaspora'. It will also discuss the generational differences among the diasporic community as they have reached their third and fourth generations in the United Kingdom. The deviations and choices of the subsequent generations and their attitudes towards the homeland and the homeland culture are discussed in this chapter, along with the class and gender differences among the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the host land. The Conclusion draws on the findings and analyses of the entire research. It presents an overview of the entire thesis, along with the conclusions generated from the research, and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Having introduced the research background and scope, philosophy, aims and objectives, methodologies and data analysis techniques employed in this research, the next chapter provides a comprehensive description of the historical background of the Sinhala Buddhist culture, both in the host land and the homeland, based on a study of literature. This will help to understand the socio-cultural and religious values and identities of the Sinhala Buddhist people and how they have established their life in the host land.

## 2. The Sinhala Buddhist History and Migration

To study and understand the Sri Lankan diaspora and their lived experience in the United Kingdom, it is important to shed light into the history of Sri Lankan heritage and migrations, which is the focus of this chapter. A comprehensive account is given with regard to the origins and the migration of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. This will provide a contextual framework to study the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora with regard to their socio-cultural and religious aspects of life. The study of their Sinhala Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka will also provide a basis on which to develop the analysis of their homeland relations and the identity construction in the host land.

Sinhala Buddhist culture and language have been developed over many centuries in Sri Lanka before Sinhala Buddhist migrants first arrived in the United Kingdom. Sinhala Buddhist identities in the United Kingdom are essentially an extension of the heritage of Sinhala Buddhist history in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the historical values and developments of present day Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka for this research into the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora. The following is a comprehensive literature review of the historical facts of the Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

### *2.1 Prehistoric Era*

The Sinhalese diaspora has its origins in Sri Lanka, which is an island in the Indian Ocean located at the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Sri Lanka is separated from India only by a narrow strait of eighteen miles. It is a pear shaped mass of crystalline rock and limestone of about 25000 square miles in area (Sharma, 1976). The south-central portion of the island is mountainous, which is surrounded by the plains that stretch down to the Indian Ocean. The capital city of 'Kandy' of the ancient Kandyan Kingdom is situated in this part of the country. The country has a tropical climate with warm and humid conditions right throughout the year. The southwest plains and the south west side of the hill country belongs to the wet zone. The north central and the eastern parts of the country belong to the dry zone.

Sri Lanka has a population of 21 million people and 75% of that belongs to the Sinhalese ethnic group who speaks Sinhalese. 70% of the total population are Buddhist, which means the other 30% represents other religions or no-religion (Department of Census and Statistics—Sri Lanka, 2012). The Sinhalese, in general, take great pride in their Sinhalese/Buddhist heritage which spans over many

centuries. It is therefore more appropriate to distinguish the Sinhalese ethnic groups living in the United Kingdom from the rest of the Sri Lankan diaspora as Sinhalese diaspora (Reeves, 2014:10), and to examine the role played by the Buddhist heritage of the Sinhalese in the diaspora.

The written history of Sri Lanka as recorded in the Mahawamsa (the Great Chronicles of Ceylon) (Geiger, 1912) and the archaeological findings give evidence of a prehistoric human existence on the island (Siriweera, 2002). The arrival of merchants and immigrants, primarily from the Indian mainland, resulted in the subsequent development of Sinhalese ethnicity and language. Subsequently, the introduction of Buddhism and advanced civilization, which came along with it, has enabled a Sinhala Buddhist civilization to flourish on the island during the last two millennia.

The period from 1000 B.C to 300 B.C. is considered as the protohistoric period in Sri Lanka. This rapid transition thereafter is due to the arrival of migrants from mainland India and the technology that they brought with them. During this period, improvements in habitation centres were possible due to the introduction of iron technology and irrigation techniques, establishment of settled agriculture, burial centres and improved pottery. These settlements were created and expanded in the northern, north-central and north-western regions of the island, indicating the arrival of immigrants from India. The beginning of sea-borne commerce and the greater exploitation of the oceanic resources can also be dated to this era (Siriweera, 2002:16). The burial sites indicate belief in life after death as some of the items used by the deceased were also buried with the dead bodies. Pottery, bead material, iron, copper, and gold artefacts and cereals are among the items found in these tombs. Use of symbols and letters and cremation practices are also interesting details found in these sites.

The excavations at the citadel of Anuradhapura have revealed the existence of a reasonably advanced society, with a lineage conscious political system during the period of 800 B.C. to 300 B.C. (Siriweera, 2002:17). This polity of the Proto-historic Early Historic interface is highlighted by the legends of King Vijaya and King Pandukabaya. The Vijaya legend is found in detail in the 'Mahavamsa' (Geiger, 1912), The Great Chronicle, which was written in the sixth century A.D. by a Buddhist monk called Mahanama (Siriweera, 2002:17).

### *2.2 The Vijaya Legend and the Sinhalese*

According to the Vijaya legend, as recorded in the Mahavamsa, King Vijaya who is considered the first Sinhalese king of the written history of Sri Lanka arrived on the island from the northeast of India, considered to be Bengal in present day India (Geiger, 1912:53). According to the legend, Vijaya's father was the King of the Lala country in the north-east of present day India. His name was Sinhabahu, and he ruled his country from a city called Sinhapura. Sinhabahu means 'lion arms' and Sinhapura means 'lion city'. According to the legend, Sinhabahu was born to a lion and a human

princess of Vanga country. He had to kill his father, who was a lion, to rescue the inhabitants of his country before he became the king, and therefore he was also called Sihala. Sinhabahu's wife, Sinhasivali, bore twin sons sixteen times. The eldest of the thirty two sons was Vijaya. Vijaya and his seven hundred followers were found to be of evil conduct by their countrymen, and therefore Sinhabahu had to put them in a ship and banish them from the country along with their wives and children. The Mahavamsa says that the men, women and children were sent separately and landed separately in present day Sri Lanka. It goes on to say that the Prince named Vijaya, the valiant, landed in Lanka, in the region called Thambapanni on the day that the Lord Buddha passed into Nibbana (Geiger, 1912:54). The legend also says that Lord Buddha told the lord of the Gods to protect Vijaya in Lanka, who would be the King of Lanka where his religion would be established. Vijaya met Kuveni, who was a woman belonging to a local tribe of Yakka on his arrival. According to the Mahavamsa, Kuveni was spinning a wheel and weaving cotton when she encountered Vijaya and his followers. Kuveni served them with rice and other food and goods of every kind which she had collected from the traders visiting the island. Kuveni helped Vijaya to kill her tribal king during a seven day wedding festival and to take control of the island. Vijaya had two children from Kuveni. His chief followers established settlements in places such as Thambapanni, Upatissagama, Udeni, Uruvela, and Vijithanagara (Geiger, 1912:58).

According to Mahavamsa, Vijaya's father Sinhabahu was also called 'Sihala' because he had slain the lion and therefore, by reason of the ties, Vijaya and his followers were also called 'Sihala'. In order for Vijaya to be consecrated as the King, he wanted to bring a maiden of a noble family from India. His ministers sent people to the south Indian city of Madhura to bring one hundred maidens along with the daughter of the Pandu King to be consecrated as the Queen of Vijaya (Geiger, 1912:59). On the arrival of the princess, Vijaya expelled Kuveni along with her two children and became consecrated as the new King of the Island (Geiger, 1912:60). King Vijaya reigned for thirty-eight years. Since he did not have any children, he had arranged to bring his brother's son Panduvasudeva from India before his death to be the next King of Lanka. Vijaya's ministers were told by a soothsayer that 'one who shall spring of Panduvasudeva's house shall establish the religion of the Buddha in Lanka.' Upon Panduvasudeva's arrival with thirty two other men on the island, he was entrusted with the sovereignty of Lanka (Geiger, 1912:63).

This legendary story written in Mahavamsa is woven around some historical facts. There have been waves of migration from the northeast, northwest and also from the south of India to Sri Lanka during 1000 B.C. to 300 B.C., in addition to the merchants who visited the island. Consecration of Vijaya as the King of Lanka and arrival of his followers has resulted in calling the inhabitants of the island as Sinhalese. However, it is likely that migrants arrived in Lanka even before Vijaya, by the fact that

Kuveni and her relations were an industrious community living on the island and dealing with merchants when Vijaya arrived. According to Mason (2014:208), the Sinhalese appear to have originally come from the north-west of India. Mason speculates that they might have been Mohenjodaro people displaced when the Aryans invaded north India. However, it is also possible that they had links with the Aryans due to the fact that Sinhalese language belongs to Indo-Aryan, Prakrit family of languages (Reeves, 2014:17). They were a highly advanced community who used to work with iron and advanced irrigation systems. The episode of Kuveni could also be considered as an invasion from north India and conquest of the indigenous inhabitants of Lanka and the synthesis of their culture in Lanka (Siriweera, 2002:19). It is an important wave of migrants from North India to Sri Lanka, who settled along the riverbanks of the north central regions of Sri Lanka. Seventh century Chinese traveller, Hsuan Tsang and fifth century Chinese traveller Fa-Hsien suggest that Lanka was peopled by merchants, confirming the fact that there had been several waves of immigration to the country (Siriweera, 2002:19). The story of Vijaya and his followers bringing one hundred maidens from south India indicates that there had been migrants coming from south India. The terms 'demada' and 'damida' found in early Brahmi inscriptions indicate the arrival of Tamils from South India (Siriweera, 2002:20). The continuous relationships with India in the subsequent periods provide ample evidence of migrations from India to Sri Lanka. The story of the arrival of Vijaya in Lanka on the day of the Buddha's demise only signifies the close association of the Sri Lankan kingship with Buddhism (Siriweera, 2002:19). Moreover, the chroniclers of Mahavamsa and other chronicles have attempted to signify the importance of Sri Lanka and the rulers of the island as the protectors of Buddhism.

According to Mahavamsa, Lanka was ruled after Vijaya by Panduvasudeva, Panduvasudeva's son Abhaya, Abhaya's nephew Pandukabhaya and then by Pandukabhaya's son Mutasiva until 250 B.C. Pandukabhaya is known to be the first king to build 'Anuradhapura' as the capital city of Lanka and the founder of well planned, organized city administration during fourth century B.C. This era belongs to the prehistoric era of Sri Lanka, which was recorded only as legendary stories in Mahavamsa with no historical evidence. According to Siriweera, 2002:238, the caste system was also introduced from India during this period and grew both by infusion and maturation. Apart from the rulers and merchants, cultivators, weavers, washer-men, carpenters, drummers, potters, blacksmiths, sweet makers, cleaners etc. were the other castes existing in Sri Lanka, which is basically an occupation based caste system.

### *2.3 The Arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka*

The historical age of Sri Lanka begins from the time of the King Devanampiya Tissa (250 B.C. to 210 B.C.), who is the second son of Mutasiva. The setting up of records on stones (lithic records) and

maintaining an oral historical tradition began during this era with the official introduction of Buddhism (Siriweera, 2002:23). Devanampiya Tissa's rule in Sri Lanka coincides with the reign of Emperor Asoka in India. According to Mahavamsa they were friends, exchanging gifts through entrustments (Geiger, 1912:80). Emperor Asoka, who was the son of the founder of Mayuran dynasty, 'Chandragupta' and a converted Buddhist, sent his son 'Mahinda', who was a Buddhist monk, to Sri Lanka in order to establish Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Mason, 2014:29). Mahinda Thera met the King on the Missaka-mountain and the King and his men embraced Buddhism from there on (Geiger, 1912:94, 95). Mahinda Thera established and ordained the first male Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka and later sent for his sister 'Sanghamitta', who was also a Buddhist nun, to come from India to establish the female sector of Buddhist monks (Geiger, 1912:98). Sanghamitta and her followers came to Lanka along with a sampling of the tree called 'Assatu', which provided Lord Buddha with shade during his efforts to become enlightened. The fact that Buddhism was embraced by the King of Lanka, it enabled Buddhism to spread on the island and to be established with the royal patronage. Thuparama Stupa was built by King Devanampiya Tissa, which is considered to be the first Dagobah (Stupa) in Sri Lanka. He also built the Mahavihara monastery and donated it to the Buddhist monks led by Mahinda Thera, which eventually became the Mahavihara fraternity. Eventually, the Mahavihara sector became the protector and promoter of 'Theravada Buddhist tradition' in Sri Lanka. The Kings and other noble devotees were sustaining the religion by donating land and temples to the monks and considered receiving blessings from the monks as an essential part of ruling the country. The monarchies were expected to be the prime protectors of Buddhist establishments and Buddhism became a legitimizing factor of royal authority (Siriweera, 2002:245).

The arrival of Buddhism also signals the beginning of the use of an alphabet and a common language, the introduction of Pali literature and a historical tradition which was passed down by word of mouth (Siriweera, 2002:25). According to Siriweera (2002:244), Buddhism has had a revolutionary impact on the social life in Sri Lanka. The art of writing, knowledge of the art and architecture of the sub-continent and a new way of life with a new system of values and a code of conduct was introduced along with Buddhism.

Dutthagamini who reigned from 161 B.C. to 137 B.C. and defeated the South Indian invaders, is known to be the first king to unite the country under one royal banner. He patronized Sinhala-Buddhist culture by constructing Ruvanveli Dagobah, Mirisaveti Dagobah and Loha Pasada (Bracen Palace). During the reign of Vattagamini (89-77 B.C.), Buddha's teachings or the Tripitaka was written down as a book for the first time in the world at the temple called 'Aluvihara' in Sri Lanka (Siriweera, 2002:245). However, Vattagamini also built and donated the 'Abhayagiri Monastery' to a group who believed in Mahayana Buddhist tradition, which was popular in India by that time (Geiger, 1912).

Mahayana tradition flourished under the patronage of King Mahasena (274-301). Mahasena built and donated the Jetavana Monastery to Mahayana Buddhist monks (Siriweera, 2002:247).

Following the reign of Mahasena, Theravada Buddhism was re-established under Mahavihara by King Sri Maghvanna (301-328). His reign is also notable for the fact that the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha was brought to Sri Lanka from Dantapura in Kalinga by a princess known as Hemamali. According to the Fa-Hsien's book of travels (406-428), there had been an annual ceremonial procession in honour of the Tooth Relic (Siriweera, 2002:248). The possession of the Tooth Relic became a symbol that combined state power with religious authority and a prerequisite for legitimization of royal power. At present, the Tooth relic is placed in the temple of Tooth in Kandy where the last Sinhalese kingdom was (Mason, 2014:208). Even now, this annual ceremonial event is practised every year in August in the hill country capital of Kandy, by carrying a replica of the Tooth Relic on a back of a tusker in a procession of religious and cultural performances.

#### *2.4 The Visits of the Lord Buddha and the Solosmasthanas*

According to the Mahavamsa chronicles, the Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times during his lifetime, knowing that Sri Lanka would be the place where his doctrine should shine in glory and would be preserved (Geiger, 1912:3). It says that Buddha made his first visit to the island nine months after his enlightenment at a place called 'Mahiyangana', where a Dagobah was built later by enshrining a lock of hair of Lord Buddha. On his fifth year of enlightenment, he again visited the island at Nagadeepa to resolve a conflict between Naga Kings, Chulodara and Mahodara over a gem studded throne. The two Kings later built the Nagadeepa Dagobah, enshrining the throne they were fighting for. The third visit of the Lord Buddha occurred during the eighth year of enlightenment on an invitation by the Naga King 'Maniakkika' in Kelaniya. During this visit, the Buddha also visited 'Samantkuta' (Adams Peak), Diva Guhava, Deghavapi and the places where 'Jayasri Maha Bodhi' (The Sacred Bodhi Tree), Ruvanveliseya, Thuparamaya, Sela Cetiya and Muthiyangana Dagobah were later built (Geiger, 1912:3-9). Apart from the places mentioned above, five other temples with Dagobah, namely Tissa Maharama, Mirisavetiya, Abhayagiriya, Jetavanaramaya, and Kiri Vehera, which were built by several Sinhalese-Buddhist kings, are included in the sixteen sacred places considered to be the most important places of worship in Sri Lanka.

These places of worship of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community are considered to be hallowed by the visits of Buddha or enshrine various relics of Buddha, and therefore called 'Solosmasthanas' (Sixteen important places). Apart from these places, the Temple of the Tooth Relic has also become a very important place of worship for the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka. The annual season of pilgrimage to Adam's Peak and the annual procession of the Tooth Relic in Kandy are among some of the highlights of the Sinhalese Buddhist culture and calendar in Sri Lanka. With the introduction of

Buddhism, the tradition of the worship of trees and rocks by the inhabitants of the island was accommodated by the practice of worshipping the Bodhi Tree and the Dagobah.

### *2.5 Education and Women in Sinhalese Buddhist Society*

Traditionally, Buddhist monks were the pioneers of education and literacy in ancient Sri Lanka since the third century B.C. (Siriweera, 2002:242). The literacy knowledge and creativity of the ordinary men and women were evident from the poetry written on the 'Mirror Wall' at Sigiriya from the sixth century onwards by the people coming from different regions of the country.

The main centres of education were the Buddhist temples called 'Pirivena Education'. Buddhist monks played a pivotal role in imparting education to both the Buddhist monks and the lay people. Mayura Pirivena in Anuradhpura, Abhayagiri monastery and Jetavana complex have been major institutes of Buddhist education in ancient Sri Lanka. The tradition of Pirivena education has continued up to Kotte period until the beginning of the colonial rule by the Europeans (Siriweera, 2002:243).

Unlike in traditional Indian society, women occupied an important position in ancient Buddhist Sri Lanka. The Bhikkuni Oder, or the order of nuns, were introduced in Sri Lanka in the third century B. C., and the entering of the Oder by Queen Anula and her followers indicates that women have played a pioneering role in the propagation of Buddhism (Siriweera, 2002: 241). They were also instrumental in the introduction of the Bhikkuni Order in China and Tibet in the fifth century A.D. Princess Hemamali from Dantapura in Kalinga is known to have brought the Tooth Relic of the Buddha to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sri Meghavanna (301-328).

Women also played a vital role in the agricultural economy by participating in agricultural activities in paddy fields and home gardens, animal husbandry, cottage industry, pottery, weaving etc. Some of them have also achieved high literacy levels, which is evident by the writing on the Mirror Wall and study of scriptures. Women also have played an important role in music and dancing (Siriweera, 2002: 242). Contemporary women play an important part in maintaining the food culture, traditional rituals and are a symbol of Sri Lankan identity in many ways.

### *2.6 Sri Lankan Culture and Events*

Sri Lanka is known to have had a long history of paddy cultivation and advanced irrigation systems, since the sixth century B.C., which included thousands of tanks to collect water. There are several types of cereals grown in Sri Lanka to this date (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016). Sri Lankans are known to have rice and cereals for their main food. Main dishes are accompanied by classic combinations of seafood, meat, egg, poultry and vegetable dishes (Reeves, 2014:38). Eating beef is not popular due to the Buddhist and Hindu influences. There are several ways of cooking rice such

as rice gruel, milk rice, ambul bath, cooked rice with bees' honey, cooked rice with ghee, cooked rice with spices, rice mixed with cereals, tempered rice with vegetables, rice kept with water and mixed with onion, coconut milk, lemon juice, salt water etc., yellow rice and rice mixed with green grams. Kings offered milk rice to Buddhist priests, and it is a meal with a high cultural value even in present day (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016). Flat bread made with powdered cereals, salt gruel, herbal gruel and milk gruel, along with tropical fruit juices, are consumed regularly.

A large variety of vegetables grown in home gardens, including tuber, plantains, coconut, jak fruit etc., were used along with scraped coconuts and coconut oil to flavour food. Spices made with pepper, ginger, mustard, tamarind, garlic turmeric, lemon curry leaves, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and chillies etc. are used to make curries. Sri Lankan dishes are spicier and hotter than most of the other Asian dishes, but not all the dishes are made fiery hot (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016).

Rice flour and treacle are used to make a variety of confectionary items, such as Aluwa, Halapa, Ingurudosi, Welithalapa, Dodol, Kiri roti, Konda Kavum etc. (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016). Most of these traditional food items take an important place in the various cultural and religious events that take place throughout the year.

Sri Lanka's geographic proximity to India has resulted in Indian influence and introduction of Indian cuisines. South Indian culinary influence is prominent in Sinhalese dishes, with the introduction of Tamil and Kerala dishes to Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan food was also enriched by the arrival of Muslims, merchants, travellers and colonialists. Traditional Sri Lankan utensils that were used in food preparation includes coconut scrapers, grinding stones, rollers, rice pounding equipment, steaming pipes etc. Sri Lankan diaspora have become pioneers in innovation at present, through the new influences they receive in different countries and their new lifestyles (Reeves, 2014:40).

Sinhala New Year is celebrated on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of April in accordance with astrology every year. Usually, this month is a prosperous and leisurely period in Sri Lanka after the harvesting season. People place a very high importance on following the traditions and astrological guide lines during this festival and also give a particular importance to Buddhist rituals. There is also a strong relationship between this festival and the food culture (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016).

Lighting of the hearth is conducted according to the auspicious time on the New Year day, and boiling milk and cooking of milk rice follows. Traditional food takes a prominent place during this festival and it is not celebrated in isolation. Families, friends, neighbours and the whole of the village get together in sharing food, festivities and New Year games in order to renew their relationships and to appreciate their help and support (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2016).

Dance and music of the Sinhalese has evolved and been passed down through generations over

centuries. The Vijaya and Kuveni legend refers to celebrations involving dance and music in the prehistoric era. Sri Lankan traditional dance is comprised of three categories, namely upcountry Kandyan, low country and Sabharagamu (Sabharagamu is a province in Sri Lanka). The rituals and the way these dances are performed indicates a clear Buddhist influence on them. Women take a prominent role in Sri Lankan dance traditions. Sri Lankan music involves several local instruments (drums), as well as instruments influenced by Indian culture. 'Kolam', 'Sokary' and 'Nadagam' are the varieties of Sinhalese folk drama culture. Some of them are performed as healing practices and involves worship of local deities. The rituals involved in these dramas are later influenced by Buddhism, but the styles are influenced by the indigenous and Indian cultures (LankaLibrary, 2016).

Sinhalese people involve themselves in various traditional sports events, especially during the New Year festivals, and some of these are influenced by Indian culture. However, the most popular of all the sports events in Sri Lanka is the game of cricket, which was introduced by colonialists during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, even the Sri Lankan diaspora has the habit of keenly following and cheering the Sri Lankan national cricket team all over the world. Cricket is a way of rebuilding a connection with the homeland for the people in the diaspora (Raman, 2015).

Since the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, the full moon days (Poya) of every month are considered as days devoted to Buddhist rituals. Buddhists in Sri Lanka commemorate special events in Buddha's life and the historical events of Buddhism in Sri Lanka on Poya days (LankaLibrary, 2016). Vesak full moon poya day, in the month of May, is the most venerated day of the Buddhist calendar. Buddhists all over the world commemorate the birth, enlightenment and the passing away of the lord Buddha on this day. Making Vesak lanterns, exhibition of Buddhist stories in pictures with decorative lights (Pandols) and distributing free food are some of the events that take place on this day in Sri Lanka. Poson poya, in the month of June, is considered as the day Mahinda Thera came to Sri Lanka in order to establish Buddhism. Traditional Buddhist rituals are carried out on every poya day by staying away from the worldly affairs by both lay people and the monks (LankaLibrary, 2016).

### *2.7 British Colonialism and The Revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka*

After the thirteenth century A. D., the Sinhalese kingship in the north central region declined steadily due to south Indian invasions, famines and epidemics. Arrival of the European colonists from the sixteenth century and their Christian missionary activities further hampered progress and sustenance of Buddhism in Sri Lanka during this time, except in the Buddhist kingdom of Kandy (Reeves, 2014:25). The first colonialist to arrive was the Portuguese, who gradually took control of the coastal areas of the country from 1505 to 1594. Many Sinhalese in the lowland areas were converted to Christianity during this period due to the missionary campaigns by the Portuguese. The Sinhala Buddhist kingdom in the central capital of the island did not like the Portuguese and therefore, looked for the support of the Dutch to expel the Portuguese by making a treaty. The Dutch were able to take control of the whole of the coastal areas by 1658. However, the agreement was breached by both parties and the Dutch ruled the coastal areas until the British came to the island in 1796. The British were able to take control of the whole island by 1815 by signing an agreement with the Kandyan chieftains in the central capital of the island. The British rule lasted until 1948 when the island received its independence.

The colonial era also marked the arrival of the people of European and African origins and the formation of hybrid (in-between) communities who adopted a Western and native mix culture while following Christian faiths (Reeves, 2014:24-31). Such communities were a result of the interactions between the locals and the foreigners at individual level, which leads to the formation of communities of the mixed races such as the 'burghers'. While such developments threatened the prevalence of Buddhism in the country at varying degrees, the main threat to the dominance of Buddhism in the country was the colonial implantation of a secular government in the country. This development removed the Buddhist monks' power of choosing the ruler of the country, whom in return was required to patronize the Buddhist monks (Liston, 1999). By doing so, the British colonialists were able to dislodge the influence of Buddhism on the Sri Lankan politics. As a result, the temples lost their power as educational institutes while the British government was able to establish educational institutes, which enabled the locals to get English education, and to join British administration. This opportunity to get a western education resulted in the beginning of migration of the local upper class people to the United Kingdom for higher education. At the same time, the English educated locals were involved in a revival of Buddhism in the country rising against the prevailing Christian missionary powers (Liston, 1999). The early migrants who were educated in British founded schools in Sri Lanka were easily assimilated into the British society. They were not interested or capable of expressing any kind of diasporic identity. However, the more recent migrants who are influenced by the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka and are mostly economic migrants, have been able to come together in numbers and

show their diasporic identities in various ways. Therefore, the British colonial impact on the Sri Lankans vastly was making United Kingdom a main attraction as one of the very first destination countries for the Sri Lankans. It does not show a considerable impact on the current diasporic identities and features of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. Rather, The Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom shows much closer relationship with the Sinhala Buddhist cultural heritage and the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka.

A Buddhist revival in the modern era was initiated by a philanthropist called Anagarika Darmapala (1864-1933), with his nationalist and Buddhist movement. Being an inspirational and influential leader, he used strong language and stressed the importance of protecting Buddhism and the nation of Sinhalese from the colonialist. He met Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, the founders of the Theosophical society in New York at a very young age and started working for the Buddhist revival in the country with the support of some Buddhist monks (Londonbuddhistvihara.org. 2016).

Anagarika Darmapala was a forerunner in the temperance movement, which acted as a catalyst to the nationalist movement in the country. He also pioneered in opening Buddhist schools all over the country. He started Buddhist newspapers in Sinhala language and opened Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in Sri Lanka. His energetic efforts resulted in the rejuvenation of Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness in the nation. He rendered his services overseas by creating the 'Mahabodhi Society' and revival of Buddhism in India. His missionary work took him to the United States, Europe, Japan, Honolulu and England during this time (Londonbuddhistvihara.org. 2016)).

Anagarika Darmapala's visit to London on 28th September 1925 convinced himself that building a Buddhist temple was the prime need for a permanent centre of Buddhism where British public could benefit. The following year, on 24th July 1926 he returned to London with the funds needed to open the first ever Buddhist Temple of the west and named it of 'London Buddhist Vihara'. The British Mahabodhi Society was also born on this occasion. The objects of the society were the extension of the knowledge of the tenets of Buddhism, the establishment of a temple in London and the promotion of the cause of Buddhism in the west (Webb, 2004:2). The residing Buddhist monks in the London Buddhist Vihara subsequently opened Buddhist temples elsewhere and introduced the trend of opening new temples all over the United Kingdom. At present, these Buddhist temples have become religious, cultural and social centres for Sinhalese-Buddhist diaspora living in the United Kingdom.

### *2.8 Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom*

Sri Lanka has had a long historical relationship with the United Kingdom dating back to the colonial era, which spanned from 1815 to 1948. Even after the gaining of independence in 1948, as a Commonwealth country, Sri Lanka continued to foster strong diplomatic and economic ties with the

United Kingdom (Reeves, 2014:115). Although there are records of the Sri Lankans coming to the United Kingdom since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the modern migration of the Sri Lankans to United Kingdom took place in three main waves after the Second World War. The first wave brought professionals, such as doctors and nurses, and students from the upper class sectors of society immediately after independence in 1948. The second wave brought the marginalised Tamils on account of the political tensions that had arisen from the passing of legislation that made the Sinhalese language the sole official language in Sri Lanka in the 1960s (Hear et al, 2004:16). These two waves have brought professionals and students who were able to secure white collar jobs in the UK government (mostly in NHS as doctors and nurses) and the private sector. These migrants belonged to both the Tamil and the Sinhalese ethnic groups and other minority communities such as Muslims and Burghers. This early diaspora has provided the social infrastructure required to arrange the departure of asylum seekers to the UK, following the outbreak of the civil war in Sri Lanka (Crisp, 2014:7). Therefore, the third wave of migration, caused by the onset of the war in the 1980s in Sri Lanka was able to find an already established diaspora in the UK. Most of these migrants left Sri Lanka as asylum seekers during turbulent times. “While deteriorating relations between Sri Lanka's two main ethnic groups (the Sinhalese and Tamils) led to some migration beginning in the 1950s, the onset of civil war in 1983 saw a massive increase in displacement, especially amongst Sri Lanka's Tamils” (Sriskandarajah , 2003:3). The civil war between the two ethnic groups, which started in 1983 continued for three decades. In the meantime, the insurgencies in the south of the country has led to political victims, who left the country as political asylum seekers (Told, 2014). This deteriorating situation on the island, in turn, has inevitably hampered the economic growth of the country and the wellbeing of the inhabitants, forcing them to grab new opportunities and to leave the island for a better life in another country. These three waves of migration of Sri Lankan migrants to the United Kingdom has enabled the building up of further infrastructure and network facilities, such as religion based organizations, alumni organizations, professional organizations and welfare organizations (Hear et al, 2004:16 and 17).

The exact number of the Sri Lankan diaspora living in the United Kingdom is not known, as they have not been included in any form of census. The ‘Office for National Statistics’ in the UK indicates that there are approximately 46000 Sri Lankan born immigrants in the country by the year 2018. It says that there are approximately another 3000 Sri Lankans born in the United Kingdom. The other available sources of information, such as ‘The Labour Forces Survey’, indicates that there were a little over 100,000 Sri Lankan born immigrants residing in the United Kingdom in 2006, with an increase of 52% from the previous census which was carried out in 2001. Most of these numbers were concentrated in London, mainly in East Ham, Southall, Wembley and Rayners Lane. (Reeves,

2014:115 and 116). These groups of Sri Lankans consist of all four major ethnic groups that are found in Sri Lanka, namely Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and the Burghers. Apart from the migrations to the United Kingdom, the more recent migrations since the onset of the war has resulted in substantial Sri Lankan populations in Canada, Australia, The United States of America and the Europe. The main reasons for migration to these countries are educational purposes, work and as asylum seekers. In addition to this there are economic migrants in Middle East, Italy, South Korea and other East Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Japan (Reeves, 2014). The exact numbers of the Sri Lankans in these destination countries are not found in any reliable source. However unreliable sources such as 'Wikipedia' provides following statistics; Saudi Arabia: 600000, United Arab Emirates: 300000, Kuwait: 300000, India: 200000, France: 150000, Qatar: 145256, Canada: 139415, United Kingdom: 132000, Italy: 109968, Australia: 109853, Lebanon: 100000, Germany: 60000, Switzerland: 55000, USA: 45159. These numbers consists of all ethnicities in Sri Lanka of which majority are Sinhalese and Tamils and could be considered as approximate figures.

The study of literature of the historical, religious and cultural background of the Sinhalese people indicates that the prehistoric humans who were the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka, and the subsequent arrivals from India, the Near East and Far East have contributed to the current composition of the Sinhalese community in Sri Lanka. In general, immigrants who arrived on the island were able to assimilate into the society by embracing Buddhism and speaking the Sinhalese language. Eventually people were recognized as Sinhalese Buddhists. The existing literature provides information of a clear linkage between Theravada Buddhism, the Sinhalese people and the island of Sri Lanka (Siriweera, 2002:19; Geiger, 1912:3, 54). The written history of Sri Lanka found in the book *Mahawamsa*, which was written by a Buddhist monk in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, took a particular interest in highlighting the Sinhalese Buddhist civilization in the country. According to *Mahawamsa*, the Lord Buddha said to 'Sakra', who is the 'lord of the Gods', to protect the island of Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese people, where his original doctrine would be protected and sustained. The Sinhalese community has upheld these words, believed to be said by Lord Buddha, to date, first by putting the Buddhist Theravada doctrine into writing for the first time in the world (Siriweera, 2002:245) and then by practising it to this date. The Sinhalese people take pride in their history and Buddhist civilization, which nourishes and gives meaning to their lives from cradle to grave. This fact was highlighted by a visiting Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka during a sermon at 'Sri Sambuddha Vihara', Liverpool, who compared the children of the Sinhala community in the UK to 'uprooted plants', who are denied sources of spiritual and cultural nourishment due to emigration from the homeland.

The present day emigration of the Sinhalese people from Sri Lanka to various other parts of the world is primarily a migration in search of better opportunities based on economic and academic reasons.

The present day Sinhalese community in the United Kingdom has arrived during the past 70 years, since the end of the colonial era in Sri Lanka. They represent at least three generations. These three generations consists of the immigrants, their children and the grandchildren. Their interest and commitment to sustain Sinhala Buddhist tradition is reflected by the established Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist institutes all over the United Kingdom. The Buddhist monks residing in these temples are sponsored and brought to the UK by the community themselves. Therefore, it is important to understand how this community is committed to maintaining continuous relationships with Sri Lanka, and how they are committed to the sustenance of Sinhala Buddhism in Sri Lanka as a source of spiritual and cultural support. Interestingly, 'the Sinhalese Theravada Buddhists' commitment to the wellbeing of the island of Sri Lanka is associated with the historical records found in the Mahawamsa, which is also carried forward by word of mouth from generation to generation. In this context, the 'Sinhalese diaspora' draws parallels with the concept of Zionism associated with the Jewish diaspora. However, it will be interesting to see why the Buddhist teachings of renunciation and impermanence counteract such sentiments.

This section has given an overview of the historical background of the Sinhala Buddhist people both in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. It is evident from the findings that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is enriched and sustained by the migration of people both in the homeland and the host land. The migrant people have developed a rich Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka, which has become the epitome of the Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle of the migrant Sinhala Buddhists to the United Kingdom. The following chapter reviews the theories and debates on the concept of diaspora. Later on, it will develop common features of a diaspora within the context of the Sinhala Buddhist history of migrations, the researcher's own lived experience and the existing debates on the diasporic theory. This will provide the basis for the descriptive analyses of the lived experiences of the Sinhala Buddhist people in the UK in the later chapters of this thesis.

# 3. Theories of Diaspora

One of the objectives of this research is to discuss the theory of diaspora and to use it to highlight the features of the Sinhalese living in the UK in order to appreciate its diasporic qualities and to find out how it has developed over time. In order to do so, it is important to discuss the history, existing concepts, definitions and debates on the topic of diaspora. The following review of literature is aimed at accomplishing this task. Firstly, it attempts to review the existing knowledge of the diasporic theory by examining the theories of diaspora and the definitions. Later it attempts to develop a set of common features as hypothetical concepts based on the literature review and the researcher's own diasporic experiences. It seeks to develop a theoretical framework to study this topic of Sinhala Buddhist diaspora from the researcher's own perspective. The research findings are analysed against the diasporic theories later in this thesis, in order to conform to an analytical and theoretical framework.

## *3.1 Existing Definitions and Debates on Diasporic Theory*

Diaspora could broadly be described as the communities of a specific country who are living away from their country of origin. "Diaspora was initially associated with the forced exile of the Jewish people from the holy land and Jews have come to be seen as the archetypal 'diasporic community'" (Sales et al, 2009:4). The term diaspora was commonly associated with the Jews, Armenians, Irish and the Greeks in describing their transnational communities. According to Tololyan (2012:5), the term 'diaspora' derives from a Greek word meaning 'scattering', used to refer to citizens of a dominant city-state who immigrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonization. Hence it embodies a notion of a centre, a home from where the dispersion occurs (Brah, 1998:181). Diaspora also carries the image of a journey. However, the diasporic journey can be differentiated from any other journey, as diasporic journeys are aimed at settling down and putting roots down elsewhere away from the homeland (Brah, 1998).

The diaspora communities described in the early days in the literature are often associated with catastrophic experiences, which eventually led them to flee their homelands (Tsagarousianou, 2004:53). In modern society the word diaspora has taken a wider meaning than 'emigration for the purpose of colonization' or emigration due to catastrophic experiences. According to Ionescu, "The term "diasporas" refers to expatriate groups which, in contrast to "migrants", applies to expatriate populations abroad and generations born abroad to foreign parents who are or may be citizens of their countries of residence" (Ionescu, 2006:8 and Brubaker, 2005). In contrast to original definitions, Ionescu's definition has included a wide range of different types of migrants. The ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) (2004:1) defines diaspora as populations of migrant origin

who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which they develop multifarious links involving flows and exchanges of people and resources: between the homeland and destination countries, and among destination countries. "...‘Semantic domain’ of the term ‘diaspora’ was being ‘shared’ with such terms as ‘migrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile, overseas community and ethnic community’ and that Diasporas had become ‘the exemplary communities of the transnational moment’" (Toloylan, 2012:4). According to Cohen, 2008, diaspora studies have gone through four phases since early 1960’s. In the first phase, during 1960’s and 1970’s, the classical use of the term Diaspora was confined to the Jews, Armenians, Africans, Irish and later Palestinians, who were expelled or oppressed in their homelands. In the second phase in 1980’s, the term was used to describe different categories of people, such as expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities etc. creating a more varied cluster of Diasporas. In the third phase, during the 1990’s, the social constructionists sought to decompose two of the major building blocks previously delimiting and demarcating the diasporic idea, namely ‘homeland’ and ‘ethnic/religious community’. It was further argued that identities have become deterritorialized and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way. In the fourth phase, a kind of consolidation of ideas has taken place with a modified reaffirmation of its core ideas, such as homeland and ethnicity (Cohen, 2008).

Diasporic journeys could be considered as a form of transnationalism. Transnationalism is a processes that surpass international borders. It is often used to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries, which includes communities and all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups, and organizations. Transnationalism involves everyday practices of migrants engaged in various activities, including exchange and solidarity within relationships and networks, political participation in home and host country, private enterprise across borders, exchanged of cultural customs and practices, and others (Baubock & Faist, 2010; Pasura, 2008). However, Diasporic journeys are unique as they leads to settling down in a host land.

Diasporic communities live in places away from their country of origin, which is known as the country of residence or the host country. However, they continue to maintain strong socio-economic and sometimes political ties with their countries of origin. The research carried out about Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Africans, and Caribbean islanders stand witness to this phenomenon (Cohen, 2008). According to Garbin, 2005:2, "settlers coming from the South Asian countries to United Kingdom are linked to their countries of origin by telephone, mail, internet, television and radio so that communication of news is rapid and sustained and results in ‘diasporic communities’ and a sense of belonging to multiple homes/nations". However, it is also observed that the second or third generations of the diaspora, although they consider their country of origin as the ‘ancestral home’

where their cultural ‘roots’ are, it appears that very few of them are willing to invest, send money regularly, or stay for a long time (Garbin, 2005:2). The fact that the diaspora consists of people who were either forcefully or voluntarily migrated from their homeland, could also create different perceptions for them about their homeland.

According to Huang et al (2012:5), although diaspora tourism is a return or a homecoming for the first generation diaspora, it is a new destination to the second-generation diaspora. Therefore, the first generation diaspora can also play a vital role in creating a destination image for their country of origin amongst the people in their country of residence (Allotey, 2010:43).

Over the years, scholars have used the word diaspora with a broad working definition to study various ethnic, religious and other types of minority groups, leading to scholarly debates on the definition and sometimes to the loss of meaning of the word diaspora. Considering this issue, William Safran has introduced some common features to be considered when applying the concept of Diaspora. William Safran expected the members of an expatriate community to share several of the features listed in the (Table 3.1) (Safran, 1991: 83-99).

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘centre’ to two or more peripheral or foreign regions</li> <li>2. They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements</li> <li>3. They believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it</li> <li>4. They regard their ancestral homeland as their true ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return, when conditions are appropriate</li> <li>5. They believe that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and</li> <li>6. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously to that homeland in one way or another and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship</li> </ol>
--

**Table 3.1:** Common features of an Ideal type of Diaspora by William Safran (Safran, 1991: 83-99).

Safran’s common feature reflects a subjective approach to understand and distinguish the diasporic existence. It can be argued that Safran has based these common features on the experiences of the historical ‘victim diasporas’ such as the Jewish diaspora and therefore reflects a subjective approach. Robin Cohen, who has appreciated Safran’s attempt to introduce this list of attributes of an ideal type, has gone further to introduce his own expanded list of common features of a diaspora community (Table 3.2) (Cohen, 2008:17).

Cohen's common features objectively describe types of diaspora other than 'victim diasporas', who are capable of changing their circumstances according to their wish. Therefore, Cohen's common features of a diaspora allows the inclusion of different types of diasporas, such as religious, ethnic, trade, labour, etc. For example, the Chinese and the Indian diasporas are known to have spread to different parts of the world due to their pursuit of work (labour) or trade related endeavours.

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;</li> <li>2. Alternatively, or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;</li> <li>3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;</li> <li>4. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;</li> <li>5. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;</li> <li>6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;</li> <li>7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;</li> <li>8. A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and</li> <li>9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism</li> </ol> |
|--|

**Table 3.2:** Common features of an Ideal type of Diaspora by Robin Cohen (Cohen, 2008:17)

The French scholar, Stephane Dufoix has proposed the consideration of four ideal types that involves the structuring of the collective experience abroad. Namely, they are "centro peripheral", "enclaved", "atopic" and "antagonistic" (Dufoix, 2008:62, 63). The centro peripheral mode represents a national community in a host country which maintains close relationship and links with the home country, often with the backing of the home country. The enclaved mode involves the local organisation of a community within a host country based on a shared identity and not on a formal link of nationality. Atopic mode is a Trans state mode, but it does not seek to acquire a physical territory. It is the state of being in a space of common features, such as the ethnicity and religion without being reduced to a subject of a host country. Antagonistic mode is also a Trans state mode, but formed by groups who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current regime in their home country. Dufoix goes on to say that, it is possible to move from one structuring mode to another and that they do not exist in pure form in practice. Dufoix recognizes the current tendency towards proliferation of forms of diaspora

(Dufoix, 2008:64).

Tololyan (2012:9) argues that the orientation of these dominant theories towards the homeland as an essential feature of diasporic identity, is deeply influenced by a certain view of Jewish history that eventually became Zionism and is now that of the Jewish state. In his view, a collection of transnational migrants becomes a diaspora when its members develop some familial, cultural and social distance from their nation, yet continue to care deeply. According to him, 'Diasporas' are those communities of the dispersed who develop varieties of associations that endure at least into their third generation (Tololyan, 2012:11). This corresponds with what Dufoix calls a "centropheripheral Mode".

Tsagarousianou (2004) has taken a different stand to the views mentioned above on continuous attachment to a homeland and a long-term settlement over generations, by emphasising identity negotiation as an important feature of any diaspora:

We can rewrite the definition of Diasporas to encompass 'members' for whom identity and belonging are a matter of selection. In this sense, long-term settlement, over generations, is not a requirement anymore. Dispersion because of poverty, war, or discrimination is not a necessary prerequisite. The continuous attachment to the homeland is a choice in a world defined by the ready availability of identities to be appropriated and performed. What counts is the ability to build a (diasporic) identity, which is a 'socio-political process, involving dialogue, negotiation and debate as to "who we are" and, moreover, what it means to be "who we are"'. (Tsagarousianou, 2004:60)

Rogers Brubaker, recognising the proliferation of the term 'Diaspora' and the stretch of its meaning to accommodate various intellectual, cultural and political agendas, has warned against the dispersion and loss of its meaning (Brubaker, 2005). He suggests after analysing various classical and modern diasporic communities that, 'let-a-thousand-diasporas-bloom' approach would lead the term 'diaspora' to the point of uselessness, losing its discriminative power to make distinctions (Brubaker, 2005:3). Brubaker has suggested some criteria in order to stop this dispersion of the meaning by identifying certain core elements that constitute the term diaspora. They are 'the dispersion in space', 'orientation to a homeland' and 'boundary-maintenance'. Boundary maintenance is vital and an indispensable criterion of diaspora in its process as it 'involves the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-a vis a host society'. It enables diaspora to be identified as a distinctive 'community' featured by distinctive, active solidarity and relatively dense social relationships that cut across state boundaries (Brubaker, 2005:6). Brubaker also emphasise the importance of maintaining these boundaries over an

extended period of time, ideally over several generations. Brubaker has also identified the existence of active diasporic members as a vital part of boundary-maintenance. Therefore, he has suggested that ‘rather than speak of a diaspora as an entity, it is more fruitful to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms and practices. Considering a diasporic community as a stance enables us to study it empirically as to the degree of its conformity to a diasporic project among members of its putative constituency. Such a framework is necessary to identify an active diaspora who maintains boundaries against the diasporic counter-currents such as hybridity, fluidity creolization and syncretism, which contributes to the erosion of boundaries.

