

LET US PRESERVE OUR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous knowledge is generated through the diverse experiences faced by people in meeting different challenges posed by nature and by society. The indigenous knowledge is the knowledge inherent to a particular community or country. This knowledge flows down from generation to generation and is embedded in the culture of the community or area concerned. Therefore indigenous knowledge progresses with the progress of the community or area and also degenerates with its decline.

In ancient times autocrats who ruled our country adopted diverse systems of government. However, the ancient works of irrigation, the temples, the dagabas, the medical system, and architecture all bear clear evidence to the fact that in the indigenous knowledge was utilized readily in the past than the present. The consequence of repeated foreign invasion of the country caused the gradual destruction of the invaluable indigenous culture and knowledge inherent to our country. Although it is obvious that the society changes with the time, it is not incorrect to say that our indigenous culture was destroyed in this way due to the people in our country indiscriminately imbibing cultural practices of the aliens. The ultimate result of this situation which aggravated day by day, was that our country has gained a name among world powers as a destitute country in the Third World. The foreigners who invaded our country however, studied our valuable culture and sciences and other scholarly aspects and enriched their own culture and knowledge based with what they derived from it whereas we indiscriminately embraced their customs and practices and turned our backs on our own culture. Concealing traditional knowledge as the property of the "Gurus" was another reason for the decline of indigenous knowledge.

In spite of an advanced agricultural technology of our own, even today we try to adapt our fertile farmland to artificial agro chemicals brought from the so called developed countries to destroy the countries that are recognized as 'poor' but are rich in ecosystems. Although we had an advanced metallurgy, developed architectural practices and an advanced irrigation engineering industry, all of it is now in decadence. Sri Lanka was in a developed state at the time when the countries that are developed today were in a primitive condition. There are historic facts to prove this. Let us take a look at the creative workers of the past and their creations. It is very clear that our indigenous technology, aesthetic values and the environment were all well preserved by their creations. We should not forget our past. Science and technological knowledge should not be considered unsuitable merely because it has come to us from a foreign country. All intelligent choice should be made of what is needed. We should be able to adapt the knowledge selected in this way while preserving our indigenous knowledge.

In this issue of "VIDURAVA" an attempt is made to reflect on a few facets that have a scientific value such as agriculture, metallurgy, textile technology, indigenous medicine as well as astronomy, in the vast body of knowledge which is specific to Sri Lankan society and these articles convey to students and to the general public, the significance of preserving "Indigenous knowledge".

Editor