

**The practice of heritage as soft power by overseas Sri Lankans:  
A case study of Sydney, Australia**

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This research is a case study into the practice of heritage as soft power by the people of Sri Lankan origin living overseas, with special attention to Sydney, Australia. Common or shared heritage is a binding factor as well as a tool of soft power for the diasporic communities. Power, as the ability to affect people and events to obtain a desired outcome, is threefold; threats of coercion, inducements/payments and attraction/ persuasion. The aforementioned third, attraction and persuasion is also called soft power. According to Joseph Nye, a country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values and politics. Therefore, culture and heritage is seen as a facet of soft power, utilised not only by states but also by non-state actors and public. UNESCO, one of the pioneer multilateral organisations to promote intercultural dialogue to build world peace after the II World War, defines cultural soft power which is sometimes referred to as cultural diplomacy as a form of soft power that foster the exchange of views and ideas, promote knowledge of other cultures, and build bridges between communities, to promote cultural diversity, as a source of innovation, dialogue and peace.

For Sri Lankans living overseas culture and heritage is the umbilical code to their motherland and the resort to return one day. They utilise heritage as soft power to bring the community together, build up a cultural identity overseas and influence the authorities in the host country for the benefit of the community. The host country on the other side sees cultural diversity as wealth and strength for inclusive development. The research looks into the use of soft power by the overseas Sri Lankans, in the context of the host State utilising soft power to win over migrant communities and incorporate them to one national identity.

**Keywords:** *Soft power, heritage, overseas Sri Lankans, cultural diplomacy, Australia*  
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