Cultural studies consider diaspora as a moving away from the boundary maintenance or the discontinuity of identities and a celebration of hybridity and deterritorialization of identities. Hybridity, according to Homi Bhabha is a third space or an ‘in-between-ness’ (Bhabha, 2004). Ambivalently belonging here and there (homeland and the host land) can open new spaces to reflect on and to creatively construct new homes and identities that are deemed hybrid (Prabhakar, 2017). According to Stuart Hall, hybridity is formed by diaspora identities which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves through transformation and difference (Prabhakar, 2017; Hall and du Gay, 1996).

Stuart Hall describes two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. One way is to think of cultural identity as a stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, a one true self hiding inside many other. This oneness of identity is what a diaspora must discover, bring to light and express by various means. The second position recognizes the differences in reality and acknowledge that it is continuous process of transformation. Identities are subjected to continuous play of history culture and power. Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Hall, 1990). Practices of group identity enables the diasporic communities to manufacture cultural and historical belongings, which mark out terrains of commonality, in the diaspora (Fortier, 1999). Diasporic groups attribute this sense of belonging to physical places, and also to various cultural practices that mark out spatial and cultural boundaries for a particular diasporic community. For a religious diasporic group, a church, mosque or a temple can recreate a physical place of belonging. For an ethnic diasporic group, the practice of a specific cultural identity in the diaspora by a group of individuals could recreate a performative belonging to that distinctive diaspora.

According to Jules-Rosette (2000), diasporic African communities in France are faced with three options of immigrant adjustment. One option is ‘insertion’, which refers to retaining

one's own nationality and cultural practices while living in an isolated enclave in France. 'Assimilation' refers to adopting the customs and practices of France, with or without assuming nationality. 'Integration' refers to adopting French nationality while attempting to retain a balance between one's culture of origin and French culture (Jules-Rosette, 2000: 40). Each of these strategies of adjustment are based on the form of identities negotiated as a community. According to Jules-Rosette, the diasporic aesthetic expressions plays an important role in their identity discourses and adjustment strategies. According to Butler, 2001, most of the diasporic experience is unwritten. It is inscribed in creative arts, material culture, and oral tradition. Ethnographers need to be familiar with literature, cultural studies, political science etc. to identify the themes to carry out diasporic studies (Butler, 2001: 212).

### *3.2 Attributes of Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora*

This section will build a theoretical and conceptual framework based on the review of the literature in the previous sections, taking into consideration the academic writings by authors mentioned in this chapter, while developing a list of common features of a diaspora to determine what type of diaspora the Sinhalese is in the UK. The following critical analysis is carried out to achieve this task.

The Sinhalese community in the UK is a result of scattering of the original population from their homeland, true to the original Greek meaning of the word 'diaspora', but it was not for the purpose of colonisation, as Tololyan (2012) describes. Rather it was an outcome of British colonisation, where the Sri Lankans were able to develop links with the United Kingdom through the British Empire. They are also not a result of a catastrophic experience in their homeland, unlike some of the diaspora communities in the early days, as described by Sales and Tsagarousianou (2004). They have emigrated in search of work, education and better living standards in the west, while a minority of them have left the homeland due to political victimization. They maintain socio-cultural and religious links with their home country, in line with the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society's definition of a diaspora. However, there is no clear evidence of such links among destination countries. Therefore, as Tololyan (2012), Ionescu and Cohen (2008) describe, the Sinhalese community in the UK is a scattered expatriate population, but of the same ethnic origin who share the same ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural values, and they look for Sri Lanka to provide and nourish their identity (Butler, 2001).

The above description of the Sinhalese community in the UK reflects the attributes of a centro-peripheral mode, as Dufoix (2008) has proposed, since this national community receives the backing of their home country to maintain links and to get benefits from the homeland society. Out of the common features described by Safran and Cohen, this community reflects four common features.

They have been dispersed from Sri Lanka to two or more peripheral foreign regions in search of work, education or better living standards. They retain a collective memory about their homeland, including its location, history and achievements. They have a collective commitment to the maintenance, safety and prosperity of their homeland. Their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity is based on a distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common culture and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate. Both Cohen and Safran have emphasised the belief in a return movement which is influenced by Zionism (Vertovec, 2004), but this is not evident in the activities of the Sinhala community in the UK. Rather, they reflect what Cohen has described as the possibility of a distinctive, creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. The Buddhist teachings which preach the value of non-violence and tolerance, and the social structure in Sri Lanka where a multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies have prevailed over thousands of years, help them to accommodate this idea of living an enriching life in a host country with a tolerance for pluralism. Tololyan’s argument of ‘developing varieties of associations that endure at least into their third generation’ can be accommodated in a list of attributes to describe the Sinhalese diaspora, as they are already into their third generation in the UK. Considering these features of Sinhalese in the UK, a list of attributes is adopted in this research as common features of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora as shown in Table 3.3.

The attributes adopted here directly relate to migration, ethnoreligious and cultural similarities among the members of a diasporic group, and their homeland consciousness. Considering the list of attributes adopted, and the literature review, a diaspora is defined for the purpose of this research as ‘an immigrant population, who shares same ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural values with the patronage of their homeland and committed to the maintenance and prosperity of their homeland’.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They have emigrated from the homeland in search of better employment, education or a better standard of living.</li> <li>2. They retain a collective memory and myth about their homeland including its location, history and achievements.</li> <li>3. They have a collective commitment to the maintenance, safety and prosperity of their homeland.</li> <li>4. Their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity is based on a distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common culture and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate.</li> <li>5. They rely on their homeland as an ethnic community and seek support from the homeland to recreate and sustain their cultural and religious heritage in host land.</li> <li>6. They believe in the possibility of a distinctive, creative, enriching life in the host country with a tolerance for pluralism.</li> <li>7. Their relationship with the homeland endures the test of time by lasting over three generations.</li> </ol>
---

**Table 3.3:** Common Features of Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora

This chapter has attempted to build up a contextual and theoretical framework and a foundation to this thesis. It has reviewed the existing literature on diasporic theories and derived a conceptual framework by means of common features in order to appreciate the diasporic features of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. The next chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the research design and methodology used in the research. It describes the qualitative research methods utilised in this research in data collection and analysis. A descriptive presentation is provided of the ethnographically informed approaches of data collection used in this research. It explains the techniques such as participatory observations, interviews, photo (visual) analysis and the study of artefacts that have been utilised to strengthen and reinforce the ethnographic descriptions found in the Research Findings Chapter (Chapter 5). The ethnographically informed participatory research provides a way to disclose the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the host land. Formal and informal interview techniques help to disclose their inner senses as to how they relate themselves to their homeland, how they comprehend the host land society and what factors encourage them to reconstruct their homeland culture in the host land. It will address and reveal issues and experiences related to the researcher's own engagement with regard to positionality and approaching the field in the context of Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom. It will also explain the ethical grounds of the research. As this research has utilised qualitative research methods based on an ethnographically informed nature, adhering to the research ethics and following of the accepted ethical standards are given a high priority. Therefore, the steps and procedures followed to maintain the ethical standards are explained in detail. In general chapter 4 attempts to explain how the ethnographically informed research methods were utilised in this research to collect data that will provide evidence to support the existing knowledge of the diaspora and reveal new knowledge about the characteristics of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom, which is essentially an extension of the historical and contemporary Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

# 4. Methodology

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the research methodology adopted in the thesis. Firstly, it gives a conceptual overview of the research philosophy behind the methodology adopted in this research. Then it describes the qualitative research methods utilized in the research, while shedding light on the use of special themes, such as artefacts and visual materials for data collection and analysis. The researcher's own experience in conducting the field research and his influence regarding the subjective nature of this ethnographically informed research is discussed in detail. Finally, the ethical aspects of conducting ethnographic research is discussed in this chapter.

## 4.1 Research Philosophy

One important fact that needs to be reiterated at this stage is that the researcher himself, who conducted this research, is a Sri Lankan born Sinhala Buddhist who migrated to the United Kingdom. Therefore, the researcher himself has experienced the life in Sri Lanka growing up as a Sinhala Buddhist. The researcher's own experience of migrating to Europe, and all the endeavours in settling down in the United Kingdom as a migrant Sinhala Buddhist, naturally inculcates a subjective outlook in the researcher's mind towards the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora living in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the research is carried out to understand the socio-cultural and lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist people in the United Kingdom from a sociological point of view. Therefore, it is important to know the viewpoints of the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community and to appreciate the processes of the social functionality and the interactions among the individual members of the community, in order to provide a comprehensive and descriptive analysis of their lived experience and identity negotiation. Either way, the outcome will be a socially constructed, subjective and a relativist description of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom (Robson, 2002).

Considering these two aspects and, therefore, the subjective nature of this research, the methodology used is committed to constructivist epistemologies (Hammersley, 1993:16) based on relativism (Van De Ven, 2007: 46-54). The research methods are aimed at understanding the experience through the minds of participants, viewing the meaning of experience and behaviour in context and in its full complexity, generating working hypotheses and emergence of concepts from data (Robson, 2002:25). The research methodology used in this research essentially includes qualitative research methods based on interpretative approaches. The fundamental reason for this is the fact that the research questions in this research are set to find out and analyse the social, cultural, religious, historical and theoretical aspects of the life experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom.

The research involved studying the individual interactions in the group behaviour and the organised institutional behaviour in Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom. Therefore, theoretical approaches used in this research includes both functionalist and symbolic interactionist (Giddens 2006: 19-24) approaches in order to analyse the institutional relationships and interactions among the members of the diasporic community.

Several qualitative research methods were used in this research, along with an ethnographic approach to the field (Brewer, 2000). Each of these methods have contributed to the richness of the ethnographically informed descriptive analysis of the results. The methods used in this research are described in the following subchapter.

#### **4.2 Qualitative Research Methods**

Since this research is on the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom, the researcher has utilised an ethnographic approach to qualitative research. Ethnographic 'fieldwork requires the researcher to live with a group of people for extended periods, often over the course of a year or more, in order to document and interpret their distinctive way of life, and the beliefs and values integral to it' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 1). The researcher watches what happens, listens to conversations, asks questions through informal and formal interviews, collects documents and artefacts, and take photographs during participated research of people's daily lives for an extended period (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 3). In this research, the ethnographic approach involved the gaining of access to the field, participation of the researcher in the daily activities of the Sinhala Buddhist people in the United Kingdom, observation of the people's activities, listening to what they say through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts and taking photographs. 'Ethnography provides information on the behaviour of people in groups, organizations and communities' (Giddens, 2006: 85). Seeing the things from inside the group helps to better understand the individual actions and the social processes in a given situation under study. A range of ethnographic methods was used to come up with a comprehensive description of their lifestyle. The researcher was participating in the daily lives and events of the Sinhalese community living in the United Kingdom for an extended period of time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 3). Documentary evidence of various kinds was gathered while informal conversations were used to gather information (Fetterman, 2010: 41). Since this research pays particular attention to their Sinhala Buddhist cultural orientation, the researcher acted as a complete participant observer (Angrosino, 2008: 55) in their religious and other cultural activities, in order to provide a detailed description of how they maintain their identity in a foreign land. In this regard, the researcher participated in monthly and annual religious activities in the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples while having informal discussions with the participants. Similarly, other social activities were also observed over a period of 17 months in order

to provide a comprehensive narrative of their lifestyle in the United Kingdom (Appendix 10).

#### *4.2.1 Document and Literature Analysis*

Several methods were utilized to achieve the first objective of gaining a clear picture of the Sri Lankan Diaspora in the United Kingdom. As a first step, the historical records and literature with regard to the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom were studied. Religious, cultural and social associations and organizations of Sri Lankan origin were searched and contacted to get information in terms of the make-up of this community. The research findings were analysed, first to find out the origins of the Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka and to describe their cultural and religious values in detail. The research findings include both empirical and critical analysis research data and also the historical writings found in ancient mythological books. In the second phase, the literature was analysed to find out the beginning and developments of Sinhala Buddhist migration to the United Kingdom, and the establishment of their institutions in the United Kingdom (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 121).

The second objective was achieved by analysing some of the academic writings done by the authors mentioned in the literature review. The writings and common features introduced by Robin Cohen (Cohen, 2008:17), William Safran (Safran, 1991: 83-99) and Stephane Dufoix (Dufoix, 2008:62,63) were critically analysed along with the literature of other writers on the subject in developing a list of workable attributes or common features (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997: 101) of diaspora. Moreover, a definition to determine what type of diaspora the Sinhalese in the UK is, was achieved by further analysing the workable common features created and the literature on the topic of diaspora discussed in the literature review. Further analysis and discussion of the common features and the definition of Sinhala Buddhist diaspora is achieved, based on the findings and analysis of the ethnographic fieldwork.

#### *4.2.2 Participatory Observations*

The observation method used in this research is a flexible and unstructured approach, with the researcher becoming a part of the group being studied and fully participating in the group activities (Robson, 2002: 313). Therefore, the researcher acted as the observation instrument in this research. The personal background of the researcher, and his already established good relationship with the community, had put the researcher in an advantageous position at the onset of the participant observation. As the participant observer, the researcher spent about one and a half years gaining entry into the social and 'symbolic' world of the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool area before the field research was started (Robson, 2002: 313).

The researcher used the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool as the first point of access to the community in Liverpool. The researcher first introduced himself to the residing Buddhist monk in the

temple as a Sinhala Buddhist research student newly arrived in the Liverpool area, and then explained the academic activities and the research objectives to the Buddhist monk. Secondly, the researcher attended and actively participated in most of the monthly, annual and special religious and cultural events organised by the temple community along with his family. Occasionally the researcher made visits with his family to the temple to participate in the rituals and to have friendly discussions with the residing Buddhist monks. The researcher was able to introduce himself and to make acquaintances with most of the community members during such occasions. The researcher also made it a point to describe his research activities, and the need to participate in activities and to talk to the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom. With time, the researcher was able to become family friends of several Sinhala Buddhist families in Liverpool. The researcher was invited or called to their private and public events frequently, as a fellow or as a friend of the community and its members (appendix 10). By the time the formal field research began, after obtaining ethical approval, the researcher has gradually and steadily become a member of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the Liverpool area. The researcher was able to go and visit temples in other cities with the friends and families from Liverpool for observational purposes. The researcher had not faced any obstruction in participating in the activities in the temples and events in other cities, since they were happy to consider him as a fellow Sinhala Buddhist. Such visits helped the researcher to get to know some people who later became the participants of the interviews.

The formal participant observation began with the participation in monthly Buddhist ceremonies and special Buddhist sermons at the 'Liverpool Sri Sambuddha Buddhist Vihara'. The researcher actively participated in the activities of preparation, rituals, listening to sermons, cleaning, and closing down at the end of the events. The researcher also actively participated in the annual celebrations of the Sinhala New Year, Vesak, Poson, 'Rainy Retreatment' and Katina ceremonies. The researcher was able to observe, how the people go about doing ceremonial, ritualistic activities, helping and guiding each other, while participating in the events and activities. The Buddhist monks who are brought from Sri Lanka and some elders of the community take the lead in these activities. The researcher was able to talk to them and discuss the things happening, as to how and why these activities are important and done in a certain way. The people participating were concentrating on the ongoing activities and most of them were keen on showing them to their children, and therefore were not distracted by the presence of the researcher.

The researcher was also able to participate in the opening ceremony of the Leeds Buddhist Temple, opening ceremony of the 'stupa' in Birmingham 'Jethavana' temple and the Rainy retreatment of the 'London Buddhist Vihara'. In addition to these, the researcher was invited to actively participate in two alms-giving functions organized by two families in Liverpool. The researcher was able to

contribute to the 35 types of cuisines kept for the alms and to observe and discuss about the artefacts and rituals that take place in one family house during one of the alms giving ceremonies. The other family was giving alms to invoke blessings on a pregnant mother. The researcher was able to contribute with food, participate in the activities and by bringing the Buddhist monk to and from the house. The researcher was invited to a dinner and a get together of the organizers of the 'Katina' ceremony in Liverpool to show their gratitude for his contribution in another occasion. The researcher was able to observe and actively participate and enjoy the food, drinks, chatting and singing of Sinhala songs during this get together. The researcher was also invited to some of the community members' houses for dinners and to socialize. The researcher was able to observe the artefacts displayed in their houses, ask questions, take photographs and to interview them on such occasions. In addition to this, various other interactions and dialogs in other places such as supermarkets, boutiques, trips, etc., were recorded in field notes.

Since the observations were unstructured, the researcher had to pay extra attention to concentrate and not to stray from the objectives of participant observation. The fact that the researcher is a member of this community sometimes resulted in occasional lapses in recording important observations for the research. Such lapses occurred when the researcher felt that a certain activity and or observation was quite normal in his experience and is not worth mentioning. The researcher was taking photographs and checking videos, in addition to keeping a field notebook in order to minimize such lapses.

#### *4.2.3 Oral Accounts and Interviews*

In social research, 'the objects studied are in fact subjects in the sense they have consciousness and agency. They produce accounts of themselves and their worlds' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 98). Interviews as a research method involve the researcher asking questions and receiving answers from the participants (Robson, 2002: 269). The interviews were used in this research to obtain insider views and personal narratives from the members of Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community of their lived experiences. There are two interviewing methods used in this research. One method was the formal semi-structured interviews. In this regard, a sample of 22 (Appendix2) individuals were selected from the Sinhalese Buddhist communities living in various parts of the United Kingdom and they took part in semi-structured interviews (Fetterman, 2010: 40). The interviews primarily focused on their life experiences, diasporic experience, religious and socio-cultural activities in the United Kingdom. The semi-structured interviews in this research consisted of about 20 to 24 questions aimed at life experiences, common themes such as communal events, religious practices, food, arts & music, life in the United Kingdom and life in Sri Lanka (Appendix 1). In addition to these questions, the researcher was interested in listening to the participants' unique experiences and narratives by asking

more questions, depending on their interest to speak (Robson, 2002: 270). The researcher was particularly interested in recording life stories and memories, material culture, photographs, food culture, arts music and cinema, festivals, social activities, religious practices, places of interest and religious places that they would make pilgrimage to in Sri Lanka. In this regard, the participants were asked to share detailed life stories and memories of their experiences in both the homeland and the host land. The material culture of their day-to-day lives was also an interesting theme to which the researcher paid particular attention (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 133). The artefacts (cultural, religious and general) that have taken a special place in their lives were studied in order to gain an understanding about how they maintain their identity in the host land and relate to their homeland (Pahl, 2012:3). The participants were asked to share the story behind an artefact or a photograph that has taken a special place in their lives, by 'going down the memory lane'. This was done to help understand how things were back in their homeland and what it meant to them, and how they have adapted themselves to changing circumstances in the host land. Similarly, food culture of this community, such as the staple dishes of rice and curry and the food for the festivities, were asked about and studied to understand how the food culture complements their distinctive lifestyle. For example, they might have depended on their homeland for the supply of some of their food items and utensils, and they might have to develop some innovative methods to recreate some of those cuisines in the diasporic environment. The influence of the Sinhalese arts, music and Sinhala cinema was explored by asking them what kind of music and cinema they enjoy, how they gain access to them, how they are carried back to their homeland memories by these art forms and by studying what effects it has on their life in the diaspora.

Apart from one interview, which was done with a British born Sinhala Buddhist, the rest of the interviews were conducted in their native language, which is Sinhala, in order to get the best possible description of their lived experiences. The researcher's native language also being Sinhala was an advantage in this regard. The interviews were audio recorded with informed consent and were later transcribed by the researcher from Sinhala to English.

The sample of 22 interviewees was selected on an ongoing basis, relying on the researcher's personal experience and judgement. The researcher was able to interview some of the gatekeepers at the beginning of the field research by explaining to them the requirements and the method of interviewing. Then the researcher was able to convince some of the elders and active members of the community with the help of the gatekeepers. The people who were interviewed in this way were happy to introduce many more people of different walks of life, known to them from different parts of the country. The researcher was able to get an idea through word of mouth about the background, age, sex, time spent in the United Kingdom etc., of the potential interviewees (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 2010: 103). The researcher used such information to look for people with potential different experiences, to avoid repetition of similar kinds of experiences as answers. Most of the participants, who were interviewed have come to the United Kingdom in the new millennium. Therefore, the researcher was particularly interested in including participants from earlier years, such as 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Understandably, there were fewer numbers of people that could be included from those eras.

The interviews were conducted in different settings depending on the participants' choices and some of the interviews were done over the telephone. Four of the interviews, which were done with participant Buddhist monks, were held in their respective temples in Liverpool, Birmingham, London and Glasgow. Another three participants were happy to come to the Liverpool temple to do the interviews. Five of the participants invited the researcher to come to their houses for dinners and lunches as family friends, and the interviews were conducted during such visits. The researcher got the opportunity to observe their home settings and their life in their homes and discussed things, such as artefacts and photographs during those visits. Two of the interviews were conducted at the University of Liverpool and the Liverpool John Moores University. The rest of the interviews were conducted over the telephone. Most of them, who were interviewed over the telephone, were met during participant observation sessions in the events and interviews were done over the telephone after agreeing to do an interview on a later date. One participant was introduced to the researcher by a member of the community, but has not met the researcher. Five interviewees were females of differing age groups. The duration of the interviews were an average of one hour. The shortest interview was of about 35 to 40 minutes while the longest interview was of about two and a half hours. The longer interviews were a result of the participants' willingness to talk elaborately about their life experiences and personal life.

The semi-structured interviews were a useful method to collect data on predetermined themes of the diasporic experience. However, the researcher sometimes had to be satisfied with short answers from some of the interviewees. On the other hand, some of the interviewees gave elaborated answers or deviated from the questions to describe things that he or she would like to talk about. On such occasions, the researcher had to get the participants back on track by repeating the question or moving to the next question. The researcher also had to take particular care in filtering out the unnecessary parts and recording the useful information when transcribing the interviews.

The second method of interviewing used in this research was informal interviews. Informal interviews were carried out during the participant observation sessions by the researcher. Informal interviews were used to talk to the participants regarding various aspects of the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. In informal interviews, the researcher and the participants

start a conversation on a general area of interest and let the conversation develop in a very informal and friendly way (Robson, 2002: 271). Such naturally occurring oral accounts are a good source of direct information about the setting and about the perceptions, objective, anxieties and practices of the people (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 99). In this research, the researcher used most of the participant observation settings to conduct informal interviews. The discussions were mostly started by talking about the various aspects of the ongoing events. However, some of the participants gave oral accounts of their lived experience in the United Kingdom and in Sri Lanka. On such occasions, the researcher was able to collect data on the specific socio-cultural events that they organise, how and why they organise them, the participants' personal experiences and about members of the community. The researcher kept a field notebook for recording purposes on such occasions and used to make a note after the field visits about the informal discussions held during the day's participant observations.

#### *4.2.4 Visual Methods*

'The collection and use of visual material has gained a particular currency from the increasing influence of cultural analysis in the social sciences' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 99). Photography has long been used in anthropology. 'Images can be effectively integrated with other forms of information to improve sociological work' (Stanczak, 2007: 142). In this research, the researcher has used photography and video as a source of data and as tools that facilitate the process of research. The researcher used his smartphone camera and another digital still camera to take both photographs and video clips of the events and activities during participant observation sessions. The researcher was also able to collect photographs and videos from the friends and participants who were willing to share their materials.

The visual materials obtained were utilized in several beneficial ways to facilitate the process of the research. The photographs and video clips helped the researcher to record information about the activities, events, locations and people. Visual materials helped the researcher to complete the field notes with the missing information after an event had occurred. On the other hand, sharing visual materials with the participants and community members helped the researcher to establish relationships and rapport, which was crucial in gaining acceptance from the communities under research (Stanczak, 2007: 145). Such sharing of visual materials was instrumental in making participants comment, tell stories and to describe the contents of the pictures. Photo-elicitation method was used during the semi-structured interviews to invoke comments, memory and discussion from the participants (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015: 86). On one of the occasions, when the researcher visited a participant at his home for an interview, the participant showed and described a photograph of himself and his family taken at a religious site in Sri Lanka. The participant was keen to describe

the importance of the photograph. He explained that he visits this particular religious site every time he travels to Sri Lanka. The researcher was able to observe how the participant changed his emotions as he described the content in the photograph.

Some of the photographs taken are utilised in the 'Research Findings' section of this research in order to support the descriptive analysis in the context and to descriptively analyse the reading of the photographs (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015: 9). The photographs taken were read for information, taking into consideration several aspects. The researcher describes the event and the location where the photographs were taken. Then the content of the photograph is analysed in regard to the people, their roles, appearance, dress codes, artefacts, the background, context and how they relate to the Sinhala Buddhist lived experience in the United Kingdom and Sri Lanka. The researcher was aware of the multivocality of the photographs (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015: 134), and therefore the subjectivity of the interpretations in relation to the context of the research. The descriptive analysis of the photographs was incorporated into the main body of the 'Research Findings' chapter to support and strengthen the outcomes of the research.

#### *4.2.5 Study of Artefacts*

The settings where the researcher conducted his participant observation sessions, interviews and home visits consisted not only of people and their activities (Social Actors), but also of a wide range of things that they use in their day to day lives and collect for various reasons and purposes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 133). People often perform social practices with not only words but with objects. Therefore, the material world is an integral part of the social world. Sometimes people use materials as a way of expressing their identity or the social status or emotional and sentimental aspects. Sometimes they use materials in rituals, giving a special significance to the materials. They also use materials to get their day-to-day work done in their own ways. 'the sort of issues that researchers sometimes lump together as experience, biography or memory are often embodied in material goods and personal possessions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 137). In this research, material culture of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom is incorporated into the ethnographic enquiry of their lived experience.

The researcher was able to gain first hand experiences of the use of artefacts by the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom during socio-cultural and religious ceremonies and at their homes during participant observation sessions. The research includes the study of the importance of artefacts, such as relics of the Lord Buddha, preparation and offering of a robe to the Buddhist monks in 'Katina' ceremony, artefacts used to carry in processions and the material culture in celebrations of 'Vesak' Ceremony, and the rituals fabricated around such activities. It also includes the construction or offering of Sri Lankan style artefacts to the temple and the rituals and ceremonies performed during

such offerings. Such artefacts, rituals and the ceremonies are descriptively analysed to provide a comprehensive narrative of how and why the artefacts have gained a significance in the social world and how the social world is shaped by the values put on such artefacts.

The researcher used formal and informal interviews to ask about the artefacts and material culture from the participants. The semi-structured interviews had specific questions asking the interviewees to describe the artefacts they brought with them or had brought from Sri Lanka. The researcher also used the home visits to ask the inhabitants to describe the stories behind the artefacts displayed in the living room. Some of them were kind enough to take the researcher into their kitchens and to show the materials they use for cooking purposes. The artefacts discussed in this research includes Buddha statues, wall paintings, wall hangings, bronze lamps and ornaments, cooking utensils, Vesak cards, Vesak lanterns, Vesak pandals, Photographs, Ficus trees (Bodhi Tree), Golden fence, Stupa, garments and many more materials related to Sinhala Buddhist culture. Most of these artefacts were an attempt by this diasporic community to recreate the homeland experience in a foreign land.

### **4.3 Approaching the Field**

The research experience in Sri Lanka and in the United Kingdom is included in this thesis to provide an epistemological foundation to the research. The researcher being a member of the community was beneficial in terms of communication and building up a healthy relationship with the community. However, it was important to devise a methodical approach in order to maximise the outcome of ethnographic research methods.

The researcher has gained ten years of personal experience of living in the United Kingdom as a Sinhala Buddhist and interacting with the fellow diasporic community. However, the official data collection for this particular research using ethnographic approaches was done during a period of 17 months in the years 2016 and 2017. The formal field research was started after obtaining the ethical approval from the 'University Research Ethics Committee' on 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2016.

The researcher has gained access to Sinhala Buddhist communities all over the United Kingdom, instead of selecting a specific sample or confining the research to a specific area in the country. The purpose behind this idea was to collect data from a broad range of experiences of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. The researcher's main research base was the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool, United Kingdom, where the researcher himself was living. The researcher had already established some relationships with the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool; 'Sri Sambuddha Vihara, Liverpool', and the people visiting this temple over a period of one and a half years before the field research was begun. The researcher's previous experience of living in London and the new friendships formed in Liverpool and Manchester have helped the researcher to visit other temples in various parts of the United Kingdom to participate in their religious celebrations. Such

visits were instrumental in interactive participant observation, building new friendships and interviewing people from various backgrounds and experiences from different parts of the country. In addition to this, the researcher was able to attend private functions and get-togethers of the Sinhala Buddhist peoples at their homes on several occasions. The researcher utilised such occasions to do field research with informed consent from the attendees and the hosts.

A simple process of obtaining gatekeeper consent was enough to gain access to the public settings of the communities such as annual and monthly cultural and religious celebrations. The researcher being a Sinhala Buddhist himself was an advantage in public settings and this enabled the researcher to interact and participate in the group activities without being noticed or distracting the attention of the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 43). The researcher, having the same physical appearance as the fellow Sinhala Buddhist people, speaking their language, following same religious and cultural rituals and the already established friendly disposition, helped the participants to carry out their activities freely, overlooking his presence as a researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 73). In most of the occasions, the participants were supportive and facilitative of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 58) and sometimes were keen to help the researcher as a student by providing information, introducing people and giving interviews.

#### **4.4 Positionality**

My own lived experience, as I have mentioned here, led me to do this sociological research about the lived experience and identity negotiation of the Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom. As I started my field research, I had an already established relationship with the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool. The Sri Lankan community in the United Kingdom thinks highly of education, therefore they strive to give a good education to their children. In a similar note, they are willing to support anyone who is trying to get a good education. When I started my field research, this positive outlook of the Sinhala Buddhist community towards education and students helped me to get support from the community in Liverpool. I had the fullest support from the residing Buddhist monk at the temple and the senior and active members of the committee. Most of the participants in the observation sessions let me do my research without any questioning or shedding any doubt. I had an already established role as a member of the community of Sinhala Buddhist in Liverpool. Talking to the participants helped me get to know important personalities and places in other cities to visit for research purposes. Sometimes, they were kind enough to take me to important events in other cities. My visits to the opening ceremony of the Leeds Buddhist temple and the opening of the 'Stupa' ceremony in Birmingham were such two occasions. The Buddhist monk at the Liverpool temple accompanied me to my first visits to the temples in Manchester and Birmingham.

Most of the formal and informal interviews were also conducted in a very friendly nature, due to my

familiar Sri Lankan background. Often the interviewees were talking freely about their life experiences, including very personal things, which were not intended for publication. They even talked to me about conflicts among the individuals at very personal level. They had the confidence in me to talk in such a free and articulated way, due to our already well established relationship of over two years. Most of the interviewees were instrumental in finding more participants for my interviews once they had faced the interview and knew what it was all about. Some of the participants made it a point to invite me to their occasional get-togethers, alms giving ceremonies at their homes, dinners and for special ceremonies organised by them at the temple, knowing my research interests and hoping that it might be beneficial to me. On such occasions, the participants were considering me as another one of them, since I was able to act as a Sinhala Buddhist participant in their activities.

One important statistic to mention here is the partial absence of the women's voices in these interviews, which is reflected by the fact that only five out of twenty two that were interviewed were women. Four out of those interviews were conducted over the telephone after meeting them in community events and agreeing to do the interviews. One reason for this is the fact that the researcher being a male faces some cultural restrictions meeting and talking to women in the community. On the other hand the researcher gets less opportunity to talk to women in Sri Lankan cultural events where male plays a dominant role in organising events. It is also partly due to the lack of attention by the researcher to include more female voices in the interviews in his efforts to concentrate more on diasporic activities of the Sinhala Buddhist community as a whole. However, the researcher has taken an effort to include details of the female roles in informal interviews and observation descriptions in the research findings section.

The major challenge I had to face as a fellow Sinhala Buddhist was to constantly remind myself of the need to stay focused on the research interests, whilst acting as a participant. There was a tendency to be inattentive to some of the aspects of the research settings or the social processes, which, if I were not a Sinhala Buddhist, would have been interesting and important observations or information to me. Taking photographs and videos and later going through them and taking second visits to the observation settings were helpful in minimizing the effects of the issue of overfamiliarity. In addition to that, I was able to call back or talk to people on sites to look for the missing information.

#### **4.5 Recording Data**

The data collected in this research is of a qualitative type, due to the qualitative methods used. They were of different categories. The ethnographically informed research methodology generated qualitative data in the forms of literature, interview responses, discourses, observation field notes, narratives, audio and video recordings and photographs (Brewer, 2000:58).

Different methods were utilized to record and collect data of different types (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 2010: 140). Most of the literature was either downloaded from the internet or collected from the library sources, such as books and journal articles. Some of the Sinhala Buddhist institutions, such as Buddhist temples, have contributed to the literature (Chapter 3). The visual materials were collected in digital format and stored in electronic devices. The researcher himself has taken most of the photographs published in this thesis during participated observation sessions in the community (Chapter 5). Some photographs are taken from some of the community members' albums with their informed consent (Appendices 7 & 8). The video recordings were utilized in the process of writing the 'Research Findings' chapter. The interviews were digitally recorded with informed consent (Appendix 5 & 6) and later transcribed from Sinhala language to English (Robson, 2002; Brewer, 2000). Apart from one interview the rest of the interviews were conducted in Sinhala language and later transcribed to English by the researcher.

In addition to the methods mentioned above, the researcher kept a field notebook to write observations and information during the participatory sessions (Appendices 10 & 11). The researcher wrote notes after the participatory sessions of the day's experiences (Brewer, 2000:72). Retrieving the visual materials and scanning them were helpful in filling the missing information in the written records.

#### **4.6 The Process of Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis in this research is an interactive process of collecting data to develop concepts and then to use the concepts to introduce or explain social processes, with the help of further data collections (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 158). The analysis in this research is an iterative process of moving back and forth between ideas and data based on grounded theorizing (Robson, 2002).

In the first stage of data analysis, a descriptive analysis of the historical, religious and socio-cultural background of the Sinhala Buddhist people in Sri Lanka and in the United Kingdom was done, along with a descriptive and critical analysis of the theory of diaspora. Data collected in this way was further analysed to come up with a set of common features and a definition to appreciate the qualities of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora (Chapter 3). The researcher's own experience as a Sri Lankan born Immigrant in the UK has provided a subjective epistemological perspective to this research.

The field research and interview data were subjected to a thematic, descriptive and critical evaluation in relation to the common features and definitions already described with the purpose of testing against the existing diasporic theories (Braun and Clarke 2006). Chapter 5 presents the field research and interview data under seven themes. The semi-structured interview questions were based on generic experience related aspects of the diasporic life. However, the responses were subjected to thematic analysis both at semantic and latent levels (Braun and Clarke 2006). The field research data and interview responses were subjected to thematic analysis in order to bring out the meanings by

interpreting and explaining them. The themes emerged from the field research data and the interview questions were aimed at further investigating the emerged themes. Secondly, the analysis was aimed at understanding the underlying meanings, ideas and assumption of the data collected in order to comprehend the importance of those facts to the diasporic existence.

This research has identified seven themes to conduct descriptive and critical analysis of the research data after the initial evaluations of the data. They are namely, 'Language and Identity', 'Food Culture', 'Music and Arts', 'Events and Celebrations', 'Culture and Religion', 'Life in the United Kingdom' and 'Homeland Relations'. The Research Findings chapter presents these themes with extensive descriptive and critical analysis. The visual data, interview responses, artefacts and researcher's own field research experience support the analysis process. In addition, the 'Research Findings' chapter also provides an ethnographically informed rich narrative of the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom.

Finally, the research findings and the identified themes were subjected to a critical analysis in the 'Discussion' chapter to relate and assess the validity of the common features and diaspora theories identified in the literature review (Robson, 2002). Each of the common features are subjected to a comparative critical analysis in this respect with the research findings and the diasporic theories under the two broad concepts of 'homeland relations' and 'identity construction in the host land'. The attributes and attitudes of the first, second and the third generations of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom provide opportunities for further research. Therefore, the discussion chapter has attempted to provide a basis for future research by discussing the differences and attributes of the three identifiable generations of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. It has also attempted to describe and analyse the Sinhala Buddhists class differences and gender differences in the diaspora in relation to their Buddhist philosophy. The information for this discussion is gathered from the researchers own observations during the field research and the responses given by the interviewees with regard to their children and grandchildren.

#### **4.7 Ethical Issues**

This research was conducted after obtaining University Research Ethics Committee approval for the field research. Every effort was taken to adhere to the ethical standards during this research. Several precautionary steps were taken in this research to avoid anticipated ethical issues that could arise from the responses. The available and standard literature on research ethics relevant to ethnography and anthropology was thoroughly studied (Iphofen, R. 2013; BPS. 2014; Gledhill, J. 2018). The written and informed permission from the gatekeepers and the informed consent from the participants were taken at the beginning of participant observation settings and interviews. 'Fully informed consent is often neither possible nor desirable in ethnographic research' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 42).

Therefore, fully informed consent was taken only from the gatekeepers, informal and formal interviewees and some of the participants in group activities. The observation and visual record of large gatherings were done with the permission of the gatekeepers. However, the individuals of the gatherings were not informed and consent was not taken due to practical difficulties. The photographs collected from the participants and contributors were done with their informed consent (See Appendices).

The interviewees were informed about the audio recording of the interviews for transcription. The reproduction of the photographs in the thesis was done with the informed consent of the participants (Appendices 7 & 8). Anonymity of the participants who requested to be anonymous has been respected. The interviewees were selected from the Sinhalese diaspora living in the United Kingdom. The participants were approached by contacting them via Sri Lankan Buddhist institutions, organizations and through personal networks. Full information about the purpose of the study and the researcher's status and the role were given to the interviewees. Honesty and avoidance of deception and harm was practised at all times. Informed consent was taken wherever it was needed. The participant's right to refuse to take part in the interview or the need for anonymity and confidentiality was respected. The gatekeepers and the participants were informed of the researcher's role as a participant-as-observer and permission were taken to film or record the activities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 209-229). Advice was available from the university ethics committee on any ethical issue that would come up during the research (see also Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010: 209-229; The BSA, 2002).

This chapter has given a comprehensive description of the research methodology utilised in this research. The methodology is based on the examination of social functionality and the individual interactions and actions of this community, which were studied by an ethnographical approach to doing field research. The field research included interviews, observations, study of photographs and artefacts. In addition, other qualitative methods of study of literature and descriptive and thematic analysis of the data were used in this research to provide a comprehensive report of this unique diasporic community. The next chapter presents the research findings from the use of ethnographic field research, observations, interviews and visual and multimedia data collection and the methodology that is described above. The findings are discussed with thematic and descriptive analysis under seven themes. The themes were identified during the research process with the help of responses to the interview questions, field observations and the researchers personal experience. These seven themes provides descriptive and elaborative presentations of the lived experience and the emotional experiences of the journey of this unique diaspora.

## 5. Research Findings

The ethnographically-informed field research underpinning this thesis involved participant-observations, interviews and collections of visual materials, including photographs, videos and artefacts. The findings from the research were grouped and categorized according to seven themes in order to provide rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. This includes vivid anecdotes, narratives, interviews and descriptions of events, activities, culture, religion and language use, based on individuals' narratives and their thoughts, along with the researcher's own experiences, which is enriched and supported by photographs and the visual analyses that accompany them (see also Brewer, 2000). It is important to mention the frequent inclusion of lengthy interview excerpts with research participants in this chapter. This is a deliberate attempt to focus attention on the actual voices and lived experiences of the Sinhalese people, rather than presenting their views only through the researcher's analytical and interpretative frame, which will instead be the focus of the subsequent Discussion Chapter (Chapter 6). By including the actual voices of members of the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK, the thesis acknowledges the unique and significant contribution made by Sinhalese diasporans to this new line of ethnographically-informed research. All interview quotes are English translations by the researcher and were originally conducted and transcribed in Sinhalese. As already mentioned, the research findings were grouped according to seven themes. They are 'Language and Identity', 'Food Culture', 'Arts & Music', 'Events & Celebrations', 'Culture & Religion', 'Life in the Host Land', and 'Homeland Relations'. The subchapter on 'Language and Identity' looks into the Sinhala Buddhist diasporas' use of Sinhala language and how it facilitates the identity construction and maintenance process. 'Food Culture' looks into the unique features of the Sinhala Buddhists' traditional food and how they use it in their day to day lives, traditional events, and social events to strengthen community feelings, homeland relations and identity. 'Arts & Music' looks into how the Sinhala arts contribute to the diasporic experience of the Sinhala Buddhists in terms of their memories, homeland relations and identity in the host land. The subchapter on 'Culture and Religion' looks into the day to day life and religious practices of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the host land at domestic level. 'Life in the Host Land' looks into how the Sinhala Buddhists in the UK negotiate their identity in the host land while building relationships with the host land society. The subchapter on 'Homeland Relations' looks into their diverse relationships with the homeland while being residents in the host land. While the chapter intends most and foremost to provide rich insights and descriptions of the lived experiences of Sinhalese diasporans in the UK, including their own voices, this chapter also relates these

ethnographic insights to analytical concepts, namely identity negotiation in the host country, homeland relations and lived experience in the host society.

## **5.1 Language and Identity**

This subchapter investigates how the Sinhala language has contributed to the socio-cultural and religious traditions and a shared identity among the Sinhala people living in the United Kingdom. It studies the way that the language of the Sinhala ethnic communities plays a significant role in their identity construction and maintenance in the United Kingdom, and how the use of their mother tongue enriches their cultural and religious consciousness, feelings and activities, which are important aspects of their identity negotiations. It also looks at how the use of language and the importance given to the language is changing from generation to generation. The following analysis has utilised the opinions and experiences shared by Sinhala community members in the diaspora during twenty-two formal interviews and informal interviews. It has grown out of observations during participatory research sessions in the Sinhala diasporic communities in the United Kingdom, and responses to questions about the use and importance of language. The findings indicate a strong relationship between language, socializing, culture and religion among many members of the first generation Sinhala Buddhist diaspora. However, there also exists a fading relationship with Sinhala language among subsequent generations of Sinhala people born in the United Kingdom, showing that the importance of Sinhala language for Sinhala identity differs from generation to generation and may even decline further. In order to understand the use and importance of language among Sinhalese diasporans today, it is important first to establish some historical context about the origins and development of the Sinhala language and its relationship to Sri Lankan Buddhist traditions.

### *5.1.1 Origins and Development of the Sinhala Language and Buddhism*

The Sinhala language belongs to the Indo-Aryan sub-family of languages, which falls into the family of Indo-European languages. The origins of this language can be traced back to the classical Indian languages. However, it is not found anywhere else in the world other than in Sri Lanka (Coperahewa, 2015: 2). Sinhala is spoken by 74% of the population in the island. “The Sinhala language was derived from a form of mixed ‘Pakrit’ and developed mainly under the influence of Pali probably until the 8<sup>th</sup> century” (Abeysinghe, 2016:306). Pali is a religious language used only in performing Buddhist religious rituals and customs (Edwards, 2009:100,101; Darquennes and Vandenbussche, 2012). Pakrit, Pali and Sanskrit, which are North Indian languages, are known to be the mother languages of Sinhala (Herath et al, 2007). Buddhism, which arrived in the island in 250 B.C was a doctrine preached by Lord Buddha in Pali language. The entire Buddhist doctrine was carried forward through word of mouth in Pali language until it was written down in the first century B.C. in Sri Lanka. The formation of Sinhala language can be attributed to the influence of Buddhism. In addition to that,

migrations from the North of India to the island over a long period, along with the influences of the South Indian Dravidian languages have contributed to development of Sinhala language. It was also enriched by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and several other Eastern and Middle Eastern languages along the way to develop into its present-day status as the common language of the whole of the Sinhala population (Herath et al, 2018; Abeysinghe, 2016:308).

### *5.1.2. The Sinhala Language and Sinhala Buddhist Culture*

The Sinhala Buddhist community in Sri Lanka has a cultural and religious heritage developed over 2500 years. The Sinhala language is predominantly a result of the influence of Buddhism, Pali and Sanskrit languages on this population and the culture that has developed over this period. According to Martin Wickramasinghe:

Language and culture develop together. Language is an essential part of culture. Without the knowledge of the language of a community, its culture, which means material and spiritual life, cannot be understood as a whole. (Abeysinghe, 2016:307 and Wickramasinghe, 1964:84).

Ven Sugatharathana thero is the residing Buddhist monk at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool and he reiterated this opinion during an informal discussion about teaching Sinhala language to the Sinhala children in the United Kingdom:

Learning Sinhala language is a must in order to comprehend, and practise the Sinhala Buddhist culture. (Interview Ven. S, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017)

I always stress the importance of speaking in Sinhalese at homes. At the Sunday school I teach them Sinhala language and Buddhist way of life. Almost all the members of the community are Sinhalese and therefore the activities are conducted in Sinhalese language. Sunday Buddhist School for the children is conducted in English, as their Sinhalese knowledge is limited. However, I teach them Sinhala language at Sunday school. I sometimes write Sinhala poems and use them in my communal activities. I also listen to or watch some of the Sinhalese music and cinema, which receives good critics. Sinhalese Buddhist heritage is promoted only in temples sustained by the Sri Lankan Buddhists. (Interview Ven S, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

Ven Sugatharathana thero made the above statements whilst highlighting the importance of teaching the Sinhala language to Sinhala Buddhist children in the United Kingdom. Sinhala Buddhist monks and devotees alike, even to this date, chant most of the Buddhist doctrines in the Pali language. Due to the similarities between the two languages, the Sinhala people find it easy to understand and to remember the teachings preached in Pali, and to translate them to Sinhala. Language is closely connected with each community to which it belongs (Karunaratne, 2014), and Sinhala people use the Sinhala language to communicate their cultural and religious needs in a natural fluency. This inborn relationship between language and culture is hard to replace by an alternative foreign language.

