

## **Ancient local governance practices as soft-power on contemporary governing issues in Sri Lanka**

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Contemporary Sri Lanka has been facing many severe and complex issues in governing process. High level of bribery, corruption and nepotism practices in public sector (bribery and corruption index was between 52-97 among 175 countries from 2002-2018), increase of crime rate (recorded number of grave crimes were 60,870 in 2008 and 36,355 in 2018), high budget deficit (equal to 5.3% of the Gross Domestic Products in 2018), human right violation, media suppression, abuse of power and public resources by politicians and bureaucrats are some of the governing issues in contemporary Sri Lanka. In addition, some groups have been requesting proper power-sharing mechanism since the British period. The country has adopted several practices to mitigate the governing issues over the years, but many of them are failed. This background provides a room for finding suitable implications to resolve the governing issues in the country. Therefore, the researcher examines what and how ancient governing practices used to resolve the present governing issues in Sri Lanka. The study is conducted based on a literature review and qualitative approach. Local governance practices from 377 BC (King Pandukabhaya) to 1236 AD (Polonnaruwa Kingdom) provide many clues to mitigate several governing issues. As described in Hopitigamuwa slab inscription (935 AD-938AD) committee system for implementing responsibilities of the local government, transferring the power to local governments on day-to-day activities like agriculture, irrigation, general administration, maintenance and protection of public resources, banking services, land administration, make decisions on fine and tax rate, maintaining law and order and judicial services are some of them. Planned cities including land for waste disposal which practiced by king Pandukabhaya, a collective decision (traders, government officers and villagers/village leaders) on fine and tax rate, collective responsibility of preventing crime in the villages are some other practices used in ancient Sri Lanka which could be used as soft power in current governing process.

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