

A Historical Approach to Social Responsibility for Animal Welfare in Sri Lanka

Dr. R. K. M. Trileeshiya Indrani

Department of History & Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90800005>

Received: 15 July 2025; Accepted: 26 July 2025; Published: 26 August 2025

ABSTRACT

This study uses a historical approach to examine social responsibility for animal welfare. It aims to explore ancient Sri Lanka's methods of promoting animal welfare, the role of rulers and legal systems, the adoption of these strategies in modern contexts, their practicality, and how ancient practices can be applied today to enhance contemporary animal welfare efforts. To obtain the necessary data, information was gathered through both primary and secondary sources. Qualitative research was used in this study. Ancient humans gradually promoted animal protection by using good methods not only for humans but also for domesticated animals. The laws, advanced medical methods, and local knowledge that humans have acquired since the beginning of Sri Lankan human civilization were instrumental in this. With the arrival of Mahinda Thero and Duminda Thero, which were a unique turning point in the country, there was a systematic and organized nature in the social, economic, cultural, and political sectors that existed before. With this development, a civilization emerged that was harmonious and prosperous between man and nature. Accordingly, it is seen that the past rulers and citizens, based on the Buddhist words of 'Arogya Parama Labha Santutthi Parama Dhanam', gave priority to the promotion of health for both humans and animals. In this way, it can be concluded that the strategies adopted for animal protection in ancient Sri Lanka had a strong impact on the protection of the animal system in this country, and that even though some of the past strategies cannot be used in the same way under their practical conditions, they are extremely important strategies in the contemporary era.

Keywords: Animals, Protection, Responsibility, Social Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

There is evidence that the idea of animal health protection has been practiced in Sri Lanka for more than two thousand five hundred years. The people and even the rulers who lived in the pre-Buddhist era recognized that animal health was a very important factor that needed to be protected. After the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, the king needed to live a Buddhist life. His traditional role was to take necessary steps to protect people, wild animals, trees, and forests, following the ancient principles of non-violence. There are several things that can be seen when paying attention to the state policies built by the state in the history of Sri Lanka. The state was the most powerful unit in the state administration. The power maintained by the king can be seen to be limited by religious influence. After Buddhism was recognized as the state religion, the close relationship that developed between religion and the king due to Buddhist ideas was strong enough to overshadow even the independent decisions made by the king. These characteristics were not only evident in the implementation of state policies but also in social ethics, literature, and the arts. Accordingly, the past rulers, based on the Buddhist words of 'Arogya Parama Labha Santutthi Parama Dhanam', gave priority to the promotion of the health of both humans and animals. It is possible to uncover a large amount of information from chronicles and inscriptional sources about the policies followed and certain orders and regulations implemented by the rulers and the public during the Rajarata and Southwestern kingdoms for the protection of animal health. This research provides a historical approach based on literary and inscriptional sources on animal protection.

Animal protection revealed by literary sources

The Anuradhapura kingdom was built in conjunction with Buddhism, and the main role of the kingdom was to govern the state by virtues such as non-violence. Therefore, protecting humans as well as protecting animal resources was also a duty of the king. The king was the protector of the country's citizens as well as all animals. An examination of historical literary sources reveals that various rules and regulations were formulated to protect animal health. In particular, the establishment of health centers for animal health care by the rulers of Anuradhapura, as well as the maintenance of positions called Hatthi Vejja to provide medical care to elephants, shows that the rulers of Anuradhapura also took various steps to protect animal resources.

The fact that there were good views about wild animals at the time of the introduction of Buddhism to this country, as well as before, is confirmed by the statement that King Dewanampiyathissa, when he went hunting for deer, saw a deer eating grass and could have shot it directly, but "It is not advisable to shoot a deer that is resting and eating with a bow." (Fonseka 1998: 155). Accordingly, the kings did not hunt as a sport but for the sake of killing animals. The idea that the deer should be allowed to survive shows the king's compassion for animals. This act of the king also shows the good views about wild animals in society at that time. When Buddhism was introduced to this country, the first sermon was held at the Mangala Elephant Hall (Fonseka 1998: 157). The choice of a park with trees and wild animals as the most suitable place for them to live, thus fostering the close relationship between humans and wild animals. The concept of association and coexistence is implicit here. It is said that the protection of wild animals can be achieved in two ways (Fonseka 1998: 157). Protection by prohibiting the capture, injury, or killing of any animal at all - and by prohibiting the killing, capture, or injury of animals during the times when they are most numerous.

