

A study of the indigenous knowledge systems: a case study

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Indigenous knowledge is a special branch of knowledge, which is unique to a certain civilization, society or an area. It is based on the agriculture, health, security, preservation of food, education, protection of the environment and many other human activities of the respective society. This knowledge which has come down for ages orally; is not properly recorded and due to various factors so that this knowledge being marginalized.

This research; conducted in the eastern part of the Divisional Secretary's area of Kuliyaipitiya in the Kurunegala district; was based on the hypothesis that there is no systematic exploration or conservation of traditional knowledge in Sri Lanka. The sample of this research was 10 villages remaining selected from 5 Gramaseva divisions, which belong to the Divisional Secretary's area. Observations and interviews were the research methodology.

Main emphasis of the research has been laid on identification of the sources of indigenous knowledge in the area, the organisational nature thereof, its usage, the manner in which such knowledge is harnessed, its viability and the extent to which it has been conserved. Attention has also been paid to the issues that have propped up regarding the survival of this knowledge and the remedial measures that could be adopted in this connection.

It was observed during the research that there exists a wealth of personal sources relating to the indigenous knowledge, but such knowledge is available in written form even up to date. It exists in a disorderly manner despite its organisational structure and that its usage and survival are in a chaotic or questionable state at present.

The indigenous knowledge that was identified in relation to various fields in the area which came under this study is duly recorded under the relevant spheres and the data is analysed in a qualitative and quantitative manner under 04 main fields. Finally, the conclusions and suggestions; based on such analytical statistics and observations; have been presented.

Certain conclusions have been reached at the end of this research. There is a specifically identifiable system of indigenous knowledge that has come down from ancient times in the particular locality, the nature of the sources pertaining to such knowledge is varied. These sources tend to undergo changes and amendments owing to various factors, there is a clear scientific basis in this knowledge, which is tested and proved, presently there isn't sufficient usage of it guaranteeing its survival, the failure to follow a proper method of conservation has led to its destruction and in general, there is no proper exploration or conservation of indigenous knowledge in Sri Lanka.

Thus, it has been suggested hereby that a network of active institutions be established under the patronage of the State for the purposes of proper collection and recording as well as for the interpretation, storage, dissemination and conservation of this knowledge coming down orally. It has also been suggested to launch more research development and thereby create social recognition and a positive change of social attitudes towards this valuable system of knowledge to ensure its future survival.

Key words: Indigenous knowledge, System

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