

**Do the museums in Sri Lanka reach their full potential as Institutions of soft power or have they simply ignored its role in cultural diplomacy**

**J.M.J.P. Gajanayake**

University of Kelaniya

janani.gajanayaka@gmail.com

This paper articulates how Museums have been identified as Agents of Soft power and if this is accepted and followed by the Museums in Sri Lanka. The study is foregrounded on three national museums in Sri Lanka, namely, Colombo National Museum, Sri Dalada Museum Kandy and Museum of Ancient Technology Polonnaruwa. The three Museums were selected from three different provinces in order to highlight the geographical as well as cultural differences; with the attempts to show the cultural diversity resides in the country as well as the difference in the areas and eras demonstrated in the selected three museums. Museum was first known as an institution of hard power and later on it was taken as an agent of soft power. Many countries such as China and India have identified the worth of museum as an entity of Soft power and a key element to propagate cultural diplomacy, as accumulated strength of museums, universities, arts, and cultural organizations – are fundamental to the country's global reputation (Hunt 118). In this paper, the author has included a brief introduction on Soft Power, in relation to Joseph Nye's Power division. Next section is dedicated to the relationship between Museums and Soft power and the following section is written on how the three museums and their locations could develop/ have developed their regional soft power. Next part would be, how and whether Sri Lanka was able to see the value of the resources contained in its museums to be elements of attraction and if the museums are considered as a mode to increase country's reputation in the international platform. The study ends with a future reference to the development of Museums and the civil society which, as a team could work together to overcome the challenges in the International Arena.

***Keywords:*** *Soft power, Cultural Diplomacy, Museums, International Platform*