Evidence of the policies adopted by the rulers of Anuradhapura to protect animal health is provided by literary sources. The Mahavamsa describes King Elara as a very pious Tamil king who treated both humans and animals equally. During the reign of Elara, the tendency to apply the law equally to any wrongdoing, whether it was a human or an animal, shows a good attitude towards the existence of animals. "When the prince was travelling in a chariot to Lake Tissa, a very small calf with its mother was accidentally hit by the chariot and died. The bull went and attacked the bell, who was complaining to the king, and the king cut off his son's head with the wheel." (Mahavamsa 1996:97).

It is mentioned here that his son was also beheaded by the same cycle for the mistake of killing a calf due to his only son's negligence.

'A baby bird in a palm tree (nest) was eaten by a snake. Since the mother of the baby bird rang the bell, the king brought the snake and, having torn the snake's belly, took out the baby bird and nailed it to the palm tree.' (Mahavamsa 1996:98).

Since the snake had eaten a baby bird in a palm tree nest, it is clear how the king acted to appease the mother bird. Such incidents reflect the fair and just implementation of the law, health protection, and kindness towards animals - and this is also an opportunity to practice the exemplary noble quality that the king possessed in treating both humans and animals equally - 'Seeing a baby elephant lying in the bushes near the Thota Lake, a Vedda showed the baby elephant to the king. The king immediately sent elephant tamers to bring the baby elephant and feed it.' (Mahavamsa 1996:102).

Kandula is the chief elephant of the Dutugemunu period, was raised with the kindness of King Dutugemunu is clear. The Mahavamsa testifies to the great attention paid to the health and safety of animals at this time.

'That noble elephant stood proudly out of the water. The elephant doctor applied medicine and administered it. The king climbed on the elephant's head, stroked its head with his hands, and said, "Son of Kandula, I will give you the whole of Lanka." He pleased the elephant, fed it well, covered it with good armor, applied a leather cover over the armor, applied seven types of oil on it, and took care of the elephant.' (Mahavamsa 1996:115).

This story is also confirmed in Saddharmamalankara. At that time, the elephant doctor came and applied medicine to remove the rust stuck on the elephant's back (Saddharmalankaraya 1996: 245). Here is the scene

where King Dutugemunu's elephant, Kandula, was injured on the battlefield and was being treated. Thus, it is clear that there were doctors dedicated to the health and safety of animals in this contemporary period. According to this incident, it is clear how not only the external damage to the elephant was treated, but also the mental confusion that arose. There is further clear evidence that special attention was paid to the health of animals during this reign. 'The oxen, who had worked hard during the day, were given hay soaked in honey at night.' (Saddharmalankaraya 1996: 245) Thus, the bulls were worked during the day, and the animals that were free at night were given proper nutrition. There was a great understanding of the physical and mental health of both humans and animals at this time.

When discussing the animal conservation laws of ancient Sri Lanka, the 'Magatha Edict' holds a special place. The Magatha Edict was an order implemented to protect the health of animals- Amanda Gamini, a ruler of the Anuradhapura period, not only ensured that the water of the tanks was secured out of compassion for animals, but also imposed the Magatha Edict or the law that animals should not be killed throughout the entire island (Fonseka 1996:180).

This shows that the policy of protecting animals, which had been in place until then due to traditional customs and religious influence, was further strengthened through the enactment of laws, or rather, it was clear that the health of animals had reached a point where it was necessary to protect them through the enactment of laws. The sources state that the name Voharika was derived from the establishment of a legal system free from violence by King Voharikatissa. King Abaherana Salamevan had enacted laws prohibiting the killing of any animal in Sri Lanka. This shows that the Anuradhapura kings continued to maintain the policy of protecting animal health.

The fear of a great disease caused by the great animal, who had compassion for all animals, was eliminated by this strategy (Mahavamsa 1996:174).