“Language is not a culture-free code, distinct from the way people think and behave, but, rather, it plays a major role in the perpetuation of culture...” (Kramsch, 1998:6). Therefore, language plays a major role in the understanding, practice and existence of social, cultural and religious world of a community. This creates a special bond between Buddhism, Sinhala language and their cultural heritage enriched by the Buddhist traditions over 2500 years.

### *5.1.3 Sinhala Language and the Sinhala Diaspora in the United Kingdom*

The common language of the Sinhala people plays a pivotal role in bringing together Sinhala people as a diasporic community in the United Kingdom. Common attitudes, beliefs and values are reflected in the way members of the group use their language (Kramsch, 1998:6). The Sinhala language helps them to share their experiences, to communicate, and to organise activities that helps them to recreate the culture, religion and a homeland experience in the diaspora. Familiarity with and fluency in the Sinhala language makes it convenient and practical for the Sinhalese to communicate effectively in communal, religious and cultural activities, which was frequently mentioned during personal communications. The first generation Sinhala migrants to the United Kingdom instinctively identified this important fact and acted progressively towards building a home away from home centred on Sinhala Buddhist temples and associations, which use Sinhala language as the main medium of communication. Such institutions provide them with a space where they can use their mother tongue in communication and sharing experiences to recreate cultural, social and religious activities.

Present-day Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom are organized under the patronage of the Sinhala communities in the United Kingdom. Most of the first generation community members and some of their children have migrated to the United Kingdom with varying degrees of lived experiences in Sri Lanka. Moreover, almost all the Buddhist monks in these temples have come from Sri Lanka after completing their formal education in Sri Lanka. Therefore, both the monks and the lay groups coming to these temples are familiar and fluent in their mother tongue, which is Sinhala. Sinhala Buddhist monks have a tradition of chanting Buddhist sutras and psalms in both Pali and Sinhala languages. They deliver most of their sermons in Sinhala language. The community that gather to participate in these events also use Sinhala language to communicate, which was frequently experienced during observations. Such an atmosphere that recreates their homeland in the country of settlement brings them together with the bonds of language, culture and religion enabling them to reminisce on their common history and identity (Cohen, 2008:35). The research interviews revealed that Sinhala Buddhist monks play a vital role in recreating this homeland atmosphere in the host land with their symbolic customary rituals conducted in Sinhala language. In particular, the responses to interview questions cited below reveal the situation that was faced by the early Sinhala migrants to the United Kingdom:

MJ who arrived in the UK in the seventies revealed of their unsuccessful attempts at trying to make his two sons speak in Sinhala. Talking to his children in Sinhala only at home has not been very successful. However, he also revealed how the different destinies of his two sons are showing two different developments. His elder son, who is married to a Sinhala woman from Sri Lanka gets more opportunities to talk in Sinhala and therefore is improving in his ability to speak. His younger son, who is married to a British woman, hardly gets any chance to speak in Sinhala apart from during their occasional travels to Sri Lanka.

We speak in Sinhala. However, my sons speak in English. It was difficult to make them speak Sinhala. They understand Sinhala language. They are also very fond of Sri Lanka. My elder son is married to a Sinhala woman from Sri Lanka, so they speak in Sinhalese to their relations in Sri Lanka. My younger son, who was born here, married a British, but he brushes up his Sinhalese whenever he travels to Sri Lanka. (interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

Most of the early immigrants' children did not have the opportunity to go to a Sinhala Buddhist temple or a community centre and they were inevitably exposed to the host land culture. SP reveals that she took action to make up for the shortfalls in their early life in the UK. SP's account indicates that the Sinhala people born in the diaspora will become curious about their origin and identity or become interested to learn the language and culture in the later part of their lives when they grow up.

I speak to my husband in Sinhala. However, my children cannot speak Sinhala. They can understand. We speak to them in English. When the war veterans came to Liverpool, I kept my elder son with them. Then he could not speak to them because he did not know Sinhala well. Then he wanted to go to Sri Lanka and learn Sinhalese. Therefore, we arrange a teacher in Sri Lanka for him to learn to speak and write Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. My two daughters were born in England. There were not many Sinhala people those days for them to talk to. Therefore, they missed that opportunity to learn Sinhala. When we go to work they were looked after by British nannies at caring homes. That is also one reason that they could not learn Sinhala. That was a shortcoming from our side as parents. Later Manchester temple started classes once a month to teach both Buddhism and Sinhala. It is important to keep our identity in the UK because we are ethnically Sinhala. Later in their lives it will be important for them to know their origins and identity. It is our responsibility to teach them and show them our language and culture. (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

NP revealed the disappointment she felt of not being able to talk in Sinhala language at the temple. She was not able to recreate the emotional bond she has with the religion without the use of Sinhala language, which was the medium she uses to link with the religion. As Sapir and Whorf have explained (Kramsch, 1998:11), the language provides different people different ways of thinking, imagining and expressing the world around them. The Sinhala people fail to communicate the meanings and values that contain in symbolic expressions and structure of the Sinhala language when

they speak in English, which is unfamiliar to them. Therefore, it can be suggested that NP's thinking and behaviour were affected by the use of an unfamiliar language, which is English. Establishment of Sinhala institutions in the UK has enabled them to overcome such limitations at present.

Our people had to go to London to attend rituals in a Sinhala Buddhist temple. Therefore, we could go to a temple only once a year. Even such a visit does not give us the feeling of going to a Buddhist temple like in Sri Lanka because of the long distant to travel and tied schedules. The monks in those temples do not know us, and they do not speak our language. (interview NP, 06<sup>th</sup> November 2017).

Teaching Sinhala to Sinhala children at Sri Lankan Buddhist institutions in the United Kingdom has become a new trend since 1990s on the popular demand of Sinhala parents (interview Ven. SW, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017). These institutions and the parents are of the opinion that Sinhala children need to learn their mother tongue in order to maintain their cultural identity and homeland relations. The following are some of the opinions expressed by the head monks of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in the UK.

We conduct all our events in Sinhala language. We consider it very important for our community to speak in Sinhala and continue it in the United Kingdom. I think it is important that the parents talk to their children in Sinhala all times, as Indians do. They should be ashamed of themselves if their children do not learn our language. We teach the children Sinhala language at the Sunday school. I think it is very important for maintaining our identity and to continue our religious and cultural heritage. (interview Ven. K, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

The chief incumbent of both the Liverpool and Birmingham Sinhala Buddhist temples, Ven Kappetiyyagoda Gunawansa Thero, is of the opinion that Sinhala language is crucial to maintaining the cultural and religious identity of the Sinhala diaspora in the UK. By taking the Indian diaspora as an example, he is trying to show that it is something practical and achievable. He also encourages parents to teach their children by saying "it is a shame on parents if their children do not speak Sinhala". His opinions further highlight the importance of Sinhala language for the sustenance of the Sinhala Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom. Personal communications during this research found that Sinhala-speaking people in the United Kingdom sustain the Sinhala Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom, which are the cultural and religious centres of the Sinhala communities.

We teach Sinhala in Sunday school to the children. We have a period on Buddhism, another period on Buddhist worship and rituals. The other period is to teach Sinhala language and culture. We have included it on demand by the parents. Parents are keen to pass their language and culture to their children. Therefore, they teach their children accordingly at home. However, when they go to school they fall into the British way of life, which creates a conflict within themselves. Therefore, the parents complain that they speak to their children in Sinhala, but they reply in English. No matter what the parents think, it is their obligation to pass over and introduce their cultural heritage to the children. Even if a British family goes to Sri Lanka and settle, they will practise their British culture at home

even though there is a different culture outside. Likewise, when Sinhala parents speak in Sinhala and show Sinhala culture to their children, the children also learn it. If not it is very difficult for us to teach the children Sinhala language in a one hour period per week. (interview Ven. SW, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

Moreover, Ven Seelawimala thero, who is the chief incumbent at the 'London Buddhist Vihara', highlighted another example of how the Europeans who have settled in Sri Lanka practise their language, culture and religion at their homes even though the outside is an unfamiliar environment. He also spoke about the conflict these children have to face when they live in two different cultural environments at home and away. However, he emphasised the importance of teaching Sinhala language, religion and culture at home while using the Buddhist temple as an organisation away from home where they can come and refine their cultural, religious and language identity.

We teach Buddhism and Sinhala language to the children while the parents get involved in alms and other socialising activities. We conduct our activities in Sinhala language in these ritualistic events. Therefore, they fulfil their religious and social needs at this temple. We teach at the Sunday school. The question is to what extent they learn and practise our culture and heritage. They grow up in a very different culture here. Therefore, they can have Buddhist principles but not much of Sinhala Buddhist culture. They learn of their own cultural heritage only at their homes and in the temples. For example, no one is worshipping no one in the UK. However, we practice worshipping lord Buddha and our parents as a mark of respect. Some of them learn how to worship only at the temple. Their association with the temple is vital for them to understand of their Sinhala Buddhist identity. (interview Ven. R, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

The chief incumbent at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Glasgow, Ven Revatha thero, explained how the temple is turned into a space where both children and parents can come as families to be involved in religious, cultural and social activities while imparting that knowledge and practices to their children. This arrangement has enabled Sinhala diaspora in Scotland to experience the Sinhala Buddhist identity away from their homeland and to pass it over to their children.

In general, almost all the interviewees in this research told that they speak in their mother tongue, which is Sinhala at their homes, which is clearly reflected in the following interview excerpts.

AA was content with his ability and the space he gets to communicate in Sinhala in the United Kingdom. However, he was critical of the followers of British ways of life. He has taken some progressive and innovative steps towards maintaining and promoting the use of Sinhala language among the community. He was also of the opinion that the temple plays a vital role in promoting the Sinhala language among children.

We speak in Sinhalese at home and with the members of the community. (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

We used to get together once a month in a member's house and discuss issues and interesting topics related to Sri Lanka. The host used to serve the gathering with Sri Lankan cuisines. Some of the topics discussed included horoscopes, Sinhala folk poetry, lectures on important people and their work. I always do programs in Sinhala language in our community. We used to train children to do a speech in Sinhalese on such occasions. Some parents complained that their children could not understand. However, we encouraged doing so and some of the children used to come and ask in English things they could not understand. There is a trend in some high-class families to forget the Sri Lankan culture and to take British way of living. However, someday those children will complain for not teaching them Sinhalese. Therefore, we tried to break that trend of forgetting Sinhalese on such occasions. We also developed a trend of communicating in Sinhala poetic language among the members of the group about the events and their organization. (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

I bring books from Sri Lanka to help them learn of our culture, religion and language. Our temple is the main mechanism in delivering such services to our community. (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

PG, who was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to the UK with his family, was satisfied with the situation in his family since his two daughters were born in Sri Lanka and learned to speak in Sinhala naturally in Sri Lanka. He did not express any disappointment over the fact that his daughters could not read or write in Sinhala. It was also interesting to note that he was not keen on forcing his children to learn a language that will not benefit them in their life in the United Kingdom. The personal communication revealed that he was of the opinion that the children should be given the freedom to choose their way of life.

I speak to my wife in Sinhalese. I speak to my children in English and they speak to me in English. They speak to my wife in Sinhalese. They speak to each other in English. They can speak Sinhala because they were born in Sri Lanka. They cannot read or write in Sinhala. We took them to Sunday school to teach them to read and write Sinhala. However, now they will not learn any more. Moreover, it will not benefit them any more here in the UK. (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

An active participant in Sinhala communal events in Liverpool is KS. He talked contentedly about the opportunities he gets to use his mother tongue in the community and he wanted his daughter to learn Sinhala and a Sri Lankan way of life. He is disturbed by thinking about his daughter's future by looking at the current situation. He wants his three-year-old child to learn Sinhala so that she can learn about the Sri Lankan way of life and to practise it. KS is relying in part and trusting on Sinhala language to impart his cultural and religious experience to his child.

We speak in Sinhalese at home and with the members of the community. I talk to my daughter who is 3 years old in Sinhalese but she answers in English. I want to teach her Sinhalese and hope she will learn with time. (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

TH is a young university student born to Sinhala parents in the United Kingdom. His parents and

sister were born in Sri Lanka, and has therefore experienced a Sinhala speaking environment at his home since birth. He has also been associated with the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Birmingham since his childhood. However, his association with the larger society in the host land and the influence of the western culture have led him to give less priority to Sinhala language and culture. He is of the opinion that it is not important to pass on the knowledge of the Sinhala language and culture to his children. However, he is carrying a notion of identity by saying that he will tell his children about their language and where they come from. TH's comments provide evidence of an inclination in the future generations of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora born in the United Kingdom, to keep or feel about their Sinhala Buddhist identity only with a symbolic value. Their interest in keeping the Sinhala Buddhist culture alive in the diaspora is diminishing with the exposure to the bigger and influential host land culture.

My parents speak in Sinhalese at home most of the time and with the members of the community. Therefore I can understand Sinhala, I also can speak Sinhalese to some extent, but not so fluent. I learnt Sinhala language at Sunday school at Birmingham 'Jethawana Vihara'. I learnt to read Sinhalese there, but now I cannot remember because it is not in my priorities. My elder sister can write in Sinhalese as well because she was born in Sri Lanka. I like Sinhala language, but I do not put an effort to learn it further because of my other priorities and I do not think it is of much benefit to me in the UK. Therefore, I do not think I will put much effort to teach it to my children in future. However, I will tell them about their origin and language for them to know. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

A participant whose Sinhala family first immigrated to Italy from Sri Lanka and then recently moved to England, is SA. He spoke about the conflicting experiences that his family has had to face in their migration journey. According to SA, his children were beginning to learn Italian when they moved to England. However, the parents' inability to speak English and their efforts to teach Sinhala has resulted in his children being able to speak in Sinhala. He wants his children to learn Sinhala so that they can communicate when they go to Sri Lanka. SA considers the language as an important tool for the diaspora community in maintaining homeland relations. Knowing one's mother tongue has enabled them to construct their own identity in the diaspora and to build up new relationships with their homeland. In this example, SA's children were born in Italy and are now growing up in the United Kingdom. They experience their homeland culture at home in their family, at the Sinhala communal events and during occasional visits to Sri Lanka. However, knowing the language of their homeland has enabled them to look at their own identity in relation to the culture of a third country where they have not lived. It can be suggested that the Sinhala language plays a vital role in their negotiation of a Sinhala Buddhist identity in the diaspora.

The language became a major barrier when we first came here. I had to learn the language by living and working here at the beginning. Now I go to language classes to learn it (explaining his struggles

with learning English). We speak in Sinhalese at home my children also talk to us in Sinhala. The children talk to each other in English. They also know Italian language at different levels since they were born in Italy. We are happy that they learned English faster than us and now fluent in English. I think it is important for them to learn Sinhala since we do not know where we will have to live in future. They also need Sinhala when they go to Sri Lanka for visits. Otherwise they won't be able to move with the people in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, most of the children coming to the temple cannot speak Sinhala. Therefore, my children were finding it difficult to move with them at the beginning as their English knowledge was minimal. Now they have gradually improved and able to do their studies well. (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

NP was born in Sri Lanka and his children were born in the UK. He is encouraged by his three-year-old son who understands Sinhala and is hopeful that he will start to speak in Sinhala. The example of a Sinhala woman born in Italy who can speak Sinhala well and practicing Buddhism, is a reassurance for him. He is optimistic about a Sinhala community prevailing in the UK as a subculture, unharmed by outside forces, where Sinhala language would be used to share their experiences. Such an environment is conducive to construct and maintain a Sinhala Buddhist identity in the UK.

We speak in Sinhalese at home and with the members of the community. My first child is only three years. He can understand Sinhalese. We talk to him in Sinhalese. I want him to learn Sinhalese so that he can talk to his grandparents in Sri Lanka. I find it easy to communicate in Sinhala language. Sinhala culture in the UK is a subculture. There is no harm to others from it. Therefore, I think we should encourage everyone of our community to speak in Sinhala. I have seen one Sinhala woman who was born in Italy and now living in the UK, and she can speak Sinhala well and she is a practicing Buddhist. Likewise, I think my children also will do the same. (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017).

We speak in Sinhalese. We speak to children in Sinhalese. They can understand but cannot speak well. We take them to the Sunday school for them to learn Sinhala, but we do not want to push them much at this stage. They do not get much opportunity to talk in Sinhala. Even when they go to Sri Lanka, others talk to them in English. I think it is not a big issue as long as they learn our culture, mannerism and Buddhism. (interview IH, 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2017).

We want them to learn Sinhalese so that they can speak to grandparents and people in Sri Lanka when they visit Sri Lanka. We take him to the Sunday school to learn Sinhala. My son is keen on learning Sinhala because he has realized that learning Sinhala is important to communicate when he visits Sri Lanka". (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

We speak in Sinhala, but my children do not understand much. Therefore, I have talked to the temple about sending them to Sunday school to learn Sinhala. Soon they will start going to Sunday school. (interview IS, 07<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

We speak in Sinhala at home. However, my children were small when they first came here. Therefore,

now they find it difficult to speak in Sinhala even though they understand the language. (interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> august 2017).

The above interviews reveal how the environment external to the family and Sinhala communities has affected the Sinhala children who are born in the diaspora. The parents do not have much control in preventing their children from being exposed to the host land culture. Their efforts to teach them their mother tongue has not reached the expected level of success with the young children. However, the parents understand the importance of teaching the language to their children. They want their children to learn the language to participate in the diasporic activities and to maintain a relationship with the homeland. This relationship is currently demonstrated through talking to grandparents and relations in Sinhala and trying to communicate in Sinhala during their travels to homeland.

We speak in Sinhala and my children speak very well in Sinhala. They go to Sri Lanka every year and they know about our rituals and values very well. I was born to a traditional family in Sri Lanka and therefore I try to impart all the values in that tradition to my children. (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

We speak in Sinhala. My son also can speak and understand. However all my son's friends are British. Therefore, he moves more with them. My son's wife is British, but she wants to teach Sinhalese to her son because it is his father's language. She, herself is trying to learn Sinhala words while speaking to us. (interview GW, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

We speak in Sinhala; my children also can speak well since they came here when they were teenagers. We want to take our grandchild to temple for him to learn Sinhala and Buddhism. (interview NP, 06<sup>th</sup> November 2017).

I do not have a family here. However, I talk to people of our generation here in Sinhala. However, my brother's children who live here answer in English even when we talk to them in Sinhala. I think parents should take the responsibility of teaching their children Sinhala by talking to them in Sinhala. (interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> 2017).

We watch Sinhala films whenever we get a chance. Moreover, we have made it a habit to watch a selected Sinhala tele drama every day. (Interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

The Sri Lankan way of living and our values are different to what we see here, but I always try to practise those things here to some extent. For example, I try to speak in Sinhala whenever it is possible, and try to talk to children in Sinhalese when I meet them. (interview AM, 15 February 2017).

Yes, perhaps it is because of my upbringing in a Sinhala family. My father is committed to conservation of dialects of Sinhala language based on the regions in Sri Lanka. (interview AM, 15 February 2017).

Now I spend more time watching Sinhala musical programs and tele dramas. Sometimes I bring CDs from Sri Lanka or use internet. (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

I started a radio channel called ‘Ceylon Radio’ in 2012 and I developed mobile apps for Apple and Android. I employed some people to do announcing. I started photography to support this channel. We used to broadcast Sinhala songs and used to do interviews with celebrities and important people coming from Sri Lanka. We also used to broadcast the Sri Lankan events in the UK. The channel is inactive now. (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

We send them to Sunday Buddhist school. Therefore, I think our children will continue our culture and religion. My son is trying to learn Sinhala as well. Now he can manage to talk to people in Sri Lanka. (interview PP, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

The numerous interview excerpts collectively indicate the importance and weight given to the Sinhala language by the diasporic community in various ways. Most of them were born in Sri Lanka and migrated later in their lives and they have been able to continue practising the Sinhala language. They have utilised Sinhala music, cinema, websites, printed materials, such as Sinhala newspapers, and even a radio channel to fulfil their Sinhala language needs in the diaspora. They have been able to pass it on to their children in varying degrees of success, so that they are also able to communicate in Sinhala. The migrants who have come since the 1990s have been able to benefit from the already established Sinhala communities and a set of well organised religious and socio-cultural organisations in the United Kingdom. There is a natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and that social group’s identity (Kramsch, 1998:65). However, the value of language as a conveyer of the socio-cultural and religious values of a diaspora is felt and understood at differing levels of importance by the subsequent generations of Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom.

I think more than Sinhala language, Buddhism will prevail and pass down to our next generation because it is very acceptable. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

We all speak in Sinhalese including my children. I have made Sinhala language an accepted language in the Hounslow council. (interview SD, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017).

TH, as mentioned earlier, is a university student born in the diaspora. His present opinion is that Sinhala language is not of much benefit to him in the UK. However, Sinhala diaspora naturally keep contacts and visit Sinhala Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom, which are inhabited by Sinhala Buddhist monks where they inevitably get to experience some Sinhala.

Present day first generation Sinhala diaspora plays an active role in the use of Sinhala language, in the cultural and religious activities and passing down the language to subsequent generations. Continuous migration of Sinhala Buddhists to the United Kingdom has occurred for various reasons, and it keeps the Sinhala language alive in the diaspora. The Sinhala language is central to Sri Lankan-born Sinhala people in the diaspora to experience, understand and share their social, cultural and

religious values. To some extent, the Sinhala language plays the role of a religious language to Sinhala Buddhists. The Sinhala language is important to Sinhala diasporans born in the United Kingdom in their search of a Sinhala Buddhist identity and homeland relations (Perera, N. 2014). However, on the other hand, many cultures (such as the Jewish culture) have survived even though their language has virtually disappeared (Kramsch, 1998:69). Religions have survived without the use of their languages. Therefore, there is scope for Sinhala Buddhist culture to survive in the diaspora, even if the use of the Sinhala language diminishes from generation to generation in the future.

This section has presented a descriptive analysis of the importance of the Sinhala language to the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom. It has presented historical facts in the context of Buddhism and Sinhala Buddhist culture. The importance given to the Sinhala language by the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom has been shown through the various responses to interview questions and personal observations, emphasising how relationships are built and maintained with the homeland through the use of the Sinhala language. Finally, this subchapter also shed light upon the future of the Sinhala language in the diaspora, as younger generations may become less interested in the Sinhala language. The next subchapter will focus on the importance of Sinhala food culture for their identity construction and maintenance and relate the diasporic experiences of food culture in the Sinhala Buddhist communities in the UK to their homeland of Sri Lanka.

## **5.2 Food Culture**

Sri Lanka is a tropical island situated near the southern tip of the Indian peninsula. Therefore, the traditional food varieties in Sri Lanka are mainly derived from the tropical cereals, vegetables, fruits and spices. Being an island nation, it also has access to plenty of seafood. The Sinhala Buddhists give very high priority to their food culture in their day-to-day lives, cultural celebrations and in Buddhist rituals. Its food culture and food preparation methods are largely influenced by the food culture of neighbouring India. However, The Sinhala Buddhist have developed their own methods and utensils for their food preparations and traditional rituals with the resources found in their own environment. Therefore, the Sinhala Buddhists have a unique food culture that is not found anywhere else in the world. This food culture of the Sinhala Buddhists is a common factor that acts as a symbol of their identity. “Food rules define particular, concrete settings for ‘collective belonging’. They shape the way in which we share or how we negotiate identity” (Flitsch, 2011:970). “Our knowledge and experience of food comes first from home. This is both a social and personal experience, which among many other cultural, religious and political experiences, contributes to the net of social relationships and to our identities (Rabikowska, 2010: 378). Therefore, a study of the food culture of the transnational Sinhala Buddhist communities is an important way of finding out their sense of belonging to the homeland and to each other as Sinhala Buddhist diasporic communities. It is also a

way of finding out the nature of their reconstructed and contested identities in the diaspora.

The Sinhala people initially have to leave their traditions, culture, language and the food culture during their migration process. However, after establishing in the host lands, they have managed to find ways of recreating and continuing their food culture away from their homeland. Their unique food culture adds a symbolic value to their diasporic identity. It is a way of maintaining a relationship with the homeland. It “provides a link to the homeland and the past, as well as being part of creating an identity for a diasporic community” (Praveen, 2016: 47). It also brings them together as one diasporic community in the host land, recreating a social space for them. This chapter studies how members of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom have been able to continue their food culture in the host land and thereby maintain their diasporic identity. The data and descriptions presented in this subchapter are based on the researcher’s own experience, participatory observations and the responses received in formal and informal interviews.

### *5.2.1 Past and Present Perceptions of Food Habits in the Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora*

The first and second waves of Sinhala Buddhist migrants to the United Kingdom arrived in a host land, which did not have many facilities to accommodate their unique lifestyle. There was ‘London Buddhist Vihara’, which was opened by Anagarika Dharmapala, and later the Sri Lankan embassy in London (opened in 1948) for the Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom to reach out for social, religious and immigration purposes. Apart from these two institutions, there were Indian temples already established in the United Kingdom, which serve South Asian food to the public. The Indian grocery shops had been the main sources of ingredients for food preparation. However, Sri Lankans were often unable to find the unique ingredients and food items that they used to cook in the homeland.

We eat the Sri Lankan way including my children. When we first came, we had to buy things from Indian shops or to bring them from Sri Lanka when we go for visits. However now we have everything in Sri Lankan Tamil shops (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

A member of the first generation of early migrants to the United Kingdom from Sri Lanka is SP. She has worked for the NHS as a medical doctor and has lived in Liverpool since arriving in the United Kingdom. She reveals how they continued to prepare their Sri Lankan cuisines in the host land. At the beginning, they found some of the ingredients, such as rice and spices, in Indian shops, which closely resemble Sri Lankan food. They have also kept links with the homeland by travelling regularly, using such travels to bring food items that they do not find in the United Kingdom. She also reveals that at present they can find many Sri Lankan food items in Sri Lankan Tamil shops. The larger population of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the United Kingdom have been able to develop a wholesale network of importing grocery items from Sri Lanka to distribute to the Sri Lankan shops in the main cities all over the United Kingdom. They cater to both Tamils and Sinhalese alike. This

business network is another way of maintaining a relationship with the homeland to the Sri Lanka diaspora in the United Kingdom.

We still eat the same way that we used to, back in Sri Lanka. Rice and curry is our staple food. However, my sons have changed their eating habits. They also like very much to eat Sri Lankan spicy food, which they can buy easily in London food stalls. When we first came here, it was hard to find Sri Lankan food. Those days Sri Lankan embassy used to give rice and curry meal for lunch to the visitors, especially for students. So we used to go there solely for that, 40 years ago. Those days we used to buy rice and curry powder from Indian shops. Sri Lankan Tamil shops came up fast since about 15 years back (interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2017).

MJ revealed the situation in the 1970s when he first came with his wife. He described how they went to the Sri Lankan embassy in London just to enjoy a Sri Lankan rice and curry meal, as there were not many Sri Lankan restaurants at that time. It is a sign of their reluctance to change their food habits and a longing for the homeland food culture. The nostalgia of an experience and memories in the homeland make them recreate and look for such experience in the host land. He also indicated that his children, who belong to the second generation Sinhala Buddhists, may have shown signs of changing their food habits. However, they have maintained their longing for Sri Lankan spicy food by dining out in the new trend of Sri Lankan restaurants, which were first established 15 years ago. It is a way of identity negotiation for the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom, where they have copied the dining out tradition of the British but with a Sri Lankan touch, by dining out in the Sri Lankan restaurants. It is a sign of their nostalgic instinct to taste the home food away from home.

We buy some of the grocery items from the nearby Indian shops and supermarkets. We bring spices from Sri Lanka when we go there. We cook only Sri Lankan food. We also try to cook different cuisines that we used to eat in Sri Lanka. Some of the special utensils that we used in Sri Lanka such as moulds for steaming are not found here. For such purposes, we use a general steamer (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

One participant, AM, confirmed the experiences of the early Sinhala Buddhist migrants and maintains that she only cooks Sri Lankan food. She also revealed that she tries different cuisines that they used to eat in Sri Lanka. During research observations it became clear that it is a common custom for the Sinhala Buddhist women to share their experiences and recipes with each other in cooking Sri Lankan cuisines. Such sharing of ideas creates a sense of belonging among the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora, and often occurs transnationally with the help of new technologies. They often talk to their relations in the homeland for recipes, most commonly they talk to their mothers in Sri Lanka. AM also revealed that she adopted an utensil found in the host land to recreate a Sri Lankan cuisine, since she could not find the right Sri Lankan utensil in the United Kingdom. “Migration thus leads to adaptation and substitution of items, from another culture encountered in the diaspora” (Praveen,

2016: 51). Their nostalgic longing to recreate the homeland food in the diaspora leads them to innovate new ways of making the same food.

We eat Sinhala food mostly for dinner. We have English breakfast in the morning. We buy our food items from Asian Food Markets. We also bring from London. We have brought most of the utensils from Sri Lanka to make 'hoppers', 'string hoppers' and 'pittu' (interview IH, 03<sup>rd</sup> of May 2017).

IH admitted that his family has had to substitute their morning meal with English breakfast for practical reasons in the host land. However, he is somehow managing to have at least one meal in Sri Lankan style. To accomplish that, he is taking the extra effort to travel to London to buy the essential ingredients. He has bought the essential utensils and brought them over from Sri Lanka to recreate the home food in the host land.

We eat at least one rice and curry meal a day. I have brought clay pots from Sri Lanka and coconut shell spoons (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2017).

Moreover, SW also provided evidence for the Sinhala Buddhists nostalgia for home food and how they use their relationship with the homeland to recreate homeland food in the host land. SW referred to the unique taste that they get by cooking home food in clay pots. She has used her occasional travels to the homeland to collect and bring some of the utensils that they do not find in the host land.

We use coconut in most of our food. In Sri Lanka, we used to scrape fresh coconut and use. However, here we use desiccated coconut or coconut milk powder. We use firewood for cooking in Sri Lanka, especially in cultural events, but here we can only use gas cookers. However, we cook only Sri Lankan cuisines here (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

Some of the limitations that Sinhalese have to face in the diaspora were revealed by KS. It is a revelation of the nostalgic memory of food made of freshly scrapped coconut in clay pots and firewood furnaces, which gives the smells and tastes of homemade food. In Sri Lanka, they use coconut shells as firewood, which adds to the taste of the food they cook. However, in the diaspora they have to use alternative products such as desiccated coconut or coconut milk powder. They cannot use firewood for cooking and instead use gas or electric cookers. However, KS said they cook only Sri Lankan food in the diaspora.

We have brought all the utensils from Sri Lanka and therefore we cook all the Sri Lankan food at home (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

PG has also made extra effort to get all the kitchen utensils from Sri Lanka in order to recreate the Sri Lankan Cuisines in the diaspora. PG invites his Sri Lankan friends to their house for get-togethers, and on such occasions he and his wife treat them with homemade Sri Lankan cuisines. The food is appreciated by discussing the ingredients, methods they use to cook them and so on, sharing their

experiences. Their conversations about the food takes them back to the memories and experiences in the homeland. The conversations bring them back the memories of the places where they had those foods and the people who made them and who were sharing those foods with them (observations). The Sri Lankan food culture in this instant acts as a bridge between the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora and their homeland. It reenergizes the relationship with the homeland and become an important part of the reconstructed homeland experience in the host land.

I always want to eat and drink the way we did in Sri Lanka. Therefore, I ask my sister who lives in Sri Lanka to arrange even the curry powders from Sri Lanka. I even ask her to send me 'Watawala' tea, which I used to drink in Sri Lanka. I used to get all the ingredients from Sri Lanka. We also have brought utensils from Sri Lanka to cook Sri Lankan cuisines. We eat rice and curry every day. We make other Sri Lankan dishes also regularly. We also like to eat Italian cuisines at night. My children also like them. I do not think British cuisines taste as good as Italian food and therefore we do not make them at home (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

SA, who has lived experience in his homeland and in Italy, expressed his nostalgia for his homeland food and Italian food where he spent many years of his life. He is craving the exact taste of the food in his homeland and therefore is maintaining an active relationship with his relations in Sri Lanka. Homeland food has become a very important reason for his travels and maintaining a relationship with the people in Sri Lanka. His wife is capable of recreating a wide range of homeland food and constantly updates and expands her knowledge of Sri Lankan food by talking to her relations in Sri Lanka. This relationship with the homeland enables them to reconstruct the homeland food culture in the host land and enables their children to experience exactly the same food they would have had in the homeland.

We get from banana leaf to everything from Tamil shops in Liverpool. Therefore, all my family cook and eat the Sri Lankan style. Even when we have an European meal occasionally, we feel the need to have rice and curry after that (interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2017).

Banana leaf takes a very important place in Sri Lankan food culture. Sri Lankans use banana leaf as a plate, to lay rice during preparation, to wrap food and to cook food. DJ, by saying 'from Banana leaf to everything' indicates that, at present, Sinhala Buddhists can find most of the ingredients and items that they need to prepare Sri Lankan cuisines in the diaspora. Sri Lankan shops and restaurants all over the United Kingdom cater to the needs of diasporans and they take every effort to recreate the Sri Lankan food consumer culture in the diaspora. DJ also revealed his physical and emotional need to have at least one meal of homeland food per day.

I do not cook. My mother always cooks Sri Lankan cuisines at home such as Rice & curry, 'Appam', 'Idiappa', Pittu. I am also fond of the delicacies we make for the 'New Year' festival. In addition, I am

always willing to try Sri Lankan Food varieties such as ‘Kottu’ when I go out of my home (interview TH 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

We cook Sri Lankan dishes. Even my grandchild likes to eat rice and curry (interview NP, 06<sup>th</sup> of November 2017).

TH, who was born in the United Kingdom, expressed his familiarity with the Sri Lankan food by calling them by their Sri Lankan names. He also mentioned about Sri Lankan festive foods and eating out in Sri Lankan restaurants. He explained that he first got familiar with Sri Lankan food by eating his mother’s food at home. Therefore, the Sri Lankan food plays a prominent role in recreating the home environment in the host land, passing the homeland culture to the next generation in the host land and negotiating an identity for the Sinhala Buddhists in the host land. NP’s expression shows signs of passing the Sinhala Buddhist food culture to many generations to come. However, there are signs of some Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora changing their food habits to host land food culture.

We eat Sri Lankan food. There are shops to buy our food and ingredients. However, my child eats mostly UK food. We have gradually got used to English food as well (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

We like to eat Sri Lankan cuisines. However, our children now have got used to local food. Because of them, we also have had to change our dietary patterns (interview IS, 07<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

We still eat the Sri Lankan way. We have not changed a bit from our traditional way of living. However, my son has got used to British food (interview GW, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

The above interviews reveal the aspect of changing food culture of some of the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora. Some of them think that their children will not be able to get used to homeland food. Some think that they have to change their food culture to accommodate the changing habits of their children. However, the present-day Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora have a well organised network along with the Sri Lankan Tamils to import and distribute Sri Lankan products at commercial level all over the United Kingdom. There are Sri Lankan restaurants, catering services and many other service providers relating to the needs of the Sri Lankans (Garnweidner et al, 2012). The nostalgic longing for the homeland food of the Sinhala Buddhist immigrants in the United Kingdom have permitted them to recreate their food culture in the host land. Such motivations have made it possible for them to pass their food culture to the subsequent generations. It has also enabled them to build up new relationships with the host land society in the forms of shopping and dining out experiences, while negotiating their own identities in the host land.

### *5.2.2 Social and Religious Aspects of the Sinhala Buddhist Food Culture in the Diaspora*

In many Asian countries, rice has also a religious status that few other grains enjoy. In China and Japan, there are rituals associated with the rice crop. In India, feeding the child with a first spoonful of rice is a sacrament. Uncooked rice with turmeric is used in Hindu worship services. Sprinkling rice on

newlyweds is a mark of wishing good progeny. (Raman, 2014: 962)

Similar to the influence of Indian culture, Sinhala Buddhists give a very high regard to food in their socio-cultural and religious events. Rice takes a prominent place in their religious and cultural events. 'Kiribat', which is made of rice and coconut milk, takes a prominent place in such events from being the first solid food fed to an infant, being served at weddings and all the special celebrations.

Agricultural success is the key to prosperity, happiness and strengthening social bonds in the traditional villages in Sri Lanka. The traditional food takes a prominent place in the New Year Celebrations in Sri Lanka. The publicity that comes with the advent of the electronic media and the commercialization of the traditional festivals, make this festival popular among the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora all over the world. In addition to that, the lived experience of this festival of most of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in their homeland compels them to recreate this festival in the host land. It is a way of recreating the homeland as well as negotiating their identities in the host land. Traditional food is a vital part of the Sinhala Buddhist New Year festivals in the host land.



*Figure 1 A Traditional New Year Table of the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool, 23.04.2016*

Figure 1 shows the New Year table arranged by the Sinhala Buddhists in Liverpool in their New Year Festival. They have taken a special interest in representing all the food varieties that they usually cook in Sri Lanka for this festival. Members of the community have joined together and contributed voluntarily to make it a success. It is an occasion for the Sinhala Buddhist women in the host land to refresh their memories of the experiences in the homeland in relation to food culture and the people associated with it, especially their mothers and aunts. It also helps them to build up and renew their relationships with members of the community in the diaspora and the relations and friends in Sri Lanka, through discussions about the methods and ingredients of the traditional food.

We cook Sri Lankan traditional food at home, but have reduced the amount of chilli we add to our curries after coming here. Since I am a chef, I cook some of the European and other cuisines at home. Therefore, we are used to both now. We have brought some of the utensils from Sri Lanka. My wife has brought her mother's 'kokis mould' as it is already well tampered. During Sinhala New Year time, it goes around all our friends' houses. My wife has learnt from her mother to cook Sri Lankan cuisines and sweets very well. Therefore, she makes all the sweets for the New Year festival. Some other foods we learn from internet (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2017).

NP who lives in London with his family was talking fondly about the festival foods when he was asked to share his experience in the diaspora. He confirmed that Sinhala Buddhist women take the front in making traditional food, although he is a chef. He provides evidence to the fact that the people in the diaspora use their relationships with the homeland to get information regarding food preparation. He also talked about some utensils that he brought from Sri Lanka, especially an item belonging to his mother in law. His wife is sharing it with his friends in the diasporic community, indicating that knowledge is also shared with the utensil. Therefore, the relationship of one diasporic member with the homeland, contributes to the spread of homeland culture among many members of the diasporic community. The New Year Table at the New Year festivals in the diaspora is an opportunity for the members of the diaspora, who do not get to make the traditional food in their homes, to experience the taste and the tradition of the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora. It is an opportunity for all the members in the diaspora to reconstruct their culture of the homeland in the host land and to use it as an expression of their identity in the diaspora.

The traditional Sri Lankan food also plays a prominent role in socializing events for members of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. The traditional events, religious ceremonies and occasional get-togethers of friends at houses give a prominent place to Sri Lankan cuisines.

We used to get together once a month in a member's house and discussed issues and interesting topics related to Sri Lanka. The host used to serve the gathering with Sri Lankan cuisines. I used to be a teetotaler when I was in Sri Lanka, but now I have a little wine in social events. We bring most of the spices from Sri Lanka every time we go to Sri Lanka. Most of the Sri Lankan items such as vegetables are now available in shops here. We also have brought items such as coconut scraper, mortar and pestle and other utensils from Sri Lanka to cook Sri Lankan Cuisines. We eat rice and curry everyday prepared exactly the same way we do in Sri Lanka (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

AA told about get-togethers they organise, and how the hosts treat the participants with Sri Lankan cuisines on such occasions. It is a common practice for them to enjoy Sri Lankan cuisines while having friendly conversations amongst themselves. He has added drinking alcohol socially to his eating habits after coming to the United Kingdom. However, he said that he has not changed the way they eat or make the Sri Lankan cuisines in the diaspora. He has even brought the utensils required

from Sri Lanka to make the Sri Lankan Cuisines in the diaspora. Sri Lankan food plays a vital role in their socialising in the Sinhala Buddhists community in the diaspora. Therefore, along with the language, homeland experiences and homeland relationships, food is a vital part of the Sinhala Buddhists diasporic identity in the United Kingdom.

Religious social events are also an important aspect of the Sinhala Buddhists diasporic experience where the traditional food plays a prominent role.

Children observe 'Sil' on Vesak day usually a Saturday. We usually have 'Poya' events in the weekend here in the UK. The next day the elders observe Sil. There are about two hundred people participating, and about 100 children. We cook and offer food to all the participants (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

We have over 150 people observing precepts on such days, Vesak been the highest with around 300 attendees. Therefore, we arrange alms (Food) for the attendees on such days (interview Ven. Seelawimala, 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2017).

Venerable Seelawimala Thero and SW provided accounts of the religious events held at the London Buddhist Vihara. The community members are voluntarily involved in cooking and supplying food for the participants in the religious events at the temple. The Sinhala Buddhists consider giving alms as a worthy deed according to Buddhist teachings. They are brought up with such practices in the homeland and therefore they continue such good causes in the host land. They believe that such deeds invoke blessings and merits for their life after death.

I used to invite the Buddhist monk at Manchester to my house and offer alms with my friends and to listen to his sermons (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

PP who was living in the north of England did not have a temple near his residence and therefore had to invite the Buddhist monk in Manchester to his house. His Sinhala Buddhist community feeling is articulated by inviting his friends in that area to his house to participate in the alms giving and to listen to the Buddhist sermon. The Sinhala Buddhists participate in the event of offering food as alms to the Buddhist monks with the highest reverence. PP's act is a sign that the Sinhala Buddhists in the host land have the desire to continue their Sinhala Buddhist culture away from homeland.

We were able to give alms every day of the year to the residing monk and able to run the temple without a trouble to this date. We organise a food stall as well on poya days, especially Vesak. (interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2017).

It has always been Sri Lankan cuisines such as rice and curry (interview Ven. S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

DJ considers being able to offer food as alms to the residing monk at the temple in Liverpool every day of the year as a vital aspect of running the temple. In Sri Lanka, the devotees of a particular

temple look after the temples and the residing Buddhist monks in that temple. Likewise, the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom continue the same tradition, considering it their responsibility. The temple committee takes the responsibility of supplying the alms to the residing monk with the support of the volunteers from the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool. Venerable Sugatharathana Thero, when asked, replied saying that he always receives Sri Lankan Cuisines as alms in Liverpool temple. It is a sign of the Sinhala Buddhists reluctance to deviate from the traditional homeland practices.

A highly devoted Sinhala Buddhists living in Liverpool, Mr. Suranga, performs an extensive set of rituals once every three months when offering alms to the Lord Buddha and the Buddhist monks. He performs an ancient Sri Lankan practice of offering 32 varieties of cuisines to the Lord Buddha and the Buddhist monks at his house in Liverpool. It is a tradition practised in Sri Lanka, where they offer the same number of food varieties that they offered to the king of the country and to the temple of the tooth in Sri Lanka.



*Figure 2 Thirty-two varieties of cuisines prepared to offer to the Lord Buddha and the Buddhist monk at Suranga's residence in Liverpool, 06.08.2017*

Mr. Suranga makes it a point to invite the members of the community to participate in this event, and the participants contribute to the varieties of cuisines that are needed to perform this special alms giving. In addition to the thirty-two varieties of curries, they make some desserts, fruit platters and some beverages to offer as alms.



*Figure 3 Food offerings to the Lord Buddha as alms during the Katina Ceremony in Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

Mr. Suranga's special interest in performing an ancient Sri Lankan tradition in the diaspora reflects their longing and nostalgia for the homeland traditions. It is also a celebration of Sri Lankan food in the diaspora. Such a practice enables them to cook, see and taste Sri Lankan food in the diaspora. It also helps to continue the homeland food culture in the diaspora with no omissions and acts as a symbol of their relationship to homeland.

Members of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom show a nostalgic longing for homeland food for which they have not found a substitute in the host land. Their craving for homeland food encourages them to recreate homeland food in the diaspora. They build up new community relationships among the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora and renew their relationships with Sri Lanka in their efforts to recreate the homeland food in the diaspora. The recreation of homeland food in the diaspora is also important for the socio-cultural and religious events and celebrations in the diaspora. It plays a prominent role in their identity maintenance and identity negotiation in the diaspora. The subsequent generations of the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora still love the homeland food and they find new ways, such as dining out in Sri Lankan restaurants, of enjoying their homeland food by incorporating it in to their British lifestyle. Therefore, the homeland food plays a significant role in the negotiating of their identity in the host land. The next subchapter presents a discussion of how Sinhala arts and music have contributed to the diasporic experiences among Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. It provides a rich description of the uses and functions of art and music in events, day to day life and in the homeland relations of this community.

### **5.3 Music and Arts: Aesthetic Expressions of Sinhalese Identity**

The geographical location of Sri Lanka in the world was crucial for its socio-cultural, religious and political evolution to the present status of affairs in the country. Art and music was no exception. The

'Mahawamsa', which is the first written document of the history of Sri Lanka, mentions that when Prince 'Vijaya' arrived in the island from India, there were local tribal festivals with music and singing (Geiger, 1912:57). It also tells about the aboriginal festivals of singing and dancing for deities. King 'Kashyapa' (477-495 AD) decorated his fortress with colourful frescoes. The Sinhala Buddhist kingdoms all over the country exhibit their creative abilities in the forms of sculpture, carvings, paintings, and art and music of varying styles. Such remnants and reports provide ample evidence for the artistic qualities of the Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka and their ability to appreciate aesthetic aspects of life. Sri Lankan art styles and traditions have been mainly influenced over many centuries by Indian traditions. Later, European and African immigrants have brought their own art and musical traditions to enrich the art and music of the Sinhala community. Being close to the Indian sub-continent, Sinhala art and music is influenced by South Indian, North Indian and Bengali arts and music over many centuries. Later during the colonial times, Sinhala art and music was enriched by European and African influences. Interestingly, the carols and church music that came along with the colonial rulers acted as a catalyst to the rise of the Buddhist devotional songs and music. The 'Theravada' school of Buddhism does not encourage art and music, which is considered as mundane aspects of lay life. However, the influence of the Mahayana Buddhist traditions introduced chanting of 'Sutras', 'Gatas' and 'Jathakas' to the Buddhist culture in the island. Temple art and sculpture is another important aspect of the influence of Buddhism on the culture in Sri Lanka. African people who came along with colonial rulers as labourers also contributed with their styles of singing and dancing to the local art and music culture.

