

**Potentials and Problems of Using Religious Places for Urban Recreational Needs:
a Case Study Related to Kelaniya Buddhist Temple – Western Province, Sri Lanka.**

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A recreational activity can be defined as an activity undertaken for the pleasure, leisure or satisfaction. In highly urbanized area availability of recreational spaces are important specially because of the high population density, lack of vacant lands and environmental pollution. Under such conditions the urban environment can negatively affect the mental and physical health of their residents. Therefore, the recreational facilities have become a fundamental human need that should be facilitated in urban environment. In fulfilling the above requirements the place which are of religious and cultural values take a major position of importance.

Kelaniya temple regarded as a very important Buddhist religious site situated within the western province of Sri Lanka which is density populated and is important by way of historical and religious values. Kelaniya temple bears its religious and historical importance as Lord Buddha is said to have visited Kelaniya on His third arrival Sri Lanka. This temple is situated about 6 miles away from the Colombo city which is commercial capital of Sri Lanka and the extended of the entire land is around 10 Acres. The surrounding of the Kelaniya temple consists of the attractive landscape with a beautiful environment because it stand facing a braided flow swirl of Kelani river. Kelaniya temple has become an attraction of foreign and local tourists due to the above notable reasons.

The objective of this research is identify the abilities and related problems in adapting the environ of Kelaniya temple to fulfill the urban recreational needs of the people which is situated in a close proximity of a religious locality with religious, environmental and cultural value near a highly populated urban area.

The study has been conducted with the help of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered using questionnaires, field observations, interviews and focus group discussions. Altogether 60 visitors arriving at the Kelaniya temple were selected by random sampling methods. The secondary data was collected from different sources. Gathered data was generalized, classified and summarized. Charts, maps, diagrams and percentages were arranged and used as data analysis methods.

The ability of developing the recreational needs related to Kelaniya temple site remains at a satisfactory level. This area of Kelaniya river could be made use for water related recreational sports activities such as boat riding, swimming and diving etc. Either side of the riverbanks and the surrounding greenery also could be adapted for outdoor passive recreational activities. This locality could also be put into the use of the purpose of meditational activity which can develop the mental relaxation of participant. Certain problems and challenges will arise in organizing recreational facilities as noted above mainly organizing the recreational center in a suitable manner appropriate to the religious site, disposing of garbage of the religious site and the problem in eliminating the beggars who are used to frequent the religious site regularly. Minimizing these problems had to be carried out without causing any inconvenience to the pilgrims who visit the temple.

Keywords: Recreational activity, Urban, Pilgrims