The Mahavamsa states that the king protected all animals from the epidemic that spread during the reign of Sanghabodhi and removed the fear of disease through his strategy. The kindness shown to both humans and animals during the reign of Buddhadasa was immense. That king, in the presence of the living, shows the character of a bodhisattva and shows compassion for animals like a father to his sons (Mahavamsa 1996:109). The author of the Chulavamsa states that the king employed doctors to treat elephants and horses. Since King Buddhadasa was also a skilled physician, the Chulavamsa bears witness to the occasions when he treated animals for their diseases.

'A king cobra was seen suffering from a stomach ailment. The king, seeing the nature of the snake's body and recognizing that a tumor was growing in its stomach, decided that the snake was sick... The king approached the cobra, opened the snake's stomach with his surgical knife, removed the defects, and gave it a noble medicine...' (Mahavamsa 1996:172).

It is said that a tumor growing in the stomach of a certain poisonous snake was removed by a surgeon and cured by administering medicine, and as a token of gratitude, the snake gave the king a gem. There was an advanced veterinary system at this time to protect the health of animals, even though surgery. It is said that King Kassapa III not only issued an edict prohibiting the killing of animals but also raised and preserved fish in two wharves (Fonseka 1998:172). Similarly, King Aggabodhi VIII prevented the bringing of fish into the inner city during Poya days. King Kassapa IV, by providing alms to the animals in aquatic and terrestrial animals, by conducting the administration according to the customs of the previous kings, and by freeing many captive animals (Fonseka 1998:181), made it clear that the edict of killing animals was continuously implemented in his state policies. When we pay attention to all these facts, it is evident that the Anuradhapura rulers continuously maintained animal health and safety in implementing their state governance policies.

Sources provide evidence that rulers were exemplary rulers by showing kindness to animals not only through the implementation of laws but also through practical activities. There is evidence that kings also paid personal attention to providing food for animals. King Dappula II set aside days as grain days to feed crows and grain to cows. (Fonseka 1998:181), And during the reign of King Mahinda V, rice and grain were given to monkeys, pigs, deer, and dogs, clearly demonstrating the interest shown in animals as well as humans. It is also said that gerians (bulls) were given grain in the fields. This also reveals the contribution made by past rulers to the health

and safety of animals. With the blessings of righteous rule, the idea of karma, rebirth, merit, and its consequences taught in Buddhism became firmly established in society around the 10th century AD. It is mentioned in the Samantapasadika written by Buddhaghosha Thero that a person who lives by killing cows goes to hell and then comes out of hell, he sees cow bones and meat as a sign. It is mentioned that skeleton ghosts and flesh ghosts are born. Therefore, it is clear that the thoughts of the people who were afraid and did not want to suffer in future life were directed towards animal welfare.

Sources reveal that there was no lack of state patronage shown towards animal welfare during the reign of Parakramabahu (1153-1186 AD), who is considered one of the most famous kings of the Polonnaruwa kingdom. King Parakramabahu the Great implemented this policy according to religion. The Chulavamsa mentions that the king gave alms to all land and water animals, such as deer and fish, every month. The main point that is clear from this is that the practice of giving alms to animals, which was practiced by the rulers of Anuradhapura, was also practiced by the rulers of the Polonnaruwa period. The Chulavamsa also mentions that at this time, the royal hospital treated the diseases of animals.

A crow, suffering from a severe case of mouth disease, came to the king's hospital. He begged for mercy as if he were tied to a rope and could not fly. At that time, the doctors treated the crow's condition according to the orders of the great king. After the disease subsided, the king mounted the crow on an elephant and paraded it around the city before releasing it. (Mahavamsa 1996:338).

Thus, it is clear that there was no division for animal health protection. Even for a small animal like a cow, it is further enhanced by the dedication of royal doctors.

The attitudes that emerged through attitudes for animal health protection were also extremely important- The religious and attitudinal influence on the measures and policies adopted for animal conservation in the country was also extremely important- In general, there is evidence that animal images were used to represent protection, glory, and responsibility- That is, even the image of animals seems to have been considered as a sign of good luck. It can also be seen that animal images are often engraved on the gates set up to enter a sacred place. It is mentioned in the Mahavamsa that during the Dutugemunu period of the Anuradhapura kingdom, there was an elephant wall in the Maha Seya built by that king. This makes it clear that the various attitudes towards animals influenced the creation of these sacred places.

