

**SRI LANKA NATIONAL INVENTORY
OF
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ELEMENTS**

**Rituals and Offerings for the Sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi
at Anuradhapura**

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**Prepared by
National Library and Documentation Services Board
No.14
Independence Avenue
Colombo – 7
Sri Lanka**

Phone- +94-11-268-5197

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A. STATE PARTY OR STATES PARTIES

Sri Lanka

B. Name of the element

1 Name and Identification of the element

Rituals and Offerings for the Sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi at Anuradhapura.

1.1 Name of the element in the language and script of the community or group concerned

අනුරාධපුර ජය ශ්‍රී මහා බෝධීන් වහන්සේ උදෙසා සිදුකෙරෙන වතාවත් සහ පූජා (in Sinhala)

அனுராதபுர புனித ஜெய ஸ்ரீ மஹா போதிக்கான சடங்குகளும் பூசைகளும் (in Tamil)

1.2 Short, maximally informative title (including indication of domain(s))

Rituals and Offerings for the Sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi at Anuradhapura: Social practices, rituals, and festive events; Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

1.3 Communities Concerned

Buddhists in Sri Lanka who participate in daily, monthly, and yearly rituals and conduct offerings for the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*) with no restriction of gender or age form the primary community of the element. Accounted for 70% of the total population, the community is composed mainly of ethnic Sinhalese and of some sections of ethnic Tamils. Today, the Sacred Bodhi is the center of focus of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Anuradhapura.

The Sacred Bodhi tree grew up from a sapling of the original Bodhi tree that was in Bihar, India under which Siddhartha Gauthama attained Buddhahood and thus considered to be a sacred relic of immense spiritual significance. Brought to Sri Lanka and planted in 236 BCE at Anuradhapura, Sacred Bodhi is the world's oldest living human-planted tree with a known planting date. Descendants of the original service guilds who came along with the Bodhi sapling from India serve at present as its traditional custodians as outlined below.

A team of senior monks led by the Most Venerable Chief Incumbent Monk of the Eight Sacred Places of Anuradhapura officiates the rituals. They recite traditional devotional stanzas for the pilgrims to repeat after them. They have inherited the knowledge and skills in the ritual procedures and the oral traditions from their predecessors and will transmit to the younger generations of monks. Thus, the monks are identified as a pivotal part of tradition bearers of the element.

A three-member Committee for the Eight Sacred Sites serving as the highest traditional body of trustees is responsible for the administration and management of the Sacred Bodhi site and for maintaining the traditional attributes of the rituals and other activities associated with it. The Committee is chaired by the head of an aristocratic family that is traditionally assigned for that purpose irrespective of gender difference. The above-mentioned chief incumbent monk of the Eight Sacred Sites and the chief incumbent monk of the Sri Pāda (Adam's Peak) temple, another important seasonal pilgrimage site for both Buddhists and Hindus, hold the other two positions of the committee.

As briefly stated above, a large team of traditional lay custodians who originally came from India as the protectors of the Sacred Bodhi and operating as a service guild play a significant role in the continuation of the element. Subsisting on traditional land grants received from ancient kings and confined to nine such villages at present, they hold different ranks based on each one's assigned duty with possible upward mobility. Custodians of the highest rank serve as 'lay-priests' assisting the monks carrying the offerings and placing them on altars during rituals and serving as 'intermediaries' invoking the

Duties of other custodians include cooking and preparation of the solid-meal offerings and herbal drink offerings following traditional recipes; supplying of flowers, oil-lamps, incense as offerings; cleaning altars by removing the offerings sometime after they were offered; and sweeping the sand terraces to keep the precincts clean and pleasant etc. One significant aspect of the custodian service is that it is only the male members of those families perform those services.

As 'sound-offerings' are an essential accompaniment of most rituals, musicians that include drummers, conch-shell blowers, players of the oboe-like wind instrument etc. also become a part of the community. Since the traditional families who had been assigned for this service have ceased to exist some years ago, at present the Administrative Committee obtains the service from traditional drummers and musicians from outside.

There are many families of the local community whose livelihoods largely depend on the element. They are the sellers of votive objects such as flowers, candles, oil and oil lamps, incense sticks, Buddhist flags etc. Some other locals provide accommodation or meals to the pilgrims. Accordingly, they are considered an important part of

stakeholders of the elements as their subsistence is largely dependent on the element's continuity.

