

# **Challenges Faced by the Asian Elephants from Religious and Cultural Aspects of Contemporary Sri Lankan Society, Importance of Awareness and the Role of Law**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to identify the threats posed to the elephants from the conservative religious and cultural affairs of Sri Lanka and to formulate a viable solution for the conversion of conservative mindset to enhance and secure the future of the elephants through awareness and cohesive law enforcement. The main objective of this research is to emphasize on the importance of accurately identifying the prevalent religious and cultural challenges the elephants face and the interrelationship between awareness, law and law enforcement in safeguarding the future of the species. The present paper primarily identifies the usage of elephants in religious ceremonies, usage of elephants in parades, elephant labor, illegal trafficking of calves and the motivating factors for trafficking calves as the major challenges that could be mitigated by awareness, new laws and strengthened law enforcement. Origin of the cultural and religious usage of elephants, justifications provided for such usage and criticisms against the various practices will be discussed in depth. Existing framework of laws targeted at protecting the tamed elephants and the loopholes in the prevailing legislations and the need of amendments will be discussed further. The paper highlights the need of awareness to gradually convert the misconceptions of the society related taming of the elephants and questions the sustainability of the process. Further the paper asserts the need of awareness campaigns carried out by various NGO's, environmentalists and activists. Data gathered through social media poll options will be utilized to illustrate the predominant attitudes held by the public to pinpoint the weaknesses and strengths of seeking a change within a conservative society to limit the practice of taming the elephants for human needs.

**Keywords:** *tamed elephants – elephants in parades – elephant taming laws – illegal trafficking of elephant calves – awareness*