The Chulavamsa mentions that the inner city of Polonnaruwa had elephant gates and lion gates. Sources state that elephants were considered sacred during the Polonnaruwa kingdom of Anuradhapura. It is said that elephants were used as a sacred object in all three Maha Seyas. This was also a symbol of strength and protection. The sound of elephants and the neighing of horses were considered auspicious during that period.

Due to the concept that killing animals is a sin, eating the meat of animals like cows was considered a very low act. Eating beef was considered a very disgusting act in society. Similarly, killing cows and eating beef was a punishable offense. Due to the idea that the skin of animals should not be used for sitting, the use of animal skins was avoided. It is said that through this, animal slaughter and cruelty to animals were controlled. Also, animals such as elephants were used in religious ceremonies. It is said that a chariot drawn by white horses and royal elephants was used to carry the relics. Also, on special occasions, elephants have been used as the front of the relics, and kings have traveled on elephants - It is said that King Parakramabahu the Great used a golden plow, which was used by the king's Mangala elephant, to enclose the boundaries of the twelve-stored Poya temple - It must be said that the health of animals was indirectly protected due to the measures taken by the kings in this way - It is clear that animal resources were also protected through the sacredness and respect shown to animals in particular -

During the Polonnaruwa period, the kings paid special attention to the practice of gardening, which was used to preserve plants, and through this, it was also mentioned in the sources that it was a means of protecting the animal resources. There is evidence that King Parakramabahu the Great was engaged in perfect gardening. Even the home gardens he built were said to be a perfect combination of all garden elements. These were created to do good to human and animal resources, considering the shade of the trees and the coolness of the water ponds as the most essential environmental elements in the climate of the dry region.

That king, who was an extremely pious man, built various tanks and ponds in each place to alleviate the suffering of animals due to famine (Mahavamsa 1996:393).

Since the climate is dry for most of the year, it is understood that it is the responsibility of the king to protect the lives of animals.

With the decline of the Rajarata civilization, the centers of state administration in the country shifted to the southwest. The kingdoms of Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, Kurunegala, Gampola, and Kotte are known as the southwestern kingdoms. Sources reveal that the policies adopted by the rulers of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa for the protection of animal health in the country were maintained in the same way during the reign of the southwestern kingdoms. The Chulavamsa reveals that efforts were made for the welfare of animals during the reign of Parakramabahu II, who ruled the Dambadeniya kingdom.

‘Sometimes the distance near the river is about thirty cubits (heyakda), and that distance is thirty cubits (heyakda), and that distance is seven cubits (heyakda) in the village of Ulapatha, and it is tied up to a distance sufficient for elephants, donkeys, camels, bees, etc. to travel.’ (Mahawansa 1996:418).

It is the responsibility of the king to bring about development in the country. This he did, and this proves that through this development, he also paid attention to the health and welfare of the animals to prevent them from being harmed.

‘A man named Chullapanthaka became rich by selling a dead mouse to a cat-owning household, buying a bunch of flowers, and selling them again and again.’ (Saddharmaratnavali 2011:276).

As the daily diet of domesticated animals changed, contemporary people became more concerned about the nutritional needs of animals to maintain their good health. These facts can be further confirmed by the sources of evidence. People's attitudes towards animals changed greatly under the influence of Buddhist philosophy.

‘If, out of the animals such as pigs, dogs, chickens, etc., one were to give a full stomach of food to any animal that came near him, the alms given would be given to each of them as the five gifts of life, form, power, wealth, and wisdom, and would give birth to a hundred races and five hundred rewards...’ (Saddharmalankara 1996:245)

‘Seeing a dog afflicted with a disease, one would feed it a piece of rice. That devotee, after death, was reborn in the next life in a world-renowned family, and having acquired all the wealth and fame, he attained the great arahantship...’ (Saddharmalankara 1996:245).