Both classical and popular art and music is part of the identity of Sinhala people in Sri Lanka. Sinhalese art and music plays an important role in shaping their perceptions of the environment, society, human relationships and individuals. Those who are exposed to Sinhala art and music from their birth naturally carry that experience and influence right throughout their lives. Members of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom have had varying degrees of exposures to Sri Lankan art and music, depending on individual circumstances. The following is a thick description of the experiences of members of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the UK with respect to art and music, which were gathered during observations and formal and informal interviews.

### *5.3.1 Sinhala Music and Songs*

Sinhala music and songs are influenced by western music styles, which were brought by the colonial rulers, Indian music traditions and from local folk music. Sinhala people naturally enjoy all music styles depending on the occasion, regardless of its origin or the style. In Sri Lanka, people listen to music on radio and television channels. There are organised indoor and outdoor musical shows all over the country for people to get together and enjoy. It is also common in the Sinhala communities

to organise parties at their homes, where singing and dancing are popular acts. Sinhala songs, regardless of their styles and genre, express feelings of life, people and environment in Sri Lanka. They can also be descriptive of the humans, their relationships, nature and the lifestyles of the people in Sri Lanka. Therefore, listening to Sinhala music and songs compels Sinhala people to build up emotional bonds with their homeland, its people and lifestyle. It is a way of giving relief to or healing their minds by reminiscing about the aesthetic aspects of their lives in the homeland in addition to enjoying the sounds and melodies, which became particularly clear in the observations during fieldwork.

The Sinhala Buddhist immigrants in the United Kingdom at present find Sinhala Buddhist music and songs as the most common and easily accessible aesthetic recreation in the diaspora, due to the advancement of technology and internet. Listening to Sinhala songs is a way of refreshing their memory and emotional belonging to the homeland for the people, who were born in the homeland and have had some years of experience of the life in the homeland. It is also a way of momentarily forgetting the distance and the separation, by travelling in their minds to the homeland through the experience unfolded in the songs and music. Their personal experiences associated with those songs in the past can bring special memories of the homeland and strengthen their relationship with the homeland.

MJ belongs to the first wave of Sinhala migrants who came to the United Kingdom. He came to the UK after completing his professional education in Sri Lanka and after completing a few years of work in Sri Lanka. He explains the situation in the 1970s and 1980s.

We used to go to see Sri Lankan concerts in London when Sinhala artists come and perform in London. They were not many in those days. We still listen to music and watch cinema. I mostly watch politics and Cricket (on internet) in Sri Lanka (interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

He explained that Sri Lankan concerts were so infrequent at that time and therefore they made it a point to attend the concerts in London whenever the Sinhala artists came and performed. It was not common at that time for the Sinhala people in the United Kingdom to gain access to listen to Sinhala music in the diaspora. Therefore, they have cherished those rare occasions of enjoying Sinhala music of those artists they used to love and enjoy in the homeland, which was particularly emphasised during the personal communications.

SP is also an early immigrant who has actively been involved in Sinhala social and cultural activities in the United Kingdom.

We have a massive collection of songs, drama and movies from Sri Lanka. Our friends watch them with us when they visit us at our home. We used to make a list of things that we like to enjoy and bring

them when we go to Sri Lanka. We listen to a Sri Lanka radio channel online and follow politics as well. My friends sang 'Jayamangala Ghata' in my son's wedding, which made everyone overwhelmed and my son crying. Later when their daughter was born, we did the same. We also did a big cultural concert to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of Sri Lanka in Liverpool. There was a big turnout for this event. We did not have enough seats for the crowd in the Liverpool town hall. There were traditional dances, songs involving both children and adults. There are Sinhala people who teach dancing. We found instrument players from different areas of the country (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

SP revealed how they managed to enjoy Sinhala music and cinema by making a list of them and bringing them from Sri Lanka when they travelled to the homeland. Sinhala Music and cinema has become one of the several reasons for them to sustain a relationship with the homeland. It is also significant to note that they have used those music and cinema recordings at their home in the host land to entertain the visitors, who are predominantly Sinhalese. This shows the importance of music and cinema as a contributing factor to the diasporic community building in the host land. The members of the community, Sinhala language, homeland food, and art and music facilitate such small get-togethers of Sinhala Buddhist communities in the diaspora. Such get-togethers result in sharing each other's experiences and provide a space for community building in the diaspora. It is a way of identifying the resource persons in the community. As SP revealed, the ultimate results of such micro level social activities were evident when they organised the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence Day of Sri Lanka in Liverpool. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence in Sri Lanka was celebrated in 1998, which falls during the period of the onset of the third wave of Sri Lankan migrants to the United Kingdom. Therefore, by that time the Sinhala Buddhist community in the UK was equipped with better infrastructure to be organised. Not only have they managed to provide for their basic needs but also to provide for their cultural, religious and aesthetic needs. The overwhelming participation of both the young and adult members of the community in contributing to the dancing and singing events and enjoying them, are significant in several ways. It shows their yearning for homeland art and music in the diaspora. On the other hand, they have taken some fruitful efforts to pass it on to the younger generations with less resistance from them. They have been able to sustain their art and music culture by identifying relevant specialist members of the diaspora and passing it on to the younger generations. The need of specialist persons, instruments and equipment for the concerts compels the organisers to reach out to the Sinhala Buddhists all over the diaspora and to the homeland. Therefore, it strengthens the relationship among the diasporic community members, as well as their relationship with the homeland. Moreover, performing a concert in the host land is a way of exhibiting Sinhala Buddhist identity to the society in the host land and therefore is a way of negotiating their identity in the host land. It helps them to develop mutual understandings and to earn the respect of the host

society as a unique diasporic community with their own values.

SP was very emotional and joyful when she was talking about her son's wedding. According to SP, her son was in tears when her friends recited 'Jayamangala Ghata' or the 'Stanzas of Victorious Auspices' in his wedding. It is a way of invoking blessings by singing eight stanzas in the Pali language, which narrates eight qualities of Lord Buddha. SP had managed to arrange her friends to perform it at his wedding. Apart from the blessing it brings to them, it is a way of displaying and experiencing a sense of joy and pride of their heritage. Her son's reaction to it indicated that he has developed a Sinhala Buddhist conscience of a considerable degree, even though he was born and raised in the diaspora. SP went on to say that she did the same when her granddaughter was born, indicating the will to continue the tradition from generation to generation, obviously with her son's consent. This makes clear that certain unique features of the Sinhala Buddhist tradition are positively contributing to the continuation of the Sinhala lifestyle in the diaspora.

An elderly member of the community in Liverpool who came to the UK in late 1980s, is GW. He spent the first half of his life in Sri Lanka and therefore has an abundance of memories of life in Sri Lanka.

Yes, I was brought up watching stage dramas of Sarathchandra and listening to Sinhala arts and music. I like to listen to songs of Victor Rathnayake, Nanda Malini, and so on. Recently I found some songs of Sunil Santha. I found out that he is the pioneer in Sinhala music. I like classical arts. Time-to-time we organise musical events in Liverpool as both entertainment and cultural items. I watch Sri Lankan news every day (interview GW, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

The stage dramas of Prof. Sarathchandra are mostly musicals performed on stage since the 1950s. Sunil Santha was a music composer who pioneered Sinhala song since the 1950s. GW was brought up listening to those songs, sounds, melodies and rhythms. He also talked about the music of the contemporary artists of his age in Sri Lanka. He has been psychologically nourished over many years by the art and music of Sri Lanka, in addition to other aspects of life such as religion. His life experience in Sri Lanka largely determines his lifestyle in the host land. He spends his leisure time travelling down memory lane by listening and exploring the music culture of yesteryears in the homeland. He even relives those memories by organising musical events in the diaspora by bringing over artists from Sri Lanka. He says that he is doing this not only for entertainment, but also to show it to the younger generations of Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the UK. This is an example of how music plays an important role in maintaining homeland relations, Sinhalese identity and in passing it on to the next generation of diasporans.

TH was born in the UK. However, his parents were migrants in the 1990s from Sri Lanka. He experiences Sinhala art & culture at his home and in the diasporic community.

My parents listen to Sinhala songs. I like to listen to ‘Amaradewa’s songs for his voice and melodies, even though I do not understand all the words (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

While TH was brought up in a Sinhala Buddhist house in the UK, Buddhism, Sinhala food, language, traditions and music are all parts of his upbringing experience. He says that his parents listen to Sinhala songs at home and therefore he gets to listen to them without any effort. It is an indication that his parents lead a Sri Lankan way of life here in the UK. The sounds and melodies of the Sinhala songs that he listens to at home have made a lasting impact on his ability to appreciate Sri Lankan music. He has developed the ability to enjoy Sinhala music, though he does not fully understand the meaning of the words. He has also developed a selective interest of the songs that he enjoys listening to. The particular singer whom he has mentioned is well known for his compositions reflecting Sinhala Buddhist culture and values. Being able to grow up in such a musical environment in his home has made a lasting impact on his attitude towards Sinhala music, which is a positive factor that contributes to the continuation of Sinhala Buddhist culture in the diaspora.

Sinhalese are generally a music loving community. A Sinhala pop music culture has evolved over the past five decades in Sri Lanka. The majority of the members of the Sinhala diasporic community have had the experience of enjoying Sinhala pop music in Sri Lanka at some stage of their lives. Therefore, most of the social events and get-togethers consist of singing and dancing to popular Sinhala music. Observations during fieldwork revealed that even the social events of the Sri Lankan professional associations, such as APSL UK, organises events such as ‘Fund raising dinner dances’ where participants can enjoy Sinhala pop music. Both young and old in the diaspora get involved in such occasions. Such events promote Sinhala pop culture in the diaspora and help the younger generations to get a feel of that atmosphere.

### *5.3.2 Sinhala Cinema and Drama*

Sinhala cinema and drama plays an important role in entertaining and enlightening the Sinhala people of the life and culture in Sri Lanka. Sinhala cinema was very popular before the arrival of television in the 1980s in Sri Lanka. People of the older generations, such as SP and MJ, have taken an extra effort to make a collection of movies that they used to watch in Sri Lanka and to share them with their friends in the diaspora. Tele dramas have gained popularity since the arrival of the television in Sri Lanka in early 1980s. The third wave of migrants who came to the United Kingdom from the mid-1980s are mostly tele drama fans. At present, they have the opportunity to watch films, serial TV dramas and every other television programme on the internet with the help of modern technology in their houses in the host land. Therefore, it has become easier for them to maintain that relationship with the homeland through art and music.

NP belongs to the third wave of migrants and reveals that they watch most of the Sri Lankan TV

programs on the internet.

Yes, we listen and watch songs, tele dramas and cinema from Sri Lanka. My wife is fond of Sri Lankan tele dramas. They remind us so much of our life in Sri Lanka. We watch some of the British programs on TV as well (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017).

He came to the United Kingdom in 2012 after getting married to his wife, who came and settled in the UK ten years before him. Therefore, NP arrived into an already settled Sinhala Buddhist community in the UK. Moreover, the ability to enjoy Sri Lankan TV programmes in the host land enables NP to psychologically remove the barriers of distance and to get close to the life in Sri Lanka. Their ability to watch Sri Lankan tele dramas and other TV programmes on the internet enables them to keep constantly updated with the life and current affairs in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the audio-visual experiences that they get, help them to overcome the sense of separation created by the distance. Being constantly updated with current affairs of the homeland and watching contemporary tele dramas helps them to avoid being alienated from the homeland society. It helps them maintain a healthy lifelong relationship with the homeland society and to avoid experiencing a cultural shock when they visit their homeland.

AA is a zealous Sinhala Buddhist living in the diaspora who actively engages in conserving the Sinhala Buddhist culture and values. Therefore, he constantly refines his Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle by maintaining a relationship with Sri Lanka.

I have CDs of all the famous and respected singers of Sri Lanka. We also listen to a Buddhist sermon every evening from a selected Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka. We watch Sinhala films whenever we get a chance. Moreover, we have made it a habit to watch a selected Sinhala tele drama every day. These days we are watching with keen interest, a tele drama based on the life of an ancient Sinhala king called 'Dutu Gemunu' who united the country by defeating the invaders (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

AA is very selective in his choices. He has made a collection of Sinhala music of only the very best and respected artists in Sri Lanka. He uses the internet to watch selected Sinhala Buddhist programmes from Sri Lanka. His choice of tele dramas is also limited; however, he has made it a habit to watch one tele drama every day. He revealed that he is interested in not only the current affairs of the homeland, but also the history of the Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. AA is keen on enriching his life with good quality Sri Lankan art and music and keeps a continuous relationship with Sri Lanka to maintain and refine his Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the diaspora.

SS was born and brought up in rural Sri Lanka before coming to the UK, and therefore his experience with Sinhala art and music is strongly established in his memory.

Sinhala music and cinema is very much attached to our life. Our songs are very close to our life. Our tele dramas show us our lifestyle and sceneries in Sri Lanka. There is one tele drama that I watch, that shows my village area and our lifestyle there, which I missed for last 13 years. Therefore, we should encourage them and protect that industry at least to show to others how we lived in Sri Lanka (interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

He revealed how his experience of life in Sri Lanka is powerfully depicted in Sinhala songs and tele dramas. They bring fond memories of his life in the homeland, and he values the opportunity to watch and listen to them in the host land. Therefore, SS wants to actively engage in protecting the industry, and to show Sinhala art and music to others for them to know about it. For him, Sinhala art and music are instruments that he uses to sustain a relationship with the homeland. It is a way of introducing his homeland to the fellow citizens in the diaspora.

TH, as mentioned earlier, was born and grew up in the UK. However, the Sinhala Buddhist environment in his home has given him enough exposure to enable him to enjoy Sinhala art and music.

I also used to watch some of the tele dramas such as ‘Amba Yaluwo’ (a children’s tele drama). I can understand the story though I do not understand all the words (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

His parents may have guided him, so that he has been able to watch Sinhala tele dramas since his childhood. He was talking about a Sri Lankan children’s tele drama and that he was able to understand the story. It gives him the opportunity to get a close look at the life style, language and the environment in Sri Lanka and to appreciate them. It helps him to comprehend his Sri Lankan origins.

SW married and had her children after migrating to England. However, she has largely been able to pass on her Sinhala Buddhists way of life to her children.

Yes, we listen to Sinhala music including my children. We watch Sinhala tele dramas. My children learn a lot about Sri Lanka and our language by watching Dramas (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

She revealed that her children have being learning Sinhala language by watching Sinhala tele dramas. It also gives them a wide-range understanding about life in Sri Lanka. Learning about life in Sri Lanka and the language, provides them with an advantage when it comes to appreciating Sinhala songs and music. Therefore, SW’s children have been able to enjoy Sinhala music in the diaspora. It acts as a part of their Sinhala identity in the diaspora.

DJ migrated with his family in 2010, and is an active member of the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool.

Yes, we do watch on TV (Sinhala programs) with the help of internet. Our children also watch comedy programs with pleasure. In addition, we make it a point to show them a tele drama every day from Sri

Lanka while they have their dinner. They like to watch them and get to see the life and environment in Sri Lanka. We listen to Sinhala music, but my children do not like to listen to them (interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

DJ revealed that as parents they take a special effort to make their children learn to appreciate Sinhala art and music. They are keen to show their children the lifestyle and environment in Sri Lanka through tele dramas. DJ said that he uses dinnertime to show his children a Sinhala tele drama from Sri Lanka. Dinnertime is a time when children and parents can get together on a regular basis. Therefore, it gives an opportunity for the parents to talk to their children in the Sinhala language, to enjoy Sinhala food and to enjoy Sinhala art and music. The research showed that most of the Sinhala Buddhist parents with young children in the diaspora have similar views and guide their children to learn and experience Sinhala Buddhists lifestyle through art and music. It is a worrying fact to most of the Sinhala Buddhist parents living in the diaspora that their children do not get much exposure to the Sinhala Buddhists' way of living. Sinhala art and music is one of the important ways that the parents try to pass on their identity and heritage to the next generation of Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora.

### *5.3.3 Sinhala Traditional Dance and Concerts*

Sinhala traditional dances take a prominent place in most social, cultural and religious celebrations and events in Sri Lanka. They mainly have three dance styles, namely Upcountry, Low country and Sabarabamu dancing styles. Sinhala parents consider it an important skill for their children to master. They have a very high respect for these three traditional dancing styles. Buddhist rituals take a prominent place in training routines as well as in performing. On the other hand, these dances and playing of drums take a prominent place in most of the Buddhist rituals, celebrations and processions. Sinhala Buddhists consider them as part of their heritage, and therefore pass it on from generation to generation as a symbol of their identity.

IS is a mother of two children who has migrated with a considerable amount of lived experience in Sri Lanka. She takes an effort to play an active role in the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool.

I participate in 'Up Country' dancing group events. We participate in events organised by the temple or our community organisations. We do not have much time for that since we have children. There is a dancing class for our children conducted by our dancing group leader (interview IS, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

'Up Country' dancing is a traditional form of dancing held in very high regard in Sri Lanka and performed to show the unique tradition and Sri Lankan identity to the world. IS has learned this art in the homeland and now performs in a group in the diaspora. She said that they are conducting traditional dance classes for the younger generation in the diaspora. IS is one of many Sinhala Buddhists who plays an active role in helping to continue their Sinhala Buddhist traditions through art in the diaspora. Not only do they negotiate and exhibit their identity in the host land, they even

train the younger generation so that it will sustain through generations.

SW further explained about her social and family life here in the diaspora, with regards to Sinhala traditional arts.

We organised an event called 'Hela Daru Aruna', which is a concert involving many Sinhala children of all ages from all over the UK like Manchester and Birmingham. We did it in Sinhala. We included dancing, singing, speeches, drama, and some of the older children were announcing in the show. My two daughters did traditional dancing under a teacher called Somarathne Pathiraja in London. Later they went to Mr. Attanayake to learn and did two dancing concerts. Mr. Attanayake does traditional dancing, drums, and blessing (shanthi karma, bali) activities in Sinhala style. He has done dancing in the Sri Lanka Army. They do classes in Hounslow, Kingsbury, and Eastham etc. They also do traditional weddings here with 'Ashtaka'. My children have achieved the level of wearing the headgear called 'Vestattuwa'. We used to do a Vesak procession from Hyde Park, London to a temple in May for several years. My daughters also used to dance in that procession (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

SW talked about a well-organised Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community who takes every effort to cover and provide for every aspect of their way of traditional life in the diaspora. She revealed that there are teachers who conduct classes and train both children and adults to perform traditional dance, and they also train people to play instruments, such as traditional drums. They have let people come and participate from all over the UK. She also spoke about the relationship between traditional Sinhala arts and Sinhala Buddhist rituals when she talked about her daughters participating in a dance in the Vesak procession. Every other aspect of life that she explained, such as wedding rituals and blessing activities, involve singing, dancing, reciting and Buddhist rituals. The Sinhala Buddhists in the UK have been able to fulfil those needs in the diaspora and thereby maintain their identity. More importantly, they are training the younger generation so that those traditions will be sustained through the generations.

#### *5.3.4 Aesthetic Aspects of Sinhala Buddhist Traditions*

Buddhism does not encourage art and music since they are considered inspiring humans to be attached to worldly things. However, Sinhala Buddhist traditions consist of art and music in many aspects of its practice. Figure 4 shows the traditional instruments and players dressed up in their traditional dresses at the 'Katina' Ceremony in Liverpool. They are playing their instruments to welcome the Buddhist monks to the ceremony. It is a way of negotiating their identity in the host land by using traditional sounds of the homeland. It is also witness to a well-established diasporic Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom.

As a Buddhist monk, we do not go after them much. However, I sometimes write poems and use them

in my communal activities. I also listen to or watch some of the Sinhalese music and cinema, which receives good critics. I strongly believe that art should be to develop a better person and not to harm a person or the society in any way (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).



*Figure 4 Traditional instrument players at 'Katina' Ceremony in Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero uses his creative abilities to compose poems and then recite them during his Buddhist sermons and programmes for children in the diaspora. As a Buddhist monk, he intends that art and music should be for causes of good. He oversees the Buddhist programmes organised by the temple community in Liverpool. The paintings that they used for the 'Vesak Pandal' and the decorated 'Vesak Lanterns' reflect some aspects of the Sinhala Buddhist art traditions. The Buddhists' processions that they organise for Vesak and 'Katina' consist of dance, instrument playing and many other decorative items. They organise a choir to sing Buddhist devotional songs on special days in the Buddhists' calendar, such as Vesak and Poson. Most importantly, they organise a choir of children to sing Buddhists' devotional songs as well. According to Dr. Welhengama, who is the president of the Sinhala community centre in Liverpool, their attempt in the diaspora is to follow the same Sinhala Buddhist traditions that they used to practice in Sri Lanka (personal communication). He had even given instructions to the group of dancers and drummers to perform in the hall where they held the

‘Katina’ ceremony so that the younger generations could see and appreciate them.

The Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom takes every effort to continue their Sri Lankan traditions and way of life in the diaspora. There are several reasons for this. Immigrants from Sri Lanka yearn to continue their way of living and identity in the diaspora. They organise activities in the community so that they can negotiate their status as a unique diasporic community in the host land. They also want to pass it on to the younger generations who are born and raised in the host land so that their identity is sustained for many generations to come. Art and music are important instruments that they use to achieve these purposes. However, not all of their community responds favourably.

We watch most of the tele dramas and listen to music from Sri Lanka. However, my child does not watch them. He likes British TV and music (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

We watch Sri Lankan TV programs such as news and tele dramas, but my children don’t like to watch them (interview IS, 07<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

Both PP and IS are immigrants from Sri Lanka. Therefore, they still make an effort to follow the same lifestyle in the diaspora. However, both of them lament that their children, who were born in the host land, do not like to learn about Sinhala Buddhists tradition. Some of them have embraced western culture.

NP belongs to the group of early immigrants to the United Kingdom from Sri Lanka, and there were not many opportunities for them to participate in Sinhala Buddhist communal activities in those days.

We used to watch and listen to western songs and movies at the beginning. Now I do not watch them much. My husband is interested in watching Sri Lankan news. I get to know them from him. I am keener on living a Buddhist way of life (interview NP, 06<sup>th</sup> November 2017).

NP revealed that they enjoy western art and music and she does not even bother to spend time watching Sri Lankan TV programmes. Moreover, she is practising Buddhist principles as a way of living rather than performing the rituals that most of the Sinhala Buddhists do as a tradition. These are signs of some Sinhala Buddhists who are dropping out of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora. They provide evidence of assimilating into the larger society of the host land rather than maintaining their identity as Sinhala Buddhists.

This section has presented the importance of Sinhala art and music to the diasporic experiences of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. It has aligned the discussions with diasporic experience, homeland relations and identity maintenance (Krüger and Trandafoiu 2014). It highlights how modern technology helps the diasporic communities to maintain their identities and homeland relations through art and music. The next subchapter presents an extensive description of Sinhala

events and celebrations in the host land, while focusing on the concepts of identity, diasporic experience and homeland relations of this community.

#### **5.4 Sinhala Events and Celebrations**

The Sinhala diaspora in the United Kingdom organises a range of annual and one-off sociocultural events throughout the year. Most of them are traditional annual events and celebrations that they organise in parallel to the Sri Lankan cultural calendar. Some of the events, such as the “Festival of Cricket in London”, are unique to the Sri Lankan diaspora in the United Kingdom. Festivals and cultural events are useful contributors to reproduce and maintain the identity of a community across national borders (Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013). Moreover, festivals and cultural events contribute to the development of a sense of community and belonging and give an idea of who we are and where we come from. “Festivals can reflect the dynamic value systems of individuals united by the same customs, images, collective memory, habits, and experiences. Festivals can be replicated and each generation can pass on something of its experience to the next” (Derrett, 2003: 51). Therefore, festivals and cultural events are a substantial aspect of the Sinhala diaspora in their effort to maintain its identity in the host land. The following is a description of the events and festivals performed by the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom. The data was gathered via a literature review, participatory observations, semi structured interviews and informal discussions with members of the Sinhala Buddhist community.

Ven. Seelawimala Thero, the chief incumbent at the ‘London Buddhist Vihara’, explained the annual and monthly events conducted by the temple for the Sinhala Buddhist community.

We start the year with a blessings ceremony on first of January, to which, most of the devotees participate. Then we have a children’s concert with a prize giving for the children at our ‘Sunday Buddhist School’ during Easter holidays. We also have Poya day ceremonies with the main events on Vesak, Poson and Esala. We bring lecturers from outside to give special lectures and sermons on such days. We have over 150 people observing precepts on such days, Vesak been the highest with around 300 attendees. Therefore, we arrange alms (Food) for the attendees on such days. On Asala poya day, we conduct the usual poya day ceremonies and then there is a ceremony for the invitation of the Buddhist monks by the devotees for the rainy season retreat. These ceremonies are conducted according to Sri Lankan traditions. The rainy season retreat, which started yesterday, will finish in October with the ‘Katina Ceremony’. Katina also is done according to Sri Lankan traditions, but the procession is confined to the temple premises on a small scale. The monks stay at the temple and involve in religious activities with the devotees during these three months. We do not organise a Sinhala New Year celebration, but we offer blessing to the people coming to the temple on that day. However, we participate in the New Year festivals organised by the Sri Lankan communities in London upon invitations. (Ven. SW., 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

The Sinhala New Year, Vesak, Poson, the Invitation of the Buddhist Monks for the Rainy Season Retreat, Katina, and Full Moon Day Buddhist ceremonies are some of the annual or monthly events that Sinhalese follow according to the Sri Lankan cultural and religious calendar. According to Dr Welhengama, who is the president of the Sri Lankan community centre in Liverpool, their intention is to follow the same customs and rituals that they used to practice in Sri Lanka over the years, in all the cultural and religious events in Liverpool. In general, all the traditional Sinhala Buddhist and cultural events in the United Kingdom are conducted to perform the same customs and rituals at the same time of the year as they are performed in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, there are public holidays on such days to celebrate, but Sinhala diasporans in the UK do not get holidays on such days. Therefore, they usually choose the nearest weekend to make it convenient for the participants to take time off from their occupations, according to personal communications with research participants. This prearrangement can be considered an effort on their side to maintain their sense of belonging to the homeland. It acts as a constant reminder of who they are and where they come from. Moreover, it plays a vital role in passing their cultural heritage to the next generation in the diaspora unchanged.

According to Ven. Sugatharathana Thero, Sinhala Buddhist temples take the lead in organising the religious and cultural events for the Sinhala communities in the UK. They are keen to follow unaltered Sri Lankan traditions at these events. The temple provides a space for the community to perform and participate in their traditional events in the diaspora. By doing so, the community gets the opportunity to reconstruct and experience their cultural and religious aspirations in the host land, with a feel of homeland.

All the annual events such as the Sinhala New Year, Vesak, Poson, and Katina are held according to the traditions. Apart from that, monthly full moon days and Sunday Buddhist School for children are conducted. The three months preceding the Katina ceremony (July to October) is especially devoted to religious activities with the participation of the community. (Interview Ven. S, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

The religious ceremonies mentioned above by Ven S are conducted under the patronage of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the region. Such ceremonies are usually sponsored by two or three families getting together. During fieldwork, it was found that such unions enable them to help each other and to share the responsibilities among them, making it easy for them to perform the duties. They use such opportunities to build up new relationships while reinforcing and strengthening the existing relationships among families. Such collaborations among families are vital to the sharing of experiences and knowledge, which plays a major role in sustaining the Sri Lankan culture in the diaspora.

I participate and oversee all the events organised by the temple. We have been organizing New Year festivals and Christmas parties for Sri Lankans in Liverpool since 1990s. We opened the temple in

2014. After opening the temple, now we organise all the events through the temple except the Christmas party. We do January new year blessing program, Sinhala New Year festival, Vesak, Poson, Katina and all the full moon poya day events. In addition to that we have an event to teach the children of the importance of their parents by teaching them the values and the way to respect and worship their parents in the traditional way. (Interview Gunapala Welhengama, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

Dr.Gunapala Welhengama, the president of the ‘Sri Lankan Community Centre’ in Liverpool, said that his efforts in initiating the community centre and later the opening of the Buddhist Temple in Liverpool are exclusively aimed at enabling the Sinhala community in Liverpool to experience Sri Lankan culture and religion in the host land without any alteration. He explained how they try to celebrate all events according to the Sri Lankan calendar of events and use the temple as a centre for celebrating Sinhala Buddhist cultural values. Such arrangements manifest their ongoing relationship with the homeland. Moreover, it is an effort to pass their cultural essence to the next generation of Sinhala Buddhist in the UK. It is also interesting to note that they are organising an annual Christmas party for the Sinhala community in Liverpool. Sri Lanka, being a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, includes cultural festivals of other ethnic and religious communities in its cultural calendar. The Sinhala community, with their western colonial influences, get into the festive mood during Christmas time with no regard to their religious background. The Sinhala community in the diaspora have embraced the same tradition that they used to practise in their host land. It is interesting to see how such events influence their identity negotiation and relationship with the society in the host land.

The comments of SS, a male Sinhalese migrant who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, reveal how the situation of the Sinhala population in Liverpool was before the opening of the Buddhist Temple. It highlights how a Sinhala Buddhist student population has led to the formation of a Sinhala diasporic community in the Liverpool area. It is noticeable that their interest in celebrating Sri Lankan cultural events in the United Kingdom resulted in the formation of the Sinhala community in the beginning. Therefore, the present day Liverpool Sinhala Buddhist community and the Temple is a result of Sinhala socio-cultural and religious consciousness expressed in the form of their desire to celebrate the cultural events in the diaspora. This phenomenon has led to the discovery and finding of specialist persons and bringing together the Sinhala community into one space, while breaking down class barriers. Their organisational abilities and the desire to continue their Sri Lankan way of life, in terms of events and celebrations in the host land, has resulted in annual and monthly events and celebrations which help them to maintain their cultural and religious identity in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the cultural and religious events and Sinhala Buddhist temples in the UK play a vital role in sustaining the Sinhala diasporic identity and providing a logistical framework.

I got to know Sinhala people from the very beginning. At that time, most of the Sri Lankan functions

in Liverpool were concentrated at the Liverpool Hope University, where there was a substantial number of Sri Lankan students. There were no Buddhist events or a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in Liverpool at that time. Sri Lankan students organized some traditional events such as Sinhala New Year. I used to go and see such events those days. However as I was struggling to survive as a lonely individual here, I could not actively participate at that time. I was working seven days. I had to support my family in Sri Lanka. I had financial problems to solve. I was not financially and mentally settled. Therefore, I did not have the mind-set to think about the community. After 2009, I was able to establish myself here and to contribute to Sri Lankan community events. It was a divided community from that time on. They were divided as professionals, such as doctors/engineers, Students and asylum seekers. Therefore, it was hard to bring them together. I started organizing Sinhala cultural and Buddhist events, since 2008. Mostly, students from Hope University came in and helped in such events. We used to get together at someone's house to discuss and organise events. Eventually the divided community started to come together at those events. When we opened the temple in Liverpool, they all came together to support the temple. They all started to live with the temple. I think they all put more importance on Buddhism and culture beyond class differences, and that is why they all come to the temple. (Interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> 2017).

SS revealed his struggles and hardships as an asylum seeker while establishing himself in the UK. Once he was able to provide for his basic needs and secured means of living, he was able to contribute to the community in order to realise his social needs. It highlights the importance of having well-established individuals in order to build up a diasporic community. According to SS, the Sinhala students and asylum seekers in the Liverpool area have taken considerable time to establish themselves and to break down the class barriers with professionals in the community. The importance they give to the maintenance of the Sinhala Buddhist identity and culture has enabled them to adjust their class consciousness and to come together for a worthy cause for their shared benefit. In the early days, they gathered in private places of accommodation to discuss and organise events for the community. Such efforts highlight the dedication and commitment they have put at individual level to develop a Sinhala diasporic community with a Sri Lankan identity.

Sri Lankans are naturally party loving people which involves music and dancing. Figure 5 shows the occasion of an organised party called 'Paduru Party' by the Sinhala community in Liverpool. 'Paduru' are a type of mats, which are made of hay. People use a mat laid on the floor to sit together and enjoy talking, eating and singing together in traditional peasant villages in Sri Lanka, and which has been brought to the diaspora. Participants wearing a traditional 'sarong' are dancing to Sinhala music performed by a group. Some British people who have joined the party can be seen wearing a Sri Lankan style dress. In the background there is a Sri Lanka national flag displayed. They also built a model of a Sri Lankan peasant house thatched with hay, which is a symbolic expression of their

Sinhalese identity in the host land. It is also an effort to relive the life they used to live in Sri Lanka. The event is an occasion for the Sinhala community to get together and celebrate Sri Lankan life and to share it with the society in the host land. Such efforts enable them to develop mutual understanding and respect between different ethnic groups in the host land. Most importantly, such events result in identity negotiation in the host land society, and help them to maintain their identity by passing it on to subsequent generations.



*Figure 5 An organised party in Liverpool, 09.08.2015*

At the beginning, we organised events such as Sinhala New Year at very basic level. Money did not involve much. Later we became more capable of organizing events in large scale by bringing together professionals, student and working community in events such as ‘Katina’, ‘Vesak’, and Sinhala New Year. The activities at the temple helped us to identify capable people to organize such events. Now we participate in most of the religious and cultural events organized by the Temple. (Interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> 2017).

SS revealed how the opening of a Sinhala Buddhist Temple in Liverpool has shifted the organization of the Sinhala community and removed class barriers to develop into one united diasporic community. They were able to achieve this, driven by their desire to perform cultural, religious and social events in the diaspora. AA has taken various initiatives to fulfil his sociocultural and religious needs in the diaspora.

I used to organise Buddhist sermons in temples all over the United Kingdom by bringing Buddhist

monks from Sri Lanka. We also organised special worshipping programs and 'Poya' day (Full moon day) observation of precepts at the temple by the lay people. Once again, we introduced poetic language to communicate these events and it was well received. I have also worked hard by giving lectures to the community to keep them from following the Sri Lankan groups who practice a deviated form of our Theravada Buddhism. I believe that such developments are harmful to the original doctrine of the Lord Buddha. They are a sector promoted by a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk and followed by the Sinhalese living in the UK. I am happy to say that my efforts resulted in preventing our community members from following that sector. All other annual and regular Sinhala Buddhist events we organise here are done according to the way they are done in Sri Lanka. My lived experience in Sri Lanka comes handy in such events. Recently I offered a golden fence to the 'Bodhi Tree' in the temple reminiscing the memories of 'the Sri Maha Bodhi' in Sri Lanka. I also organize lectures on Sri Lankan Traditional topics whenever I get time. I also got together with one other friend, brought a Buddhist statue from Sri Lanka, and offered it to the temple in Scotland. (Interview AA, 13 January 2017).

Some of the events at the temples are one off events organised by individuals or a group to fulfil their aspirations. Figure 6 shows the occasion of offering the Golden Fence at the Buddhist Temple in Liverpool. The participants, both young and old, express their devotion by following the rituals and worship. Venerable Sugatharathana Thero, who is the residing monk at the temple, guides the devotees according to the Sri Lankan Buddhist traditions. The Meditating Buddha statue in the background is brought from Sri Lanka where it was made according to the Sri Lankan tradition of sculpture and art. On the two sides, there are statues of Lord Buddha's principal devotees as they are depicted in sculpture and paintings in Sri Lanka. There are Buddhist flags hanging from the walls and the ceiling, which is a modern introduction to Buddhism as a symbol by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott in the late nineteenth century. The Golden Fence, which was offered at this ceremony, is a symbol of veneration and security provided by the Buddhist devotees to the Bo plant. The Bo Tree is a plant grown to a large size in tropical regions, providing shade under the tree. It is a Ficus tree that is believed to have given shade to Lord Buddha when he was enlightened. A shoot from that tree is believed to be planted in the city of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, which is venerated and protected equally by devotees and political leaders in the country. The tree in Sri Lanka is surrounded with a large gold-plated fence as a symbol of protection and veneration offered by the Buddhists in the country. The fence offered at the temple in Liverpool resembles the one in Sri Lanka and protects the small Bo plant at the temple, bringing memories of the place in Sri Lanka to the visitors to the temple, generating devotion and recreating relationship with homeland. For the children who are born in the United Kingdom, this is an opportunity to experience Sinhala Buddhist tradition as it practiced in Sri Lanka in the host land and to construct destination images of Sri Lanka as a Buddhist country.



*Figure 6 Ceremony of Offering of a Golden Fence to the Bo Plant at the Sri Sambuddha Vihara, Liverpool, 19.08.2016*

AA revealed his efforts to keep Sinhala Buddhist traditions from deviations caused by external forces. As a Sinhala Buddhist born and raised in Sri Lanka, he is keen to follow the same traditions and rituals in the diaspora. Therefore, he is organising one off events, as time permits, to enlighten the community on Sinhala Buddhist values and to refine the current practices in the diaspora. By donating a golden fence to the temple, which resembles ‘Sri Maha Bodi’ in Sri Lanka, he is expressing his desire to enable the Sinhala community in Liverpool to experience a homelike atmosphere in the diaspora. The sight of the golden fence at the temple acts as a catalyst that make devotees remember and relate to the memories of Buddhist pilgrimage sights in Sri Lanka. Such an experience creates ideas of the holy in the hearts of worshippers (Wickramasinghe, 2015:19) at the temple and strengthen the homeland relations, in terms of memories and experiences of the immigrant Sinhala Buddhists in the UK.

Cricket is the most favourite sport among most of the Sri Lankans, and Figure 7 shows a picture taken at the Festival of Cricket 2017, which was organized by the Sri Lankan community in the UK. Most Sri Lankans follow the local school cricket tournaments in Sri Lanka ever since they were school children. In the diaspora, they have created old boys unions of their alma mater and organise social gatherings called “old boys’ get-togethers”. In addition, the old boys’ unions have got together to organize this annual event called Festival of Cricket in London. The Sri Lankans living all over the

United Kingdom participate in this annual event to socialize and to enjoy Sri Lankan food, music, cultural events and cricket.



*Figure 7 Festival of Cricket 2017, London, 16.07.2017*

Figure 6 shows a section of the ground where the festival of cricket was held. Various cultural and recreational activities take place around the ground while the old boys' unions play each other in the grounds. It is also a meeting place for the Sri Lankans to share a moment with friends and loved ones. It replicates the atmosphere at a Sri Lankan school cricket match. Each old boys' union has their own tent and plays against each other, renewing old memories of the schooldays back in the homeland. They come in numbers as families and friends provide a carnival atmosphere where both young and old can enjoy it, in one way or another. It is a place where they gather as a community. They build up new relationships and strengthen existing relationships. They also display traditional cultural performances in the forms of singing and dancing during the event, where children get experience and exposure to the Sinhala culture. The children in the picture are dressed up in traditional clothes and are carrying different types of traditional drums which they have brought from Sri Lanka. During the observations, it was found that they performed traditional dances to the beat of the drums.

The children in the image performed something similar to what SW described in the interview. According to SW, there are Sri Lankan trained art teachers in the diaspora who are teaching the younger generation to perform the traditional arts in the host land. It is also noticeable that the younger generation in the diaspora arrange their wedding ceremonies according to the Sinhala Buddhist traditions in the host land.

I am also a cricket lover and I support Sri Lankan team though I am born in the UK. I take pride in my

Sri Lankan origin. We used to go to the 'Sri Lankan Cricket Festival in London' where old boys associations of many schools in Sri Lanka organised games and recreation. I like to watch cricket there and to enjoy the atmosphere. Once I helped one of my uncles to run a food stall there. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

TH talked enthusiastically about the festival of cricket, where he has the opportunity to experience facets of Sri Lankan lifestyle in the UK. He also expressed his emotional attachment to his homeland by saying that he supports the Sri Lankan cricket team. This is a good example of how a Sri Lankan festival in London can construct new relationships and help to maintain the emotional bonds with the homeland for the diaspora born in the host land.

I participate in all the communal events organized by the temple. We also play cricket and go for practices once a week. We play football as well. All the participants are Sri Lankan and I got to know them through the temple. They advised me when I first came here and wanted to open my own business. (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017)

It was revealed by SA that the community organised sports events, such as cricket and football games, act as vital instruments for building relationships amongst the individuals in the diaspora. He also revealed how the temple became the contributory factor to most of the social events in the UK, building up social relations among the Sinhala Buddhists.

Most of my friends are in Manchester and therefore I go to Manchester and to 'Kethumathi Buddhsit Vihara' in Manchester for communal events. We organize trips with our friends and go for parties and get-togethers such as birthday parties in Manchester. I participate in 'Vesak' festivals, Sinhala New Year Festivals and most of the other Full moon day events. I also, go there for meditation and 'The eight precepts observance' programs. Sometimes we go there for Buddhist sermons. (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017)



*Figure 8 A get-together of Sinhala community members in one of their houses, 26.10.2017*

AM described how social events of western influence, such as birthday parties, trips and meditation sessions, are utilised for the purpose of community and relationship building among the diasporic population. Such organised events enable them to experience their native language, food culture, Sinhala music and arts, religion and gives an opportunity to talk about Sri Lanka, whilst sharing their experiences with each other. Figure 8 depicts one such occasion in Liverpool where they entertain each other with Sri Lankan food, music and friendly conversations. They are using the internet to find lyrics for Sinhala songs to sing along. The drums they use to play with the songs are brought by them from Sri Lanka when they go there for visits. They have incorporated wines found in the local supermarket to go with Sri Lankan food.

Last year we went to participate in one of our friend's funeral. A Buddhist monk was brought to the cemetery to conduct the funeral according to Sinhala Buddhist tradition. The monk delivered a short sermon and conducted a 'pansukula' according to Sri Lankan style to offer merits to the spirit of the death person. Later we participated in seventh day and third month ceremonies of offering merits to the death person at the temple, which were conducted by the Buddhist monks. Likewise, we participate in most of the Buddhist and cultural events as time permits. (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> 2017).

The proceedings of a funeral of a Sinhala person in the diaspora was revealed by NP. On this occasion, the availability of a Sinhala Buddhist temple and a Sinhala Buddhist monk in the diaspora enabled them to perform the funeral according to Sinhala Buddhist traditions. This is another example of an occasion where the diasporic community exhibit their diasporic identity while maintaining their homeland relations through following funeral rituals. It is an opportunity to the Sinhala diaspora born in the UK to get a glimpse of Sinhala Buddhist tradition as practiced in Sri Lanka. It is also another

occasion where Sinhala Buddhists have actively expressed their cultural needs in the diaspora in the form of performing funeral rituals according to Sri Lankan traditions.

Sinhala Buddhists in the UK consider it highly important to pass their cultural values to the next generation. Therefore, they have taken some vital steps in educating children on values, such as respecting elders and parents, upholding the Sri Lankan culture in the diaspora. Sending children to Sunday Buddhist schools at temples is an important initiation towards achieving this goal. In addition, they organise an annual event called “Ma Piya Wandana”, which means worship of mother and father, in the month of March according to the Buddhist calendar. This event falls on the day when Buddhists commemorate the day when Lord Buddha visited his father for the first time after his enlightenment to respect him.

Every year we used to have a ceremony at the temple where we honour our parents by singing praises in ‘Pali’ language and worshipping them according to Buddhist tradition. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).



*Figure 9 Worshipping Parents, 18.03.2017*

As a Sinhala Buddhist born in the UK, TH explained how he used to attend this event at the Birmingham temple. Figure 9 shows the same event held at the temple in Liverpool. The children are taught of the value of their parents during this event. They have practical session of learning how to worship their parents and chanting Pali and Sinhala verses. The picture depicts this occasion, where children offer beetle leaves to their parents and recite verses of worship during the session. Beetle leaves, which is a tropical climber grown in Sri Lanka, take central stage in cultural and religious

activities in Sri Lanka. It is used as a symbol of honour by offering a bunch of beetle leaves to the elders before worshipping them. This is an example of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom, making an effort to maintain their own identity rather than the culture and traditions in the host land. They have constructed social spaces in the form of events and celebrations where they can practice, experience and disseminate their culture to the subsequent generations in the host land.

I first came to Newcastle. There was no temple there. However, I used to invite the Buddhist monk at Manchester to my house and offer alms with my friends and to listen to his sermons. We also had a group of 20 to 30 Sri Lankans as a community group in New Castle. There were some Sri Lankans, who did not participate in this community group. Most of them were from the two universities in that area. We used to celebrate Sinhala New Year and to organize small musical events. Now there is a Sunday Buddhist school conducted by Manchester temple. After five years, I moved to Manchester. Manchester temple has a large Sinhalese community. We go to most of the events at Manchester temple including Vesak, Poson, New Year, children's cultural events and so on. We also go to Sinhala Christians Christmas parties. (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> 2017).