1.4 Physical Locations of the Elements

Main Location – Sacred Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, Anuradhapura

1.5 Short Description

A vast body of collectively performed rituals and individually carried out offerings for the Sacred Bodhi have evolved over time through generational recreation and transmission. Participants believe, as a relic of extraordinary spiritual significance and supernatural powers, the Sacred Bodhi can influence nature and peoples' destinies. Farmers believe that it can cause rain during droughts and bring good harvest. Accordingly, the Sacred Bodhi and the terrace spaces where rituals and offerings happen become the most central part of the element.

Collectively held rituals;

- festive offering of the first portion of rice harvest by farmers (January full-moon day);
- 'past-year' festival held five-days before the traditional new year in April;
- anointing ceremony where golden regalia offered to the Sacred Bodhi after anointing a Buddha image before the May full-moon day;
- festival of lights where clay oil-lamps are offered (November full-moon day);
- firewood procession where devotees bring firewood bundles and light bonfires symbolizing an ancient practice of protecting the Bodhi from wild animals (August full-moon day);
- procession commemorating the bringing of the Bodhi sapling by *Theri Sangamitta* (December full-moon day)
- special offerings on all other full-moon days, especially in May & June.

Offering of flowers, oil-lamps, incense, herbal drinks, milk-rice or solid food (depending on the time of the day), drumming and music, and reciting devotional stanzas are common to all festivals and rituals. Some processions include dancing. Some rituals follow astrologically auspicious times.

For individual offerings, some votive objects are offered believing it brings good health and prosperity in this life and the next. For making vows, devotees invoke the Sacred Bodhi's guardian deity named Kalu Devata Bandara with offerings through a lay priest as intermediary. Devotees seek blessings to accomplish personal wishes; eg. to have healthy babies; safe childbirth; healing from ailments; success in education, at job interviews or promotions; safe foreign travel etc. Vow-making with malicious intent aren't welcome.

2. Characteristics of the Element

2.1 Associated tangible elements

Sacred Bodhi Tree (*Ficus religiosa*)

Offerings

- Flowers
- Oil Lamps
- Incense
- Food (Milk rice/ Herbal Drinks)

Ritual spaces (Terraces, Altars)

Musical instruments

- Drums
- Conch shells
- Wind instruments

2.2 Language(s), register(s), speech level(s) involved

Main Languages – Sinhala/ Tamil

Ritual Style – Traditional devotional chanting (Religious register)

2.3 Perceived origin

The Sacred Bodhi tree grew up from a sapling of the original Bodhi tree that was in Bihar, India under which Siddhartha Gauthama attained Buddhahood and thus considered to be a sacred relic of immense spiritual significance. Brought to Sri Lanka and planted in 236 BCE at Anuradhapura, Sacred Bodhi is the world's oldest living human-planted tree with a known planting date. Descendants of the original service guilds who came along with the Bodhi sapling from India serve at present as its traditional custodians as outlined below.

3. Persons and Institutions Involved with the Element

Monks conduct the rituals reciting devotional stanzas that devotees repeat after them. Lay priests (always men) assist the monks perform ritual procedures. They also cook the meal offerings for all ritual events and prepare herbal drinks. For individual offerings, mostly women prepare the solid meals and herbal drinks. Family members of the lay trustee, regardless of gender, manages the site and the rituals. Lay custodians who carry out assigned duties are always male members of those families. Male drummers and musicians provide sound offerings to accompany the rituals. Bearers and practitioners assure commitment to promote generational transmission of the element.

3.1 Practitioners(s)/ performer(s) : name(s), gender, and/ or professional

Stakeholders / Community – Register (01-60)		
Monks		
01	A	Most Venerable Etalawetunuwawe Gnanathilaka Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent of Ruwanweli Mahaseya Temple / Pradhana Sanghanayake thero of the North and Central Province
	C	Ruwanweliseya Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-777-0612
02	A	Venerable Dr. Kallanchiye Rathanasiri Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent of Abhayagiri Temple
	C	Abhayagiri Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-144-8788
03	A	Venerable Kahalle Gnaninda Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent
	C	Thuparama Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	-
04	A	Venerable Ihala Halmillawe Rathnapala Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent
	C	Jethavana Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	-
05	A	Venerable Ralapanawe Dhammajothi Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent
	C	Lankarama Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-658-3302
06	A	Venerable Welihene Sobhitha Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent
	C	Mirisawetiya Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-222-2025
Atamasthana Committee Members		
07	A	Most Venerable Dr. Pallegama Sirisumana Rathnapala Hemarathna Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent
	C	Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi Temple, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-720-7077
08	A	Venerable Bengamuwe Sri Dhammadinna Thero (Male)
	B	Chief Incumbent, Siripada Viharaya
	C	Siripada Viharaya, Siri Padaya, Rathnapura
	D	-
09	A	S.K.W.J.A. Bulankulame (Male)
	B	Lay Trustee / President, Atamasthana Committee
	C	Nuwarawewa Walawwa, Railway Town, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-71-447-8152

