

# **The environmental policies and conservation practices implemented in Ancient Sri Lanka and potentials and applying such in a sustainable manner to the present environmental system**

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The environment is the total set of the surrounding; the ecological complex of physical, chemical and biological factors that act upon an organism, population or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form, functions and survival. Data in the present study were collected using multiple historical sources and the internet. The study was an attempt to identify the views in Buddhist / Indian philosophies, inscriptions and records to protect the environment and how human can utilize their knowledge, the principles and conservation methods in the past. Such approaches can use to reduce the conflict between human activities and natural resources in a complex social system and apply them to current environmental sustainability. The Mahawansaya depicts the best land use pattern of King Pandukabhaya. According to the policies of the royals, the use of natural resources is a special responsibility of the king and the effective management of land, forest and water resources have been pointed out by Kautilya's Economics. Buddhist Philosophy focuses on environmental conservation concepts. The Pali Sutta discourse states that environmental ethics, sustainability and the protection of animals and plants. For instance, cutting down of palm trees was prohibited by the Buddhist Vinaya. King Mahinda IV (BC.1026-1042), enacted regulations to ban cutting trees (Jethawanarama Slab Inscription). W. Geiger said that royal officials were forbidden to carry shells or cutting trees. Mahavansaya also gives evidence of the rules and conservation methods on animal protection. According to the Vedic literature, ecological objects and forces are worshipped by divine spirits. Water management can be identified as an important aspect of the environmental protection process. The principles of water distribution are described in Samantra Pasadika, written by Buddhaghosha in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The Manusmruthiya also highlight the environmental qualities of the state and they have also pointed out the punishments for animal slaughters. The Anuradhapura inscription of King Kashyapa V (929-939 BC) and an inscription of King Dappula IV (923-935 BC) include some evidence of contemporary environmental policies. Based on such information it is possible to conclude that the ancient royal policies have addressed the environmental issues, and they have had policies towards sustainable public governance.

**Key Words:** environmental policies, environmental sustainability, ancient policies in Sri Lanka

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