PP revealed another aspect of the experience of the diaspora where they reach out for support from other city centres to fulfil their social and cultural needs. In this instance, the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Manchester provides services to the Sinhala Buddhist community in Newcastle. The temple in Manchester has also contributed to the opening of a temple in Leeds by providing resident monks from the temple in Manchester. Similarly, the temple in Birmingham has provided the Buddhist monks to open the temple in Liverpool. He also revealed that some Sri Lankans do not participate in the events. Whether they totally fall out of the diasporic community depends on their future circumstances.



*Figure 10 Opening ceremony of the Leeds Buddhist Vihara in Leeds with the patronage of the Chief incumbent at the Manchester Kethumathi Buddhsit Vihara, Manchester, 12.06.2017*

Opening of new Sinhala Buddhist temples in different cities in the UK have been a trend in the recent past. Figure 10 depicts the occasion of the opening of the Leeds Buddhist Vihara for the benefit of the Sinhala Buddhist community in Leeds. The occasion was attended by well over one hundred community members in Leeds and Buddhist monks from the temple in Manchester. The chief incumbent unveiled the Buddhist statue and the traditional oil lamp was lit as a ritual. Both the young and old participated in this event enthusiastically. There was a small procession in the front yard resembling Buddhist processions in Sri Lanka. There was Sri Lankan food for lunch supplied by a Sinhala family. A choir consisting of both adults and children of both sexes performed some of the most popular Sinhala Buddhist devotional songs for the gathering to hear. Their performances, along with the proceedings in this event, enabled the participants to reconstruct the homeland atmosphere and feelings of devotion within the premises.

They include Vesak, Poson, all the Poya ceremonies, New Year festival, Sunday Buddhist School and many other organized events. I also visit and participate in events in other Sinhala Buddhist temples all over the UK. In addition to that, we organize several charitable events to collect donations for needy people in Sri Lanka. We also collect donations when disasters strike our homeland. Tsunami and recent floods are some examples. (interview Ven. K., 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

Venerable Kappetiyyagoda Gunawansa Thero, who is the chief incumbent at the “Jethavana Buddhsit

Vihara” in Birmingham, explained how the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom have built up a network to support each other in celebrating events by participating in events in different regions in the host land. He also talked about charitable events organised to collect donations to Sri Lanka. Such events are an exhibition of Sinhala Buddhists’ sense of belonging with each other in the host land and the people in the homeland.

Recently we went to participate in an event where a Sinhala woman (A lady doctor) became a Buddhist nun for the first time in the UK. It was a big event with a large number of participants. (Interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

MJ here describes another aspect of Sri Lankan traditions in the diaspora. According to MJ, the temples host events to bring people into monkhood by performing traditional rituals. It is also significant in terms of the sustenance of Sinhala Buddhist monk traditions in the United Kingdom. The survival of the Sinhala Buddhist monk tradition in the United Kingdom depends entirely on a well-established Sinhala Buddhists community in the diaspora. The reason for this is that, it is a mutual relationship between the laypersons and the monks, which creates a Sinhala Buddhist community, where the community look after the monks by providing for them. On this particular occasion, the entry of a female to the Buddhist monkhood symbolises the strong and well-established foundations and infrastructure of the Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom.

Poson is an event to celebrate the arrival of Buddhism to Sri Lanka from India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. with the arrival of the Mahinda Thero along with his disciples. It is celebrated in Sri Lanka on the full moon day of the month of June with celebrations and rituals similar to what they do on Vesak celebrations. Therefore, it is of very high significance to the Buddhists in Sri Lanka. The Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom gives an equal importance to this occasion celebrating the event following same traditions that they follow in the homeland. Figure 11 depicts a scene of arrival of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, which was displayed at the Leeds Buddhist Vihara on Poson Poya Day. It shows how the King of Sri Lanka, who was on a tour of hunting for pleasure, was stopped by Mahinda Thero to preach the news of Buddhism. The Buddhist flag hanging on the wall by the side displays a phrase in Sinhala language, which means “let Sri Lanka be illuminated with the light of Buddhist canon”.

Although this episode is highly significant in Buddhist history in Sri Lanka, it has no relevance to the Buddhism in the United Kingdom. However, the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom celebrate this event with a sense of significance, purely based on their relationship with the homeland. Therefore, it is a symbol of their attachment to homeland, which is expressed in the form of celebrating an event in their host land, which is of sole importance to the homeland. They have expressed their emotional bond with the homeland by displaying a Buddhist flag with greetings to

the homeland.



*Figure 11 A handmade portrayal of the arrival of Buddhism to Sri Lanka displayed at the Leeds Buddhist Vihara on Posaon Poya Day, 12.06.2017*

Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom make every attempt to make their place of worships look similar to what they have experienced in the homeland. The Sinhala Buddhist temples in the host land, a place they go to worship Buddha, are treated with the same interest by the devotees and sponsors of those temples. The Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka consist of five main sections for the benefit of the devotees and monks of the temple. They are the auditorium for the devotees to gather to listen to Buddhist sermons, the place for the statues of Lord Buddha and other characters that are described in Buddhist mythology, the place where the Bodhi tree is planted, the place of the Stupa, which contains embedded holy relics of the Lord Buddha and his disciples, and the lodge for the Buddhist monks. The Sinhala Buddhist in the diaspora takes every effort to represent all these aspects of a traditional Sri Lankan temple, in the temples that they open in the host lands. The devotees at 'Jethavana Buddhsit Vihara' in Birmingham organised a ceremony to open the newly built 'Stupa' of that temple resembling the stupas of temples in Sri Lanka.



*Figure 12 Opening Ceremony of the Stupa at the Jethavana Vihara in Birmingham, Birmingham, 16.05.2017*

The figure 12 depicts the occasion where the Buddhist monks placed relics in the stupa before the opening for the worship of the devotees. There was a large gathering of devotees on this occasion. They were dressed in white according to the Sri Lankan tradition. Traditionally dressed drummers performed rituals as they are done in Sri Lanka. The occasion and their efforts in building a stupa in the host land has enabled both the young and old Sinhala Buddhists in the host land to experience a Sri Lankan style temple atmosphere in the United Kingdom.

#### *5.4.1 Professional Associations*

Sri Lankan professional associations have been instrumental in bringing together Sri Lankan communities through organisation of events such as get-togethers, since the very early times of the arrival of Sinhala Buddhist to the UK. Such get-togethers create a space for the Sinhala community to share their diasporic experience while reconstructing an atmosphere where they can feel the Sinhala culture in terms of language, food, arts and entertainments.

When we came to Liverpool, we started associating with a Sri Lankan professional association, which consisted of professionals of Sri Lankan origin from all over the country. We created a Sinhala cultural society through that association. (Interview AA, 13 January 2017)

AA describes how the meeting of professionals in professional associations lead to closer ties in the form of get-togethers at individuals' houses and lead to social and cultural activities that help them to reminisce the Sri Lankan life style in the host land. Such occasions become spaces where they recreate the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the host land in terms of art and music, language, food and discussions about the life in Sri Lanka as a whole. Professional associations played a major role in the early days of the formation of the Sinhala diasporic communities. In cities such as Manchester, the professional

organisations have pioneered the opening of the Sinhala Buddhist temples and organizing cultural and religious events.

There were not many Sri Lankans in the North West when we first came here. There was no organised community. However, later we got to know some of them and learnt that there is an association called, 'North West Sri Lankans' through our colleagues at the hospital. They used to organise cultural events and aid programs to Sri Lanka. We also participated in those activities. People came from both Liverpool and Manchester. That association was active for about twenty years from Manchester. (Interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

SP came to the UK in 1983, and she revealed the situation before the arrival of asylum seekers and students in large numbers. In the early days, the professionals took the lead in organising Sri Lankan events for the benefit of their families and the students coming to study at the universities. Such initiatives have become the foundation of the present day Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom, which were created with the arrival of the third wave of migrants from Sri Lanka in large numbers in the new millennium.

We used to organise all the cultural and communal events in the North West and I was actively participating in them. Once we brought our war heroes to Manchester and did a show. We also invited Dr. Amaradewa to a show. Some years back we did the 'Katina' ceremony at Manchester temple. We participate in all the annual events at the Manchester temple, such as Vesak, Poson, and 'Sinhala New Year'. I used to organise the New Year program and train the children for the events. I used to present the program on that day. (Interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017)

SP, who worked as a Doctor in NHS, talked about how they organised one-off special events related to Sri Lankan culture and with the participation of people from both the diaspora and Sri Lanka. Such events provide them with the experience of Sri Lankan culture while building up new relationships with the homeland community. Celebrating Sri Lanka's 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Day in the UK and honouring Sri Lankan war heroes in the UK are two good examples of the Sinhala diaspora's homeland consciousness and its relationship to Sri Lanka. In addition to that, such initiatives to organise events result in finding resource persons such as dancing teachers, musicians, caterers and many other people with skills, knowledge and experience, which make a wholesome diasporic community who are capable of sustaining a Sinhala identity.

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans (APSL) is another professional organisation initiated in the new millennium, bringing together Sri Lankan professionals of different backgrounds in the host land for common purposes such as fund raising for charitable work in Sri Lanka. It is also a space where professionals, ranging from doctors or engineers could come together on common grounds as Sri Lankan professionals. Therefore, it is an effort by the professionals to eliminate the differences

among Sri Lankan professionals and bring them together as one community. This association organises charity events, lectures and discussions such as 'Living in the UK' discussion series.



*Figure 13 Association of Professional Sri Lankans (APSL) Charity event held in Manchester, 26.03.2018*

The APSL charity events and meetings are instrumental in addressing social needs of the Sri Lankans in the UK. As Figure 13 depicts, it is a space where likeminded professional people can get together to socialise and relate to their links with Sri Lanka. The charity event held in Manchester in 2018 was filled with guest lecturers, raffle draws, dancing events and a DJ for participants to enjoy the evening together. It included a presentation by a committee member about charity projects conducted in Sri Lanka. The audience was keen to learn of the progress of the association and willing to support the good causes by offering their sponsorship. Later they were entertained by a Sri Lankan style dinner and dance session to Sri Lankan music, which they enjoyed a lot. The participants can invite their friends and come along with families to this occasion. Apart from its importance as a socialising and networking event for Sri Lankans in the UK, it is also an opportunity for participants to contribute to its charitable work in Sri Lanka. Some of the ongoing activities sponsored by this association in Sri Lanka includes Solar Village Project, Cancer Relief Fund, Flood Relief Projects, and the scholarship scheme for the school children in Sri Lanka. The scholarship scheme allows each individual to sponsor one or more schoolchildren in Sri Lanka up to their completion of GCE A/Ls. Such initiatives are a symbol of the emotional bonds of the Sri Lankans in the United Kingdom, with their homeland and the willingness to give back something to their motherland both collectively and as individuals.

#### *5.4.2 The Sinhala New Year Festival*

Sinhala New Year Festival takes the most prominent place in the Sri Lankan cultural calendar. It is an annual 'Harvest Festival' socially celebrated in many countries in the South and Southeast Asia in the month of April (Agarwal, 2009). Each country celebrates this festival with their own unique cultural rituals, exhibiting their cultural identities. In Sri Lanka, this festival is celebrated by both Sinhalese and Tamil communities according to their own traditions. The Sinhalese give priority to Buddhist rituals and auspicious times according to the Sinhalese astrology. The New Year begins when the sun moves from the house of Pisces to the house of Aries, according to the Sinhalese astrology. It is a time of the year where people get together and celebrate with traditional food, arts & music and traditional sports. It is a time for sharing and building up new relationships while strengthening existing relationships. It is also a time to show gratitude to the land for the harvest and to the elders and parents in families and the community by worshipping them. Worship takes an important place in Sinhala Buddhist culture and it is the highest form of expression of respect and gratitude towards others. Children in Sri Lanka get a school vacation in the month of April to celebrate the New Year festival. Therefore, both adults and children can freely enjoy the festive season. They take this opportunity to visit their parents and grandparents in their hometowns and villages.

The Sinhala diaspora in the UK gives an equally high importance to this event and takes every effort to celebrate it with whatever the means they have in the host land. They make it a point to follow the same traditions that they used to experience in their homeland. The Sinhala Buddhist temples and organisations take the nearest weekend to hold such festivals as they do not get national holidays for their New Year celebrations. However, most of the families perform New Year rituals on the same day by arranging a table filled with traditional food on the New Year Day.

Some of the New Year day rituals are performed (New Year table, applying of ointment) in the temple. My wife does some New Year's Day rituals at home, but not according to the auspicious times. (Interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

According to DJ, Sinhala Buddhists in the host land find it difficult to put into practice the auspicious times, which are made according to the time in Sri Lanka. However, they make it a point to do the same rituals on the same day within the restrictions they face in the host land. In Sri Lanka there are regional New Year Festivals organised right through the month of April for the people to participate and enjoy. They are the places where people get to experience traditional arts, music, sports and socialise with each other in the community. In the host land, this void is filled by the New Year Festivals organised by the regional Sinhala Buddhist temples and organisations in the UK.



*Figure 14 Inauguration of the New Year Celebrations in Liverpool by lighting the traditional oil lamp, Liverpool, 23.04.2016*

Figure 14 shows the opening of the Liverpool Sinhala New Year Festival. The organisation of the event is spearheaded by the Liverpool Sinhala Buddhist Temple and the Sri Lankan community. The event's main sponsor is a freight company mainly catering to the Sri Lankan community in the UK in transporting their goods to and from Sri Lanka. The image shows the individuals representing the above-mentioned three institutions lighting the traditional oil lamp, which is a main item in opening any Sri Lankan traditional event. It also shows some people wearing traditional dresses to suit the occasion. In Sri Lanka, it is a common tradition for everyone to wear a new dress in traditional style when they celebrate New Year. The communities in the UK bring them from Sri Lanka when they visit homeland to use in special occasions like the New Year festivals in the diaspora.

Being born in the UK, TH's association with the Buddhist temple in Birmingham has enabled him to appreciate Sri Lankan traditional festivals, where he was able to participate in traditional games.

We used to go to Birmingham temple for most of the Buddhist events such as full moon days. We used to go to New Year festivals and play traditional games. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017)



*Figure 15 Playing traditional games at the New Year Festival in Liverpool, 23.04.2016*

The new generation of Sinhala Buddhists who were born in the UK find opportunities to experience and participate in cultural activities at Sinhala Buddhist temples. The positive experience of TH at the New Year Festivals is a sign of continuation of the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the diaspora. Figure 15 depicts one such occasion of playing traditional games at the New Year Festival, which was watched and enjoyed, by both the young and the old in Liverpool.

Most of the traditional Sinhala Buddhist events are organized and conducted by the communities associated with a particular temple here. Therefore, we participate in most of the events conducted by the temples in Hounslow and Chiswick. Recently we participated in the Sinhala New Year festival and the application of ointments ceremony at the temple. We also go to listen to Buddhist sermons at the temple. (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> 2017)

In Sri Lanka, people perform rituals over several days. It starts from the transitional period where they cease activities for the Old Year and are involved in Buddhist rituals at the temple: lighting of the furnace for the New Year, opening of the dining table, worship of elders and exchange of gifts, applying ointments on head and bathing for the New Year and leaving for work in the New Year. According to NP, Sinhalese in the UK takes every opportunity with the help of the temples to follow those rituals.



*Figure 16 Opening of the Dining Table for the Sinhala New Year in Liverpool, Liverpool, 23.04.2016*

Traditional food takes a prominent place in Sinhalese cultural events. Figure 16 shows the dining table at the Liverpool New Year Festival. The table is filled with traditional food items, especially made for the New Year Festival as it is done in the homeland. The community members make the food at their homes and bring it to the festival to share with everyone. As a tradition, the oil lamp is lit here, usually by the elders of the family or community, before partaking the food. The celebration of this event in the diaspora enables the community members, both young and old to participate and experience the atmosphere. People, who are unable to perform the rituals at home, get the opportunity to participate at the festival organised by the community. The atmosphere at the festival venue is filled with Sinhala music, conversations in Sinhala language, Sinhala traditional food, people dressed up in traditional cloths and traditional games and dances. Therefore, the people who gather here forget for a moment that they live in the diaspora.

#### *5.4.3 The Katina Ceremony*

The 'Katina' ceremony is one of the most important events in the Sinhala Buddhist calendar in Sri

Lanka. It is a ceremony held at the end of the rainy season to honour the Buddhist monks, who have spent the rainy season in a particular temple. The community gather together ceremoniously to offer a specially-made robe to the Buddhist monks, along with various other offerings to honour them for spending the rainy season in that community's temple. The rainy season starts in July, in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the community members invite the Buddhist monks, with a special ceremony in July to spend the rainy season in their temple. The Buddhist monks who accept the invitation will stay the whole of the rainy season in that particular temple serving the community. The community get together and look after the monks during this time and also organise various ritualistic activities at the temple with the guidance of the Buddhist monks during this period. Therefore, the temple becomes more active during this time. The period is ended by holding the Katina ceremony during the month of October. The Sinhala Buddhist believes that looking after the monks during the rainy season and offering a Katina Robe to the Buddhist monks is the highest form of offering a Buddhist can achieve. This procedure is followed by the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom during the same time as in Sri Lanka.

Most of the religious events are organised in parallel to the religious events in Sri Lanka, because the majority of the devotees are Sinhalese. Moreover, the British society is not yet fully aware of and keen on traditional and ritualistic activities such as offering alms to the Buddhist monks. The Sinhala devotees look after the monks during the rainy retreat, because of the tradition they brought from Sri Lanka. Therefore, the rainy retreat (Was kalaya) is performed in parallel with the rainy retreat in Sri Lanka, which is from July to October. We have discussed to organise 'Was' in the winter, but we could not come to an agreement yet. The reason is that our Theravada Buddhist establishment here is still at a very primitive stage and therefore it is too early to make any drastic changes to the traditions. With its development with time the rituals can be adapted to the times and place where it is practiced. (Ven. Seelawimala., 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

Venerable Seelawimala Thero, the chief incumbent at the 'London Buddhist Vihara' is of the opinion that it is best to stick to the Sri Lankan traditions in celebrating the Katina ceremony, because it is very much a Sinhala Buddhist practice continued by the Sinhalese living in the United Kingdom. 'London Buddhist Vihara', which was established with the intention of spreading Buddhism among the British people, relies on the Sinhala Buddhists in the UK and accommodates the Sinhala Buddhists' wishes in holding a Katina Ceremony away from their homeland.



*Figure 17 The invitation of the Buddhist monks to spend the Rainy Season at The London Buddhist Vihara by the devotees, London, 16.07.2017*

The preparations for the ‘Katina Ceremony’ begins with the invitations to the Buddhist monks to reside in the temple during the rainy season. Figure 17 depicts the occasion of inviting the Buddhist monks to spend the rainy season at the London Buddhist Vihara by the devotees at the temple. It is done on the Poya day in July, along with the routine ceremonies of that day. Therefore, there are devotees who have observed eight precepts dressed in white. The two main sponsors of the Katina ceremony for the year formally invite the Buddhist monks. The Buddhist monks chants ‘Damsak Pewatham Sutra’ to bless the gathering.

Sinhala Buddhists in Scotland are more interested in doing the ritualistic aspects rather than meditation and observing precepts. The highest amount come for the Katina activities. Our people in Scotland still follow what they were doing in Sri Lanka. For example people get involved in religious activities more during the ‘Was period’ and very keen on Katina. (Interview Ven R., 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

All devotees at the temple contribute in different capacities and support the main sponsors to make this process a success. In return, the whole community get the benefit of the services of the Buddhist monks at the temple. Therefore, it is an occasion that brings the diasporic Sinhala Buddhist community together to perform a Sri Lankan traditional event in the host land. The next three months consist of various Buddhist rituals, sermons and alms giving events at the temple. Volunteers from

the community sponsor each of these events.

The end of the Buddhist monks' rainy retreat is marked by the Katina ceremony in the month of October. It falls on a full moon Poya day, which is a public holiday in Sri Lanka. However, all the Poya ceremonies in the diaspora are conducted in the nearest weekend for the convenience of the devotees in the host land. The 'Katina Robe' is sewn at the main sponsors' residence. Usually the main sponsors invite all the community members to come and participate in preparing the robe. In Sri Lanka the 'Katina Robe' that is prepared for many days with veneration at the main sponsors residence is carried on a colourful procession to the temple to offer to the Buddhist monks. The day's proceedings start with offering alms and worshipping the Lord Buddha. Then the alms giving to the Buddhist monks takes place.



*Figure 18 Offering alms to Lord Buddha, Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

Figure 18 depicts alms offered to the Lord Buddha at the Katina ceremony in Liverpool. It is customary to offer alms to Lord Buddha before anyone else partakes in his or her meals. The 'Katina Robe' also can be seen placed in front of the Buddhist statue in the picture. Sinhala Buddhists consider it a symbol of honour to offer flowers to Buddha during worship. The same rituals are practised in the diaspora with little change. The picture also displays some of the traditional Buddhist relics placed on the altar and some artefacts to decorate the place. In the background some of the Buddhist monks, who participated in the event, can be seeing eating their meals provided by devotees as alms. Figure 19 depicts the devotees offering alms to the Buddhist Monks during the Katina Ceremony in Liverpool. Sinhala Buddhists consider it a meritorious deed to offer alms to the Buddhist monks.

Therefore, everyone gets involved in these activities. The community members encourage each other to participate in these activities. All community members voluntarily contribute to such occasions by bringing homemade food to the events.



*Figure 19 Offering alms to the Buddhist Monks at the Katina Ceremony, Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

The most important occasion of this ceremony is the offering of the Katina Robe to the Buddhist monks. Instead of carrying the robe from the main sponsors' residence to the temple as it happens in Sri Lanka, the devotees in Liverpool carry the Katina Robe in a procession around the hall where the event is held. Figure 20 depicts the occasion of carrying the robe in a procession in Liverpool, symbolizing the Katina procession as it happens in Sri Lanka. They have made all efforts to symbolically represent all the aspects of a standard procession in Sri Lanka. Everyone is given an opportunity to carry the Katina Robe during the procession as they believe that it is a blessing. The Katina robe is provided with protection and respect by holding a canopy above it. The traditional drummers lead the way informing the people of the procession. The traditional dancer wears the traditional 'Vestattuwa', which is the highest level of achievement to a traditional Upcountry Dancer in Sri Lanka. The participants in the procession carry traditional decorative items and things to offer to the Buddhist monks. The pedestrians and the residents in the streets watched the procession with interest and curiosity. It was an opportunity for them to witness and appreciate the culture of another ethnic group in the country. One British white lady could be heard, looking out enthusiastically from near the entrance to her house, proclaiming 'can't believe it's been a year since the last one'. The Sinhala Buddhist community on the other hand were able to negotiate a space for them to practice

their culture and proclaim their identity.



*Figure 20 The Katina Procession in Liverpool, Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

The community members take every effort to acquire the resources and the resource persons to perform these traditional rituals. They supply some of the traditional items from the homeland. The resource persons such as Buddhist monks, drummers and dancers are called to Liverpool from other cities in the host land. Sometimes the monks come from the homeland to participate in these events as visiting monks. This is a good example of the networks of diasporic communities that the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora have been able to build, both locally and transnationally.



*Figure 21 Performing ritualistic rites with the Katina robe, which was offered to the Buddhist monks, Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

The ceremony ends with the offering of the Katina Robe to the Buddhist monks by the community, as depicted in Figure 21. The participants get the rare opportunity to watch the rituals performed by the Buddhist monks before handing over the Katina robe to the resident monk at the Liverpool temple. As a tradition, the monks wear the Katina robe to embark on a publishing tour after the rainy retreat for the benefit of humankind. On this occasion, the resident monk at the Liverpool temple took a pilgrimage to the Buddhist historic sites in India with the donations of the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom.

#### *5.4.4 The Vesak Festival*

Vesak is a Buddhist religious and cultural celebration of the birth, enlightenment and demise of the Lord Buddha. The modern style of Vesak festival has its origins in Sri Lanka in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was still under British rule. It was a time when the Sinhalese Buddhist movement, which was against the colonial missionaries, had taken the attention of Buddhist sympathizers around the world. A Buddhist sympathizer called Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, who arrived in the Ceylon in 1880, and a philanthropist called ‘Anagarika Darmapala’ initiated the Vesak festival to counteract the mounting influence of the Christian missionary movement in the region at that time. They introduced various items to the celebration of this festival during this time, emulating the Christian traditions to make it more attractive to the public. Since then, the Vesak festival has become a part of the national identity for Sri Lankans (Turpie, 2001, 16). The Sinhala Buddhist community in the UK in particular, takes a special interest in celebrating this modern Vesak festival according to Sri Lankan traditions. This is

a description of the historical and current practices of the modern Vesak festival and its impact on the diasporic experience of the Sinhala Buddhist community living in the United Kingdom.

The second half of the nineteenth century holds a significant importance in the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and all over the world. This Buddhist revival was a result of several movements countering the impact of Christian missionary work in the region and against the monastic centered deviances from the Theravada Buddhist practices. Therefore, scholars have identified modern Sinhalese Buddhism as ‘Protestant Buddhism’ (Turpie, 2001, 19). The philosophical, rational and scientific features of Buddhism and the Lord Buddha himself as the central figure were reestablished during this period by the Buddhist reformers in Sri Lanka. They were able to spread this Protestant Buddhist Movement to other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, China, Burma and Thailand. This movement of the Buddhist reformers in Sri Lanka was to find common grounds for Buddhists all over the world. Towards this goal, they reinstated the Lord Buddha as the central figure, reinvented the celebration of Lord Buddha’s birthday as a festival and reclaimed ‘Buddha Gaya’ in northern India from Hindus. Buddha Gaya, which is the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, became the common and most sacred place of worship for Buddhists all over the world (Kim, 2011: 52). Several important figures pioneered these efforts from both East and West. Anagarika Darmapala (1864-1933) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) were prominent amongst these reformers.

Colonel Henry Steel Olcott was a Buddhist sympathizer and the founder of the Theosophical Society in the USA. He came to Sri Lanka in 1880 in support of the Sinhala Buddhist movement that was counteracting the Christian Missionaries movement. The young Sinhala Buddhist reformer ‘Anagarika Darmapala’ joined him in reforming and reviving Buddhism (Sangharakshita, 2011: 25). Both of them envisioned a Lord Buddha centered Theravada Buddhism in the place of the worship of Hindu and Mahayana deities. In 1881, Colonel Olcott, along with some Buddhist monks, petitioned the British government to restore Buddha’s birthday as a public holiday, calling it ‘the Buddhist Christmas’ (Olcott 1904, 73; as cited in Kim, 2011, 52). He called it a ‘Buddhist Christmas’ as it resembles the Christmas celebrated by Christians all over the world to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. The Sinhalese Buddhists planned a large-scale celebration of Vesak, once the Vesak day was officially designated as a national holiday. Colonel Olcott himself designed the Buddhist flag, which symbolizes Buddhism and the Buddhist community all over the world. They designed various symbols and rituals emulating those of Christianity to make it appealing to the public. For example, Darmapala introduced Vesak greeting cards, Vesak carols, parades, pandals and lanterns into this festival. They also adapted missionary practices such as Sunday Buddhist school, social welfare programs, celebrating wedding ceremonies, and propagating through printed media. The modern Vesak festival was celebrated for the first time on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1885 in the presence of Sri Lankan and

western Buddhists (Kim, 2011, p53). Anagarika Darmapala later travelled to India, Japan, the United States and many other countries in his efforts to introduce Lord Buddha centered Buddhism to the whole world. During his journeys, he introduced Vesak festival to countries like Japan and the USA that they celebrate to this day. Their efforts resulted in a revitalized Buddhist community and a Buddhist identity centered on the portable symbol of Vesak festival.

#### 5.4.4.1 Vesak celebrated by the Sinhala Diaspora in the United Kingdom

Anagarika Darmapala himself inaugurated the first Buddhist temple in the United Kingdom in 1926, when he visited the United Kingdom with the vision of introducing the message of Lord Buddha to the British people (Webb, 2004, 2-3). However, the Sinhala Buddhist migration into the UK actually occurred in three waves after 1950 (Hear et al, 2004:16). The first two waves were small in numbers and those who came were spread all over the United Kingdom as professionals and students. Therefore, they were not able to organize themselves as a community to celebrate Sinhala Buddhist cultural and religious activities on a large scale. According to venerable Pidiville Piyatissa Thero of ‘Kethumathi Buddhsit Vihara’ in Manchester, the early immigrants had to travel long distances to go to a Buddhist temple to practice rituals and therefore faced hardships in doing so. With the arrival of the third wave of immigrants, which was comparatively large in numbers, they have been able to organize into Sinhala Buddhist communities to celebrate cultural and religious events. Most of these communities are centered on Sinhala Buddhist temples that were established all over the United Kingdom since late 1990s (Sesatha.co.uk 2017).



Figure 22 Anagarika Darmapala Statue at the London Buddhist Vihara, London, 16.07.2017

Figure 22 depicts the Anagarika Darmapala Statue placed at the London Buddhist Vihara. A line of

Buddhist flags, which was introduced during his time, can be seen hanging on the wall. There is a bookshelf filled with Buddhist literature and compact discs for the community to collect free of charge. Sinhala Buddhists continue to honor and venerate Anagarika Darmapala to this date for his service to the Sinhala Buddhists and for opening the temple in the United Kingdom.

Those days we did not have cultural events for Vesak. However now at Liverpool temple they organise cultural events such as food stalls, pandals, lanterns, Buddhist choirs etc. We receive Vesak cards from Sri Lanka. We feel happy to see them. They depict Buddhist picture. We keep them in a place so that we all can see them. We feel like going to Sri Lanka for Vesak when we see them. We could not be in Sri Lanka for Vesak since we came here. My children really missed it. Liverpool temple celebrates 'Poson' also in a grand scale showing the coming of Mahinda Thero to Sri Lanka. (Interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017)

SP described the situation before the third wave of migrants arrived in the United Kingdom. She regrets that her children were denied the opportunities to experience the Sinhala Buddhist culture, as they were born in the UK when there was no organised Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the country. She also talked about receiving Vesak greeting cards from Sri Lanka and feeling sentimental about it. She revealed her attachment to the homeland and its culture as a person who was born in Sri Lanka. Her children were not able to develop such bonds with the homeland due to the lack of opportunities at that time. Her revelation is also significant as to how much the Sinhala Buddhist community has evolved in the host land over the past four decades. The present generation is able to experience the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the host land with the advent of Sinhala Buddhist temples all over the United Kingdom.

The present generation of Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom takes pride in celebrating the modern Sri Lankan style Vesak festival by organizing events at various temples in the UK (Sesatha.co.uk 2017). They have been able to bring the tradition of making Vesak lanterns, Pandals, singing Vesak devotional songs, offering free food, arranging processions with artifacts, such as Buddhist flags, and to practice religious rituals at the Sinhala Buddhist temples in the UK.

They take this opportunity to teach and show their children about their heritage. This institute has become a community centre for our people. They come here with their children on Sundays to the Sunday school for children. We teach Buddhism and Sinhala language to the children while the parents get involved in alms and other socialising activities. We conduct our activities in Sinhala language in these ritualistic events. Therefore, they fulfil their religious and social need at this temple. Sinhala new-year festival is also organised by the devotees at this temple. We also hold ceremonies for Vesak and other poya days. We had a special training session for the children during Vesak season to teach them how to make Vesak lanterns. I think Vesak cards are an adaptation from western culture. We used to practise making Vesak lanterns and lighting them with candles so that they will light up for a while

and then burn itself with the candle showing us of the impermanence of mundane things. Now we use electric bulbs to light up lanterns. Culture itself means something made up and therefore it can change over time. The number of flowers I offer to Buddha here represent a number of qualities of the Lord Buddha. Now everyone who comes here follows the same ritual making it a cultural item. (Interview Ven R., 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

Venerable Rewatha Thero of Scotland Buddhist Vihara explained the Buddha's insight into impermanence of life and how the Buddhist devotees use the flowers and Vesak lanterns to symbolize this eternal truth and to meditate upon them. He also talked about the progression of the culture with time. The Sinhala Buddhists have adopted western features in developing the modern Vesak festival and now such features have become a part of their Sinhala Buddhist culture. Venerable Rewatha Thero spoke about teaching children to make Vesak lanterns and about getting whole families to come to the temple to get involved in these activities. Such occasions have become spaces for them to socialize with the fellow community members and to use Sinhala language in communication, constructing diasporic Sinhala Buddhist communities. Therefore, the Buddhist events at the temple can be identified as an important aspect of the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic identity maintenance.

We also used to make lanterns for Vesak festival. I can remember us making a lantern called 'Atapattama' using a paste made with wheat flour with my mother. (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017)

TH, who was born in England, talked fondly about how he used to make Vesak lanterns with his mother. He described the method and the materials he used, which are identical to the way it is made in Sri Lanka. TH has learnt it from his mother who was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to England. His revelation symbolises the passing of Sinhala Buddhist culture as it is practised in the homeland from generation to generation in the host land. Parents and organizers pay particular attention in helping children participate in these events and activities. Therefore, the children are encouraged to make Vesak lanterns by holding competitions and giving prizes for the best Vesak lantern. They use alternative materials that can be found in the local market to make the Vesak lanterns or ask their relations and friends in Sri Lanka to send materials for them in advance. Figure 23 depicts the Vesak lanterns built by children with the help of their parents. The children can be seen being enthusiastically involved in these events. Parents also seem to encourage them to participate in such events. Such events are vital components of continuation of the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the host land.



*Figure 23 A Vesak Lantern Making Competition at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017*

The Vesak Pandal at the ‘Sri Sambuddha Vihara’ in Liverpool in 2017 was painted by an artist in Sri Lanka and sent to the UK, along with the light systems. The volunteers from the community installed the pandal at the temple for the Vesak celebration with the help of a British electrician, who helped to rectify the issues with the electronic circuitry which was dismantled at the UK boarder, for security reasons. Therefore, the British electrician was also invited and honored at the Vesak festival in Liverpool. The British electrician came along with his little daughter and was keen to show the Vesak celebration and the pandal to his daughter. The incumbent Buddhist monk at the temple explained the Buddhist story depicted by the pandal. There was a well-trained choir singing Buddhist devotional songs on the occasion. Everyone contributed with food for the food stall, which was giving free food and drinks to the attendees.



*Figure 24 Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool organising the Vesak festival, Liverpool, 28.05.2017*

Figure 24 depicts the people busy making arrangements for the Vesak festival in Liverpool. Venerable Sugatharathana Thero is talking to the British electrician about the Vesak Pandal, which can be seen covered with a screen before the opening. Vesak lanterns made by the children are on display on the side. The next Figure 25 shows the Vesak Pandal on display at the temple. The image shows the Vesak pandal after the opening. It depicts a story from Buddhist mythology in the form of a series of painted pictures. There are multicolored bulbs around the paintings illuminating in a rhythmic pattern to decorate the pandal. Pandals are an adaptation from the European Christian event and built in large scale in Sri Lanka during the Vesak Season. They usually depict a Buddhist story with a lesson for people's spiritual development. The Sinhala Buddhist in the United Kingdom have used this item to reconstruct their Sri Lankan experience in the host land and to negotiate their identity within the community and with the host land community.



Figure 25 The Vesak Pandal on Display at the Sinhala Buddhist Temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017

In connection to the Vesak festival, participants were exchanging Vesak greetings on social media and by sending Vesak greeting cards by post.

Vesak, Posen, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Sinhala New Year day, are celebrated in the temple. We organise special events for children such as Vesak lantern competition, New Year traditional sports events. However, we organize all the important events at our temple in Liverpool so that all can participate and experience such as Vesak Posen and Katina. We organise a food stall as well on Poya days, especially Vesak. We also build a Vesak pandal in the temple. We receive Vesak cards from Sri Lanka during Vesak. My relations think that my children should see them when they are small. (Interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> august 2017)

DJ explained the activities that are involved in Sinhala Buddhist events in Liverpool. He talked about how his relations in Sri Lanka encourage his children to experience the Sinhala Buddhist culture by

sending them Vesak cards from Sri Lanka. Children were encouraged to make Vesak greeting cards at the Sunday school and to give them to their parents as greetings. Some of them talked about receiving Vesak greeting cards from Sri Lanka.



*Figure 26 A free food stall at the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool, Liverpool, 28.05.2017*

A typical food stall on a Vesak day is depicted in Figure 26, which shows the food stall in the Buddhist Temple in Liverpool. Everyone voluntarily contributes to the food stall and participates in serving food to the visitors to the temple. It is a tradition in Sri Lanka to open free food stalls for the benefit of the people who come to the city and town centers in Sri Lanka to see Vesak decorations. The community in the diaspora has adapted the same tradition to treat the visitors to their temples with free food and drinks.

We used to do a Vesak procession from Hyde Park, London to a temple in the month of May for several years. My daughters also used to dance in that procession. It has stopped now because of many reasons. Children observe 'Sil' on Vesak day usually a Saturday. We usually have 'Poya' (full moon day) events in the weekend here in the UK. The next day the elders observe Sil (Observing eight precepts). There are about two hundred people participating, and about 100 children. We cook and offer food to all the participants. Children make Vesak lanterns at the Sunday school along with the teachers. We make lanterns at our homes as well for our children to see. I used to get Vesak cards from Sri Lanka. I used to buy cards when I go to Sri Lanka and then send them to my friends during Vesak. I keep the cards I received in my place of worship because they depict beautiful pictures of, Buddha, 'Sri Maha Bodi', Pirinivan mandiraya and also have some picture brought from pilgrims to India. I remember Sri Lanka and my family members when I see them. We sing Buddhist devotional song for Vesak. We do it for Poson as well with our children. Sunday school offer the alms on Poson day. We also organise lectures

on Vesak and Poson days. So our children also learn about Poson. (Interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).



*Figure 27 Vesak Cards Displayed at AAs house in Liverpool, Liverpool, 07.10.2017*

Vesak cards are typically displayed inside peoples' homes, which can be seen in Figure 27. AA had placed them on top of the refrigerator in his home in Liverpool. By displaying the cards at a high place in the house, it is a way of showing respect. He had placed them on top of the refrigerator so that they can see them frequently. They receive such Vesak greeting cards every year from Sri Lanka. Therefore, the Vesak greeting cards displayed this way acts as a constant reminder of their homeland and homeland relations. They bring back memories of their life back in the homeland. Moreover, it constantly reminds them of their religion and culture.

SW described various activities that participants perform during the Vesak festival at the 'London Buddhist Vihara'. The activities she explained are identical to the Vesak celebrations introduced and practiced to this date in Sri Lanka. She also talked about receiving Vesak cards from Sri Lanka and how she treats them with a special veneration. One person, when asked, said that he either displays the Vesak greetings he receives from Sri Lanka at home or keeps them safely with reverence because the Vesak cards depict either a picture of the Lord Buddha or a picture related to Vesak in Sri Lanka and Buddhism. Another person said that he did not have a Buddhist statue at home and therefore keeps the Vesak card he received from Sri Lanka, which had a picture of Lord Buddha, to practice Buddhist rituals of offering flowers and lighting lamps to lord Buddha.

Most events at the London Buddhist Vihara are religion oriented and rituals. However later we started going to 'Kingsbury Buddhist Vihara' where they organised 'Sinhala New Year' Event in April. The Buddhist monk there was keen to show our culture, dances, songs etc., to our children. Therefore, they organised this event in a concert hall. We participate in Vesak celebrations at the London Buddhist vihara. We observe 'sil' on that day. Kingsbury temple make Vesak lanterns. We used to get Vesak cards from Sri Lanka. However now we greet each other online. (Interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

MJ revealed how the onset of new technologies have changed or improved the way they maintain relationships with the homeland. He said that he receives greetings online, which is a more convenient and fast way to keep contacts. However, this is resulting in the loss of the tangible experience that they used to have when they received a Vesak greeting card in hard material. They are unable to collect them and display them in their homes as artefacts. He also revealed the differences between two Buddhist temples in London. One is the first Buddhist vihara in the UK, which was opened to disseminate Buddhism to the British public. The other is opened for the expanding Sinhala Buddhist community in London, where they have introduced many of the Sri Lankan cultural traditions in the form of events for the benefit of the community. It is a sign of the attainment of a diasporic status of the Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom with their own identity.

I did not get the opportunity to go to events like New Year, Vesak etc. We only go to temple to worship, offer alms, to listen to Buddhist sermons and lectures. My children were already grown up when they come and now married to a British. Therefore, we do not participate much in the festivals. Those who have young children are keen about such events. However, I receive Vesak cards from Sri Lanka. I collect them and gave some of them to Buddhist monks to show to children at Sunday Buddhist schools. They make Vesak lanterns and Vesak cards in Sunday schools. (Interview NP, 06<sup>th</sup> November 2107)

NP's statement supports the above argument that the Sinhala Buddhist community has shown a remarkable progress in achieving a diasporic identity in the United Kingdom. She also revealed about her continuous relationships with the homeland and how she wants to share that experience with the new generation by contributing in her capacity.

#### 5.4.4.2 The Impact of Vesak Celebrations on Sinhala Diasporic Experience

The modern Vesak celebration in Sri Lanka emulates many aspects from Christmas decorations and celebrations used by Portuguese, Dutch and English in Sri Lanka when it was a colony. With the revitalization of the Vesak festival in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has become one of the most important symbols of Sinhala Buddhist identity (Turpie, 2001: 19-20). Coincidentally, the Sinhalese diaspora in the United Kingdom, which is predominantly Buddhist, has resorted to the same features of the modern Vesak festival to maintain a distinctiveness from the rest of the society in the UK and to maintain their Sinhala Buddhist identity. They have also been able to express their diasporic religious and cultural heritage with much freedom in the United Kingdom. The fact that they had been able to gather as a community to celebrate Vesak festival, organize processions and even have British people interested in participating and showing such events to their children, symbolizes an emergent mutual understanding among these communities and a negotiated identity of the Sinhala Buddhist living in the UK.

The Sinhala diaspora in the UK still have to rely on their homeland to provide Buddhist monks, artifacts, materials and many other things to maintain their identity in the host land. The fact that they had to bring the Vesak pandal and materials for Vesak lanterns from Sri Lanka demonstrates this. The exchange of Vesak greetings is a symbol of their continuous relationship with the homeland and their friends and relatives in Sri Lanka. Vesak cards contain verses from ‘Dhammapadam’, or a word from Lord Buddha or a blessing reminding the reader of the teachings of Buddhism. The pictures depicted in these Vesak cards often generate a longing for their homeland, culture and religion by bringing back memories of their homeland. Such artifacts that they receive from Sri Lanka become important objects of homeland relation, celebration and worship sustaining their diasporic identity.

Participation of diasporic children in the activities of this festival helps them to learn their history and the importance of culture and religion. The extensive use of Sinhala language in this event creates a space for both young and old to freely experience a homelike atmosphere, which in turn contributes to the continuation of their language, culture and religious practices in the diasporic context. Therefore, the modern Vesak festival celebrated by the Sinhala Buddhist community, along with its various features, which were adapted from the Christmas celebrations, are also instrumental in transferring the Sinhala Buddhist heritage to the next generation of this unique diasporic community.

According to Turpie (2001: 16), the Sinhalese Vesak Festival is unique throughout the world for the Christian flavor of its festivities, due to the Christian influences and adaptations made during Sri Lanka’s colonial era. Such characteristics of the Sinhalese Vesak has enabled the Sinhalese Buddhists in the UK to achieve a ‘negotiated identity’ that contributes to the continuation of their Sri Lankan culture and religion without much resistance. On the other hand, bonds of language, religion, culture and a sense of a common fate has enabled them to maintain a transnational relationship with their homeland (Cohen, 2008: 7). Therefore, the modern Sinhala Vesak festival is an important contributor for the unique lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora living in the UK. It plays an important role in their identity negotiation and continuity, and is vital to their relationship with the homeland.

This subchapter has presented social, cultural and religious events and celebrations with a detailed descriptive analysis of their importance to the diasporic experience of Sinhala Buddhists in the UK. It has illustrated those events in some detail and the concepts behind organizing such events. The contributions from such activities to the communal cohesion and identity maintenance is analyzed from a social functionalist perspective. The next subchapter presents a descriptive analysis of the everyday practices related to the culture and religion among the diasporic communities at individual level. It sheds light upon the inter relationship between the individuals and the communities in maintaining their identity and the homeland relationships.

## **5.5 Culture and Religion: Sinhala Buddhist's Everyday Practices in the Host Land**

### *5.5.1 Life of Early Migrants in the Host Land*

Life of Sinhala Buddhists consists of daily ritualistic practices that the community members carry out in their day-to-day life. Such day-to-day activities related to their culture, religion and lifestyle in general, prepare them and contribute to the socio-cultural and religious events of different types in the Sinhala Buddhist communities. Sinhala Buddhist people generally carry out the practices of worshipping Lord Buddha and elders in the community, performing rituals of making offers to Lord Buddha, observing five precepts and so on. Learning the Sinhala language, traditional art and music, cooking methods and every other aspect of the Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle is learnt and put into practice at domestic level. Such training and upbringing set the foundation before they get together and perform as a community. A well-established community with the necessary infrastructure and facilities is essential for everyone in the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora to practise their socio-cultural and religious activities, both at individual and communal levels. However, the early immigrants have had to face many difficulties in practicing a Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the host land, due to lack of basic infrastructure facilities for a Sinhala Buddhist community in the host land. Dr. Welhengama, MJ and SP who are among the first Sinhala Buddhist immigrants in Liverpool revealed the situation in Liverpool when they first arrived.

