

## Study of Indigenous Knowledge which is Concerning the Shanthikarma Mentioned in Palm Leaf Manuscripts in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

*When looking at how a society or a group of people is aware of the knowledge of life, it becomes evident that the word 'indigenous' derives its most important meaning from the term indigenous knowledge. One of the most important elements of a sentence is the adjective, so the word 'indigenous' probably has a value equal to or even more than the main term. Knowledge is spoken not because of knowledge but because it is called indigenous knowledge. Across the world, special attention is focused not on knowledge but indigenous knowledge. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the word and the idea of the indigenous are of great importance. Indigenous knowledge, rather than traditional knowledge, is a cultural heritage of every human society. Thus, indigenous knowledge is a system of knowledge that is specific to a particular geographical area. That is, the knowledge possessed by the people living within a certain geographical area or region is the traditional knowledge or indigenous knowledge. The intangible knowledge of the Sri Lankan community is undergoing some changes in the current social transformation paradigm. The ancient rhetoric of ancient society, which is relevant to the intuitive knowledge of the past, is nowadays used sparingly. The 'Shanthikarma' one of the ancient traditional rituals of ancient society, which is relevant to the intuitive knowledge of the past, are nowadays used slightly. It is therefore of great importance to study the Shanthikarma of the Sri Lankan community as they are lost in the present society.*

**Keywords:** *Palm leaf manuscripts, Shanthikarma, Indigenous knowledge, Museum library*

### Introduction

This knowledge, which is not a living tradition but belongs to an ended tradition, can be described as a mirror that shows the intellect and thinking the ability of man from the prehistoric era. The adjective term of "Indigenous" means is originating or occurring naturally in a particular place or native. The word "dēsheeya" (Indigenous) comes from the addition of Derivative affix (thaddhitha prathyaya) "eeya" to "dēsha". The term indigenous refers to a country, territory or group to which it belongs naturally. It means that every group, region, and nation has its own unique set of knowledge (Edagama, 2008, p. 75). Indigenous knowledge is the knowledge inherited to a particular territorial (Ulluwishewa, 2006, p.24). It is also a function of passing on the knowledge of one generation to the next (Attanayake, 2005, p.39). According to Warren, indigenous knowledge is the oral tradition that is unique to a particular society or region. Apart, indigenous knowledge usually disseminates across

generation through content and by observing the various community practices. Indigenous knowledge is highly personalized and community-centric. Therefore, it appears that indigenous knowledge is community-specific and traditional by nature. Indigenous knowledge is the information system of a society, which facilitates communication and decision making. It is learned that the people of the area make decisions about their lifestyle and professions (Warren, 1989).

Indigenous knowledge is used by the people who created it and placed of originated it. This knowledge is not applicable in a place other than its origin and has no market value. Although not a market value, it is characterized by practical knowledge of indigenous knowledge, human nature, and the survival of the people, non-profit making, and no harm to society (Ranasinghe, 2004).

The characteristics of indigenous knowledge in the book of Best Practices on Indigenous Knowledge, a publication of UNESCO (2002:12-13) are as follows:

- Indigenous knowledge is location and culture-specific
- Indigenous knowledge the basis for decision making and survival strategies
- Indigenous knowledge is not systematically documented
- Indigenous knowledge concerns critical issues of human and animal life; primary production of human natural resource management
- Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and based on innovation, adaptation, and experimentation
- Indigenous knowledge oral and rural (<http://www.unesco.Org/most/bpindi.htm>)
- Traditional knowledge is collective and is often considered the property of the entire community, and not belonging to any single individual within the community (Hensen and Van Fleet, 2003, p. 3)

Indigenous knowledge can be analyzed as follows: “Indigenous knowledge system is a cumulative body of knowledge and belief, handed down through generation by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (Kumaran, 2007, p. 2).

And Indigenous knowledge is taken a territorial nature. Whatever the system of cognition, at the beginning it is taken a local or territorial nature. People living in different geographical regions around the world are indigenous people in those areas. Indigenous knowledge is the knowledge produced by these communities in the early ages of civilization. Utilizing this basic knowledge, each community has developed its civilizations. The enlightened people of these societies developed and acquired the indigenous knowledge which they inherited, or made progressive knowledge (Wijesundara, 2008, p.6).

In Sri Lanka system, one can observe the following basic disciplines: Agriculture, Arts and crafts, Food and nutrition, Housing, Irrigation, Medicine, Folk beliefs, Forest Lore (Ranasinghe, 2008, p. 4). Growth and use of indigenous knowledge in Sri Lanka has been seriously hampered by certain false notions spread during the colonial times as well as post-colonial period. These are:

Indigenous knowledge is not scientific

It is mysterious, dubious

It is old and has no value today

It belongs to the rural poor and illiterates

Elites do not practice it

It is weak and powerless

It does not fit into modern society

It is of inferior quality

It is not growing, but dying (Ranasinghe, 2008, p. 5).

