

## **THE EFFECTS OF COMMERCIALIZATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE STATUS OF KANDY CITY**

**A.S.M. Nawfhal**

*Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka  
nawfsam@gmail.com*

Kandy city, recognized as a World Heritage City (WHC) is undergoing rapid changes in its street facades, back lanes, building structures and urban activities. Historically, the city had left several rich architectural master pieces and activities to represent several functions that were in operation during Kandyan kingdom. Thus, on the recognition of such valuable monuments and diverse activities of historical and cultural values, the city was listed as a WHC by UNESCO. While continuing that status, the city has experienced several challenges due to the changing the facades of the city by the forces of commercialization and modernization. A profile of the historical landscape of the city was extracted through a literature survey. Data and information were gathered from relevant authorities involved in development and planning of the city. A detailed questionnaire survey was conducted to collect information from the owners of buildings randomly selected from each road selected. Façade evaluation was done using heritage standards. The spatial data and information of the city and the selected area were processed by employing GIS technology to assess the level of changes occurred in the city.

Although, the objectives of management authorities are being fulfilled, the norms and conditions of the heritage status and regulations governing in the city to safeguard the WHC status has been grossly ignored or not considered for development. RDA has also not felt the necessity of maintaining the street line within the city proper, to protect valuable heritage buildings or facades. The structures in the main streets have continuously been transformed into commercial areas despite the restriction to change the facades. Modernization and competitive forces have transformed many residential buildings and commercial buildings with facades that are not compatible with heritage designs. Buildings that existed over 100 years are also facing modification and demolition or vertical expansion. Most of the buildings are multi-storied buildings and accommodate more commercial ventures. The rent holders or leaseholders are not in a position to change the facades or appearance. But they have adopted modern display techniques or bill boards system covering the facades.

Another trend is many business investors want high rise buildings to expand the floor area of their businesses. Due to the elevation control regulation that is in effect, that requirement is controlled. Making awareness about the heritage values has become a prime requirement to educate the new businessman, investors, and politicians and convince them. Even the city commuters and school children can be made aware about the importance. Planning agents require particular attention to keep the heritage norms in the built up area while expanding roads, bringing business ventures or entertainment into the city. A proper coordination is required to find whether contemporary architectures can be integrated harmoniously in historic urban fabric.