I think religion is a very important aspect in our life. I have seen some other families encourage their children to learn and practice their religion. However, my children did not get that opportunity during 70s and 80s, due to lack of opportunity. (interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

I think practicing Buddhism is a very important aspect in our life. My sons also participate in Buddhist events. (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

All my efforts in organising the Sinhala community and opening the temple is to keep our identity, to enable us to practice our culture and to pass it on to the next generation. Our Sinhala Buddhist culture is moulded with the influence of Buddhism. We opened this temple to pass that Sinhala Buddhist culture to the next generation. Therefore, it is very important that our next generation of the Sinhala community in Liverpool use this opportunity. I regret that my son did not get that opportunity because we did not have this temple and the community when we first came here. My son is a medical doctor and a good man. However, he is not belonging himself to any religion. He thinks Buddhism is a good philosophy, but not interested in following our culture. There is a danger that children who were brought up without learning about their religion and culture can go astray and fall into wrong ways of life. We include many items in our events such as giving alms to monks, worshipping elders, processions, dances and songs to show the next generation of our heritage, whom otherwise will not get a chance to see them (interview GW, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017)

Dr. Welhengama, MJ and SP talked about the importance of having a well-established Sinhala Buddhist community to maintain Sinhala Buddhist way of life in the diaspora. Dr. Welhengama has taken the lead in organising the Sinhala Buddhists in Liverpool in order to establish infrastructure facilities for the benefit of the community. They regret about their children who did not get this opportunity during the 70s and 80s and therefore, have been assimilated into the British society. In addition to introducing and sustaining the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the diaspora, they also believe that nurturing their children in Sinhala Buddhist environment will enable them to be righteous citizens in the host land. Dr. Welhengama uses every opportunity to show the culture where he was brought up to the new generations in the Diaspora. The performance of the traditional dances towards the end of the 'Katina' Ceremony is a suggestion by Dr. Welhengama to show the aspects of Sinhala Buddhist culture to the younger generations. His efforts have created a setup where the younger generations in Liverpool can grow up in a Sinhala Buddhist environment around them.

SS was an asylum seeker in the United Kingdom when he first came. His Sinhala Buddhist upbringing in Sri Lanka continues to shape his lifestyle in the host land. He has had to travel to other cities in search of Sinhala Buddhist associations after establishing himself in Liverpool.

I started going to 'London Buddhist Vihara' since 2004 as there was no temple in Liverpool. I received a Buddhist statue from them when I told that I do not have a Buddhist statue to worship at home. I still have that statue at home and I do the rituals and worship at home every day.... Later when Dr. Welhengama wanted to open a Temple in Liverpool, we joined hands with him and gave our fullest support. After several failed attempts, we were able to open this temple and do the initial hard work. Now I am happy to see so many people have gathered around this temple to get involved in community work. Thereafter I wanted to encourage opening new temples in the UK and to encourage people to practice and teach their children to worship Buddha and to practice Buddhism in their houses. I imported a large Buddha statue from Sri Lanka and donated to the Buddhist temple in Glasgow. I also ordered 93 small Buddha statues and distributed them among our communities in Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds through the temples in those cities. I requested the monks to give a Buddhist sermon before distributing these statues to the people and wanted them to be encouraged to start worshipping, rather than keeping it as an ornament (interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

He recalled that he was travelling to London to go to a temple during his early days in the host land. The temple donated a Buddhist statue to him to keep in his house in Liverpool and to perform rituals when he could not go to the temple in London. It symbolises his desire to continue with his customs of practising daily rituals in honour of Lord Buddha. The same motive has inspired them to join hands with the community to open a temple in Liverpool. His successful efforts has motivated him to spread his work of promoting Sinhala Buddhist practices in other cities in the host land.

SS has managed not only to open a temple in the city where he lives so that he can participate in

religious activities in the temple regularly, but also to help the fellow community members in the host land to enjoy the same benefits by helping to open temples and distributing buddhist statues among the community members. Figure 28 shows Ven. Rewatha Thero distributing the buddhist statues to the community. The members of the community receive them with veneration. SS expects them to use these gifts to practise buddhist rituals at their homes rather than keeping it as an ornament. SS believes that by doing so, the culture of the Sinhala Buddhists can be prevalent in the diaspora and conserved for the younger generations. He particularly said that he asked the Buddhist monks to deliver a sermon and advise the members of the community about the value of practising rituals in their houses along with the children.



*Figure 28 Distribution of Buddhist Statues among the Sinhala Buddhist Communities in the United Kingdom, 14.11.2015*

The next image (Figure 29) shows the Buddha statue SS has donated to the temple in Glasgow. Ven. Rewatha Thero is standing by the statue. The statue is unique for its Sri Lankan style of sculpture arts. The national flags of Scotland and Sri Lanka are displayed above the statue symbolizing the relationship to Sri Lanka. The wheel above the flags, which is called ‘Dharmachakra’, symbolises the Lord Buddha’s noble eight-fold path to enlightenment. The Sinhala Buddhist immigrants of the early days have identified the needs of their diasporic community and laid the foundations for the expanding Sinhala Buddhists communities to thrive with the onset of the third wave of migrants. They have encouraged and shown the way to the diasporic communities to live a Sri Lankan way of life in the host land. This already established infrastructure has given the opportunities for the later generations to establish their Sinhala Buddhists identity in the host land.



Figure 29 The Large Buddha Statue donated to the Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara in Glasgow, Glasgow, 04.08.2017

### *5.5.2 Life in the Host Land after the Third Wave of Sinhala Buddhist Immigration*

The efforts of various Sinhala Buddhist diasporic activists of the early days have contributed to vibrant Sinhala Buddhist communities centred around main cities all over the United Kingdom. Opening of temples in the main cities have provided centres for the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora to practice their culture and religion at social level. The temples have become centres for teaching and training Sinhala Buddhist culture to the younger generations. Ven. Keppetiyagoda Gunawangsa thero explained how the Sinhala Buddhist temple and the community in Birmingham have evolved over the last twenty years.

We have a viable environment in our temple to practice and help the community to live a Buddhist way of life. The temple and its activities have seen vast development over the years since its acquisition. The Sinhala community in this area has grown with time and has become a complex mix of people from all walks of life. This is due to immigration of a considerable

number of people from Sri Lanka and other European countries during last 20 years. We teach the children about Sinhala culture and Buddhist religion at the Sunday Buddhist School. However, there is a limit to what we can do in a session once a week. Therefore, I encourage parents to lead and guide the children to follow a Buddhist way of life (interview Ven K, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017)

Ven. Gunawangsa Thero revealed that Sinhala Buddhist migrants that belong to different walks of life and different experiences have gathered around the temple as a result of recent migrations from Sri Lanka and Europe. Such a gathering naturally enables the sharing of their knowledge and experiences of Sinhala Buddhist practices of Sri Lanka in the diaspora. They contribute with their skills to start, develop and to maintain a community practising a Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the host land. The temples act as centres where the community members can get support as well as encouragement to continue with their Sinhala Buddhist culture in the host land.



*Figure 30 Dr. Welhengama along with Ven. Sugatharathana Thero, overseeing a Buddhists devotional song session. They have given a prominent place to the children with future in mind, Liverpool, 28.05.2017*

Figure 30 shows Sinhala Buddhist community choir in Liverpool singing Sinhala Buddhist devotional songs for a special event. They are singing Sinhala songs in the host land in praise of Lord Buddha. They have dressed up in white to show their respect to the temple, the Buddhist monk and Buddhism. Most of them are dressed up in Sinhala traditional dresses symbolizing their origins and diasporic identity. The elders of the community and the Buddhist monk are keen on encouraging the children during the performance. The ceiling in the room is decorated with the five colours of the Buddhist flag, symbolizing Buddhism. There is a calendar on the wall, portraying Lord Buddha delivering a

sermon to his disciples. The large TV screen on the wall displays the bank details of the Sri Lankan community centre for the benefit of the donors. The setup in the temple itself and the atmosphere facilitate religious feelings in the minds of the participants and create a viable environment for religious and cultural activities. Therefore, these infrastructure facilities are vital for the sustenance of the Sinhala Buddhists identity in the diaspora.

The role of Buddhism in Sinhala identity is further reflected in Figure 31, which depicts the occasion when the traditional dancers performed in front of the gathering during the Annual Katina ceremony. The dancer is performing a dance regarded very highly in Sri Lanka and used on special occasions, partly to show the Sri Lankan identity to the world. The poster behind depicts the colours of the Buddhist flag and Sinhala writings. Dr. Welhengama had requested it especially for the benefit of the children in the diaspora and for the adults to watch, enjoy and to get a feel of it. Dr. Welhengama believes that such activities will help to impress the young generation in the host land so that they will take initiatives on their own to protect their culture and values in the host land.



*Figure 31 An Up-country Kandyan Dancer performing at the annual Katina ceremony in Liverpool, Liverpool, 08.10.2017*

IH revealed how he takes an active effort to expose his children to Sinhala Buddhist events. He expects them to become familiar with the homeland culture by participating in such activities with their parents. It is an opportunity for them to learn and practise their religion and culture in the diaspora.

We used to take offerings to the monks and the temple along with our friends. It gives us a spiritual relaxation. We also used to participate in Sinhala New Year festival organized by the temple. We like to show such events to our children so that they will also get a feel of how our childhood in Sri Lanka was. When we came back to Wirral, we started going to Manchester temple. When the temple was

open in Liverpool, we started coming to Liverpool temple. Our children go to Sunday Buddhist school in Manchester. (interview IH, 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2017).

IH talked about how religious activities helps them to relieve anxieties of the daily lives and for individual spiritual development. He invites his friends to come along with him so that the whole community gets the opportunity to participate in religious activities. It is a continuation of the Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the host land for them, while their children get to know about the lifestyle in the homeland. It helps the children to learn about their origins and the identity, and to appreciate it. IH continued going to Sinhala Buddhist temples even when he had to relocate himself in the host land on several occasions. It is a sign of his zealous devotion to the homeland culture in the diaspora.

AA was keen to show his house and the artefacts that he had purposefully chosen to decorate the house with during the interview. Here he was referring to some artefacts and wall hangings in the living area.

Our house is arranged according to Sri Lankan style so that even the people who come to our house can feel it. We have a Buddhist statue at home to which we make offerings and prayers. We brought these batik canvas paintings depicting elephants from Sri Lanka. I even have a traditional drum here. Moreover, we keep food for birds in the garden, which I used to do in Sri Lanka. All other cultural and religious activities that we participate are centred on the Buddhist temples in the UK (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

AA's revelation proves how important the individual homes and the Buddhist temples of the Sinhala diaspora in the host land are to practice their culture and religion. These are the places where they can recreate the homeland environment in the host land. Therefore, the Sinhala Buddhists gather in such places to practise and feel the homeland environment and the lifestyle. AA uses artefacts specially brought from Sri Lanka to recreate the homeland atmosphere in his house (Figure 30). He believes that the visitors to his house may well feel the Sinhala Buddhist environment in his house, and he takes pride in showing his identity to the visitors and by entertaining them in his house in homeland style.



*Figure 32 A wall hanging depicting an elephant carrying the sacred relics, 07.10.2017*

Figure 32 shows the wall hanging that AA was referring to during the interview. It shows an elephant in traditional dress, carrying the sacred relics. It is a popular sight in Buddhist religious processions in Sri Lanka. The drums he talked about are used in religious ceremonies as well as in social events in Sri Lanka. The Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora are keen to display their identity by means of such artefacts. They not only remind them and generate sentiments about the homeland, but also helps them to recreate the homeland atmosphere in their houses. They also provide interesting themes to generate dialogue with the visitors.



*Figure 33 A Buddhist statue and other related artefacts in AA's House, 07.10.2017*

Buddhist statues are also often displayed inside the homes of Sinhalese Buddhists, for instance in AA's house where he and his family worship and perform rituals on a daily basis (Figure 33). He has also brought a sapling of a 'Bodhi Tree', which can be seen in a large pot on the left side of the picture. The 'Bodhi Tree' is a highly respected symbol of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. There are two miniature 'Stupas' by the side of the Buddhist statue. All of these features are essential requirements in any Sinhala Buddhist temple. AA has recreated all the essential items of the traditional Sinhala Buddhist

temple in Sri Lanka in a miniature style in his home. It provides him with a tangible and visual environment for him to generate holy ideas and to carry out religious rituals at his house. He does some other activities such as keeping food for birds at his place, which depicts Buddhist thoughts of kindness to all living beings. He says that his home and the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool has enabled him to recreate the Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle for himself in an alien environment in the host land. This setup enables him to negotiate and exhibit his identity in the host land.

Buddhism is important to me as much as how my mother is important to me. Buddhism teaches us to live a balanced life and helps us to achieve a better life after death (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017). AA revealed his inseparable bond with the religion and Sinhala culture by comparing Buddhism to his mother. It is a result of many years of his upbringing in the homeland before he came to the United Kingdom. Therefore, his whole life is shaped by the essence of the Sinhala Buddhist culture, even after settling in the host land. Buddhism and the Sinhala Buddhist culture goes hand in hand with an inseparable relationship. Therefore, the continuation of Sinhala culture in the diaspora requires the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition as an essential part of it. Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in the United Kingdom play a vital role in this regard.

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero, the residing Buddhist monk at ‘Sri Sambuddha Vihara’ in Liverpool, explained the setup, the role of the temple and his role as a residing Buddhist monk at a temple in the diaspora.

As for the temple we have brought some of the symbolic items that should be in a temple such as Buddhist statues, sacred relics of enlightened ones, symbolic spears and parasols for the protection of the relics, and a Bo tree, which is a ‘fiscus’ tree, believed to have given shade to Lord Buddha when he was enlightened. This tree is grown in pots sometimes as a bonsai tree due to the climatic conditions in the UK and kept indoors. The community lavishly contribute to the continuity and development of the temple. We have been able to build a space within this community to practice our cultural and religious activities (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero explained that they have managed to recreate most of the essential features of a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in the host land. Sometimes they have had to use innovative methods such as ‘bonsai’ to recreate some features. Some of the features of Sri Lankan temples, such as ‘Stupa’, Bodhi tree and statues are built outdoors in Sri Lanka due to the warm climate. However, such features have to be indoors in the host land due to cold climatic conditions. Therefore, they have opted for miniature features in most of the temples in the host land. He mentions that the community contributes to the continuation of the institute. There is a mutual relationship between the temple and the community members, and therefore the temple will last as long as the Sinhala Buddhist community survives. The ‘London Buddhist Vihara’ has survived over 90 years. Some other Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in London and other cities, such as Birmingham and Manchester, have

survived over 30 to 40 years.

As a Buddhist monk, our life is shaped by Buddhist doctrine and our actions are aimed towards achieving enlightenment. Moreover, as a residing monk in a temple I take an effort to spread Lord Buddha's teaching in the community (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

As a monk, Ven. Sugatharathana Thero explained he has a duty to himself to work towards achieving enlightenment. However, as a residing Buddhist monk looked after by the community, he has a duty to show the way to the laypersons to live a Buddhist life and to guide them through the regular ritualistic duties at the temple. Moreover, as a Buddhist monk in a temple in the diaspora he has a responsibility to teach and guide the younger generations and the children to learn to live a Sinhala Buddhist way of life in the host land.

I encourage the parents to pass their heritage to the children and encourage them to bring their children to the Sunday school. I always stress the importance of speaking in Sinhalese at homes. At the Sunday school I teach them Sinhala language and Buddhist way of life. On special occasions, we encourage children to participate in activities. For example, during the Sinhala new year period I ask all the children at the Sunday school to symbolically perform traditional rituals such as worshipping parents, going to see relations, partaking food etc. children's participation is encouraged in new year festival by organizing traditional games, dances and singing for children. Children participate in all the religious activities in the temple (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

According to Ven. Sugatharathana Thero, the temple performs the duty of a Sinhala Buddhist educational institute for the children in the diaspora. It is a place where the diasporic children learn the Sinhala language, homeland culture and Buddhism. It is a place for them to put into practice what they learn about the homeland culture and religion in the host land. The elders in the community and their parents support and provide for the smooth running of this institute. Therefore, the temple and their individual homes create a viable setup for the Sinhala Buddhists in the diaspora to maintain their identity by practising their religion and culture.



*Figure 34 Children guided by the Buddhists monks and elders in Liverpool participating in the 'Katina' Procession, Liverpool, 06.11.2016*

Children are given an important place in all diasporic activities. Figure 32 shows children participating enthusiastically, braving the weather in the Katina ceremony in Liverpool. They are under the persistent observation and guidance of the elders in the community. Their relationship with the Buddhists monks also looks promising. The decorative items that they carry are exactly as it is in a similar procession in Sri Lanka. Walking in a procession in the host land is a way of proclaiming their identity to the people in the host land. Such activities prepare them for a lifelong practice of Sinhala Buddhist culture in the diaspora. It is a way of constant reminding of their relationship with the homeland. Sinhala children also often participate in spiritual activities, observing precepts at the temple (Figure 35). The Sunday school for the children is instrumental in providing this space for the children to practise their homeland culture in the diaspora. However, the personal circumstances of the individuals result in differing challenges and opportunities for different people in the community. Therefore, the level of practice of the homeland culture in the host land is relative to individual circumstances.



*Figure 35 Children participating in a special spiritual and meditation program at the temple in Liverpool, 28.05.2017*

We have a Buddhist statue at home to which we make offerings and prayers. I worship the Lord Buddha and follow the daily rituals before I go out of the house. In the weekends, I do a kind of extensive set of rituals of offerings and worship. I spend about 10 to 15 minutes every day on meditation, which gives me a good feeling and energy to carry out day to day work. We go to Manchester to participate in cultural events with our friends (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

Buddhism is a part of my life. It is like our daily bread and we cannot live without it. I used to live near the temple in our village in Sri Lanka. Then we used to go to the temple very frequently. Here we do not get that opportunity, but we make it a point to go to temple at least once a month (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2017).

Recalling her life in her village in Sri Lanka, AM talked about the abundant opportunities she had had in her village to practise Buddhism. Her early life experience in a Sinhala Buddhist village in Sri Lanka and her house near the temple, prompts her to say that Buddhism is like her daily bread without which she could not survive. Therefore, she continues to provide herself with the spiritual food in the diaspora using the limited opportunities she gets. Her own house and the Sinhala Buddhist temples in the host land provide her with the basic setup to practice her religion and to balance it with her work life.

Women play a vital role, both as a functional and symbolic unit of identity in Sinhala Buddhist culture. Bringing up children with such qualities in the diaspora is a huge challenge for the parents, and therefore KS is a Sinhala Buddhist parent in the diaspora, worried for his daughter.

Our whole lives are shaped by the Buddhist teachings and therefore Buddhism is very important to us. Living in the UK has not changed our feelings on Buddhism. I want my daughter to learn Buddhism and our values. I want her to learn the culture we learnt during the time we went to school in Sri Lanka. I do not want my daughter to be brought up according to British values (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

KS expressed his fears for his daughter who is being brought up in the United Kingdom. In general, most of the parents in the diaspora carry the same fears and worry about their children's future as much as the parents of the earlier generations regret not having had the infrastructure to help their children (Personal communications). Such fears motivate the present day parents of young children to guide them through the system of Sinhala Buddhist communities' institutions so that they can learn about their origins and the culture.

I teach them little by little. I teach them that our religion and culture is Sinhala Buddhist and therefore we have to maintain and continue that heritage. We also try to teach them Sinhala language (interview IS, 07<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

I teach my children Sri Lankan Buddhist mannerism and the way of living from their very young age. They worship Buddha at home. They also worship parents before going to bed. They show respect and worship the elders coming to our home. I do not think there is any barrier to practice our culture in the UK. I also like to take the good qualities from the society in Europe. My wife also teaches and encourages my children to live a Buddhist way of life. It is very important to a person to practise a religion. Only then, we can refine our thoughts and deeds to live a good life. Therefore, I give priority to my religion in everything I do. We practise Buddhist rituals on a daily basis. We play Buddhist chanting every morning to bless our house. Believing in 'karma' helps us to avoid sinful ways, to respect each other and to respect life. It is the same lifestyle that I learnt to live in when I was in Sri Lanka. I used to associate myself with the temple in my hometown in Sri Lanka. I used to go to the Sunday Buddhist School. Moreover, I want my children to follow such a life. I do not force them. However, I teach them and influence them by practicing it by myself (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

Talking about teaching her children about the homeland culture, religion and the language, IS understands that it is a gradual process. SA has resorted to a more practical approach where he, along with his wife, shows the children by practising their culture and religion at home on a daily basis. He uses his own home as a training ground for their children. His children have become fluent in Sinhala language and they practise the cultural ritual, even though they are living in the diaspora (Observation). Therefore, the method of teaching by example has worked for SA to a good extent.

SW is not only a firm follower of Sinhala Buddhist culture, but also believes that it is her obligation to pass it on to her children. She does not hesitate to set some rules to her children in this regard.

I have a place of worship with Buddhist statues, pictures and some artefacts brought from pilgrims to India. I teach them to my children. I want them to marry Sinhala Buddhist partners one day. It is very important because it is part of our culture. It is our obligation to pass our cultural heritage to our children no matter where they live. We have attempted to give our children the feeling that we are Sinhala we are Buddhist and Sri Lankan. We do not change our names or colour and we want them to marry Sinhala Buddhists (interview SW, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

SW's discourse gives witness for her desire to pass on her cultural heritage from generation to

generation in the diaspora. She holds some firm opinions about it and has let her children become aware of them by saying that ‘we do not change our names or colour because we are in the diaspora’. Her efforts have been successful to a good extent, as her children have become practising Sinhala Buddhists in the host land with the ability to talk fluent Sinhalese. Figure 36 resembles some of the features in SW’s discourse. The figure shows the place of worship at Upul’s house in the diaspora. He said that the Buddhist statue is a gift from a fellow community member in the host land. He has received the other two artefacts with the shape of ‘Bodhi tree Leaf’, with pictures of the Lord Buddha imprinted, from Ven. Sugatharathana Thero. Ven. Sugatharathana Thero brought them as mementos from his recent pilgrimage to India where the Lord Buddha was born. Upul and his wife perform daily rituals and worship to these precious gifts. The framed picture next to the Buddhists statue depicts their wedding, showing them dressed up in Sinhala traditional attire. The two small inserts show Upul’s family and his wife’s family. It shows how important religion, family values and culture are for a Sinhala Buddhist. This picture is a visual reading of a Sinhala Buddhist’s mind who was born in the homeland. SW is having the same dream for her children in the diaspora. All their efforts are aimed at sustaining this culture in their diasporic lifestyle.



*Figure 36 Cultural and religious heritage as displayed at Upul’s house in the diaspora, 15.03.2018*

PG has had a different experience after coming and settling in the host land. His work life and family life has provided him with more opportunities to practice his religion and culture in the host land.

Actually, in Sri Lanka I did not have time to participate in any of the cultural events due to my studies and work. After coming here, we used to go to New Year festivals. My children went for traditional dancing classes. We go to temple and want to participate in everything. I also have a Buddhist statue and Buddhist books at home to practice. Therefore, I think I have more opportunities here to practise

my culture and religion than when I was in Sri Lanka. It gives a great relief to our mind. I read about Buddhism. I discussed with monks and other learnt people about Buddhist teachings, listen to Buddhist sermons and meditate. I am very interested about Buddhist cosmology. I try to apply Buddhist teaching in my day today life. When I face troubles in life, I resort to Buddhist teachings. Therefore, Buddhism is very important to my life. I have been spending more time on studying and practising Buddhism in the UK than when I was in Sri Lanka (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

PG's experience in the host land tells us something important about one's identity. Back in the homeland, PG was busier with his academic and work life. He was receiving the benefits of the existing Sinhala Buddhist culture and the population in the homeland unconsciously. Eventually, he had to experience an alien culture once he arrived and settled in the host land. He is using the spare time after settling in the host land for soul-searching. All his activities in the diasporic community leads him to find his religion and culture and to negotiate his identity in the host land. He is also mindful about the experience of his two daughters who are brought up in the diaspora.

We do not force them to live according to Sri Lankan traditions and values here in the UK. We let them integrate into this society. In Sri Lanka, we do not let young girls travel alone at night. Nevertheless, my two daughters are allowed to do that here in England. We encourage them to take the good things from our culture, Buddhism and from the society in the UK to enrich their lives. For example, they have become vegetarians on their own. They point out the mistakes we do and tell us what Buddhism teaches. They do not like the tradition of taking elephants in the processions in Sri Lanka. They also participate in the community events of our Sri Lankan community as time permits. They also like to go to Sri Lanka for holidays and meet relations, but they do not like to stay there (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

While some other parents strive to impart their culture as it is to their children, PG is trying to have a balanced view of the experience of his children and let them negotiate their own identity in the host land. Some of the children born and raised in the host land have even more liberal ideas as to how they should take their culture and religion forward.

I used to go to 'Jethawana Temple' in Birmingham. I studied Buddhism in the Sunday school at the temple. In addition, I participate in the events at the temple. Now I do not spend much time learning my religion, but whenever I have a question, I go and talk to the monk at the temple. I would like to further study my religion in future (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

Buddhism is the only acceptable religion to me and therefore, I want to learn more about it in future. I also want to pass it to my children one day and tell them about our history. I think more than Sinhala language, Buddhism will prevail and pass down to our next generation because it is very acceptable (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

I myself think that I am more westernized than Sri Lankan. Therefore, I do not expect my children to follow Sri Lankan traditions. It is their choice. However, I really want them to learn Buddhism. I will

tell them about our origins. I am proud of my origins as a Sri Lankan British (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

TH was born in the host land and therefore has been able to integrate into the host land culture to a considerable extent. He has had the experience of homeland culture under his Sri Lankan born parents and the Sinhala Buddhist temple. He said that he is more westernized than Sri Lanka. Therefore, he is looking at things with a more practical view and has considered what he can take from Sinhala Buddhist culture to his westernised lifestyle. He thinks Buddhism is more acceptable and wants to pass it on to his children in the future. He wants to identify himself as a 'Sri Lankan British'. He is willing to give his children the choice to follow homeland culture or not. However, it is hard to imagine children practising a culture alien to them which is not even practised by their own parents or the society in the host land. Therefore, TH's discourse illustrates a section of the Sinhala Buddhist community that assimilates into the host culture.

This subchapter has presented a descriptive analysis of the cultural and religious practices of the diasporic community, which was achieved by focusing on the experiences of the Sinhalese diasporans at individual levels. It highlights Sinhalese migrants' attempts to construct spaces at individual and community levels in order to enable them to practise their Sinhalese culture in the diaspora. The next subchapter presents a description of their relationship and the perception of the host society in the United Kingdom. It also reveals how they present themselves as a unique diasporic community to the host land society.

## **5.6 Life in the UK: Relations with the Host Society**

The Sinhala Buddhist immigrants have come to the United Kingdom mainly as economic migrants. They have a wide range of life experiences and come from diverse upbringings in the middle and upper middle class strata of society in Sri Lanka (Lau, 2016). Therefore, their perceptions about the host society also varies based on their own understandings. Different individuals read and deal with the host society based on their own perceptions and attitudes. It can be seen that some of them assimilate into the host society by acquiring host society's attributes and making them their own. Some of them attempt to maintain the values of their homeland culture by organizing themselves as diasporic communities. Either way, the diasporic communities have to maintain some form of relationship with the host land society to some extent. In the case of the Sinhala Buddhist people in the host land, their Buddhist religious background and Sinhala Buddhist culture play a vital role in their attitudes towards the host land culture. This chapter describes and evaluates how the Sinhala Buddhist people deal with the host land society based on their own upbringing as Sinhala Buddhists, either in Sri Lanka or in the United Kingdom. The analysis is based on interviews, informal discussions and the researcher's own observations and experiences in the host land.

Generally, Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom have arrived in the host land on either a temporary visa or work permit. Once they start living in the host land and settle in, most of them have looked for opportunities to live indefinitely in the host land. Some of them have even taken extreme measures such as seeking asylum under various grounds. Presumably, one of the main reasons for their reluctance to go back to their homeland is the better living standards that they are enjoying in the host land. Economic and political stability are some of the other factors that keep them from going back to their homeland (Lau, 2016). Such benefits and privileges that they enjoy in the host land have led them to make compromises on the choices between homeland and the host land. Their upbringing in a Buddhist culture, which preaches renunciation and nonviolence, also lead to their positive views of the life in the diaspora.

AA first came to the United Kingdom on a temporary visa, however he has eventually settled with his wife in the host land, embracing the opportunities to do so.

I applied for a dependent visa and came for a limited period. However, later my wife was offered a job at the University of Liverpool. Eventually we have received permanent residency in the UK. We only brought some clothes and essential items in bags. Now it has become a whole house full of items when we have to move house (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

If you are a Buddhist, you can live in any society without many issues. Buddhism teaches us to be humble, generous and friendly. Moreover, we do not see many extreme people here (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

I do not even feel that I am a minority here. Our Buddhist way of life makes it easy for us to live as a minority without been affected emotionally and physically by the environment. We do not hold on to worldly things much. Our Sinhala Buddhist society itself is a very accommodative society (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

He revealed his gradual process of settling in the host land by talking about the opportunities they received and how a temporary visa was eventually changed to a permanent residency. He also revealed that a few bags of personal goods at the beginning have developed into a whole house of goods over time. It is a sign of them gradually settling into the life in the host land. Moreover, he talked about how Buddhism has disciplined their lives and developed resilience within themselves. Buddhist exposure helps them to overcome the longing for a life in the homeland and anxieties that comes with a life in the diaspora. Such qualities have enabled them to settle into a life in the diaspora with less hassle. He revealed that he does not suffer from a minority complex as a member of a minority group in the host land. The fact that his wife has been able to secure a white-collar job and obtain indefinite leave to remain, itself speaks loud of the opportunities available for them to integrate into the host society. On the other hand, most of the Sinhala Buddhist people in the United Kingdom

generally do not have any restrictions or political reasons for not going back to their homeland. In the case of AA, it is their choice to remain in the host land. Therefore, unless it is desirable, they would not remain in the host land.

Venerable Sugatharathana Thero shared his experience of immigrating and living as a Buddhist monk in the host land.

I came on an invitation by the chief incumbent at Birmingham 'Jethavana Vihara' to support his activities in the temple. I brought some of my books and some essential items such as robes. Later in 2014, he invited me to become the caretaker of the newly opened Buddhist temple in Liverpool (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

As a Buddhist monk Ven. Sugatharathana Thero lives a simple life, which is reflected in what he brought along with him when he first came to the host land. However, he has taken a giant leap in his social life by becoming the caretaker of the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool, within two years of his arrival. He reveals that he faces less obstacles in the host land in practising and publishing as a Buddhist monk.

It has not been a big issue in the UK as peaceful religious and cultural activities are not restricted. Sometimes we participate in interfaith forums and develop some constructive relationships with other faiths (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero is satisfied with the environment in the host land, where peaceful religious and cultural activities are freely allowed. In addition, there are opportunities for building up relationships with the host land communities through Buddhism by dissemination and by participation in interfaith forums. He further revealed his personal perceptions of the life in the diaspora.

It has not been a problem as long as we do not disturb the society and Buddhism is well received in the society. My ultimate goal is to follow the path to Nirvana (Enlightenment) and attain it. Whether I live in Sri Lanka or the UK will not have any impact on it. As a Buddhist monk residing in a temple (resident monk), my responsibility is to practice Buddhist doctrine and to help the community to follow a Buddhist way of life. Therefore, where I live or where I return to in this world is not important to me (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Once again, he reiterates that Buddhism is considered as a peaceful religion in the host land, and therefore the followers of Buddhism face less issues in the host land. Besides, his own purpose is not attached to worldly affairs. His duty to himself and the society is to guide them in the path to enlightenment. Therefore, his lifestyle and activities do not support or conflict with the host land society. However, his role as a Sinhala Buddhist monk in the diaspora helps the Sinhala Buddhist community to refine and maintain the Sinhala Buddhist identity in the diaspora.

AM first came as a postgraduate student to the United Kingdom ten years ago. Since then, she has been able to gain permanent residency in the host land by becoming a university lecturer.

I brought some clothes and two books for reading. I also brought a small Buddhist statue to worship. I came on my own. Life of the people in the host land is different to our life style. I try to learn their way of living. I try to learn their religion. Sometimes I invite my colleagues to our house for dinners and let them try our food. They like to try our spicy food. I think they respect each other a lot. Moreover, there is a lot to take from their life style (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2017).



*Figure 37 The Buddhist statue and some souvenirs displayed at AM's House, 23.09.2017*

AM revealed that she first came on a temporary arrangement by saying that she brought only some clothes, books and a Buddhist statue. The Buddhist statue symbolises her strong attachment to the homeland culture and religion. Figure 37 shows how she has displayed this Buddhist statue in the living room of her house. It acts as a tangible object that constantly reminds her of her origins and identity. However, she is making an attempt to build bridges with the host land society by trying to learn the host land culture and religion. She actively engages in building relationships by inviting her friends from the host society for dinners at her house. She uses Sri Lankan spicy food as a tool to exhibit her diasporic identity. Displaying the Buddhist statue in her living room helps her to introduce her cultural and religious identity to her friends in the host society. It can act as a catalyst to generate dialogues about cultural differences and values. By doing so, she let the people from the host society

become familiarized with the Sinhala Buddhist culture. It also gives her an opportunity to learn about the host land culture. It is a two way process with mutual benefits and allows the host land society to experience and understand the lifestyle of the diasporic communities. The diasporic communities in return get a space to exhibit and negotiate their diasporic identities. AM said that there is a lot to take from the host land culture. Her statement provide evidence for Sinhala Buddhists who are progressive and willing to adopt and adapt with the dynamics of the social environment that they live in (Lau, 2016: 48). PG, who first came to work in the host land and then settled, shed more light on this argument.

Here people do not probe much into other people's life unlike in Sri Lanka. At work, I deal with them only for job related things. We are good friends and I have never had any issue with them. I have never experienced any discrimination from them. I think unlike in the past, world is getting closer together. People mix with each other. I do not think we can survive as Sinhalese Buddhist forever. I did not want to be born as a Sinhala Buddhist. It just happened. We will have to integrate into this society. Therefore, I do not expect my children to become strict Sinhalese Buddhists. They might not even marry Sri Lankans (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

PG has his wife and two daughters in the United Kingdom, and therefore said that he has no intention to go back to his homeland. PG believes that he experiences less interference from the society of the host land in his personal life and he appreciates that freedom; here, he is referring to cultural differences between the homeland and the host land. PG seems to appreciate the freedom that he enjoys in the host land. PG is a devoted Buddhist who plays an active role in the Sinhala Buddhist community activities in Liverpool. His upbringing in the Sinhala Buddhist culture in the homeland induces him to continue with the same lifestyle in the host land. However, he does not expect or force his children to learn and lead a similar lifestyle in the diaspora. He has given his children the freedom to take good things from both cultures and to negotiate their own identity as citizens of the host land.

KS, who was born and raised in Sri Lanka, has a completely different opinion about his life in the host land.

I applied for a Student visa and came for a limited period. Later I got a business visa to start a business in the UK. I brought my clothes, books, parents' photos and a picture of Lord Buddha. I think people in this country are better than our people. I find it very easy to live with them. However, I feel like it is not my country and I am only an immigrant here. In Sri Lanka, our neighbours are very close to us. We can go to our neighbours and talk any time and anything. However, here it is not like that. There is a distance (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

He revealed his strong bond to the homeland by saying that he brought a picture of Lord Buddha and his parents' photos when he first came to the host land. He believes that people in the host land are

better than the people in the homeland. Though the host society is friendly, they keep to themselves and interfere less with others' affairs. KS longs for a closer relationship with the neighbours, which is a common feature in his homeland society. The observations during fieldwork revealed that KS tries to overcome this shortcoming by vigorously being involved in the community activities in the Sinhala Buddhist temple in Liverpool.

TH was born and raised in the host land, and has a different opinion about living as a member of a minority ethnic group in the host land.

I am quite ok with it and I think I am part of this society. I can remember my parents having some problems when we were in London mainly due to their lack of knowledge about the system and language here. However, I feel quite comfortable with it. I do not really feel like I am a minority here. I used to face some racial abuse when I was at school such as calling me a 'Paki', which I am not. I just thought that they have to understand and grow up when such things happen. Other than that, I have not had any other issue here and I never think I do not belong here or that I need to find where my origins are and go there. I was born and brought up in a British setting. Therefore, I do not think that I will fit into the society in my homeland. I do not see myself going to Sri Lanka to live (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

TH is an example of a Sinhala Buddhist who fully integrates into the host land society. He has experienced homeland lifestyle in his home, social events and the Sinhala Buddhist temples in the host land. However, he does not believe that he belongs to homeland culture. Apart from occasional experiences of racial abuse, he is quite comfortable with the host land society and does not think of a better world somewhere else.

Kapila was born and raised in Sri Lanka and later lived in Italy for 20 years before migrating to the United Kingdom. Therefore, he has experienced difficulties building up relationships with the host land society.

I left Sri Lanka for Italy in 1995. I lived and worked there for 20 years. In 2015, we decided to come to the UK with the hope of giving an English medium education to my three children. My whole family moved to the UK. We brought all our Buddhist statues along with us, which were first brought from Sri Lanka. We also brought pictures that we took in 'Somawathi' temple in Sri Lanka. The language became a major barrier when we first came here. I had to learn the language by living and working here at the beginning. Now I go to language classes to learn it. Compared to Italy I have found people here to be a little cold-hearted. Even at my shop, I have met people who get annoyed by my lack of English knowledge. It is not easy for us. Even my children find it difficult sometimes. We feel isolated and discriminated. My children also face such situations where they are told off. There were incidents where eggs and stones were thrown at our house. Such incidents make me feel like I should not have come here from Italy. I have never faced such incidences in Italy. Here we habitually have to be

confined to our home and the Sri Lankan community. However, there is one family near our house, who are friends with us. They also advise us to stay away from some of the people, especially British teenagers. I would like to go back to Sri Lanka one day. However, as a family I want to live with my family. Therefore, eventually where I settle will be decided by where my children will want to live (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

Kapila has lived away from his homeland for many years. However, his strong links with the homeland are still unbroken, evident by the fact that he has brought the Buddhist statues and the pictures of a temple in the homeland from Sri Lanka to Italy and from Italy to the United Kingdom along with him. He has come to England with the hope of giving his children an English education, which reaffirms his desire to maintain his relationship with the homeland where English is the second language. He opened a grocery shop in Liverpool once he came here. His strong bonds with the homeland culture, along with the 20 years of lived experience in Italy, has made it difficult for him to build relationships with the host land society. His business and the location where he has chosen to live have led to frequent unpleasant experiences for the whole family, which have made their efforts to build relationships with the host land society even more difficult. Therefore, Kapila and his family have found a safe haven in the Sinhala Buddhist community in Liverpool and he is contemplating a life in a diasporic community where his family can be safe from racial abuse.

NP and IH, who migrated to England for better economic and living standards than in their homeland, are quite used to minor isolated incidences of discrimination at work places.

I have not felt it much apart from some isolated incidents, such as discriminations at the work place. I felt like I did not have a voice on such occasions. We are already aware of that situation and therefore, I do not worry about it. I like Sri Lanka, but now I have settled in the UK with my family. Therefore, I think I will remain here. (interview NP, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017)

I do not get affected much at work place. However, I feel the differences among us. When they get to know that we are Buddhist, we receive respect from everyone. There are occasions when I have felt like they do not like to listen to us at work place and discriminate. However, I have not had any major experience as such. In Bedford, it was a multi-cultural society and we felt more comfortable. Here it is a little different. Sometimes I ask my children if they have had any bad experiences at school. So far, nothing as such has happened. (interview IH, 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2017)

NP's revelations indicate that he has suffered from a minority complex whilst living and working in the host land society. It can be a result of language barriers, racial discrimination and cultural differences. However, he has chosen to live in the host land because of the positive aspects of the economic and living standards. IH revealed how being a Buddhist helps to build positive relationships with the host land society. Their experience shows that some of the qualities of Buddhism has made Buddhists acceptable in the host society with no regard to their racial backgrounds. Therefore, being

a Buddhist himself helps to create a conducive environment in the host land for relationship building.

PP revealed how the second next generation of the Sinhala Buddhists diaspora, who are born in the host land, build up positive relationships with the host land society.

I have not had to face any major incidents. However, sometimes we have to face disappointing experiences. I have felt like I should not have come here sometimes. However, it is important for our child's education that we stay here. Moreover, he is all right with the society here, since his first language is English and his friends are English. He has never told us about any discrimination that he has experienced. I would like to go back to Sri Lanka one day for good. However, my wife and child want to stay here. Therefore, I also have to stay here with them (interview PP, 05<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

PP's discourse explains the differences of perceptions between two generations in the host land. PP who was born in the homeland has had to face difficulties in building up relationships due to language and cultural barriers. However, his son who was born in the host land has been able to communicate better and grasp the host land culture from a very young age. It can be argued that the lack of homeland consciousness helps the diasporic children to build up positive relationships with the host land society.

SP is one of the early immigrants to the United Kingdom, who has come to work for the NHS. Her opinion about the host land society and the social level she is acquainted with is quite positive.

It is not a problem. We are now used to it. They admire our ethnic background. Like to taste our food and like to know more about other cultures. We never had any issues since we came here. We never feel bad about it. When I retired I send a message to thank everyone we met here for looking after us well ever since we came here. People in Liverpool are very friendly. I don't think we will go back since we have three children here and that we are now grandparents (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

SP has seen three generations of her family members living in the host land. Her positive viewpoint of the host land society can be a result of the social group (the NHS in this instant) or the social class that she was mixing with. She described her relationship with them as accommodative, supportive and friendly.

Venerable Seelawimala Thero, the chief incumbent at the 'London Buddhist Vihara', gave a long description of the work carried out by himself and his temple to build relationships and to disseminate Buddhist teachings to the host land society;

This is not a Sinhala Buddhist institute. This (the temple) was a gift from Darmapala to the British society to learn about Buddhism. We conduct Buddhism classes in English. We also deliver some Buddhist sermons in English on Poya days. Most of the attendees in our introductory Buddhism lessons are British. 90% of the attendees in our meditation programs are British. They are very keen on meditation. There is religious tolerance in this country. We practise our religion within our premises.

Any one is free to come and participate. Therefore, we have not experienced any obstacle. I have identified meditation programs as a way of building a link between Buddhism and the people in the UK. However, we cannot practise walking on streets to collect alms such as food. We also conduct most of the activities in English medium. We have a Sri Lankan Sanga Sabha, which is an association of all the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in the UK. I am the current president of this association. We also have a founder's day to commemorate the founder of this temple 'Anagarika Darmapala'. We organise a special talk on that day.

At present, I am involved in so many activities in the UK. Interfaith network, state events such as commonwealth day, remembrance day, queens invitation in December, queen's coronation anniversary, queen's birthday, London Olympics are some of the occasions I have represented Buddhists in the UK. I go to all the occasions in my yellow robe. At London Olympics, I worked as the Buddhist Chaplain and helped the sports personnel with meditation to relieve stress. I also attend international events such as international Vesak festival, world Buddhist monk's council etc. I also work as Buddhist Chaplain at Ealing and west Middlesex hospitals. I am involved in various welfare activities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is difficult to think of going back to Sri Lanka. If I get relieved of these responsibilities someday, I would like to go back to Sri Lanka (interview Ven. SW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

Ven. Seelawimala Thero was of the opinion that Buddhist practices, such as meditation, can be utilized to build positive relationships between the diasporic communities and the host society. Though his institution was opened at the beginning for the benefit of the British public, the Buddhist monks depend on the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom for their alms. The growing Sinhala Buddhist community frequently visit and associate with the temple. Therefore, the temple plays a vital role in bringing together the host land community and the diasporic communities inside the temple premises. Thereby, it provides a space for development of constructive intercultural relationships between them. The Buddhist monks through their network of temples play an important role in building relationships with the host land society through their Buddhist classes and meditation programs. It is also vital for identity maintenance that they participate in the social events of the host land society.

Ven. Rewatha Thero, the chief incumbent at the Sri Lankan Buddhsit Vihara in Glasgow, explains how he uses Buddhism as a tool to build up relationships and to introduce Sinhala Buddhist culture to the host land society.

I graduated from Peradeniya University. Thereafter, I started studying about astral body, mindfulness etc. I came to England to continue my studies in this field. After I came here, I started this temple in Scotland. I also started working as a teacher trainer and a religion teacher (religious education in secondary schools) in Edinburgh. Therefore, I teach about most of the main religions in the world. At

the same time, I created a meditation club in schools. Now there are students who learn Buddhism as a subject in Scotland. I also teach mindfulness to the local people at the temple. I do not orient the classes at the temple as religious, but gradually they learn about Buddhism and the rituals we practise at the temple. Now I have many students who wants to learn Buddhism at schools (interview Ven R, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

He revealed that his journey through diaspora has enabled him to gradually develop productive relationships with the people in the host land. He has been able to bring them to his temple and to gradually expose them to the Sinhala Buddhist cultural activities. His efforts have resulted in the host land society learning about another diasporic culture in their country and to respect it. It opens up a space for a positive relationship between the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora and the host society.

This subchapter has provided some detail of Sinhala Buddhists' relationship building with the host society. It has attempted to highlight certain aspects of this relationship in regard to identity negotiation, mutual understandings, cultural differences and generational differences. The next subchapter discusses the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora's homeland relations. It intends to discuss certain aspects of their relationship to the homeland. Some of them have lived experiences and memories. Memories can be of history and relationships with people and places. The impact of such relationships and memories are of importance in their lived experience as a diasporic community in the United Kingdom.

