

Flora and fauna representing old paintings of Sri Lanka: Special reference to selected Kandyan painting sites

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Abstract

The art of the painting in Sri Lanka goes back to pre-historic era. Since then it was telecasted passing the periods of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa with its own characteristics. Later, in the Kandyan period, it was totally different from the traditional system and the paintings were based on stylistic nature. The main objectives of the paintings were on Lord Buddha's Bodhisathwa life. And also, they used several trees and animals to fill the gaps in those paintings. The main objective of this research was to identify the biodiversity of the Kandyan Period through paintings of that area. The major selected sites were Kandyan paintings at "Dalada Maligawa, Degaldoruwa Rajamaha Viharaya, Gangaramaya and Medawala Maha Viharaya". They had used natural and imaginary flora and fauna, but this research mainly focused on natural trees and animals using literary and archaeological sources. The trees such as "Boe (*Ficus religiosa*), jack (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), koboleela (*Bauhinia purpurea*), breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), and cashew (*Artocarpus occidentate*)" can be regarded as the representatives of Kandyan area and the flowers such as sapu (*Magnolia champaca*), kadupul (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*), pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), water lily (*Nymphaea*), lotus (*Nelum nucifera*), lily (*Lilium candidum*), jasmine (*Jasminum*), and srewpin (*Pandanus amaryllitoli*) were used in paintings. There were lots of images of birds such as owl (*Strigiformes*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), peacock (*Pavo cristatus*), swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), pigeon (*Chiefly archaic*), auceps (*Aucupis syllabarum*), and the cormorant (*Microcarbo melanoleucos*), and animals such as cattle (*Boss taurus*), dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*), elephant (*Elephas maximus*), horse (*Equus ferus caballus*), squirrel (*Sciuridae*), monkey (*Macaca sinica*), lion (*Panthera leo*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), fish and many other species of animals. From this study, highly consider about Kandyan paintings and its relationship with the human nature and the bio – diversity of this period.

Keywords: Bio-diversity, Fauna, Flora, Kandyan painting, Paintings

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