Kapu Mahathwaru (Lay Presits)		
10	A	B. Presamisiri (Male)
	B	Chief Kapu maththaya - Vihara Kallanchiya
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-496-2460
11	A	H. Jayathissa (Male)
	B	Chief Kapu maththaya - Vihara Palugama
	C	Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-78-822-3817
12	A	B. Siripala (Male)
	B	Gamdura - Pisuyankulama Village
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-78-930-3505
13	A	J. Thilak Shantha (Male)
	B	Gamdura - Vihara Iluppukulama
	C	Vihara Kappetiya - Halauapththuwa, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-564-3982
14	A	Bodhidasa Wickramasinghe (Male)
	B	Gamdura - Vihara Madawachchiya
	C	Vihara Palugama, Viharagama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-922-3165
15	A	P. Sugathadasa (Male)
	B	Gamdura - Vihara Bulankulama
	C	Vihara Thirappane, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-586-0684
16	A	G. Anura Gunasekara (Male)
	B	Gamdura - Vihara Kappetiya
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-74-213-1530
17	A	K. Rohitha Karunarathne (Male)
	B	Gamdura, Vihara Thirappane
	C	Vihara Bulankulama, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-74-226-2040
18	A	Bandiyage Premachandra (Male)
	B	Gamdura, Vihara Halmilla
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-72-484-4741
Village leaders who serve under the headman		
Headman - K. Rohitha Karunarathne (Male)		
19	A	K. Mahinda Karunarathne (Male)
	B	Wasidura - Vihara Thirappane
	C	Bulakulama, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	-

20	A	W.W. Weeraseka (Male)
	B	Wasidura - Vihara Puliyankulama
	C	Vihara Thirappane, Anuradhapura
	D	-
21	A	Ranjith Wimalarathne (Male)
	B	Wasidura - Vihara Thirappane
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	-
Headman - P. Sugathadasa (Male)		
22	A	K. Upathissa (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Bulankulama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-393-1896
23	A	S. Nishantha (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Bulankulama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-78-508-7572
24	A	Sugath Chaminda Hemasiri (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Bulankulama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-145-8768
Headman - Bandiyage Premachandra (Male)		
25	A	G. Anura Wijesinghe (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-054-1628
26	A	B. Gunaratne (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-70-168-8131
27	A	S. Nimal Ariyawansa (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-555-6543
Headman - G. Anura Gunasekara (Male)		
28	A	D. Gemunusena (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmillawa, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-918-2813
Headman - B. Premasiri (Male)		
29	A	B. Hemasiri (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura

	D	+94-77-417-4511
Headman - H. Jayathissa (Male)		
30	A	G.K. Sumanapala (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Medawachchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	-
31	A	Ruwan Kumara (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-584-8219
32	A	Thushan Wickramasinghe (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	-
Headman - Bodhidasage Wickramasinghe (Male)		
33	A	S. Nandasena (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Madawachchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-822-1239
34	A	R.N.P. Rathnapala (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Madawachchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-219-0563
35	A	S. Priyantha Kumara (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Madawachchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-887-9110
Headman - B. Siripala (Male)		
36	A	K. Piyasena (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-812-5260
37	A	P. J. Gunasekara (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Halmilla, Kulama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94779981718
38	A	Sunimal Priyantha (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Puthiyankulama, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-045-5823
Headman - J. Thilak Shantha (Male)		
39	A	N. Gunasekara (Male)
	B	Wesidura