### **5.7 Homeland Relations of the Sinhala Buddhist Diaspora**

Sinhala Buddhist diasporans in the United Kingdom have reached the third generation of their diasporic life in the host land. They have experienced three major waves of migration and more migrations in-between those waves over the last seven decades. These immigrants and the diasporic communities have varying degrees of perceptions about their homeland. Their relationships with the homeland are also diverse and of varying importance to different individuals. Their relationship with the homeland and their perceptions of it are important variables that define their diasporic identity in the host land. Therefore, this chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the attitudes and perceptions towards homeland of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. The narratives given by the interviewees during one to one interviews are presented and discussed in this regard. Their relationships to the homeland are evaluated through religious links, family links, lived experience, memories of life, people and places, knowledge about the history and the importance and impact of homeland relations to their life in the diaspora. The interviewees were specifically asked about their awareness of the 'Mahawamsa' (The Great Chronicle) and the 'Solosmasthanas' (16 places in Sri Lanka hallowed by Lord Buddha's presence) as pilgrimage sites in the homeland. They were also asked to describe their thoughts about the importance of their homeland to themselves as a religious

diaspora.

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero painted a sentimental picture of his lived experience in Sri Lanka by describing various aspects of it. He reiterated that his emotional bond to his homeland is very strong and that it plays an important part in his identity.

I think Sri Lanka is a wonderful country. I always cherish my memories of the simple lifestyle in rural Sri Lanka, our culture, people and the climate. I remember my childhood, my teachers and places we use to visit in Sri Lanka. I keep in touch with my mother and brother by talking to them at least once a week. I also keep contacts with friends, temples and monks in Sri Lanka. Feelings about Sri Lanka are deeply rooted in my mind and I believe that, that is our identity no matter how hard we try to change it and try to become like a British or any other (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Being a Buddhist monk has not completely eradicated his emotional attachment to the homeland. His lived experience in the homeland, the environment, family, people and the culture plays a vital role in his diasporic consciousness.

I do not travel there very often as I have the responsibility of running this temple. Nevertheless, I hope to go for a visit very soon. I visit the places venerated by Buddhists such as the temple of the tooth and Sri Maha Bodi whenever I get a chance. It is important to know and visit such places with knowledge of how and why they have become sacred places. I teach the children coming to the Sunday school about such important places by bringing study materials from Sri Lanka (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Ven Sugatharathana Thero makes pilgrimages to Solosmasthana in Sri Lanka and believes that it is important to do that with knowledge. He said that he teaches the children in the diaspora in his Sunday school about the pilgrimages by showing pictures. His actions are vital in passing that knowledge to the new generations in the diaspora. It helps to build a homeland consciousness in them.

There are Buddhist temples all over the world, which can be visited by Buddhist for their religious needs. However, Sinhalese Buddhist heritage is promoted only in temples sustained by the Sri Lankan Buddhists. We rely on Sri Lanka to provide us with Buddhist monks and rest of the supporting infrastructure to maintain Sinhalese Buddhist temples here. Therefore, it is important to contribute and sustain the Sinhalese Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka. Moreover, I believe that Sri Lanka will continue to be a dominant Sinhalese Buddhist civilization for the years to come (interview Ven S., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Ven. Sugatharathana Thero is highlighting a very important point here by saying that they rely on the homeland to provide Buddhist monks and some of the infrastructure to the temples in the host land. It is a fact that very limited number of people from the society enters into monkhood. Therefore, Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the host land are unable to secure the required number of Buddhist

monks needed in their temples without resorting to their homeland. He expressed his belief in Mahawamsa by saying that Sinhala Buddhist civilization will prevail in his homeland. He also expressed his desire to sustain it, partly for their own benefit in the diaspora.

Describing his own lived experience in Sri Lanka, AA is also conscious about the separation from the loved ones, such as his mother who is in his homeland. Friends and loved ones, the homeland food, and various activities that he was associated with in the homeland are all part of his collective memory of the homeland.

I think about the religious activities that I used to do in Sri Lanka. I also think about my mother who is living in Sri Lanka. Our friends in Sri Lanka and times we spent in their homes and the delicious food we used to share at their homes, which were cooked by their parents, come to my mind. I feel nostalgic about the Sunday Buddhist School that I used to conduct in our temple in Sri Lanka. I miss the climate and the natural environment in Sri Lanka here. I talk to my mother and friends regularly. I also travel once or twice a year. I also make donations time to time on special occasions to charities in Sri Lanka (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

I go and visit some of the Solosmasthanas every time I go to Sri Lanka. I feel blessed to be able to go and worship places hallowed by the presence of Buddha. We go to such places to worship relics of Lord Buddha (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

AA revealed that his devotion to Buddhism is another important reason for maintaining relationships with the homeland. Solosmasthanas and his own temple in the village are important landmarks in his life as a Sinhala Buddhist. He also believes and is aware of the historical facts recorded in Mahawamsa about his homeland, and therefore believes in a common future for Sinhala Buddhists in his homeland.

Yes, it is very important. I continue to keep contacts with my temple in Sri Lanka and support their activities, especially the Sunday school and charities. I believe that pure Theravada Buddhism is practiced in Sri Lanka and even the historical records provide evidence for this fact. It is also very important for our sustenance in the UK. Every Sinhalese Buddhist, no matter where they live in this world should contribute to the wellbeing of our homeland. I always believe that I am a Sri Lankan and it is my homeland (interview AA, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017).

Having very strong feelings for his homeland, AA wants to go back to his homeland one day and die there. He lives in the diaspora solely for his livelihood and the better living standards. He develops relationships with the diasporic community to fulfil his social needs during his stay in the diaspora. However, his ultimate goal is to go back to his homeland and be a part of the collective belief concerning the fate of his homeland. The realism of his goal will be determined by time.

AM and her husband are both university lecturers living in Liverpool. AM sheds more light on the

importance of homeland relations and her perceptions;

I talk to my parents, siblings and friends every day. I help my university in Sri Lanka by providing them with materials they do not find in Sri Lanka and consider it my obligation to contribute to my country in every possible way (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

I like to go to Solosmasthan and spend time. I do not really know why. Perhaps it is the atmosphere in such places and the feelings of respect in my mind (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

Yes, perhaps it is because of my upbringing in a Sinhala family. My father is committed to conservation of dialects of Sinhala language based on the regions in Sri Lanka. I do not believe much of the mythical stories about the history of the Sinhalese. However, I believe that pure Buddhism is protected in Sri Lanka and I want to study it further. I think the culture and Buddhism in Sri Lanka helps us here in the UK to maintain our culture and religion. We get a lot of literature, items and even Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

I do not have children. However, I will want my children to have a Sri Lankan way of upbringing. I want them to think that Sri Lanka is their homeland. Therefore, I will bring them up in Sri Lanka. Wherever I go, I want to get back to Sri Lanka someday, because I miss my country and people (interview AM, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017).

Being an academic intellectual, AM relies more on her own research and experience than mythology. However, she also has felt the importance of homeland for the sustenance of Sinhala Buddhist culture, both in the homeland and in the host land. She has gained that understanding with her lived experience in both places. AM now has a one year old daughter who is being brought up in the host land. Instead of going back to Sri Lanka, AM now seeks the assistance of the diasporic community and the Sinhala Buddhist temple in the host land to show her daughter a Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle. It is a change of mind on her side. It shows that she has gained confidence to live and bring up children in the diaspora. She is striving to live an enriched life in the diaspora, whilst maintaining her Sinhala Buddhist identity.

PG, who immigrated to the host land with his children, continues to talk about differences between the two generations as he feels it.

I always remember my parents who are alone and aged now. I wish they were here. I also remember my village and natural beauty of the lands in my village. I do not miss them here because I have my family here with me (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

It is sad to think that Sri Lanka is still an under developed country. Poverty, pollution, mosquitos etc comes to my mind. I do not see Sri Lanka overcoming these issues in the near future. I talk to my parents, siblings and friends. We also maintain our relationships with the temple at my wife's village. When we go there, I go to my village temple as well. I go there once in every two years. I go there with my family. My children also like to go there and meet our relatives. I can remember going to

places such as Kandy, Bandarawela and Katharagama (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

Mainly we go there to see our relations. Once we get there, we decide what places to go and visit. I think Solosmasthanas are important as Buddhist for us. I used to bring pictures and show them to my children, but now I do not think they remember them or are interested about it (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

I believe that Buddhism will continue in Sri Lanka for many years to come. Moreover, I think the sustenance of Sri Lanka is very important for Buddhism. It is also important for us here in England such as to maintain our temples here. We are not used to enjoying the culture or the entertainments here in England. Therefore, we look out for Sri Lanka for such things. However, I do not think my children will think the same (interview PG, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017).

PG keeps his relationship with the homeland by talking to his relations, travelling regularly and constantly recollecting the memories of his earlier life in the homeland. His Buddhist upbringing is another reason for his continued relationship with the homeland. He sees the importance of Sri Lanka as a source of his Buddhist identity and a contributor to the maintenance of his identity in the diaspora. However, he looks at the deprived socio-economic condition of his homeland with less hope for the future. He is also doubtful about his children developing a strong homeland consciousness. Instead, he has worked for a Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the host land, which can provide him with a space to practise his culture away from his homeland.

KS is not so sure of a fulfilling and enriching Sinhala Buddhist life in the diaspora. His lived experience and collected memories of how a Sinhala Buddhist life should be, work subconsciously in his decisions.

I remember the Dutch fort in Galle Sri Lanka in my hometown. I also remember the view of the city, sea and harbour, from my office in the world trade centre building in Colombo. There are some photos of myself when I was a child, but they are with my parents in Sri Lanka. I talk to my parents and brother every day. They want to talk to my daughter so I use skype to talk to them. I like to go again to Adams peak. Solosmasthanas are important for the continuity of Buddhism (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

Our culture, heritage, language and our way of life are very important to me. In addition, I want to practise Buddhism according to Sri Lankan traditions. That can be done only in Sri Lanka. Therefore, I want to go back to Sri Lanka someday. I want to live with my parents and to bring up my children in Sri Lanka according to our values and traditions (interview KS, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

Some of the important landmarks where he grew up and worked in his homeland are vital aspects of his image of the homeland, as well as his parents, religion and culture. He talks about religious sites with high esteem. His daughter talking to her grandparents and relations in Sri Lanka using modern

technology is a sign of an attempt to bridge the gap between homeland and the diasporic communities, and their relationships in the future. He is not satisfied with a negotiated space in the diaspora where he gets to practice his culture occasionally. He wants to feel it every second in the atmosphere and within himself. However, he remains in the diaspora for better living standards.

TH, born and raised in the host land, has a constructive attitude towards his homeland.

Not very often. I go there with my parents. The last time I visited Sri Lanka was three years back. We visit our parents' house on such occasions and travel to see places also. I like to hang around with my cousins on such occasions. Cousins from my father's side in Colombo are educated in international schools and speak English. Therefore, I feel more comfortable with them. Cousins from my mother's side are from the traditional villages and do not speak much English, but they all are very likable. However, I do not think I can marry a person like that in future. I want my partner to be more westernized and I do not mind marrying a British person (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

I always remember my mother's house in the hills. It has beautiful scenery around it. My parents used to tell us about our history. According to my father, we are descendants of the Greeks who came to India. We also used to learn about the history of Sri Lanka in Sunday school at the temple. I cannot remember 'Mahawamsa' or the stories in that book. Nevertheless, I believe that Pure Buddhism is always associated with Sri Lanka (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

I do not know that word (referring to Solosmasthan). I have visited the 'temple of the tooth', which is the palace of the last king in Sri Lanka. I have also visited the large Statue of the Meditating Buddha in the hill called 'Bahirawa Kanda' in Kandy. I have visited the Stupa in Anuradhapura and the 'Galvihara in Polonnaruwa. My father used to tell us the stories behind such places. However, I do not know much about the historical facts of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

My father has told me that the pure Buddhism continues to this day in Sri Lanka. The temples in the UK get a lot of support from the Buddhist establishments in Sri Lanka including the Buddhist monks. Therefore, I think it is very important for us as Buddhist that the Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka is protected. I am very keen on Buddhism and someday want to pass it on to my children as their heritage and I think Buddhism will play a bigger role in our the next generation than the Sinhala language and the history of Sri Lanka (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

I feel proud to be of Sri Lankan Origin. I want to keep my parents property as a holiday home and show it to my children someday. I will always think of it as our homeland and visit it whenever time permits (interview TH, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

Although he does not want to follow the same life and culture as that of his homeland, TH has built a favourable image of it. He looks at Buddhism with optimism. More importantly, he is keen to pass the knowledge about his identity and religion to his children, which will be the fourth generation of Sinhala Buddhists in the host land.

Kapila feels it is important to maintain a relationship and protect the homeland culture for the future generations of Sinhala Buddhists in both the host land and the homeland. He was talking about a particular religious site of which he is fond and to where he makes trips regularly. Figure 38 shows Kapila holding a picture taken at his favourite Buddhist pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka. It is one of many reasons for his strong relationship with his homeland.

We used to go there once a year. I used to go and visit my brothers, sisters and friends in Sri Lanka. I remember many things about the life in Sri Lanka. I like the climate over there. I also like to visit ‘Somawati’ temple. I make it a point to go there whenever I visit Sri Lanka. Even my children like to go to Somawati. Therefore, ‘Somawathi’ has a special place in my heart (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

I as a Buddhist, know the importance of Solosmasthanas, but cannot remember all the places. I have visited some of those 16 places. I think it is very important to have such places to go and worship apart from learning Buddhism. I want to take my children also to visit such places (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).

I have learnt at home from my mother and at the Buddhist Sunday school about the importance of Sri Lanka as the protector of Buddhism. We bring Buddhist monks to temples in the UK from Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is important that we help to sustain Buddhism in Sri Lanka (interview SA, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017).



*Figure 38 Kapila shows a family picture taken at ‘Somawathi’ temple in Sri Lanka, 22.03.2017*

SS, who came as an asylum seeker, sheds light on another perspective of the life in the diaspora.

I cannot go to Sri Lanka as I have sought political asylum in the UK. However, my parents, one brother, and a sister still live there. I keep contact with them regularly. I remember my life in my remote village and the freedom we enjoyed. It was a very humble life with the least of desires and expectations. We

lived with the nature. I still want to go there and spend some time in that beautiful village (interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

I sponsor and organise charity work and social work in Sri Lanka with the help of my family. I have made donations for poor people in our village. I have donated Buddhist statues and worship rooms to the village temple and my school. I also organized prize-giving ceremony at my old school. I have donated to charity work at many temples around my village in Sri Lanka with the support of my brother. I think I have spent about 5 million Sri Lankan rupees on such projects in Sri Lanka.

Since I was born in Anuradhapura, I used to live among some of those sites (referring to Solosmasthana). I have a deep respect for them as places hallowed by Lord Buddha's presence and relics. However, I never thought of going to see and worship them in Sri Lanka. We must protect them to keep our identity and to show them to our children.

I have heard in Buddhist sermons about the historical stories about Buddhism and Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is important to protect Buddhism in Sri Lanka. I order Buddhist statues from Sri Lanka because they portray our identity. It is also important to have relationship with Sri Lanka to get resources to UK to sustain our Buddhist temples and the community (interview SS, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

Even though he is deprived of going back to the homeland due to political and legal reasons, SS still holds the homeland in very high esteem. He talked about another aspect of maintaining a relationship with the homeland by describing his financial support to carry out various welfare projects in Sri Lanka. This is another important aspect of the diasporic homeland relations, where the homeland benefits from economic donations. He also emphasises the contributions received from the homeland to maintain Sinhala Buddhist identity in the homeland. The Buddhist statues designed in homeland are a part of this identity.

Taking pride in her Sinhala Buddhist identity as a woman, IS believes that she has a special duty to promote Sinhala Buddhist culture. She chooses how she dresses and how she guides her children accordingly. Moreover, she thinks that Sinhala Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka is facing challenges to survive. Therefore, she thinks it's her responsibility to support and protect her heritage in Sri Lanka.

Yes I know them very well (she chanted the verses of worshipping Solosmasthana). They are places hallowed either by Lord Buddha's visits or by places where his relics are to be found. I think the Sinhala Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka is under threat. Therefore, I think that heritage should be preserved. I believe that Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country. I think safeguarding the heritage in Sri Lanka is very important to maintain our identity in the UK as Sri Lankans. I dress like Sri Lankan in most of the special events here and teach my children to live according to Sri Lankan culture. I think even the local people appreciate us for our Sri Lankan identity (interview IS, 07<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

In his interview, Ven Seelavimala Thero explained how the relationships with the homeland brings mutual benefits at institutional and diplomatic levels to promote the Sinhala Buddhist heritage in both

the host land and the homeland.

The children at the Sunday school get their certificates from the 'YMBA' in Sri Lanka. The exams are conducted by the YMBA in Sri Lanka. Whenever a national and political leader from Sri Lanka visits the UK, they make it a point to come and visit this temple because this is the first and main Buddhist temple in the UK. We also visit such people in Sri Lanka whenever we go to Sri Lanka. We also collect donations and send to Sri Lanka whenever there is a need such as tsunami, floods and landslides. We donated money to the temple of the tooth in Sri Lanka when terrorists attacked it. We also fund projects such as clean water projects, instruments for hospitals, instrument for school children in flood affected areas etc. we have also donated to countries like Kenya and Nepal (interview Ven. SW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

He also talked about his personal memories and relationships with the homeland. He gave a detailed account of how Sri Lanka plays an important role in conserving and disseminating 'Theravada' Buddhism to the whole world.

I go there once a year. I remember where I was born and grew up, places where I was teaching in Kandy. Where I studied in Kandy. In addition, I remember where I was staying in Kandy, which is Malwathu Vihara where I have many friends. I go to see them. They also come to see me. I go to the temple where I was ordained to monkhood. Last year I went to Anuradhapura. Sri Lanka has played a major role in introducing Buddhism to the UK and Europe. Buddhism was first written in Sri Lanka and therefore Sri Lanka has played a very important role in the past as well to sustain Buddhism. We call it the home of Theravada Buddhism because Theravada Buddhism was protected and carried forward in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Buddhist monks have travelled to many countries in the world to spread Buddhism. Sri Lanka has a rich heritage enriched by Buddhism. Therefore, we have to protect it in Sri Lanka for the benefit of the whole world. Buddhism is unique because there is no belief in God and is a rich philosophy. It leads you to inner peace through the development of mind (interview Ven. SW, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

Ven. Rewatha Thero explained the social work he carries out at personal level as a Buddhist monk in the homeland. He said that he chooses Buddhist monks that come to his temple in Scotland from his own temple in the homeland. He specifically talked about the mutual benefits of having a close relationship with the homeland.

My temple in Sri Lanka is the main contact point for me in Sri Lanka. I chose the Buddhist monks to this temple from Sri Lanka. I have brought a monk from my temple in Sri Lanka. All the Buddhist monks coming from Sri Lanka to visit Scotland stay in this temple. I donate for welfare and humanitarian work in Sri Lanka from my own income that I get from my teaching work. There is not many Sinhalese in Scotland to collect a reasonable amount. I have donated to tsunami, schools etc. I also run a nursery school to the children in my village. Every child who comes to the school gets a gift bag of school items every year (interview Ven R, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

I go there once a year. I go and stay in my main temple in my village and go to see our devotees at their homes and elder Buddhist monks. I also take some donations such as multi vitamins for them. I also go to see my relatives. I get involved in merit-oriented deeds even when I go there. I make it a point to go to Anuradhapura and Kandy every year. I take some old people from my village also with me in those pilgrimages. It is very important protect Sri Lanka as our roots are there. It also helps for our survival in the UK. However, we as monks have to be careful when using the word Sinhala in our general activities in order not to hurt other societies. That is where I started everything and someday I want to go back and pay my gratitude by working for them. I want to start and institute to train Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka someday who can face the challenges of modern world (interview Ven R, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017).

Having a more philosophical view of his relationships with the homeland, DJ talked about the differences between Buddhism as a religion and Buddhism as a philosophy. However, he accepts that religious aspects of it are vital for the Sinhala Buddhist culture, and that a relationship with Sri Lanka is important; an example is taking Sinhala Buddhist monks to the host land.

According to Buddhism, nothing is permanent. Therefore, I do not believe in sustainable Sinhala Buddhist culture. I do not know how long it will last. There is a conflict between Buddhist religion and philosophy. However, it is important that Sri Lankan Buddhism be maintained in order for us to be enriched by our culture here in UK. I think it is a cultural need that we maintain that relationship in Sri Lanka. For example, if we have a monk from a different country we might not have the same feeling and devotion that we get from having a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk (interview DJ, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

MJ's story is one of how artefacts generate special relationships with the homeland, in terms of tangible and intangible experiences. He was particularly fond of talking about the suitcase he brought from Sri Lanka when he first came to the United Kingdom. It reminds him of the beginning of his diasporic journey and also about his homeland and the places in his homeland.

I still have the briefcase I brought along with me when I first came here. I bought it in 'First Cross Street in Petta, Colombo. It is a very important thing to me. It reminds me my journey. I take it with me every time I go to Sri Lanka. We go once in every two years. We visit our friends and relations on such tours. My children like to go there for holidays; however, they do not like to live there. We send donations to general courses, religious places and to my relations who need help. I think we should protect our Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka, which is my homeland. I love Sri Lanka. Moreover, it is a fact that we get Buddhist monks here to our temples from Sri Lanka (interview MJ, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017).

SP revealed her fond memories of the homeland. She believes in her duty to give back to her homeland, but she does not believe in any special benefits to the diaspora from the homeland. However, she believes that a relationship with the homeland will continue in the future, mainly in the

search for Sinhala Buddhist identities of the diasporic children.

We had a wonderful time in Sri Lanka when we were young. We remember the places we visited, where we lived, where we learnt, food, culture and our childhood etc. I was born to a Buddhist family and well attached to the temple. My parents were very strict about Buddhist way of living and rituals. I do not believe much in 'Mahavamsa'. They are mostly myths. I believe that we need to study Buddhism and practice the knowledge. The Buddhist environment where we were brought up has had a large impact in our lives. However, the situation in Sri Lanka does not help much to us. We organise aid programs to help Buddhist and cultural activities in Sri Lanka. We cannot separate Sinhala culture from Buddhist culture. Our Sinhala culture is influenced by Buddhist culture. Therefore, we have to keep our relationship with Sri Lanka. Later my children will feel the need to learn about our culture. Then we will need to keep that relationship. Therefore, I think the next generations will continue to keep that relationship (interview SP, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017).

Dr. Welhengama,, an elder in the Liverpool community, talked about a lifelong journey from the homeland to the host land. As a political victim with painful experiences in his life in Sri Lanka, he does not wish to go back to his homeland. However, he recreates the life back in the homeland in his mind with his memories. Such memories have led him to open the Sinhala community centre and the Buddhist temple in Liverpool.

It is a painful experience for me, to think about the reasons that led to my departure. Once I wrote a poem about the reasons that led to my departure from Sri Lanka and I sent it to a newspaper in Sri Lanka. They published it. My parents and family in Sri Lanka had cried after reading it. I feel about my relations. I am also sad about having to leave my profession and home in Sri Lanka. I remember the village where I was brought up we used to associate the temple in my childhood. There was a paddy field next to the temple and my school beyond the paddy fields. The head monk at the temple was a very good person. He guided my generation in that village. I and another person were the first to enter the university from my village. It is a relationship we build up from our birth. I used to go to Sunday school at the university. Now I have my brothers and sisters. I help some of them and their children financially. We sent relief items to Sri Lanka after the tsunami. I am more interested in developing and maintaining our community in Liverpool. I would like to go to Anuradapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy etc. However, I am not fond of travelling. I think by looking at current situation that it might be possible the Sinhala Buddhist culture might not last long in Sri Lanka (Referring to expanding Muslim population and westernisation). We might have to come to see Sinhala Buddhist people in places like Liverpool (interview GW, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017).

He also believes that Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka is under threat from various external forces. He thinks that, as a diasporic Sinhala Buddhist, it is his duty to promote Sinhala Buddhist culture in a diasporic setting for the benefit of the future generations. He envisions another interesting facet of the diasporic existence where he believes that the home land culture and lifestyle can be

preserved in the diaspora in the event of their homeland's Sinhala Buddhist Culture coming under threat of extinction.

This chapter has presented the field research findings under seven thematic subchapters with detailed descriptions of the heritage of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora, as told through the voices of the Sinhalese diasporans who participated in this research. It provided detailed insights into the motives behind the social and individual actions of the Sinhalese in recreating their homeland lifestyle in the diaspora and building relationships with the homeland based on the field research findings. The following Discussion chapter will evaluate their diasporic experiences in relation to diasporic theory and the conceptual framework of the 'common features' of diaspora that was introduced earlier in this thesis. It also discusses class, gender and the generational differences through the lens of the particular experiences of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the UK and the researchers own observations.

## **6. Discussion**

### **The Sinhalese Buddhist Diasporic Experience: Homeland and Host Land**

The previous chapter focused on providing a descriptive ethnographic and thematic analysis of the lived experience of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom under seven themes. It also attempted to bring out the importance of its homeland relations to Sri Lanka. The seven themes under which the evidence was presented provided ample examples for identity construction, negotiation and homeland relations of this diasporic community. This Discussion Chapter builds on the findings from the ethnographic enquiry and diasporic theory discussed earlier in this thesis, particularly weighing the qualities and attributes of the Sinhalese diasporic community against the conceptual and theoretical framework developed in chapter 3. By doing so, this Discussion Chapter seeks to relate the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora to the diaspora theory and knowledge of identity negotiation and homeland relations, with particular reference to the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK. Specifically, the discussions, which have grown out of this ethnographically-informed study of the way that the Sinhalese people negotiate, maintain and reconstruct their identities, will focus on five overarching themes to describe common features of the Sinhalese Buddhist diaspora, which have been adopted from the seven characteristics of the diaspora introduced in chapter 3, and which are relisted here:

1. They have emigrated from the homeland in search of better employment, education or a better standard of living.
2. They retain a collective memory and myth about their homeland including its location, history and achievements.
3. They have a collective commitment to the maintenance, safety and prosperity of their homeland.
4. Their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity is based on a distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common culture and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate.
5. They rely on their homeland as an ethnic community and seek support from the homeland to recreate and sustain their cultural and religious heritage in host land.
6. They believe in the possibility of a distinctive, creative, enriching life in the host country with a tolerance for pluralism.

7. Their relationship with the homeland endures the test of time by lasting over three generations.

For instance, a key theme that defines the Sinhalese diaspora in the UK is their 'homeland consciousness', which is a useful notion to describe the way that the Sinhalese tend to retain a collective memory and myth about their homeland, including its location, history and achievements. The concept also describes the way that the Sinhalese in the UK often have a collective commitment to the maintenance, safety and prosperity of their homeland. Homeland consciousness is also a useful notion to describe the way that their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity is based on a distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common culture and religious heritage, and the belief in a common fate. Consequently, Homeland Consciousness will form the theme for the first section in this Discussion Chapter.

A second key theme that has emerged in this research is related to 'Migration', which is used here to describe why the Sinhalese have migrated from the homeland, which is usually due to the search for better employment, education or a better standard of living, as well as due to political reasons. The reasons behind their migration are important variables to consider along with the existing diasporic theory in relation to their identity maintenance in the host land. It is also interesting to see how their migratory experience affect their homeland relationship. The study of migration and its reasons is specifically important in considering their attitudes towards a return migration.

The Sinhalese's' lived experience in the host land as a diasporic community is examined against the existing diasporic theories to draw on significant similarities and differences in the third section. Their belief in a common religion, culture and fate are important variables in diasporic community building in the host land. Their ethnoreligious identity reconstruction, attitude towards homeland and host land are important variables in this regard. Consequently, 'Life in the Host Land' will form the third section in this Discussion Chapter.

The Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom consists of at least three generations at present. These three generations have varying degrees of experiences and perceptions about their homeland and the Sinhala Buddhist identity. The fourth section, 'Generational Differences', discusses the generational variances and their negotiated identities in the host land based on the field research data.

Buddhism totally rejects discrimination based on class and gender of people. However, as a South Asian subculture, which is influenced by the larger South Asian culture, the Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka holds some differences based on gender and class. The fifth section, 'Class and Gender differences', discusses how class and gender differences have an impact on Sinhala Buddhist diasporic experience.

## 6.1 Homeland Consciousness

Buddhism itself do not constitute diasporas themselves. However, Sinhala Buddhist culture, which is unique to the Sinhala ethnic community and marked by its religious orientation, draws parallels with other religious diasporas of Judaism, Sikhism as an ethno-diasporic group with strong views of their homeland (Vertovec, 2004). However, they do not show any signs of a return migration at present. Homeland consciousness is a key contributing factor to the qualities of the ethnoreligious diaspora of Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom. The notion of homeland is formed through their imagination based on stories, narrations and mythology for those who were born in the diaspora. It is formed through imagination, experience and memory for those who have migrated to the diaspora (Kokot et al, 2004). Its people have a similar imagination and concept about the history of the Sinhala Buddhist people in their homeland. Their imaginations and memories of the homeland are based on the written history of the Mahawamsa, myths transmitted by word of mouth and connected memories of their lived experience in the homeland. As an ethnoreligious community, the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora holds certain similarities to the Jewish diaspora (Cohen 2008) in terms of their belief that Sri Lanka is the only home for the Sinhala Buddhist people. This belief motivates them to care for and maintain relationships with the homeland in many ways, as has been described in detail in chapter 5. Such relationships account for economic contributions and other charitable donations to the homeland in needy situations. It encourages them to learn the homeland language and culture, which in return contributes to their identity construction in the host land. Such relationships are a vital source of support for their existence as a diasporic community in the host land. However, instead of believing in a return migration to the homeland, as in Zionism (Cohen 2008), the Sinhalese have built up their own diasporic spaces in the host land, where they can practice their Sinhala Buddhist culture away from home. As Brah (1998) has explained, 'diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, and about putting roots elsewhere'. Contrary to Tololyan's argument that diasporic communities develop some familial, cultural and social distance to their homeland (2012), the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom takes every effort to reproduce the homeland culture based on their collective myths, memories, imaginations and the lived experience in the homeland. They have also shown signs of maintaining their relationships with the homeland people, both at familial and social level, for several generations. Their relationship with the homeland partially supports their sustenance in the host land as a unique ethnoreligious diaspora. This support comes at both familial and social levels. Maintenance of Sinhala Buddhist temples, conduct of cultural and religious events, and a Sinhala Buddhist lifestyle in the diaspora are supported by their relationship with the homeland.

The UK's Sinhala Buddhist diaspora's reliance on the homeland for the sustenance of their diasporic existence means a dependence on social, cultural and religious nourishment from the homeland,

which reflects Dufoix's 'Centro Peripheral' mode (Dufoix, 2008). According to this, the Sinhalese continue to receive immigrant Sinhala Buddhists from the homeland who come with firsthand experience of homeland Sinhala Buddhist culture. This continuous arrival of immigrants, even though in small numbers, helps to maintain Sinhala Buddhist identity, language and religious affiliations in the host land. With the influx of the immigrants, diasporic communities build new relationships with the homeland to fulfill their Sinhala Buddhist social and cultural needs. These needs flow into the host land in the form of food and other retail materials, art and music (entertainment), Buddhist monks and Buddhism-related items, human resources and other cultural materials (see chapter 5). Immigrants with firsthand experience of homeland culture play a prominent role in diasporic identity construction and maintenance in the host land.

Immigrants bring with them Sinhalese Buddhist culture and religion and provide the resources and myths for diasporic generations to develop a shared consciousness and awareness, which is constructed through imagination, participation in events and travels to the homeland. Both, Sinhala Buddhist immigrants and the Sinhalese born in the diaspora are community members who contribute to the continuous functionality of this diaspora as a homeland-conscious ethnoreligious diaspora. Their collective memories, awareness and beliefs in myths are reinforced by the continuous migration of Sinhala Buddhist people from Sri Lanka. This ongoing process sustains their homeland consciousness from generation to generation. They are using this homeland consciousness and emotional bonds with the homeland to advantage their diasporic existence and support the good causes in their homeland. They symbolically express their homeland consciousness by travelling to homeland for visits, staying connected by virtual means, organizing donation campaigns in crisis situations and organizing welfare campaigns for homeland communities.

Another aspect of the modern diasporic experience is the use of virtual means to stay connected with the homeland society. The Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom use the social web to stay connected with their families, societies, politics, entertainment sector, sports and religious activities. As Garbin (2005) has observed with South Asians, links such as the internet, television and telephone enable the Sinhala Buddhists to engage in a continuum of relationships with the homeland that strengthen their sense of belonging. It acts as a constant reminder of their homeland and its culture, society, politics, environment as well as the Sinhala language, family relations, Sinhala Buddhist culture, Sri Lankan Buddhism, politics, social affairs, news feeds and audiovisual entertainment. Knowledge of the homeland is thus constantly refreshed and updated by virtual means in the diaspora and helps to reinforce their homeland consciousness while living in the diaspora.

## 6.2 Migration

Migration is a continuous process that leads to transnational communities all over the world. Migration is a result of various reasons that affect communities differently. Some communities migrate to avoid catastrophic events, such as war, racial abuse, genocides and natural disasters. Others migrate looking for employment, education and better standards of living (Tsagarousianou, 2004; Scotto, 2015). Even others migrate to colonize other countries (Tololyan, 2012). Some have migrated as religious missionaries. The reasons behind the migration process of the Sinhala Buddhists are specifically important to consider in relation to their Sinhala Buddhist identity maintenance and homeland relations. These reasons can be considered to have an impact on their attitudes towards the homeland and the host land.

The Sinhala Buddhists living in the United Kingdom consist of people who have migrated for several reasons. As Told (2014) has revealed, a minority has claimed political asylum based on political victimization in the homeland. However, as described in chapter 5, the majority of the Sinhala Buddhist migrants in the UK today is not subjected to political victimization or any sort of discrimination in Sri Lanka as opposed to the early diasporic communities, described by Cohen (2008). Their affiliations to the United Kingdom go back to the colonial days of their homeland as a British colony (Reeves, 2014). Western or British culture exists to this date in Sri Lanka as a subculture. As a result, the Sinhalese have been exposed to western culture even before they emigrated to the west. Therefore, it can be argued that they have an inborn ability to resist western cultural influences against their Sinhala Buddhist upbringing. In addition to that, the earliest migrants were Buddhist missionaries to the United Kingdom from Sri Lanka. They were followed by students and professionals from the privileged societies in the homeland (Hear et al., 2004). They have emigrated with a purpose of achieving some specific objectives. These early migrants can be categorized as proactive immigrants in the host land with a particular purpose. Their efforts have resulted in a strong infrastructure for the Sinhala Buddhists to establish a diasporic space in the host land. As Ionescu (2006) has described about modern diasporas, the Sinhala Buddhists migration to the United Kingdom has led to the development of expatriate communities that settled in the host land for better living standards. These migrants have come from multifarious backgrounds for various reasons. However, they have all shown a common interest to remain in the host land for better economic, educational and living standards for themselves and their children. Another aspect of their migration is the communal conflicts and economic instability in their homeland that led to their emigration from the homeland in search for better living standards (see also Told, 2014). These immigrants could therefore be described as reactive to the current situation in their homeland.

As has been described in chapter 3 about the waves of Sri Lankan migrations to the United Kingdom, the Sinhalese are currently experiencing a growth in the diasporic community through migration. In most instances, men have migrated first (see also Told, 2014). Later they brought their partners and children to the host land. Having women and children in the diaspora enables them to strengthen and practice their culture and religion in the diaspora in a homeland-like manner. Their reluctance to a return migration is inevitably due to the socio-economic and political instability in their homeland (see also Chapter 5; Told, 2014). This situation compels them to sustain their diasporic existence. Their emigration from the homeland is thus not a reaction against their Sinhala Buddhist culture in the homeland. Contrary to that, they emigrate carrying their Sinhala Buddhist culture with them. The consequent migration is also a way of providing resources for the strengthening of their Sinhala Buddhist identity in the diaspora.

The Sinhala Buddhist migration to the United Kingdom started with migration for education, employment and missionary purposes. However, at present they also migrate in search of better living standards and a better future for their children in addition to those reasons. This continuous process of migration has resulted in diasporic community building and Sinhala Buddhist identity reconstruction in the host land to facilitate the fulfilment of social and cultural needs of the immigrants.

### **6.3 Life in the Host Land**

Sinhala Buddhists migrating to the United Kingdom have several choices of identity negotiation. As Jules-Rosette (2000) has explained, while referring to the African diaspora in France, migrants have the choice of assimilation, integration and insertion. While instances of assimilation and integration are abundant, the existence of a large network of prominent Sinhala Buddhist cultural enclaves all over the United Kingdom is noteworthy. These communities are functional bodies engaged in a process of reconstructing and maintaining their homeland culture and religion in the host land. This process is sustained by the continuous migrations from the homeland to the host land.

Sinhala Buddhist culture is developed over thousands of years and nourished by Buddhism in Sri Lanka. They get together in the host land for a common purpose of practising their religion and culture. That purpose is further facilitated by their common Sinhala language. Their sense of communal belonging is further reinforced by their food culture, art and music, and their homeland consciousness. They are also actively engaged in passing their religious and cultural heritage to their children in the diaspora. Therefore, they have developed into an ethnically and communally conscious diasporic community with a solidarity based on distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common culture and religious heritage and a belief in a common fate (see also Safran, 1991;

Cohen, 2008).

Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom in general maintain a positive outlook towards the host land society in terms of their ability to practise their culture with minimum interference. They also talk highly about the opportunities they get in the host land for employment and education. They have built their own enclaves, at both individual and communal levels, in the host land to practise their homeland culture and religion. By doing so, they have been able to practise their culture while maintaining a better standard of living compared to their homeland. The opportunities in the host land enables them to lead an enriching life. Their religion, language, events and celebrations provide them with opportunities to live a distinctive and creative Sinhala Buddhist life in the diaspora.

Sinhala Buddhist people take pride in their Sinhala Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka. The parents in the diaspora make every effort to pass that heritage on to their children. They have gone to the extent of opening and funding Sinhala Buddhist temples in their new home cities to fulfil this ambition. These institutes provide the functional framework for their ethno-diasporic identity maintenance. They have experienced success at differing levels. Their efforts have resulted in over three generations of Sinhala Buddhist diasporic existence in the United Kingdom. This is supported by continuous migration of Sinhala Buddhists from Sri Lanka and European countries to the United Kingdom. The differing experiences of the migrants and the ability to stay connected with the homeland by virtual means enables the host land communities to practise their Sinhala Buddhist culture in exact similarity to the homeland, rather than experiencing cultural and social distance. By doing so, they fulfil the quality of developing varieties of associations that endure at least into their third generations (Toloylan, 2008).

Based on the research findings presented in this thesis, the working definition of diaspora that was adopted in Chapter 3 is equally valid with regard to the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. In addition to the immigrant populations, as mentioned in the working definition, the current Sinhala Buddhist diaspora consists of members born in the host land and still practising the homeland culture. They are also actively engaged in identity construction, reconstruction and maintenance in the host land where they intend to continue to live, instead of intending a return migration.

#### **6.4 Generational Differences**

The Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom consists of at least three generations at present. The first generation are people who have migrated to the United Kingdom from the homeland. The second and third generation are people who were born in the host land. The first generation is mainly responsible for the current Sinhala Buddhist diasporic identity construction in

the host land. As described and presented with evidence in this thesis, they have been responsible for the unique Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom, who follow the homeland culture very closely in the host land. As evident from the interview responses, their unprecedented efforts have contributed to accomplish two main objectives on their side. One of the objectives is to create a space for themselves as immigrants in the host land to practise their socio-religious and cultural activities, thereby creating a home away from home with the support of the diasporic community members in the host land. The second objective is to pass on their traditions and to let their children experience what they have experienced in the homeland so that their culture and religion would prevail in the diaspora. This has brought varying degrees of results with the subsequent generations due to various reasons. The collective contributions made by all generations have resulted in a unique Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community in the United Kingdom. However, it is important to recognise and appreciate the differences and deviations among the generations of the diasporic community at this stage. Culture is a flexible phenomenon due to challenges faced in practising cultural activities in the host land, and due to the differences and nature of evolving interactions among individuals.

As this research has shown, the first generation of Sinhala Buddhists in the UK often take every effort to practise their religion and culture in the same ways that they used to do back in the homeland. They use the Sinhala language effectively to recreate the homeland experience in the host land. They are also keen to pass on their culture and traditions to their children so that their diasporic identity will continue in the host land. In order to achieve this, they have put into practice various approaches with differing success rates, the most important of which is to communicate in Sinhala in their homes. They also get together and perform religious rituals in their homes so that their children will make it a habit in their lives. They send their children to Sunday School in the Sinhala Buddhist temples so that they can learn Buddhism and the Sinhala language in a formal way. They take their children and let them participate in Sinhala Buddhist religious and cultural events in the host land. They make Sri Lankan cuisines in their homes. They let their children watch Sinhala dramas and listen to music on the internet. They let them talk to their relations and friends in the homeland. They make regular travels to their homeland with their children so that they can get exposed to their homeland environment and experience life in the homeland.

Thus, first generation parents have achieved different results in their efforts to bring their children into their own culture and traditions. As was evident with SW, NP and SA (Chapter 5), some of the newer generation individuals have learned to talk fluently in the Sinhala language and to practise their homeland culture. SW has gone to the extent of finding partners to her children from Sri Lanka. On the other hand, people like TH make their own choices as to what aspects to keep and give up from the traditions that their parents have taught to them. TH is keen on passing on Buddhism to his

children one day. However, he thinks that the Sinhala language is not useful for his children to learn. He is keen to show his origins to his children by keeping their parents' house in the homeland as a holiday home, but does not think his children will practise their culture in the west. Several other interviewees expressed similar views in their efforts to guide their children. Most of them said that their children understand the Sinhala language, but they speak in English. Some have changed their food culture as they started going to school. These outcomes are partly related to the parents' efforts to guide their children, as they have to manage their time between work and family, and partly related to the childrens' exposure to the social and cultural habits in their host land society upon starting school.

The level of interest and ability to follow Sinhala Buddhists tradition among subsequent generations is also influenced by the time they belong to the diasporic community. The generations born before 2000 had less opportunities to get exposed and interact with homeland traditions and culture due to the non-availability of enabling infrastructure, and therefore got assimilated into the host land society. By contrast, the generations born after 2000 had more opportunities to get exposed and interact with the homeland culture due to the expansion of diasporic activity, infrastructure and virtual means to communicate and share information. Therefore, they show signs of retaining the homeland culture and integrating into the host society at differing levels, based on the choices they make, the impact of which is yet to be seen and would be an important area for future research. As long as Sinhalese immigrants continue to arrive in the UK, the first generation Sinhalese will continue practising their homeland culture in the host land, supported by the growing infrastructure available to them. Subsequent generations may also retain their homeland culture, while some may integrate it with the host land culture. The Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom has thus scope to prevail in the host land for the foreseeable future.

## **6.1 Class and Gender Differences**

Buddhism does not accept discrimination of people based on their class, caste, gender and other identity markers, and treats everyone equal. However, Sri Lankan culture, with the influence of the Indian cultures, has maintained a caste system based on professions and aristocracy. Even to this date, it is maintained in Sri Lanka at moderate levels, even though people have certain freedoms to make choices and choose their professions. As mentioned earlier, Sinhala Buddhists immigrated to the United Kingdom for three main reasons, namely education, professional and economic reasons. Once they arrive in the host land, they have to choose a profession that belongs to the class system in the host land based on their skills and qualifications, yet the Sinhala Buddhist community in the United Kingdom do not openly express such differences among them. The Sinhala Buddhist temples act as a moderator in this regard and enable people of all backgrounds to get together. However, class

differences could still be observed beyond the temple premises both at individual levels and organisational levels (Finn, et al 1999). There were occasions when the researcher was told about such differences, including individual likes and dislikes, by the members of the community. Moreover, professional organisations created by professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and academics indicate that there are differences in Sinhala society. Indeed, the presence of such organisations themselves leads to social divisions and differences, which hinder the common goals and objectives of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora. Yet some members of these organisations do not participate in Sinhala Buddhist religious and cultural activities centred around the Sinhala Buddhist temples. While an association like APSL would say that it is open to all professions, the high standards and etiquette adhered to by its members make it difficult for an individual from the working class to join and get along with them confidently. Therefore, the class barriers act as a burden when it comes to bringing together the Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom. Even so, Sinhala Buddhist temples play a significant role in bringing them all together for their religious and cultural needs underpinned by the Buddhist philosophy of compassion and common faith in achieving nirvana.

Besides class, gender also plays an interesting role in the Sinhala Buddhist community in the UK. The role of women in Sinhala Buddhist society is considered with high respect, and Buddhist culture gives the freedom to women to attend Buddhist temples to participate in religious activities and even to become Buddhist nuns. The cultural aspects of the community restrict the interactions between men and women to a certain extent, which can be considered mild compared to some other eastern cultures. This is reflected to some extent in the researcher's own experience in this research, where women's voices were less heard in the interviews. However, the researcher's observations and the informal discussions held with the women in the community provides ample evidence to the important role that the women play in the community. Women have equal opportunities to participate in religious and cultural events along with men. Therefore, there are no major differences between men and women or discrimination of women in Sinhala Buddhist society. However, there are certain aspects in their daily lives where women take on different importance, based on traditions and their individual mindset. Indeed, it was observed that women take the leading role in housework such as cooking, housekeeping and looking after the children. They play a leading role in maintaining the food culture of the homeland in the diaspora as a continuation of the homeland traditions in the host land. The active role played by women in Sinhalese families has become very important for the continuation of Sinhala Buddhist culture, both at homes and in Sinhala Buddhist temples in the diaspora. In addition, women play a prominent role in maintaining Sinhala Buddhist traditional and cultural identity in the diaspora. Women contribute to traditional arts by participating in traditional

dances, and it was observed that females make up higher numbers in such events than men in the diaspora. They are also a symbol of Sinhala Buddhist tradition when wearing traditional costumes in the diaspora. In short, women in the diaspora, their unique roles in the community and their differences have contributed to the success of Sinhalese Buddhist diasporic existence and identity in the United Kingdom.