The belief in the consequences of good and bad was deeply ingrained in ancient people, and people were eager to accumulate good deeds. Society was afraid of the destruction of generations and the cruelty to animals. They strongly believed that committing these evil acts would lead to suffering in the eternal hell. It is clear that with the development of these attitudes in society, the health and safety of animals were also ensured.

‘When drought approaches, birds flying like crows build nests close to the ground and their feet dig holes, and they herd their cattle nearby’ (Saddharmaratnavali 2011:277).

It is possible to identify how the behavior of birds and animals predicted the onset of a drought by keeping their cattle in places with water sources, minimizing the damage to their health, and taking steps to protect those animals.

‘A wealthy person, because he has a wealth of cattle, fears drought and protects them, so he herds cattle in watery areas, and birds like hawks and falcons that build nests in the lower branches of trees and in places where their tusks fill with water see that this is a sign of rain’ (Saddharmaratnavali 2011:277).

It is also possible to identify from these sources that the ancients also took steps to prevent the cattle from being in danger from floods during periods of heavy rainfall. Creating a suitable environment for animals that have settled in the forests to live in is a great service for the health and safety of animals (Saddharmaratnavali 2011:400).

This refers to the care given to a newborn baby elephant. This shows that bathing the baby elephant in hot water and applying sesame oil on its body was an effort to bring it to a good state of health. It is clear that the affection shown by humans to their children was also shown to animals. It is clear from the source evidence that there was a nation in the past that knew the fragility of human lives as well as the lives of animals. This is further confirmed by the three-part story in the Saddharmalankara written during the Gampala period. It is said that a giraffe, a snake, and a man, who were suffering from extreme thirst, were searching for water and fell helplessly into a pond when a good man was able to save all three of them from death. Also, according to Papanchasudani, the cowherds should visit a place once every seven days when they are taking the cows to graze. It is stated that suitable places should be selected for watering the animals, such as rivers or ponds, and that during the rainy season, the cowshed should be fumigated to prevent insects from entering. It is also stated that the cowherds should remove insect eggs from the small wounds of the cows and apply medicinal plant bark (ruk sumbu`u) to the wounds. According to the Ummagga Jata, the most nutritious food for cows is rice porridge and talamuruwa (semolina mixed with sesame seeds). This shows how much attention was paid to animal health in the contemporary period.

In the Loweda magazine written by Venerable Maitreya Vidagama during the reign of King Parakumba VI (1412-1467 AD), killing animals is described as a great evil. That is,

පෙර අගනක් එක් එක දෙනක් ඉස සිදා

සිය ප්‍රභ වැළඳී ගිනිදැල් නියර දුක් විදා

ඇය ඇඟ ලෝම ගණනේ ඉස් කැපුස් ලදා

මෙමරග වේස කාටත් අකුසලේ ලෙදා (Loweda Sangarawa 2000:10), (Language in Sinhala)

The author intends to secure the right of animals to live freely in the development of human attitudes. The Buddhist mind, which believes in the fruits of karma, has been carefully interpreted and has awakened people's hearts with kindness towards animals. Historical literary sources reveal traditional practices of animal protection that hold relevance for the contemporary global context. The preceding analysis highlights the extent to which past societies demonstrated respect for and safeguarded animal rights. Recognizing the value of these practices becomes especially significant when considering their potential for adaptation in the modern world

Animal Protection Revealed by Inscriptional Sources

When discussing the measures taken for the protection of animal health, inscriptional sources provide evidence that laws were enacted to punish cruelty to animals and killing them as an offense. The highest penalty imposed for the protection of animal health was death. Archaeological evidence provides evidence that the death penalty was imposed for killing animals. In addition, contemporary sources provide evidence that punishments such as whipping, flogging, and confiscation were also given.