	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	-
40	A	V. Nimal Senadheera (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-72-362-8117
41	A	U. Edirisinghe (Male)
	B	Wesidura
	C	Vihara Kallanchiya, Vihara Palugama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-675-7246
Artists - Shabda Pooja		
42	A	B.G. Sarath Wijekoon (Male)
	B	Hewisi player
	C	Siri Anura Kalayathanaya, No 6, Ellakattu road, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-76-229-6747
43	A	P. Sunil Rathnasiri (Male)
	B	Hewisi players - chief
	C	No 171, Ellakattu Road, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-783-3769
44	A	P.R. Sambarana (Male)
	B	Shabdha pooja hewisi - chief
	C	No 45/14, Magazine Road, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-77-936-4968
45	A	P. Sunil Rathnasiri (Male)
	B	Hewisi Player
	C	171, Allakkatuwa Road, Anuradhapuraya
	D	-
46	A	P. Sanjaya Rathnasiri (Male)
	B	Hewisi Player
	C	171, Allakkatuwa Road, Anuradhapuraya
	D	-
47	A	K.D. Sunil Rajapaksha (Male)
	B	Hewisi Player
	C	No.6, Allakkattuwa Road, Temple Lane, Anuradhapuraya
	D	-
48	A	B.G. Sarath Wijekoon (Male)
	B	Hewisi Player
	C	No.6, Allakkattuwa Road, Temple Lane, Anuradhapuraya
	D	-
Stake Holders		
49	A	K.G.R. Wimalasooriya
	B	Divisional Secretary - දිසාපති / President, Ranwata Sanwardhana Committee

	C	District Office, District Secretariat, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-222-2234/ +94-25-222-2235
50	A	D.M. Sudarshana Dissanayake (Male)
	B	Divisional Secretary (Acting
	C	Divisional Secretariat Nuwaragampalatha Central, Pandulagama, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-205-3107/ +94-70-398-4225
51	A	Senerath Wickramasinge (Male)
	B	Director General (Acting) - Department of Archaeology
	C	The Department of Archaeology, Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha, Colombo 07
	D	+94-11-269-2840
52	A	Nilan Coorey (Male)
	B	Director General - Central Cultural Fund
	C	Central Cultural Fund, No 212/1, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 07
	D	+94-70-281-8167/ +94-11-255-2014
53	A	Thusitha Herath (Male)
	B	Project Manager, Anuradhapura
	C	PM office, Jethawanaramaya
	D	+94-71-642-9692
54	A	R.M. Gamini Senarathne (Male)
	B	Commissioner General of Buddhist Affairs
	C	The Department of Buddhist Affairs Dahampaya, No: 135, Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 07,
	D	+94-11-287-2001
55	A	Ruchira Vithana (Male)
	B	Director General - National Physical Planning Department
	C	National Physical Planning Department (NPPD), 5th Floor, Sethsiripaya, Battaramulla,
	D	+94-11-207-7180
56	A	N.H.R. Nishantha (Male)
	B	Commissioner - Municipal Council
	C	Municipal Council, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-222-2276
57	A	Chandrika Jayaweera (Female)
	B	Director - Peradeniya Botanical Gardens
	C	Peradeniya Botanical Garden, Peradeniya
	D	+94-71-865-6254
58	A	A.J. Ravisanka (Male)
	B	OIC, Udamluwa Police Station
	C	89VX+9VH, Rewatha Mawatha, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka
	D	+94-25-222-1578

59	A	K.T.M.U. Hemapala (Male)
	B	Chairman
	C	Ceylon Electricity Board, Maithreepala Senanayake Mawatha, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-222-1747/ +94-25-222-2165
60	A	Deepthi U. Sumanasekara (Male)
	B	Chairman
	C	National Water Supply & Drainage Board Office, Harischandra Mawatha, Anuradhapura
	D	+94-25-222-0727

3.2 Other participants (e.g, holders/ custodians)

- Devotees (pilgrims)
- Local vendors
- Families providing services (food, lodging)

3.3 Customary practices governing access to the element or to aspects of it

While welcoming men, women, and children of any nationality or faith to enter the sacred precincts, the administrative committee maintains certain customary practices to protect the Bodhi tree and the sanctity of its environment. Only white-dressed worshippers are admitted to the upper-most terrace where the Sacred Bodhi is situated only on special occasions as determined by the chief monk. Visitors with hats or shoes are not allowed entering the precinct. Those with dresses not sufficiently covering the shoulders or legs also are not welcomed. Women with headscarves are allowed only to the terraces but not in the image house.

3.4 Modes of Transmission

Essential part of training of young monks is memorizing devotional stanzas recited during rituals. They learn the ritual procedures by imitating seniors. Children learn devotional stanzas at Sunday temple schools. Young adults of the families of custodian committee members learn about their traditional roles and responsibilities from elders. Younger generation of lay priests and other service guilds are committed to learn from parents and continue the practice. Transmission of the knowledge and skills of drumming and music does not arise as those services are now obtained from outsourced practitioners due to their extinction in service villages decades ago due to changing social-economic environment.