## 7. Conclusion

This research is based on the researcher's own personal experience of living as a Sinhala Buddhist diasporic community member in the United Kingdom. It provided an ethnographically-informed descriptive and thematic analysis of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora living in the United Kingdom. The researcher has identified this specific community in the United Kingdom as an ethnoreligious community, of which no previous systematic or formal study has been undertaken. The research specifically explored their motives and perceptions about migration and identity construction in the host land, homeland relations and the lived experience in the host land.

As a first step, this thesis presented a historical study of the heritage of the Sinhala Buddhists people, both in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. The study of literature revealed a rich heritage of Sinhala Buddhists, which inspires and motivates the Sinhalese to care for their homeland and to pass it on to their children. The Sinhala Buddhist culture is a result of the interaction between Buddhism and the community in Sri Lanka who speaks Sinhala language. The main objective of this research was to study how Sinhala Buddhist culture is reconstructed and maintained by the diaspora in the United Kingdom in their search for Sinhala Buddhist identity. In this regard, it also studied the diasporic theories in relation to the researcher's own experience and the literature on the Sinhala Buddhist people, both in the homeland and the host land. The study of diaspora theory revealed the importance of homeland relations, lived experience in the host land and the religious and cultural identities of a migrant as important variables in defining a diasporic community. These three aspects of the research provided the basis for the formulation of the research problem. Based on the literature review and the researchers' own experience, this research illustrated to what extent and how the religion, ethnicity, culture, homeland and identity play a role in one's diasporic existence. As part of the literature review, a set of common features was derived to appreciate the diasporic qualities of this community. These common features were aimed at highlighting the three main aspects of diasporic identity of the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora, namely homeland relations, Sinhala Buddhist culture and their lived experience in the host land. The research methodology was designed around ethnographically-informed research with the intention of obtaining first-hand insights as a member of this community in the United Kingdom. The field research was conducted in diasporic communities all over the United Kingdom, and included ethnographic participatory techniques, observations, and formal and informal interviews. The thematic analysis identified important aspects in Sinhalese Buddhist life, such as language, food culture, arts and music, events and celebrations as important variables in the identity construction of Sinhalese people in the host land as these resonate with the culture, belief and norms in the homeland.

The research findings indicate that Sinhala Buddhist people in the United Kingdom have developed into a unique diasporic community based on their ethnoreligious orientation. They have developed diasporic enclaves all over the host land and maintain an active network both within and outside the host land to maintain their diasporic status in the host land. They use their religious orientation, Buddhist culture, Sinhala language and other cultural activities such as food, arts and music, events and celebrations to reconstruct a home away from the homeland. Their identity construction, reconstruction and maintenance in the host land is supported by the continuous migrations from the homeland. Migration to the host land serves the purpose of strengthening the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic existence in addition to providing the migrants with a better standard of living and education in the host land. The Sinhala Buddhists' diasporic existence in the United Kingdom is largely confined to the individual and communal enclaves centred around Sinhala Buddhist temples, which are spread all over the host land. These enclaves are vibrant places where the Sinhala Buddhists engage in their identity construction and maintenance away from the homeland. Their events and celebrations are a way of proclaiming their existence to the host land society. The conducive environment in the host land encourages this community to envision and work towards a distinctive and enriching Sinhala Buddhist existence in the host land. They care and work for the prosperity of their homeland based on their perceptions of an ethnoreligious heritage in the homeland. They continue to build relationships with the homeland on the basis of mutual benefits. Their diasporic existence economically supports the good causes in the homeland. In return, their diasporic existence is relentlessly supported by continuous migration, supply of goods and services from the homeland. The virtual activities between the diasporic communities and the homeland supports this process in many ways. Such activities have opened up new opportunities for homeland relations. In addition, they have been able to close the gap between diasporic practices and homeland practices surrounding culture and religion.

This research has identified several factors that facilitate and strengthen the diasporic experience and functionality of an ethnoreligious diaspora by means of the study of Sinhala Buddhist diaspora in the United Kingdom. Those factors are some specific features of their culture, which is generally known as the Sinhala Buddhist culture. This research has proposed that in addition to the religion and the language of a diasporic community, several other features of their culture provide psychological and sociological grounds to strengthen their social functionality and existence as a diasporic community. Food culture, homeland music and arts are prominent in this regard. These factors work to maintain and strengthen the diasporic community by contributing to the functionality and individual interactionism within this community. These factors, namely, religion, language, food, arts and music are important aspects of the lived experience of any diasporic community which contributes to the

features developed in the diasporic theories. Features such as collective memories of a life in the homeland, common culture and developing homeland relations are based on these factors to a large extent.

Based on the findings of this research, the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora can be described as a unique ethnoreligious diaspora that shares the same ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural values with the patronage of their homeland, and is committed to the maintenance and prosperity of their homeland. This unique ethnoreligious diaspora provides opportunities for future research, as many questions remain unanswered that would merit further research. Some of those questions are mentioned below as recommendations:

1. The researcher's observations and personal lived experience suggest that the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic communities' political affiliations play a critical role in homeland politics. The recent development of social media and the other virtual communication methods are utilised in this political process. Therefore, it would be important to research their political affiliations, interests and influences on the political climate in the homeland.
2. The Sinhala Buddhist communities in the United Kingdom have expressed differing opinions about the perceptions of the host society. While most of them express a favourable opinion, some have had negative experiences. It would be interesting to conduct research on the attitude and perceptions of the host society towards the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora, specifically as a Buddhist ethnoreligious diaspora.
3. Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom do not show any signs of return migration. However, they continue to build relationships with their homeland. Therefore, it would be interesting to research their notions of belonging and citizenship in the context of their diasporic experiences.
4. Sinhala Buddhists in the United Kingdom consists of several generations of the diasporic community. These generations have had differing levels of experiences and perceptions of the Sinhala Buddhist culture. The choices they make with regard to assimilation into the host society and keeping the homeland culture alive in the diaspora will have an impact on the long term survival of this diaspora. It would be important to study the subsequent generations with respect to their attitudes and perceptions towards the homeland culture in order to get a measure of the long term future of this diasporic community.
5. The women plays an important role in the Sinhala Buddhist diasporic existence. This research falls short of researching and analysing in detail, the role of women in the Sinhala Buddhist diasporas. It would be important to let the women's voice be heard and do a research on women's role in the Sinhala Buddhist diaspora.

The Sinhala Buddhist diasporic ethnoreligious experience is a result of a social function based on symbolic interactions and individual actions of this community to construct and maintain their identity in a home away from home. These actions result in building relationships among the host land and homeland societies. Individuals move in and out of this social unit based on their individual

relationships, experiences, consciousness and choices. Their lived experiences determine their political affiliations, sense of belonging and identity. Sinhala Buddhists' diasporic experience is a continuous process of fulfilling the cultural, religious and citizenship needs of this unique community.

# Bibliography

- Abesinghe, D. (2016). *On culture and civilization*. Rajagiriya: Sarasa (Pvt) Ltd.
- Agarwal, R. (2009). Water Festivals of Thailand: The Indian Connection. *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, 9(10), pp. 7-18.
- Aitchison, C., Hopkins, P. and Kwan, M. (2008). *Geographies of Muslim identities*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Akenson, D. (1996). *The Irish diaspora*. Toronto: P.D. Meany Co.
- Alcoff, L. and Mendieta, E. (2003). *Identities*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Alfonso, C., Kokot, W. and Tölölyan, K. (2006). *Diaspora, identity and religion*. London: Routledge.
- Allotey, A. (2010). *Diaspora and Destination Image A Study of Ghanaian Community in the Netherlands creating Destination Image to The Dutch Community*. [online] Tourism-master.com. Available at: <http://www.tourism-master.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Ada-Allotey-TDM-Thesis-2010.pdf> [Accessed 22 Jan. 2018].
- Angrosino, M. (2008). *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. London: SAGE.
- Araujo, A. and Ana, L. (2010). Welcome the Diaspora. *Ethnologies*, 32(2), pp.145-178.
- Atkinson, P. (2015). *For ethnography*. London: SAGE.
- Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. and Lofland, L. (2007). *Handbook of ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Banks, M. and Zeitlyn, D. (2015). *Visual methods in social research*. London: Sage.
- Barber, T. (2015). *Oriental identities in super-diverse Britain*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Basu, P. (2005). *Roots tourism as return movement: Semantics and the Scottish diaspora*. Manchester: Manchester University press.
- Baubock, R. and Faist, T. (2010). *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*. IMISCOE: Amsterdam University press
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge
- Bhimji, F. (2008). Cosmopolitan belonging and diaspora: second-generation British Muslim women travelling to South Asia. *Citizenship Studies*, 12(4), pp.413-427.

Bps.org.uk. (2014). *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2nd edition, 2014)* | BPS. [online] Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-code-human-research-ethics-2nd-edition-2014> [Accessed 28 Nov. 2015].

Brah, A. (1998). *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.

Brewer, J. (2000). *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brown, R. and Capozza, D. (2006). *Social Identities: Motivational, Emotional and Cultural Influences*. New York: Psychology Press

Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(1), pp.1-19.

Brun, C. and Van Hear, N. (2012). Between the local and the diasporic: the shifting centre of gravity in war-torn Sri Lanka's transnational politics. *Contemporary South Asia*, 20(1), pp.61-75.

Butler, K. (2001). Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 10(2), pp.189-219.

Clò, C. and Fiore, T. (2001). Unlikely Connections: Italy's Cultural Formations between Home and the Diaspora. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 10(3), pp. 415-441.

Coffey, A. (1999). *Ethnographic self*. London: SAGE

Cohen, R. (2008). *Global Diasporas: An introduction*. London: Routledge

Compas.ac.uk. (2004). *The contribution of UK-based diasporas to development and poverty reduction*. [online] Available at: [https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2004-Diasporas\\_UK\\_Poverty\\_Reduction\\_DfID.pdf](https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2004-Diasporas_UK_Poverty_Reduction_DfID.pdf) [Accessed 24 Oct. 2015].

Corperahewa, S. (2015). *Origin of Sinhala and Kalinga – Lanka Linguistic Affinities*. University of Colombo. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284480892\\_Origin\\_of\\_Sinhala\\_and\\_Kalinga\\_-\\_Lanka\\_Linguistic\\_Affinities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284480892_Origin_of_Sinhala_and_Kalinga_-_Lanka_Linguistic_Affinities) [Accessed 05 Jan 18]

Crisp, J. (2014). *Policy challenges of the new Diasporas: migrant networks and their impact on asylum flows and regimes*. Policy Research Unit, UNHCR [online]. Available from: <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/riia3.pdf> [Accessed 05 Dec 14]

Cultural.gov.lk. (2016). *Sri Lankan food culture*. [online] Available at: [http://www.cultural.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=65%3Asri-lankan-food-culture&catid=34%3Aleft&Itemid=72&lang=en](http://www.cultural.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65%3Asri-lankan-food-culture&catid=34%3Aleft&Itemid=72&lang=en) [Accessed 5 Jan. 2017].

de Haas, H. (2007). Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration. *Development and*

*Change*, 38(5), pp.819-841.

Department of census and Statistics-Sri Lanka (2012). [online] Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/page.asp?page=Population%20and%20Housing> [accessed 20 Dec 2015]

Derrett, R. (2003). Making Sense of How Festivals Demonstrate a Community's Sense of Place. *Event Management*, 8(1), pp.49-58.

Dufoix, S. (2008). *Diasporas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fetterman, D. (2010). *Ethnography*. London: SAGE.

Finn, M., Kidd, A. and Nicholls, D. (2000). Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940. *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 32(4), pp.682-684.

Flitsch, M. (2011). Hesitant hands on changing tables: Negotiating dining patterns in Diaspora food culture transfer. *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift Der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft*, 65(4), pp. 969-984.

Fortier, A-M. (1999). Re-membling places and the performance of belonging(s). *Theory, Culture and Society*. 16 (2), pp. 41-64.

Garbin, D. (2005). *Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK: some observations on socio-cultural dynamics, religious trends and transnational politics*. Conference Human Rights and Bangladesh: SOAS

Garnweidner, L., Terragni, L., Pettersen, K. and Mosdøl, A. (2012). Perceptions of the Host Country's Food Culture among Female Immigrants from Africa and Asia: Aspects Relevant for Cultural Sensitivity in Nutrition Communication. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 44(4), pp.335-342.

Geiger, W. (1912). *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicles of Ceylon*. London: Oxford University press.

Gledhill, W. (2018). *Association of Social Anthropologists*. [online] Theasa.org. Available at: <https://www.theasa.org/> [Accessed 28 May 2018].

Gray, A. (2005). *Research Practice for Cultural Studies*. London: Sage

Greenblatt, S. (2009). *Cultural mobility: A manifesto*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Hall, S. (1990). *Cultural Identity and Diaspora. Identity: Community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart

Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage

- Hammersely, M. and Atkinson, P. (2010). *Ethnography*. London: Routledge
- Hammersley, M. (1993). *Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*. London: SAGE
- Hatcher, B. A. (2016). *Hinduism in the Modern World*. New York and London: Routledge
- Hear, V., Pieke, F. and Vertovec, S. (2004). *The contribution of UK-based Diasporas to development and poverty reduction*. [online] [Compas.ox.ac.uk](https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2004-Diasporas_UK_Poverty_Reduction_DfID.pdf). Available at: [https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2004-Diasporas\\_UK\\_Poverty\\_Reduction\\_DfID.pdf](https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/ER-2004-Diasporas_UK_Poverty_Reduction_DfID.pdf) [Accessed 5 Jan. 2018].
- Herath, D., Gamage, K., Malalasekara, A. (2007). *Research Report on Sinhala Lexicon*. University of Colombo. [online] Available at: <http://www.pan110n.net/english/final%20reports/pdf%20files/Sri%20Lanka/SRI01.pdf> [Accessed 05/01/18]
- Huang, W., Norman, W. C., Ramshaw, G. P., (2012). *Home away from home: diaspora tourism and transnational attachment of second-generation Chinese-Americans*. [online] Available at: <http://tra.omnibooksonline.com/2012/tra-51776-1.4568/2012-t-002-1.4662/2012-69-a-1.4755/2012-69-a-1.4756> [Accessed 05/11/14]
- Hughes, J. and Sharrock, W. (1990). *The Philosophy of Social Research*. London: Longman
- Ionescu (2006) *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers*. International Organization for Migration. [online] Available at: [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/ICP/IDM/MRS26.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/IDM/MRS26.pdf) [Accessed 07 Oct14]
- Iphofen, R. (2013). *Research Ethics in Ethnography/Anthropology*. [online] [ec.europa.eu](http://ec.europa.eu). Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/ethics-guide-ethnog-anthrop\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/ethics-guide-ethnog-anthrop_en.pdf) [Accessed 28 Jan. 2016].
- Jaeger, K. and Mykletun, R. (2013). Festivals, Identities, and Belonging. *Event Management*, 17(3), pp.213-226.
- Jules-Rosette, B. (2000). Identity Discourses and Diasporic Aesthetics in Black Paris: Community Formation and the Translation of Culture. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. 9 (1), pp. 39-58.
- Karunaratne, M. A. N. (2014). *The Sri Lankan Language Community and Social Effects of Sinhala Diglossia*. University of Kelaniya. [online] Available at: <http://hu.kln.ac.lk/depts/sinhala/docs/Publications/The%20Sri%20Lankan%20Language%20Community.pdf> [Accessed 05 Jan18]
- Kim, H. (2011). A Buddhist Christmas: The Buddha's Birthday Festival in Colonial Korea (1928-1945). *Journal of Korean Religions*, 2(2), pp.47-82.
- King, R., Lulle, A., Conti, F., Mueller, D. and Scotto, G. (2014). *The Lure of London: A Comparative Study of Recent Graduate Migration from Germany, Italy and Latvia*. Sussex Centre for Migration Research. [online] Available at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263889893\\_The\\_Lure\\_of\\_London\\_A\\_Comparative\\_Study\\_of\\_Recent\\_Graduate\\_Migration\\_from\\_Germany\\_Italy\\_and\\_Latvia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263889893_The_Lure_of_London_A_Comparative_Study_of_Recent_Graduate_Migration_from_Germany_Italy_and_Latvia) [Accessed 05 May17].

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Krüger, S. and Trandafoiu, R. (2014). *The globalization of musics in transit*. New York: Routledge.

Lankalibrary.com. (2016). [online] Available at: <http://www.lankalibrary.com/> [Accessed 16 May 2016].

Lau, L. (2016). The Sinhalese Diaspora: New Directions in Sri Lankan Diasporic Writing. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 39(1), pp.47-63.

Liston, Y. (1999). The Transformation of Buddhism during British Colonialism. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 14(1), pp.189-210.

Loddo, S. (2006). The Economic Contribution of Diasporas to their Home countries: the Case of the Palestinian Diaspora. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278629733\\_The\\_Economic\\_Contribution\\_of\\_Diasporas\\_to\\_their\\_Home\\_countries\\_the\\_Case\\_of\\_the\\_Palestinian\\_Diaspora](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278629733_The_Economic_Contribution_of_Diasporas_to_their_Home_countries_the_Case_of_the_Palestinian_Diaspora) [Accessed 05 May17].

Londonbuddhistvihara.org. (2016). *Anagarika Dharmapala the Founder of the London Buddhist Vihara & Maha Bodhi Society*. [online] Available at: <http://www.londonbuddhistvihara.org/Test%20site/founder.php> [Accessed 16 May 2016].

Ma, L. J. C. and Cartier, C. (2003). *The Chinese Daspora: Space, Place, Mobility and Identity*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield

Macdonald, S. (2008). *Research methods handbook: Introductory guide to research methods for social research*. Manchester : Centre for Local Economic Strategies

Maruyama, N. and Stronza, A. (2010). *Roots Tourism of Chinese Americans*. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261971911\\_Roots\\_Tourism\\_of\\_Chinese\\_Americans](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261971911_Roots_Tourism_of_Chinese_Americans) [Accessed 05 May17].

Maruyama, N., Weber, I. and Stronza, A. (2010). Negotiating Identity: Experiences of "Visiting Home" Among Chinese Americans. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 10(1), pp.1-14.

Mason, C. (2014). *A Short History of Asia*. China: Palgrave McMillan

Mercer, K. (2008). *Exiles, diasporas & strangers*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Pahl, K. (2012). Every Object Tells a Story. *Home Cultures*, 9(3), pp.303-327.

Palat, R. (2015). Empire, Food and the Diaspora: Indian Restaurants in Britain. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(2), pp.171-186.

- Parveen, R. (2016). Food to Remember: Culinary Practice and Diasporic Identity. *Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society*, 44(1), pp.47-56.
- Pasura, D. M. (2008) *A fractured diaspora : strategies and identities among Zimbabweans in Britain*. PhD thesis, University of Warwick. [online] Available from: <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/2378/> [Accessed 1 oct. 2019]
- Perera, N. (2014). The maintenance of Sri Lankan languages in Australia – comparing the experience of the Sinhalese and Tamils in the homeland. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(3), pp.297-312.
- Pickering, M. (2009). *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Powers, J. (2011). Reimagining the Imagined Community. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 55(10), pp.1362-1378.
- Prabhakar, M. (2017). Poetry as resistance: hybridity and the ‘third space’ of Indian diaspora, *A Global conference on Diaspora and policies*. International institute of Social studies, 5-7 October. The Hague: Netherlands.
- Rabikowska, M. (2010). The ritualization of food, home and national identity among Polish migrants in London. *Social Identities*, 16(3), pp. 377-398.
- Raman, P. (2011). “Me in Place, and the Place in Me”. *Food, Culture & Society*, 14(2), pp. 165-180.
- Raman, P. (2015). It's because we're Indian, innit?' Cricket and the South Asian diaspora in post-war Britain. *Identities*, 22(2), pp. 215-229.
- Raman, V. (2014). Food: Its Many Aspects in Science, Religion, and Culture. *Zygon*, 49(4), pp. 958-976.
- Reeves, P. (2014). *The encyclopaedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora*. Singapore: Tien Wah
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Safran, W. (1991). ‘Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return’. *Diaspora*, 1(1), pp. 83-99
- Sales, R., Hatziprokopiou, P., Christiansen, F., D'Angelo, A., Liang, X., Lin, X. and Montagna, N. (2011). London's Chinatown: diaspora, identity and belonging. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 7(2), pp.195-231.
- Sangharakshita, B. (2011). *The Anagarika Dharmapala*. Colombo: DreamsLineAd
- Sarkissian, M. (2002). Playing Portuguese: Constructing Identity in Malaysia's Portuguese Community. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 11, pp. 215-232.

Scotto, G. (2015). From 'emigrants' to 'Italians': what is new in Italian migration to London?. *Modern Italy*, 20(2), pp.153-165.

Sesatha.co.uk. (2017). *UK Buddhist Temple Contact Details*. [online] Available at: <http://www.sesatha.co.uk/BuddhistRes.htm> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2017].

Sharma, C. L. (1976) Ethnicity, Communal Relations, and Education in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) [microform] / C. L. Sharma Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse [Washington, D.C.]. [online]. Available at: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED125143> [Accessed 04 Nov 2016]

Shiva, V. and Sanford, A. (2011). *Growing Stories From India: Religion and the Fate of Agriculture (Culture of the Land)*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Siddhisena, K. and White, P. (1999). The Sri Lankan Population of Great Britain: Migration and Settlement. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 8(4), pp.511-536.

Sidney M. (2008) Food and Diaspora. *Food, Culture & Society*, 11:(4), pp.509-523.

Siriweera, W. I. (2002). *History of Sri Lanka: From the earliest times up to the sixteenth century*. Colombo: Dayawansa Jayakody & Company.

Sriskandarajah, D. (2002). The Migration-Development Nexus: Sri Lanka Case Study. *International Migration*, 40(5), pp.283-307.

Sriskandarajah, D. (2003) *Sri Lanka/ Forced Migration*. [online]. Available from: <http://tamilnation.co/tamileelam/defacto/sriskandarajah.pdf> [Accessed 07/10/14]

Stanczk, G. (2007). *Visual Research Methods*. London: SAGE

Story, J. and Walker, I. (2016). The impact of diasporas: markers of identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 39, pp. 135-141.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2015). Identity negotiation theory. In J. Bennett (Ed.), *Sage Encyclopaedia of Intercultural Competence*. 1, pp. 418-422.

Told, M. R. (2014). *Told, Michaela R. (2014) Identity, Belonging and Political Activism in The Sri Lankan Communities in Germany. PhD thesis, University of East London..* [online] Roar.uel.ac.uk. Available at: [http://roar.uel.ac.uk/4005/1/TOLD\\_TRANSNATIONALISM\\_GENDER\\_SRI\\_LANKA\\_V1REV4f\\_04052014%5B1%5D.pdf](http://roar.uel.ac.uk/4005/1/TOLD_TRANSNATIONALISM_GENDER_SRI_LANKA_V1REV4f_04052014%5B1%5D.pdf) [Accessed 5 Oct. 2018].

Tololyan, K. (2012). *Diaspora studies: Past, present and promise*. [online]. Available from: [https://www.academia.edu/28876043/Diaspora\\_studies\\_Past\\_present\\_and\\_promise](https://www.academia.edu/28876043/Diaspora_studies_Past_present_and_promise) [Accessed 07/7/15].

Trandafoiu, R. (2006). The Geopolitics of Work Migrants: The Romanian Diaspora, Legal Rights and Symbolic Geographies. *REGIO A review of Studies on Minorities, Politics and Society*. 9, pp. 130 -

Tsagarousianou, R. (2004). Rethinking the concept of diaspora: mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1(1), pp. 52-65

Turpie, D. (2001). *Wesak and the Re-Creation of Buddhist Tradition*. [online]. Available at: <http://mrsp.mcgill.ca/reports/html/Wesak/> [Accessed on 01/07/2017].

Van De Ven, A.H. (2007). *Engaged scholarship: A guide for organizational and social research*. Oxford: Oxford

Vertovec, S. (2004). "Religion and diaspora". *New approaches to the study of religion: volume two: textual, comparative, sociological and cognitive approaches*, Edited by: Antes, P., Geertz, A.W. and Warne, R.R. 275–304. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Webb, R. (2004). *London Buddhist Vihara: A Chronicle*. London: Linh-So'n Buddhist Association

Wickramasinghe, M. (2015). *Buddhism and Culture*. Battaramulla: Print Wave (Pvt) Ltd.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview questions

The following questions were used as the structure of the interview, but further details will be uncovered based on the themes of this structure during the interview by means of discussions and extended questions.

1. Age: 16-25/ 26-35/ 36-45/ 46-55/ 56-65/ 66-75
2. Where were you born?
3. When did you come to the United Kingdom (if not born in the UK)?
4. Why did you come to the United Kingdom?
5. How did you come to the United Kingdom?
6. What did you bring with you and who else came along with you?
7. Do you keep contacts with the Sri Lankan Community in the United Kingdom?
8. What Sri Lankan communal events do you participate in the United Kingdom?
9. What language do you speak at home?
10. How do you manage to practice your culture and religion in the UK?
11. How important is Buddhism to your life?
12. How do you manage to cook and enjoy Sinhalese cuisines in the UK?
13. How do you manage to enjoy Sinhalese art, music and cinema in the UK?
14. What are the things that you remember from Sri Lanka and would like to have here with you for personal, general and public use?
15. How do you find living with other ethnic and religious groups in the United Kingdom?
16. How do you find living as an ethnic minority in the United Kingdom?
17. What feelings do you hold about your homeland?
18. What kind of memories or images do you hold about life in Sri Lanka?
19. How do you manage to keep contact with your homeland?
20. How often do you visit Sri Lanka? Do you take your children to visit Sri Lanka?
21. What are the places in Sri Lanka that you would like to visit?
22. Do you visit Solosmasthan and other religious places in Sri Lanka?
23. How do you encourage your children to follow a Sri Lankan way of living?
24. Do you think you should return to your homeland one day?

## Appendix 2: Interviewee Details

Interviewee	Date	Age	Sex	Location	Mode of interview
AA	13.01.2017	46-55	Male	Liverpool	One to one at interviewees residence
Ven. S	27.01.2017	26-35	Male	Liverpool	One to one at the Temple in Liverpool
AM	15.02.2017	36-45	Female	Liverpool	One to one at LJMU Liverpool
PG	23.02.2017	46-55	Male	Liverpool	One to one at interviewees residence
KS	02.03.2017	26-35	Male	Liverpool	One to one at interviewees residence
TH	13.03.2017	18-25	Male	Liverpool	One to one at University of Liverpool
SA	22.03.2017	46-55	Male	Liverpool	One to one at interviewees residence
SS	31.03.2017	36-45	Male	Liverpool	One to one at the Temple in Liverpool
NP	29.04.2017	36-45	Male	London	Over the telephone
IH	03.05.2017	46-55	Male	Liverpool	Over the telephone
PP	05.05.2017	36-45	Male	Manchester	Over the telephone
Ven K	14.06.2017	46-55	Male	Birmingham	One to one at the Temple in Birmingham
IS	07.05.2017	36-45	Female	Liverpool	Over the telephone
Ven SW	10.07.2017	56-65	Male	London	One to one at London Buddhist Vihara
Ven. R	29.07.2017	46-55	Male	Glasgow	One to one at the Temple in Glasgow
DJ	16.08.2017	36-45	Male	Liverpool	One to one at the Temple in Liverpool
MJ	30.08.2017	76-85	Male	London	Over the telephone
SP	10.09.2017	56-75	Female	Liverpool	Over the telephone
SW	13.10.2017	46-55	Female	London	Over the telephone
GW	15.10.2017	66-75	Male	Liverpool	One to one at the Temple in Liverpool
NP	06.11.2017	66-75	Female	Liverpool	Over the telephone
SD	12.11.2017	56-65	Male	London	Over the telephone



## LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY GATEKEEPER INFORMATION SHEET

(A gatekeeper in this research can be a chief incumbent in a Buddhist temple or a president of an organisation)

**Title of Project:** The Sinhalese Diaspora in the United Kingdom: Negotiation of Sinhalese Identities

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake, School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

**1. What is the reason for this letter?**

I hereby request your consent to observe and take part in the activities at your organization as a part of my research and to seek participation of your members in my research project.

**2. What is the purpose of the study/rationale for the project?**

The primary aim of this project is to research into the lived experience, homeland relations and identity negotiations of the Sinhalese diaspora in the United Kingdom and to document a descriptive case study for future references.

**3. What we are asking you to do?**

I seek your consent to conduct participatory research, which will include the participation of the researcher in the community activities that takes place in your premises and the participation of the members of your organization in my research including interviews, filming and recording. The above mentioned methods will be used to collect data from the religious, social or cultural activities, which will be utilized to produce a case study of the lived experience of the Sinhalese community in the UK. The data collected will be treated with confidentiality and will not be published in any form without the consent of the participants.

**4. Why do we need access to your facilities/staff/students?**

Your permission is needed because most of the events of the Sinhalese community can be observed and participated at your facility. In addition to this, members of this community could be met in your facility.

**5. If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**

The researcher will participate and observe the events taking place at your facility, such as religious ceremonies, Social events, cultural events and sport events throughout the year. The events will be filmed or recorded. The researcher will seek consent of the members of your organization to take part in one to one interviews and informal interviews in the form of discussions and dialogues.

**6. How we will use the Information?**

The information collected will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained right throughout.

**7. Will the name of my organisation taking part in the study be kept confidential?'**

Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected with regard to you and your organisation and confidential information will not be published without your consent.

**8. What will taking part involve? What should I do now?**

- Sign and return the **Gatekeeper Consent Form** provided

**Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researcher:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake,  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Liverpool John Moors University  
Email: [n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk)

**This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee**  
Date of approval: 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2016  
REC reference number: 16/HSS/030

**Contact Details of Researcher :**  
Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake,  
Email: [n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk)

**Contact Details of Academic Supervisor:** *(student studies only)*  
Prof. David Chalcraft  
Email: [D.J.Chalcraft@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:D.J.Chalcraft@ljmu.ac.uk)

**If you have any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact [researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.**

Appendix 4: Gatekeeper Consent Form



**LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY  
GATEKEEPER CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Project: The Sinhalese Diaspora in the United Kingdom: Negotiation of Sinhalese Identities**

**Name of Researchers: Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake,**

Please tick to confirm your understanding of the study and that you are happy for your organisation to take part and your facilities to be used to host parts of the project.

This project involves participatory, and observatory research which includes interviews, filming and recording taking place at the premises and in events of Sinhalese community in the UK.

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
  
- 2. I understand that participation of our organisation and students/members in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect legal rights.
  
- 3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.
  
- 4. I agree for our organisation and members to take part in the above study.
  
- 5. I agree to conform to the data protection act

Name of Gatekeeper:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

## Appendix 5: Participant information Sheet (one to one interviews)



# LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (One to one interviews)

**Title of Project:** The Sinhalese Diaspora in the United Kingdom: Negotiation of Sinhalese Identities

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake, School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

### 1. What is the purpose of the study?

The Sinhalese in the United Kingdom have not been subjected to a formal study as to how they maintain their cultural, religious and social life in the host land. This research will study their diaspora status, lived experience, identity negotiations and homeland relations, by means of study of their life style, interviews, participatory research and observations.

### 2. Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive.

### 3. What will happen to me if I take part?

- The participant will be involved in an approximately one hour interview or the participants will be observed and engaged with in informal interviews during socio-cultural and religious events to gather information on their lived experience in the UK.
- The findings from the Interviews will be used in descriptive and critical analysis. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained with regard to the personal details of the participants.

### 4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?

There are no foreseen risks involved with participating in this research

### 5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and safeguarded during and after the study. Pseudonyms will be used in transcripts and written reports to help protect the identity of individuals and organisations.

**This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee**

Date of approval: 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2016

REC reference number: **16/HSS/030**

**Contact Details of Researcher:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake,  
Email: [n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk)

**Contact Details of Academic Supervisor:** Prof. David Chalcraft  
Email: [D.J.Chalcraft@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:D.J.Chalcraft@ljmu.ac.uk)

**If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact [researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.**





## **LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Use of video recordings and photography)**

**Title of Project:** The Sinhalese Diaspora in the United Kingdom: Negotiation of Sinhalese Identities

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake, School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

### **1. What is the purpose of the study?**

The Sinhalese in the United Kingdom have not been subjected to a formal study as to how they maintain their cultural, religious and social life in the host land. This research will study their diaspora status, lived experience, identity negotiations and homeland relations, by means of study of their life style, interviews, participatory research and observations.

### **2. Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive.

### **3. What will happen to me if I take part?**

- The participant will be observed and engaged with in informal interviews during socio-cultural and religious events to gather information on their lived experience in the UK. Photographs, audio and video recordings will be collected during the study.
- The findings from the observations and participatory activities will be used in descriptive and critical analysis and in publications.

### **4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?**

There are no foreseen risks involved with participating in this research

**This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee**

Date of approval: 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2016

REC reference number: **16/HSS/030**

**Contact Details of Researcher:** Nandasinghe Arachchige Jitendra Wijenayake,  
Email: n.a.wijenayake@2015.ljmu.ac.uk

**Contact Details of Academic Supervisor:** Prof. David Chalcraft  
Email: D.J.Chalcraft@ljmu.ac.uk

**If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.**



## Appendix 9: Field Research Risk Assessment



Health and Safety Unit

**Title of the research project:** The Sinhalese Diaspora in the United Kingdom: Negotiation of Sinhalese Identities

**Name of the Researcher:** Nandasinghe A. J. Wijenayake

<b>Risk Assessment</b>			
Building	Various-Buddhist temples, Private houses and community centres	Date of Risk Assessment	18/04/2016
School/Service Department	Humanities and Social Sciences	Assessment carried out by	Nandasinghe A. J. Wijenayake
Location	Various	Signed	
Activity	Interviews, observations and interactions in community events	Persons consulted during the Risk Assessment	Pr. David Chalcraft Dr. Sara Parker Dr. Simone Kruger
<b>STEP 1</b> What are the Hazards? <i>Spot hazards by</i>	The researcher might encounter unexpected objections and threats while participating in the communal events and doing the research. The researcher might be exposed to unforeseen dangers while interviewing the participants at their own residences. Sensible and stressful topics could be discussed during the interviews.		
<b>STEP 2</b> Who might be harmed and how? <i>Identify groups of people. Staff and students are obvious, but please remember</i>	Sensible and stressful memories arising during interviews can cause depression and psychological harm to the participants. Possible objections to the research activity can cause disputes and depression to the researcher.		
<b>STEP 3 (a)</b> What are you already doing? <i>What is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm, or to make any harm less serious</i>	The researcher will make an effort to handle discussion of overly sensitive issues and memories, sensibly when stressful situations arise. The research participants and the community who are observed will be informed about the research and their consent will be sought. Gatekeepers consent will be sought wherever possible to avoid disputes. The participants have the right to withdraw from the research at all stages.		

<p><b>STEP 3 (b)</b> What further action is needed?</p> <p><i>Compare what you are already doing with good practice. If there is a gap, please list what needs to be done.</i></p>	<p>The researcher will work on building up trust between the researcher and the participants with time so that any fears of harm or wrongdoing will not arise in the minds of participants. In a situation where a participant needs counselling and support in handling depression and stress he or she will be directed to either the chief incumbent at a Buddhist temple, president of a Sri Lankan Community centre, nearest refugee and migrant centre or the local NHS physiological therapies services (for example, chief incumbent at the Liverpool Sri Sam Buddha Vihar, president of the Sri Lankan Community centre in Liverpool or Talk Liverpool NHS centres in Liverpool).</p> <p>Contact details for counselling (in Liverpool):</p> <p>Dr. Gunapala Welhengama, Sri Lankan Community Center in Liverpool, 10 Grampian Court Grampian Road, Liverpool, L7 0JX. Tel. 01513529504</p> <p>Venerabab Sugatharathana Thero, Sri Sambuddha Viharaya, 10 Grampian Court Grampian Road, Liverpool, L7 0JX. Tel. 01513529504</p> <p>Talk Liverpool Central (NHS), 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH. Tel: 1512282300</p>
<p><b>STEP 4</b> How will you put the assessment into action?</p> <p><i>Please remember to prioritise. Deal with the hazards that are high risk and have serious consequences first</i></p>	<p>Ethical guidelines provided by the professional bodies will be consulted. Participants will be provided with all the necessary information with regard to the research and their consent will be taken either in written or verbally. The researcher will inform the supervisors and a family member of the full details of the places where he will be, whenever he conducts an interview or participate in an event for research purposes. The researcher will make sure that he has a fully charged telephone in his possession during such research activities. This process will be continued and reviewed right throughout the project.</p> <p>The researcher will keep contact details of counselling services to be used in case of an emergency or need.</p>

**Review as necessitated by changes.**

Appendix 10: Field Visits		
Date	Occasion	Comments
03.04.2016	Sinhala New Year Festival in Liverpool	Participated as a member of the community and got acquainted with the participants
19.08.2016	Offering of a Golden fence at Sri Sambuddha Vihara in Liverpool	Participated and observed to proceedings at the ceremony
06.11.2016	Katina Ceremony in Liverpool.	Participated as an observer and got acquainted with the participants
13.01.2017	Visited AA at his residence in Liverpool	Interviewed AA
27.01.2017	Visited temple in Liverpool	Interviewed Ven. Sugatharathana Thero
15.02.2017	Visited AM at LJMU	Interviewed AM
23.02.2017	Visited PG at his residence	Interviewed PG and had dinner with them
02.03.2017	Visited KS at his Residence	Interviews KS
13.03.2017	Met TH at University of Liverpool	Interviewed TH
18.03.2017	Program for 'Worshipping Parents' Liverpool.	Participated as an observer at the Liverpool Buddhist temple
22.03.2017	Visited Kapila's House	Interview Kapila, took some photographs with them and had dinner with them
31.03.2017	Met SS at the temple in Liverpool	Interviewed SS
14.05.2017	Opening ceremony of the Stupa at Jethavana vihara in Birmingham	Travelled to Birmingham to observe and participate. Some participants agreed to give interviews.
28.05.2017	Vesak ceremony at Liverpool	Participated as an observer and had informal interviews at the temple in Liverpool.
12.06.2017	Opening Ceremony of the Leeds Buddhist Vihara	Travelled to Leeds and participated in the opening ceremony. Had informal interviews with the gathering
14.06.2017	Visited Jethavana Temple in Birmingham	Interviewed Ven. K. Gunawangsa Thero
16.07.2017	Festival of Cricket, London	Participated as an observer in this annual Sri Lankan diasporic event
16.07.2017	Vas Aradhana at London Buddhist Vihara	Participated as an observer and some participant agreed for interviews.
17.07.2017	London Buddhist Vihara	Interviewed Ven. Seelawimala Thero
04.08.2017	Glasgow Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara	Visited the temple and interviewed Ven. Revatha Thero
06.08.2017	Special Arms Giving Ceremony at Suranga's Residence in Liverpool	Participated as a contributor and observer.
16.08.2017	Visited the temple in Liverpool	Interviewed DJ

23.09.2017	Arms Giving at AMs House	Participated and took some photographs during the ceremony
07.10.2017	A community members residence	Help with preparations for Katina Ceremony in Liverpool. Took some Photographs
08.10.2017	Katina Ceremony in Liverpool.	Participated as an observer and a community member.
15.10.2017	Visited the temple in Liverpool	Interviewd Dr. Welhengama
26.10.2017	A get-together and dinner	Participated and observed a Sinhala get-together and dinner at a community members house in Liverpool
15.03.2018	Upul's residence in Liverpool	Visited Upul and his wife in their residence. Had informal conversations and took some photographs
26.03.2018	Association of Professional Sri Lankans charity event in Manchester	Participated as an observer. Got the opportunity to learn about their activities and talked to the members.

Date: 14-05-2017.

Participated in 'Vesak full moon Poya day' events in 'Birmingham Tethavana Buddhist Vihara'. A Sri Lankan Buddhist Monk who was brought up in Niyammar delivered the Buddhist sermon in English. A gathering of men and women of all ages and children participated in the 'Sri' program. Everything was done according to the Sri Lanka tradition.

Unveiling of the newly built 'Stupa' took place in the evening at the backyard of the temple. The 'Stupa' was a copy of the famous 'Rathumali' stupa in Sri Lanka. People of all ages participated in this event. This stupa is known to be the first of its kind in the UK.

Participative rituals, sermons and chanting were a highlight of all these events.

In the evening we came back

Date:

to the Liverpool temple along with the Buddhist monk to do the evening rituals before opening the 'Vesak pandal' for a second day. The days events were concluded with a 'Damsala' offering free food of Sri Lanka style to the gatherings.

The Buddhist monk and the president of the community organization highlighted the importance of organizing such events for the benefit of the Buddhist community and the children. They also organized a Vesak lantern competition to encourage children to participate in such events.

It is observable in all these events that this community is keen on continuing their traditional cultural events that they used to practice in Sri Lanka in the same way so that their children can also see, participate and learn.

## Appendix 12: A Sample of Interview Questions and a Transcription with Colour Coding

**Interview questions**

The following questions will be used as the structure of the interview, but further details will be uncovered based on the themes of this structure during the interview by means of discussions and extended questions.

1. Age: 16-25/ 26-35/ 36-45/ 46-55/ 56-65/ 66-75
2. Where were you born?
3. When did you come to the United Kingdom (if not born in the UK)?
4. ~~Why did you come to the United Kingdom?~~
5. ~~How did you come to the United Kingdom?~~
6. What did you bring with you and who else came along with you?
7. Do you keep contacts with the Sri Lankan Community in the United Kingdom?
8. What Sri Lankan communal events do you participate in the United Kingdom?
9. What language do you speak at home?
10. How do you manage to practice your culture and religion in the UK?
11. How important is Buddhism to your life?
12. How do you manage to cook and enjoy Sinhalese cuisines in the UK?
13. How do you manage to enjoy Sinhalese art, music and cinema in the UK?
14. What are the things that you remember from Sri Lanka and would like to have here with you for personal, general and public use?
15. How do you find living with other ethnic and religious groups in the United Kingdom?
16. How do you find living as an ethnic minority in the United Kingdom?
17. What feelings do you hold about your homeland?
18. What kind of memories or images do you hold about life in Sri Lanka?
19. How do you manage to keep contact with your homeland?
20. How often do you visit Sri Lanka? Do you take your children to visit Sri Lanka?
21. What are the places in Sri Lanka that you would like to visit?
22. Do you visit Solosmasthanas and other religious places in Sri Lanka?
23. How do you encourage your children to follow a Sri Lankan way of living?
24. Do you think you should return to your homeland one day?

● ~~Events Celebrations.~~  
● Culture Religion.  
● ~~Language.~~  
● ~~Food Culture.~~  
● Arts.  
● Life in the UK  
● Homeland relations. ● Children.

Version 9 – July 2015

1

Ven.S.  
Male.

Date: 27/01/2017

Interview 2

This interview was conducted with the residing Buddhist monk, venerable 'Sugatharathana Thero' at the 'Sri Sambuddha Vihara' in Liverpool.

1. Age: 26-35
2. Where were you born? I was born in a village in Sri Lanka. I became a Buddhist monk at the age of 12. My involvement with the temple and its activities as a child made me want to become a monk at that age.
3. When did you come to the United Kingdom (if not born in the UK)? I came in 2013
4. Why did you come to the United Kingdom? I came on an invitation by the chief incumbent at Birmingham 'Jethavana Vihara' to support his activities in the temple. Later in 2014, he invited me to become the caretaker of the newly opened Buddhist temple in Liverpool.
5. What did you bring with you and who else came along with you? I brought some of my books and some essential items such as robes.
6. Do you keep contacts with the Sri Lankan Community in the United Kingdom? As a Buddhist monk, our responsibility is to participate in Sinhalese cultural and religious events and ceremonies and to conduct religious rituals while guiding and advising the community on religious matters. Therefore, I work hand in hand with the community in such events. After becoming the caretaker of the temple at Liverpool, I have taken the responsibility as the religious leader of the community in Liverpool and have seen a growth in communal activity in the area. At the beginning, about ten families took the initiative to establish the temple. At that time, most of them did not have a very close relationship with each other. Gradually the community has got together around the temple and has built up a good relationship with the temple and among each other. We have been able to identify individuals with special talents, skills, and resource persons who can contribute to communal and religious activities. Now it has come to a point where the community is established under the temple and participate in the annual, monthly and weekly events impulsively according to the Sinhalese cultural and religious calendar.
7. What Sri Lankan communal events do you participate in the United Kingdom? All the annual events are held according to the traditions such as the Sinhala New Year, Vesak, Poson, and Katina. Apart from that, monthly full moon days and Sunday Buddhist School for children are conducted. The three months preceding the Katina ceremony (July to October) is especially devoted to religious activities with the participation of the community.
8. In what language do you conduct Buddhist activities? Almost all the members of the community are Sinhalese and therefore the activities are conducted in Sinhalese language.