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POSTER

**The Human Effects on Baobab Trees of Mannar Island: A Case Study of Secretariat Division of Mannar**

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The baobab tree still survives in Mannar due to its status as a “zero-cost species” which does not compete with native species. In ancient times, the Arab traders who brought camels to Mannar, fed the animals with the leaves of the baobab. The baobab has become a conspicuous component of the coastal biological diversity of Mannar and its ability to adapt to the harsh conditions prevalent in the island is in itself a justification for its conservation.

A potential threat appeared due to the rapid population growth (through resettlement of refugees), the spread of settled agriculture, and the development of ill-considered and over ambitious tourism facilities.

The baobab is an ancient tree that needs to be protected for the future community. It will also lead to increase the income of local and foreign tourism. According to the 1990 coastal zone management plan, the historical and archaeological places in the coastal belt should be protected and the baobab tree is one of the historical trees that is gradually disappearing from Mannar Island even now.

There are thirty baobab trees in the island of Mannar currently, and we cannot replant or reproduce them due to the climate and other causes, but if we maintain these trees properly we can conserve them for a long period as they have a long life. As evidence, 700 year old trees were found in Mannar. Therefore, the focus of this research was to find out how baobab trees were affected by human activities.

The investigation was done using preliminary data and secondary data. In order to obtain preliminary particulars we have done interviews and observations in the Secretariat Division of Mannar. Thus, we collected GPS data and *Geographic Information System*(GIS) and the Secondary data was used to make the summary in a scientific way. This investigation revealed that baobab trees were affected by human activities. The reason was people do not know the value of these trees. Two trees were completely destroyed and more than ten trees were cut and damaged by the community.