

Traditional Knowledge Illustrated in the Palm Leaf Manuscripts of Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka

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Palm leaves played a major role in recording, and preserving information on various aspects of Sri Lankan culture in place of books and paper until the advent of printing in the 19th century. A search through of palm leaf collections in Sri Lanka reveals that they took part significantly in carry forwarding a tradition that considerably influenced to preserve Sri Lankan indigenous traditional knowledge that has been passed orally from generation to generation. Sri Lanka is in the custody of massive repository of manuscript wealth preserved in cultural institutions. However, an overview of literature reflects, studies are mainly confined to the preservation, historical information and to widely address the documentation aspects of the palm leaf manuscripts of Sri Lanka. This indicates that there is no research focusing on the theme that encompasses the study of paintings that depict the various aspect of traditional knowledge embedded in palm-leaf manuscripts. Theretofore, the present study is undertaken to explore the paintings in the palm leaf manuscripts in Sri Lanka. Anuradhapura district has been selected for the study. A survey has been carried out with a view to find paintings in the undocumented hither to unknown palm leaf manuscripts. Accordingly on the basis of previous pilot surveys, five Gram Sava Divisions were selected from the five different AGA Divisions of Anuradhapura District. In addition to the document analysis, focus group discussions and observations were used to collect data. While the survey produced paintings of various traditional knowledge related to Arts, the Indigenous Medicine, Magic and charms, Astrology and Agriculture, work of art appeared in palm leaf manuscripts related to ancient Sri Lankan agricultural activities are only presented in this paper. Surveying and studying hither to unknown collections at Anuradhapura District of Sri Lanka will be of momentous achievement for the benefit of research and learning. Due to the utmost value of the manuscripts it is recommended to take over the collections from the heritors with a view to preserve palm leaf manuscripts for the future generations.

Keywords: *Palm Leaf Manuscripts, Traditional Knowledge, Paintings, Anuradhapura District, Indigenous language*