3.5 Concerned organizations (NGOs and others)

Two formal meetings with the Chief Incumbent Monk of the Eight Sacred Places of Anuradhapura, several other senior monks, lay trustee of the administration and management committee, and several representatives of the traditional lay custodians were held inside the monastic premises of the Sacred Bodhi. In addition to the community members, certain public sector stakeholders, namely the officials of the Divisional Secretariate Office, Municipal Council, Dept. of Archaeology, Coordinator of Buddhist Affairs, representatives of the Police and the Civil Defence Force providing security to the site and ensure the protection of the pilgrims also attended the meetings. Some academics from the Rajarata University and the Bhikkhu University located close to Anuradhapura who have done extensive research on the Sacred Bodhi and its rituals also attended the meetings. Furthermore, a series of informal interviews with small groups of community members including the pilgrims also were held.

The nomination preparation team briefly introduced to the community members and the stakeholders the 2003 Convention and its purpose and the government's responsibility to its implementation. The team described in detail the rights of the community to its own ICH, community's role in safeguarding it, and their central position in any process in inventorying or nominating for UNESCO Listing. The discussions extended to other topics of threats against the element, challenges in transmission, livelihood issues etc.

The responses of the community and the stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive. Most community members considered that nominating the element for UNESCO listing has been a long overdue. They provided much information about the identification and definition of the various segments of the community, details about the ritual processes, challenges in transmission etc. All community members and other attendees assured their fullest support to the nomination preparation team and provide with written and video consent for nominating the element

4. State of the element: viability

4.1 Threats to the enactment

Environmental Degradation: As the rituals are centered on a living botanical entity, the health of the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is paramount. Increasing air pollution from nearby urban centers and potential acid rain from industrial emissions (e.g., coal power plants) threaten the tree's vitality, which could eventually cease the very rituals that require its "living" presence.

Over-commercialization and Mass Tourism: The "touristification" of Anuradhapura can lead to overcrowding. When the sacred space is treated as a tourist

"sight" rather than a ritual site, the sanctity required for practitioners (such as the *Thevava* monks or hereditary singers) is disrupted by noise and physical congestion.

Security Restrictions: While necessary for protection, heavy security cordons and restricted access to the upper terrace (*uda maluwa*) can distance the practitioners from the element, sometimes turning a participative communal ritual into an "observed" performance from a distance.

Climate Instability: Unpredictable monsoon patterns and extreme drought cycles affect the traditional agricultural calendar. This directly impacts rituals like the *Aluth Sahal Mangallaya* (New Rice Festival), as the symbolic "first harvest" becomes harder to secure in its traditional form.

4.2 Threats to the transmission

Erosion of Hereditary Systems: Traditionally, many ritual roles (drumming, chanting, and floral preparation) were passed down through specific families or paramparas. As the younger generation pursues formal education and professional careers in urban areas, the chain of oral transmission is being broken.

Formal Education Constraints: The rigid schedule of the modern school system often prevents youth from participating in the lengthy, time-specific ritual cycles that occur on weekdays or during school hours, limiting their exposure to "learning by doing."

Shift in Value Systems: Increasing secularization or a more "modernized" interpretation of Buddhism may lead the younger generation to view these complex rituals as purely symbolic or "cultural" rather than essential spiritual practices, leading to a loss of the deep-seated *Saddha* (devotion) required to sustain them.

Economic Non-viability: Many of the lay practitioners (traditional musicians, artisans) do not receive enough financial support to make the ritual practice a full-time vocation. Without economic sustainability, the specialized skills required for the *Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi's* unique offerings may disappear in favor of more lucrative, non-traditional jobs.

4.3 Availability of associated tangible elements and resources

All rituals and offering practices have evolved to minimize environmental damage or over-exploitation of resources. All offering materials used are eco-friendly and biodegradable, and the remains of offered flowers and food are used for making compost fertilizer. State Party confirms that nothing of the element is incompatible with the requirements of sustainable development.

4.4 Safeguarding measures in place

Safeguarding plans are based on two premises; (1) protection of the Sacred Bodhi is essential to ensure the element's safeguarding since it's the focal object of the rituals and offerings; and (2) provision of facilities and security to pilgrims as an important part of the community is essential since their participation guarantees the element's

continuation. Accordingly, the government, in association with several public institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) has taken numerous measures to safeguard the element with community-cantered approaches due to the extraordinary national significance of the element.

