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Traditional Methods and Techniques of Food Preservation in Ancient Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Since man began to settle down and formulate a civilization of his own he convinced that his main occupation would be agriculture or gathering of food from plants cultivated by him. Under these circumstances man began to understand that the food he produces either by cultivation or agriculture has to preserved in order to keep them without being decayed to use them for a long time. Hence he began to find out various means and devices to preserve his excessive food for the future use. The ultimate result of that was the discovery of various methods and devices to preserve his foodstuffs from decay and ruin. It should be noted here that the methods and devices employed by ancients to conserve his foodstuffs seems to be very simple and uncomplicated. For instance, the staple diet of the people of Sri Lanka appears to be the grains such as paddy, wheat, kurakkan, etc. In his attempt to maneuver preservative methods he has understood that the main obstacle in preserving foodstuffs were that they should be protected against the elements of nature such as sun, rain, humidity, warmth etc. As for grains the man understood that they are being destroyed by various types of insects rats and various other animals. Thus the ancients have made attempts to preserve their food items by simple and scientific means.

For instance the Vee-Bissa can be taken as one divisive method to preserve paddy for a long period of time. The ancient settlements in Sri Lanka were located in the dry zone areas such as Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, where the ancients thought that the flat lands without much jungles area could be utilized easily for the purpose of cultivation. As such they began to make their settlements in the dry zone where water is available. But when once they understood that the sufficient water is not available throughout the year they began to devise ways and means of storing water which ultimately led to the construction of irrigational works. This was the first step in the process of method of conservation of water by the ancients of Sri Lanka. When once they acquired the ability to conserve