According to the tablet inscription of King Kassapa V during the Anuradhapura kingdom, it can be identified that measures were taken to prevent animal cruelty. Namely,

බජ් නුවාක් ගම්බිමටි රාජකොල් කැමියන් වැදෑ වැරියන් ගැල් ගොන් මිවුන් නොගන්නා ඉසා (Karunarathna 2000: 28-31). (Language in Sinhala-Inscription)

The king has ordered that the royal officials should not enter the villages and take the cattle and buffalo. At this time, the state officials illegally entered the villages and took the cattle and buffaloes, or that they prevented it before it happened, and ensured the safety of the animals. It is clear from the inscriptional sources that this order was not limited to this period of the kingdom. In the inscriptional sources such as the Eripiniyawa Tam inscription belonging to the Second Sena Dynasty, the Rambewa Tam inscription and the Mihintale Tablet inscription of King Mahinda IV, it has been ordered that 'ójqka .i f.dka fkd.kakd fldg bid i;=ka n,y;aldrfhka ika;l lr .ekSu yd ful=kaf.ka f.f.dka f.ke leñhka ;=ukÜ f.dúli fkdlerúh hq;= n,y;aldrfhka jev .ekSu fkd<h;= njgZ' (Language in Sinhala-Inscription). The Ataweeragoleva inscription, belonging to the Fourth Dappula Dynasty,

also refers to the safety of animals. According to this letter, it is forbidden for royal officials to forcibly go to villages and obtain kirigeri gam (a dairy cow), galmee (a buffalo tied to a cart), variyan (elephant), and varisal (food needed for elephants). The Puliyam Kulam tablet of Uda Mahaya also orders not to forcibly enter villages and obtain village bulls.

The past rulers used various regulations and laws to prevent animal slaughter. They did not hesitate to impose severe punishments on those who violated these regulations and laws. In the tablet near the Mamaduwa tank established by King Sena II, it is written that ‘uyso jejys ny” uia.;ayqkī .ī,oaod n” ljqvq fj;ajhs (Medhananda 2016:141),(Language in Sinhala-Inscription), and the village Arachchiya, which caught the fish in the Mahinda tank, has been cursed that dogs will be killed by crows. This creates a certain fear among people to catch fish in the tank. According to the inscription of the Basawakkulam tank in Anuradhapura, fujejys uia uerE flfkl=ka /lf.k fkdmgjqj kqjr ,oaod w;ska oi yqKla rka uyjfyr” (Medhananda 2016:141-142) (Language in Sinhala-Inscription). It is said that the village head of Ma Maduwa secretly killed and ate the fish in the tank, and the mayor of Anuradhapura fined him for not taking legal action against those who caught fish in the Abhaya tank. An unknown author from the tenth-century Anuradhapura has stated that killing such fish with a sannasa is an offense. It is stated that the yjq;sfha t`M uerejd l” (Amaravansa 1969:82).

The Vewelketiya inscription of King Mahinda IV provides information on the rules and regulations regarding the killing of animals. Accordingly,

“මිවුන් ගෙරිගොන් එළුවන් මැරුවන් මරා පටිවනු කොටි ඉසා-----” (කරුණාරත්න 2000:82) (Language in Sinhala-Inscription).

Those who kill buffaloes and goats should be given the death penalty. It is stated that the death penalty was given as a punishment for killing animals in this way. It is also revealed, according to the Wewelketiya inscription, that punishment was also imposed for stealing animals

“නොමරා සොරා ගෙනගිය නියන කොටි ඔවුන් සන්ල කුණ් ඔබා හර්නා කොටි ඉසා

නිඳි නොවන් කොටා පටිවනු කොටි ඉසා-----” (Karunarathna 2000: 82). (Language in Sinhala-Inscription).

Those who kill buffaloes and goats should be given the death penalty, and if they continue to steal without killing them, those thieves should be properly identified, branded as thieves under their armpits, and exiled (Vithanachchh 2000:126). In this way, facts have been mentioned about how to give punishment to those who killed and stole animals - and the Wewelketiya inscription also reveals that there were rules and regulations regarding the sale of animals - namely, “බැහැරින් ඇඳි විකුණන මිවුන් ගෙරි ගොන් එළුවන් හන්දිනැ ඇපැ ගෙන ගන්නා කොටි ඉසා---” (කරුණාරත්න 2000:82)(Language in Sinhala-Inscription). References to the Galgon and buffaloes are also found in the Athuru Polayagama inscription, highlighting their significance in the historical context (Indrani 1997/98: 131).

