

Ancient ethics and practices as a soft power on environmental conservation in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka is one of the high biodiversity hotspots in the world. Despite the fact that country covering only 0.013 percent of the world's land surface, it has the highest species density for flowering plants, and animals in the Asian region. However, this rich biodiverse environment has been threatened by human activities over the decades. These environmental damages adversely impact on climate and weather, human health and life, agriculture, food security, economy and sustainable development in the country. Therefore, it is important to find a suitable method to protect the environment and biodiversity. This paper examines how ancient ethics and practices can be used as soft power to protect the environment in the contemporary world. The researcher used books and articles related to ancient practices on environment, agriculture and society to gather data. Data analysing as done using descriptive method. The findings reveal that some ethics and practices in *variga sabha*, *chena* cultivation, and agricultural practices like '*kurulu paluwa*' (belt in paddy lands adjacent forest, cultivated for birds to feed on) and eco-friendly crop protection methods like *kem* contributed to protect environment in the country. Moreover, practices related to cascade tank system like protect *mukalana* (catchment forest), *gas gommama* (large tree belt located in upper inundation area) and *perahana* (water filter consist of shrubs and grasses) helped to protect environment. This paper argues that some of the ancient agricultural, irrigation and social practices were beneficial for environmental protection and sustainable development and it could be used as soft power to resolve several current environmental problems. This could be achieved by integrating ancient ethics and practices into present environmental policy and practices while disseminating knowledge about ancient practices among the citizens of Sri Lanka.

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