

forest or Mukalana is another important component. The major role of the forest cover is to increase groundwater table through infiltration and gradually supply water to the tank during dry periods. Also, it serves as a source of medicine, fuel, and food for the people living around. Our ancestors have also accepted wild animals as a part of the ecosystem. Kurulu paluwa is a strip of cultivated paddy land near the tank bund which is reserved for birds. It is expected that the rest of the paddy fields will not be damaged by birds. Shrublands or Landa is a large number of different shrubs grown area and it protects paddy fields, home gardens from wild animals.

The tank cascade system was the backbone of ancient agriculture. Traditional villages developed with cascade systems were in the existence until the recent past. However, human activities have disturbed many cascade systems and the sustainability of this marvel of ancient engineering is challenged. Pressure on available land resources has led to encroachments of the catchment areas reserved

for forest people to destroy the catchment forest area and use it for crop cultivations and other purposes. Also, illegal exploitation of catchment forests for fuelwood and timber has limited the potential of catchment areas. Further, the lack of conservation efforts of governments and political interferences are also negatively affected by the sustainability of the cascade system. As Sri Lankans, a huge responsibility is vested on us that are to rehabilitate and preserve this wonder of the ancient ingenuity for future generations.

#### References:

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**“Not even a little water that comes from the rain must flow into the ocean without being made useful to man”**

King Parakramabahu