“Dolos maha than weriyan noganna kot issa gelgon meemun noganna kot issa”

Buffaloes, cows, and goats brought in and sold from outside should be identified and secured. In this way, it is revealed that the ruler of Anuradhapura had made laws regarding the trade in animals. It is also mentioned in history that laws were imposed not only for land animals but also for the protection of aquatic animals. Inscriptional sources provide evidence of a law enacted by King Kashyapa IV prohibiting the killing of fish in the Basavakkulam tank built by King Pandukabhaya in the third century BC.

How the health and safety of animals were protected not only through state regulations and laws but also through the formation of people's attitudes can be identified through inscriptions. In inscriptions from Anuradhapura, Nuwara Eliya, and Kataragama, it is stated that those who killed them took away evil. Some inscriptions make this even more special by stating that the evil deeds of those killed in the Mahavutiya are taken away. In the Kelani inscription written during the reign of Kithsiri Mevan, the Sigule Vihara Dana Patraya states that the sins of those who killed four fish were taken away, and in the Vaharakgoda inscription, it is stated that the sins of those who killed seven animals were taken away. The fact that emerges from this is that the rulers of

Anuradhapura took legal measures for the safety of all animals - it can be seen that the rulers of Polonnaruwa, like the rulers who ruled the Anuradhapura kingdom, also ensured the health and safety of animals. King Nissankamalla (1187-1196 AD) is mentioned in the Hatada inscription as having protected all the animals living in the forest (Fonseka 1998:182). According to the Rankoth Vehera inscription of King Nissankamalla, it is stated that he should protect all the living beings living in the forests as well as in the large tanks. He also protected the animals and prohibited the killing of animals in the specified places. In this way, it is clear that King Nissankamalla also took policies for the protection of animal resources. According to the Giritale inscription, it is also said that he gave freedom to the animals living in the large tanks and the forest without fear. King Nissankamalla himself protected the Ranthisa tank and the Sumanatissa Minihoru tank built by King Mahasen in the third century (built by Mahasen). The Rankoth Vehera Pillar Inscription states that the animals living in the Ganthala Tank (renovated by Parakramabahu the Great) and the Padi Tank (Padaviya Tank), and several other large tanks in the three Sinhalese kingdoms were protected. Similar evidence has been discovered in the Polonnaruwa Galpotha Inscription. It states that ... uy jeō we< wuqKq nkaoid ta ta rge iqNslal fldge tys i;ajhkag wNhodk § ... (Language in Sinhala-Inscription). This makes it clear that the state policy on animal conservation in Sri Lanka was nourished by Buddhist religious ideas and was legally incorporated into state policy with state support and continued to be maintained.

There is evidence that the concept of sanctuaries was also implemented by the rulers of the Polonnaruwa period to protect animal health. The concept of creating sanctuaries for animals began in a historical era and has a very long history. It is possible to protect very rare animal species by establishing special areas such as sanctuaries and parks. It is also said that King Parakramabahu the Great gave sanctuary to wild animals by ordering them not to kill fish, birds, and other animals within an area of three or three and a half miles from Anuradhapura. The king implemented the concept of sanctuaries through this.

The Polonnaruwa Prithi-Dahaka Mandala inscription states that King Nissankamalla built a sanctuary called Prithi-Dahaka Mandapa and that he spent his time there relaxing in the cool, gentle breeze. Similarly, King Nissankamalla, the sanctuary concept has also been implemented by issuing an order through drums that no animal should be killed within seven kilometers of the city of Anuradhapura.

The Thimbiriwewa inscription also states (Epigraphia Zelanica Vol II 1924: 13) The killing of dairy cows and buffaloes is prohibited as follows

“කිරි ගෙරි ගැල් මිවුන් නොගන්නා ඉසා”

Similarly, the Ataweeragollawa letter also states that the killing of dairy cows and bulls is prohibited. (Epigraphia Zelanica Vol II 1924: 46)

“කිරි ගෙරි ගම් ගොන් නොගන්නා ඉසා” Thus, these facts confirm that they were protected as animals used in the agricultural economy. It also explains how the country's economic policy was oriented towards animal conservation.