Ensuring Longevity of the Sacred Bodhi as the Element's Focal Object: Considering the fragility of the Sacred Bodhi due to its old age (approximately 2,200 yrs), government has entrusted the Dept. of National Botanical Gardens to attend to all issues related to its health. The Department's scientists monitor threats such as presence of insects or micro-organisms or changes happening on the bark or on leaves and take immediate remedial actions. They also monitor the soil conditions of the terraces that may affect health of the Bodhi.

The Department collects seeds from the Sacred Bodhi, germinate and propagate them, and the saplings are handed to the incumbent monks for distribution to temples within or outside of the country. The program ensures the continuation of the next generation of the Sacred Bodhi, in case the Sacred Bodhi ceased to exist due to reasons beyond control.

Protection against Destruction: The government has taken strict security measures by establishing a separate police unit (wearing a white uniforms), and a unit of the Department of Civil Security as the Sacred Bodhi has already suffered acts of vandalism (1929) and terrorism (1985). Pilgrims and visitors pass through a police checkpoint with metal detectors to protect themselves and the element.

Preservation of the Built Environment around the Sacred Bodhi: The historic retaining walls of the three successive terraces that protect the Sacred Bodhi from animals and soil erosion. The Department of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Fund regularly monitor the state of preservation of those walls and other remains within the ritual space.

Provision of Services to Pilgrims: Railways Department, Sri Lanka Transport Board, and some private bus operators provide extended services to accommodate the massive number of pilgrims who are a part of the community on the full-moon days of May and June. A Festival Committee, under the guidance of the monks and trustees, and with the leadership of the District Secretariate representing Government institutions, and the Municipal Council organize the provision of sanitary and other facilities. The National Water Supply and Drainage Board ensures uninterrupted water supply to pilgrims. Safe bathing is provided at artificial lakes called 'tanks' under the surveillance of the Police Lifeguard Service and Sri Lanka Navy. The Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Service provide First Aid facilities to the pilgrims while the Medical Faculty of the Rajarata University helps pilgrims with health issues. Various CSOs organize free food stalls for the pilgrims during ritual times.

Interestingly, those involved in organizing and implementation of those services as safeguarding measures also are a segment of the community.

5. Data gathering and inventorying

5.1 Consent from and involvement of the community/ group in data gathering and inventorying -yes

Community consultations revealed that international visitors have little or no knowledge of the element, and that their knowledge of the Bodhi is confined only to its association with Buddha and its being the 'world's oldest documented and human-planted tree'. It is understood that international visitors will not have enough time for experiencing culture during their short visits that neither match the times of the rituals or offerings.

The community believes that international visitors miss opportunity to experience the Bodhi's ability to encourage dialogue or to learn about the associated notions of cultural diversity and human creativity. As a result, they fail to learn how farming communities who believe in the power of nature ensuring their food security and environmental sustainability, maintaining health and wellbeing, facing the challenges of climate change through ritual acts leading to inclusive economic development, peace, and social cohesion.

The community thinks that international visitors would benefit more if they were informed of ICH aspects prior to their visits leading to enhanced dialogue and mutual respect. They believe that the enhanced visibility due to the element's inscription will result in increased awareness of the element among the visitors so that they will come prepared to experience the social functions and cultural meanings of the element.

Two formal meetings with the Chief Incumbent Monk of the Eight Sacred Places of Anuradhapura, several other senior monks, lay trustee of the administration and management committee, and several representatives of the traditional lay custodians were held inside the monastic premises of the Sacred Bodhi. In addition to the community members, certain public sector stakeholders, namely the officials of the Divisional Secretariate Office, Municipal Council, Dept. of Archaeology, Coordinator of Buddhist Affairs, representatives of the Police and the Civil Defence Force providing security to the site and ensure the protection of the pilgrims also attended the meetings. Some academics from the Rajarata University and the Bhikkhu University located close to Anuradhapura who have done extensive research on the Sacred Bodhi and its rituals also attended the meetings. Furthermore, a series of informal interviews with small groups of community members including the pilgrims also were held.

5.2 Restrictions, if any, on use of inventoried data -No restriction

5.3 Resource persons(s): name and status or affiliation

5.4 Data and place of data gathering

- Sacred Bodhi site (Anuradhapura)
- Formal meetings and interviews at Anuradhapura

5.5 Date of entering data into an inventory

20.03.2026

5.6 The inventory entry compiled – by Dr. Udaya Cabral

5.6 Reference to literature, discography, audiovisual and archives Books, Articles, Essays

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