When its attention to the indigenous knowledge of Sri Lanka, it is evident that indigenous knowledge ranges from agriculture, which is the lifeblood of ordinary life, to the very best of indigenous medicine and Shanthi Karma.

### **Objective**

It is used to identify the rituals mentioned in the Palm leaf manuscripts and to identify the special features of the Palm leaf manuscripts as well as to reveal the so-called yantra, mantra, and gurukam.

## Methodology

- Observing the Palm leaf manuscripts (Observation Method)
- Intangible knowledge, or indigenous knowledge, is used to obtain the data and information needed for this research and as well as the primary, the secondary and tertiary source used in the museum library collection of leaflets.

## Results and Discussion

Studying it at a time when the knowledge of indigenous knowledge is distracting can give some insight into modern society on indigenous knowledge that is fading away. The study was based on a collection of Palm leaf manuscripts from the Museum Library. Out of this collection of elaborate Palm leaf manuscripts on the rituals were identified separately and used for this research. Fifteen (15) Palm leaf manuscripts on Shanthikarma rituals were studied.

In studying the Palm leaf manuscripts containing the shanthikarma, it is clear that man has used yantra, mantra, and gurukam to cure diseases. Diseases that can be identified here are that looking by various female devils (invisible forces such as spirits and demons) after the birth of a boy or girl, falling from seasonably the female devil's glance, various diseases of children who cannot speak with devil's glance, nine days after birth the "Sama siya" a female devil develops a variety of diseases, ten days after birth the "Dewun" a female devil creates diseases that trepidation of a child's hands and feet. Eleven days after being born the "Puwasamawaneem" female devil makes a lot of nonsense in Adawala. Female demons, as they are called by various names, deal with the harmful effects of children up to the age of eleven mentioned in the Palm leaf manuscripts.

Age-related remedies for each of these female demons-borne diseases were identified as chanting mantra, cutting attachment (Bandhana), giving baskets (gotu), cutting lime, chanting mantra with eggs (Biththara methireema), identifying whether or not someone has been hurt by chanting mantra to rice and Kambili Bhairava mantra which is spreading of Buddha's rays and chasing out devils, Mantras for the elimination fear from devils and universal protection etc. Similarly, Yamakala bandhanaya, Vishnu Rama Baliya, Dewakalana Baliya, Asura Maha Baliya, like those Bali were also identified. The study also identified the Rukha Bandhana, the Navagraha Guru's Maha Dasa-Pancha Yama Baliya, the Medawa Sanni Mangalya Baliya, and the Agama Mahasohn Mangala Bhaliya etc.

It is equipped with physical protection, self-care yantra (amulets), yantra to cure deceases of thun dos kipccma (Physical causes are called Thun Dos and aggravation of natural senses of humour are called kipccma), and mantra for physical ailments, Amulets (yantra) for diseases caused by ghosts such as Yaksa, Pretha, the mantras used to cut evil (vina kepeema), Sacrifices such as Bili (that the puja, involving animal sacrifice), Gotu, Thatu puja for Amu Sohon Devatha and Sohon Devatha (goddess of cemetery), Mantras for stop fighting (Angam) and identify thieves, Mantras to die (Ayu nessema), Touching Kallu Nila (neuro positions - Internal Organs of the Human Body), Eashwara Seraya, Pilli, Bounding thun dos, Mantras to dog etc. Also, these Palm leaf manuscripts include the Angam dishtiya (aspect), the Dishti Salana Mantra, for every protection, the fever, to pregnancy, the protection from the devils and phantoms, binding the poets, the Yoga, the Nekath, the various Rakshasas, Dola Pideni, Bali Yaga, Seth Shanti, manner of getting permission with Worshipping God, Offerings to the Kadawara God, Submit to vows (Bhara Hara), manner of healing divine diseases and Bali Thovil, Offerings etc. It was clear that many of the mantras for a variety of diseases that were not yet known were also uncovered.

### **Recommendation**

At present, Palm leaf manuscripts are of little importance. However, it is clear that Palm leaf manuscripts were rich in indigenous knowledge documented in the past. The museum library has a large number of untitled Palm leaf manuscripts. Indigenous medicine, yantra mantra, and rituals suggest that catalogues of Palm leaf manuscripts should be prepared and preserved. We need to create a database of all these Palm leaf manuscripts to fit the current society. All bibliographical information should be included in the Palm leaf manuscripts and a scanned copy of the Palm leaf manuscripts should be included. Providing a scanned copy to researchers who come for the Palm leaf manuscripts research can minimize the damage done to the original.

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