Two rulers who contributed to the creation of large tanks during the Polonnaruwa period were Parakramabahu the Great and Nissankamalla the Great. Therefore, there is evidence that their animal conservation policy included laws that paid special attention to all the animals living in the tanks. The Kantale rock inscription of Nissankamalla (Epigraphia Zelanica Vol II 1924: 286-288) mentions the king's provision for the protection of animals living in large tanks. The Kalinga Kele rock inscription of Polonnaruwa (Epigraphia Zelanica Vol II 1924: 125) and the Nissankamalla rock inscription (Epigraphia Zelanica Vol II 1924: 156) mention all the animals living in the forests and tanks. Regarding the protection provided to animals with kindness. In this way, it is clear that the rulers of the Polonnaruwa kingdom implemented policies to protect animal resources.

Inscriptional sources bear witness that animal health was also protected during the subsequent kingdoms after the Lakdiva kingdom shifted to the southwest. The Dambadeniya discourse, written during the reign of Parakramabahu II of Dambadeniya, contains information about the medical science of ancient Sri Lanka and states that one should not perform sacrifices, peace rituals, yak dances, etc., to cure diseases. Inappropriate things such as killing yaks, having sacrifices, and reading Balibath, etc., should not be done due to an inherited disease

(Anuruddhika 2011: 155). This suggests that even Buddhist monks at that time performed animal sacrifices to cure their illnesses. It can be identified that the Daodeni discourse prevented this and ensured the health of animals. Historical evidence reveals that cruelty to animals was regarded as a punishable offense in the past. Moreover, practices aimed at safeguarding animal health, including the prevention of diseases, were recognized and implemented. These historical approaches, as documented in inscriptions, offer valuable insights that can be meaningfully applied to contemporary efforts in promoting animal welfare and protection.

CONCLUSION

By comparing these facts mentioned in stone inscriptions and chronicles with contemporary Indian concepts, it becomes clear that the ancient Polonnaruwa rulers nurtured their wildlife health protection policy through Indian concepts. Evidence is found that the basic features of some of the principles present in the current wildlife conservation policies were included in the ancient wildlife health protection policy. The wildlife conservation policy of the Polonnaruwa rulers was nurtured by all the factors necessary for wildlife health, such as the concept of sanctuaries, parks, veterinary medicine, and the concept of endangered species. All these facts make it clear that the rulers during the Polonnaruwa period adopted many policies for the protection of wildlife health, and through them, the protection of wildlife resources was ensured. Thus, the application of these historical strategies in the contemporary context emerges as a highly relevant and significant area of study.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

1. Epigraphia Zeylanica Vol. II, (1924) (ed.)-Wickramasinghe, Don Martino de Silva, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.
2. Loweda, Sagarawa. (2000) (ed.) K. Nanananda, Colombo: Sri Lanka, Public Trust Department.
3. Mahavamsa (1996) Sumangala Thero and Devarakshitha, Batuwanthudawe (ed.), Colombo: Department of National Museums.
4. Saddharma Ratnawaliya, (2011) (ed.)- Kiri Elle Gnanavimala, Colombo: M. D. Gunasena and Company.
5. Saddharmalankaraya, (1996) (ed.)- Ariyapala, Colombo: Sri Lanka, Oriental Language Publishing Company.

Secondary Sources

1. Amarawansa, Thero. Kothmale. (2017) Sri Lankan Inscriptions, Colombo, S. Godage and Brothers.
2. Dilhani, Anuruddhika. (2011) Diseases and Prevention Methods in Ancient Society, Department of History, Kelaniya: University of Kelaniya.
3. Fonseka, Lalitha. (2006). Environmental Policies of the Past Kings, Colombo: A. M. D. Gunasena and Company, Colombo Limited.
4. Indrani, R. K. M. T. (1997/98) The Political and Economic Implications revealed by the Attains Pillars, Vidharani Academic Journal, Department of History and Archaeology, Colombo, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.
5. Karunaratne, Saddhamangala. (2000) Collection of Inscriptions, Volume 1 (1904-1912), Colombo: Department of Archaeology.
6. Medhananda, Thero Ellawala. (2016) Stone Carved Letters, Homagama: Seneviratne Printers.
7. Withanarachchi, Rohana. Chandana. (2000) An Approach to Epigraphic Studies, Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers.