

VI. Provisional Urgent Safeguarding List

1. Traditional Agriculture in Sri Lanka and its value as a repository of ICH

Sri Lanka is essentially an agricultural country whose society, culture and life pattern have been entirely based on and fashioned by an agrarian socio-economic system. Understandably the economy of the country can still be seen revolving round the pivot of agriculture as it has been the case from the beginning of the Island's long history. The chorus of activities, large in magnitude associated with agriculture had given rise to a whole world of wisdom and knowledge that compares very well with any known body of wisdom in any other country, whether new or old, east or west. The gamut of paraphernalia associated with agriculture in this country is marked by several special features unique to it like its indigenoussness, utilitarianism, appropriateness, simplicity, inexpensiveness, reliance on religious and mythical beliefs, dependence on cooperative efforts, environment friendliness and many others.

Yet what is very interesting is the fact that most of the wisdom and knowledge that goes to produce multitude of implements and mechanisms essential for the proper execution of the vocation had remained in unwritten form as traditions and practices that was passed down from generation to generation orally and through practical lessons in the daily life. Hence this entire body of knowledge that is fondly cherished and dearly preserved with utmost care despite numerous difficulties in the face of so-called modernization and development, can be considered a rich storehouse of ICH, a gift only a very few countries are fortunate enough to bestow on the entire humankind. Hence the unfathomable value of Sri Lanka to the scholars and researchers, conservationists and promoters of ICH in the world.

Beginning of Agriculture

Beginning of civilization is considered to have coincided with the beginning of agriculture. E.B.Tylor, the pioneering writer on Anthropology, takes the beginning of agriculture still further back and says that the dawn of civilization was the result of the beginning of agriculture and hence the agriculture is the forerunner of civilization. (E.B.Tylor. Anthropology 1878). Ever since the introduction of agriculture, all societies in the world in most probability in their primary stages practiced agriculture in some form and today agriculture continues to be the basic means of livelihood of the vast majority of the world population.

Through-out the ages the people in these societies invented adapted and adopted from the nature the implements and techniques required for their agriculture. Borrowing and adopting from other societies where possible was not unknown to many early societies. Consequently today we see that from the primitive wooden hoe and the plough, the agricultural technology has developed to the present day all-purpose tractor and host of other machinery. Yet in those countries where history goes back to very early times and agriculture remains as their main means of livelihood the body of knowledge on agriculture can necessarily be seen surviving among the people solely through the practice of the vocation. Therefore with the increased pressure from the so-called developed countries to sell their wisdom and technology as another commercial commodity, the threat of losing forever the valuable body of knowledge that had been brought from ancient past to this day is mounting unprecedentedly.

Agriculture in ancient Sri Lanka

The antiquarian nature of the practice of agriculture in Sri Lanka is well reflected in the manner the human settlements were located in the early days of the country's history. It is well known that the early human settlements in Sri Lanka were centered round water ways as is proved by the different waterways associated with all the known centers of early settlements. Malwatu oya, Kala oya, Kirindi oya, Galoya, Walawe ganga, Nilwala ganga, Gin ganga, Kalu ganga, Kelani ganga. Maha oya, Deduru oya right round the island are prominent among these rivers and streams with multitude of other small waterways accommodating many a pockets of minor settlements. These settlements, it must be remembered, are much older than the beginning of the written history of the island.

The knowledge and experience gained and attachment to practice of cultivation were the guiding factors in founding new settlements as well. When a particular settlement had shown signs of over-population, forcing them to find a new settlement, a group from the spilled population under the leadership of an elderly chief set on the mission of finding a place for new settlement. The main target was a source of water and where damming was feasible. Once the place was decided first thing they did was to build a dam to store water if no ready flow of water was available to tap for irrigation. Therefore it would be seen that before the village the water reservoir originated since the availability of water was the key factor of successful agriculture.

The size of the settlement depended on the capacity of the tank to irrigate and often it ranged from 5 to 20 families. The residential area called “gamgoda” (cluster) was located on a higher elevation above the irrigated fields below the tank and all the houses were concentrated within common compound which was made easy owing to the close kinship affinities of the group. This mechanism was instrumental in guaranteeing the much needed protection, social security and fostered and promoted unity and cooperation thus ensuring the indispensable environment for successful agriculture.

The antiquity of agriculture in Sri Lanka is discernible not only through the settlement plan of the island. Walahaka Jataka story, one of the 550 birth stories of Lord Buddha, relates that the Yakkinis (female demons) of the city of Tammanna in the island of Tambapanni (another name by which the island had been known) pretended to behave like humans by resorting to ploughing etc. Well before the arrival of Vijaya from Dambadiva, as India was known then, Tambapanni had been practicing agriculture. It is proved by the evidence on the availability of warehouses full of rice and other grains with which Vijaya and his retinue of 700 were fed instantly by the ruler of the port, Kuvanna on their sudden arrival there (Mahawansa vii.24-25).

At the time of the arrival of Arahant Mahinda Thero 2400 yers BP, the starting point of the written history of Sri Lanka, there had been a well developed society where agriculture was extensively practiced. Prince Pandukabhaya (2500 years BP) who is credited with starting the indigenous line of rulers in the island had met his future queen, Princess Pali while she was carrying mid-day meals

to her father, Girikanda Siva who was at work with others in the paddy field. (Mahawansa x. 29-31).

From very early period of history royal patronage to agriculture had been very crucial that the tradition had compelled the kings to consider it their bounden duty to ensure a very steady supply of water for cultivation and hence embarked on major irrigation schemes. The philosophy behind their policy towards the supply of water can very well be seen from the declaration attributed to the great benefactor of irrigation system in Sri Lanka, King Parakramabahu the Great. (1000 years BP) "Let not one drop of water falling from the sky be allowed to flow into the sea without been harnessed for the benefit of the mankind." Therefore "Extensive works of irrigation secured with an immense amount of labour skill and science had transformed arid plains into areas of plentiful prosperity at a time when agriculture in Europe was in the rudest and most primitive state" (R.L.Brohier Pt 1 p.1). Concrete evidence are found in abundance to substantiate the fact that this deep involvement of the kings and the ruling class in providing and guaranteeing the steady and uninterrupted supply of water for cultivation in Sri Lanka had in actual fact been materialized. It can be seen how this sacred and solemn duty is been adhered to up to the present day in the country unhindered.

Ancient wisdom still remain unrecorded

It is interesting to note that despite all the developments and progresses made in the fields of agriculture and science and technology, much of the great wisdom and deep knowledge of the past that helped Sri Lanka to be self-sufficient in the food supply, still remain unwritten and unrecorded. However it cannot be denied that during the last several decades the strong winds of change and forced influences of the powerful industrial and commercial organizations have been making great inroads into these spheres necessitating the taking of urgent measures to ensure the protection of this priceless world heritage from the impending threat of disappearance. Hence the immeasurable value and relevance of the efforts like UNESCO's to safeguard and conserve human treasures like ICH can be seen gaining more and more acceptance in the intellectual world

The ICH that is part and parcel of the traditional agriculture is not easy to be compartmentalized since the entire activity or vocation (certainly it had never been a mere vocation in this country) of

agriculture carries intangible knowledge, wisdom, values, virtues, ethics etc. in every aspect of its multitude of activities, starting from the beginning to the end of the agricultural cycle. Therefore it would be seen that an enumeration of the whole host of ICH associated with agriculture is not feasible in a short essay like this. Hence laying emphasis on few most important aspects, only a brief mention of other aspects would be made in this exercise depending on their relevance to the main theme.

Fortunately, the entirety of the activities associated with agriculture can be seen fully and vividly described in the course of relating a story in a chapter of a Sinhala literary classic (Saddharma Ratnavaliya) belonging to the 13th century followed by yet another Sinhala classic (Pujavaliya) belonging to a slightly later period from which we can elicit out the all important information on ICH. This proves very well that the knowledge of scientific agriculture is not new to Sri Lanka and that it had been a popular knowledge at the time so much so that the Buddhist priests too could have written treatises on the subject enumerating and describing in detail the different aspects of the vocation.

Traditional agricultural cycle

The traditional agriculture as practiced by the people in this country in the past, when most of the problems encountered by the present day people had been unheard of, has had three main branches identified according to the type of work involved, place of work and the manner in which the work was embarked on.

- (a) Field cultivation-wet
- (b) Chena (slash and burn) cultivation-dry
- (c) Home-garden cultivation-mixed

Taking the first two branches into consideration one can see several stages in their cultivation cycles to be identical.

- (a) Preparation of the field
- (b) Selection and preparation of seeds and plant materials
- (c) Sowing or planting
- (d) Crop protection
- (e) Harvesting
- (f) Religious rituals- paying back gratitude

In the traditional agricultural cycle of activities, the clearing marks the beginning of the preparation of the fields. In the case of chena cultivation a plot of jungle land was used for the cultivation of different varieties of grains, yams, pulses, vegetables etc. In the other form of wet cultivation only paddy was cultivated in the muddied fields. In the case of dry cultivation the cultivators in a group go out to the jungle and choose a suitable area which can accommodate all and where everyone will have an equal size plot to work. The manner in which the plots were demarcated made the plots appear like a cart wheel.

Scientifically this design had ensured the unity and cooperation in the work, protection and the success of the vocation. In the case of the wet cultivation the initial activity again was the clearing of the surrounding of the field and attending to the repairs if any, of the canals and channels conducting water into the fields. This speaks volumes about the civic consciousness of the people in the olden days. They had never waited for the state's intervention in attending to their minor works, a worthy lesson to learn from the past to the present.

The next step in the chena cultivation is more or less the most hazardous of all. Clearing the jungle and preparing the land for cultivation is on the one hand a painful job not only for the heaviness of the work involved but for the guilt instilled through the religious training discouraging them from intervening with the nature, disturbing the life pattern of the wild birds and beasts and vandalizing the forests and its resources. Yet since they were compelled to resort to the jungle clearing for the sake of their sustenance, they took every precaution to minimize the damage done to the nature and its many resources. When clearing the jungle all the large and valuable trees were spared and protected. In setting fire to the dried jungle waste they resorted to an almost a ritual of running round the plot with the torch of fire in hand thrice crying loudly a request to the beasts and birds to be kind enough to leave the place since they are compelled to resort to this action for the sake of their young ones.

The cultivators of the wet fields did not have such painful experiences other than the heaviness of the workload they had before them. Soon after clearing the surroundings, the waste is dumped into the fields left with the paddy stems from the previous harvest for decaying and fertilization of the field. Towards

achieving this objective the cultivators open the gates (vakkadaya) to conduct water into the fields and close exit points so that all the Liyaddas (plots) will be soaked in water for several days. While this helps to acquire the nitrogen from the sun rays on to the plots, it helps immensely to convert the waste and the paddy stems etc in the plots to enhance the fertility of the fields while softening the bottoms of the plots to facilitate the next step of muddying and levelling the plots.

The third stage in the cultivation of chena is the preparation of the land for cultivation. Unburned remnants will be collected and where necessary burnt in heaps or dumped into the boundary of the chena. Simultaneously the protective wooden fence built with heavy logs to keep the wild beasts away from the cultivation will be attended to. At the same time action will be taken to assemble the seeds and other things required for the cultivation. Also of importance is the construction of the temporary hut to keep watch in the night and to rest during the day since watching is almost essential as the wild beasts are in abundance in the surroundings. In the areas where elephants are abundant the huts are built on tree tops to avoid been threatened by them. The wet field cultivators devote their attention to repair and restore bunds and dams that form an essential part of the field helping to retain water in the individual plots. The preparation of the plots too starts and the first ploughing (hi-neguma) or the first hoeing (bim ketuma) takes place to condition the plots by turning up the soil. This process is continued for two more times (de-hiya) or de-ketum) and (tun-hiya) or (tun-ketum) with a short break in between and finally the field will be ready for sowing or replanting (vepireema or pela situveema).

As the work progresses much activity is taking place at home. The seed paddy chosen will be tested for its capacity to germinate according to the traditional methods of soaking a selected number of seeds for a day in water or mostly in a stem of a plantain (banana) tree. A short piece of banana stem will be cut half-opened and the selected seeds will be deposited in it and sealed till following morning. Then it will be examined and number of germinated seeds will be counted and the success percentage will be calculated. This process will be continued until the most suitable variety is found. The selection of other cultivable items for chena cultivation is done according to the personal experience or on the advice of the elders.

The chena cultivation though is condemned and rejected by certain sections accusing it to be environmentally harmful and dangerous to the conservation of the nature, it would no doubt be seen that it is their thorough ignorance of the proper functioning of the chena system that prompts them to make such wild accusations. On the one hand chena cultivators never destroy the jungle. Nor they ever cleared the plot chosen completely to deprive it of all the big trees either, since they knew how useful they are for their survival. They were able to realize this because they were conscious of the long duration such trees have taken to grow to such heights. But most importantly the chena cultivation survives only for a maximum of 2-3 years after which it would be left fallowed for a long time .It may not be within 40 to 50 years hence that it would be re-cleared if at all necessary. Besides, all these chena had been the chief benefactor of the innocent villagers since it guaranteed them with food security for an extended period of 2-3 additional years since it produced fruits, yams, pulses and green leaves well beyond the time chena had been in actual fact abandoned. Systematic chena cultivation and the destruction of nature are two concepts far apart.

It also brings to us yet another virtue inherent to chena cultivation namely that it is only a temporary occupation of the jungle for a limited purpose by the people who never allowed the jungle to be destroyed. However the population explosion we see today is making a heavy demand of the forest which is fast dwindling and hence it is an indication that chena cultivation can no longer survive in the modern world. With the phenomenal increase in the population there is the stiff competition to share the limited and scarce resource of land. More over there is vehement opposition to the clearing of jungles from the environmentalists throughout the world since it tends to increase the global warmness and acts as a threat to the entire mankind as well as the animal world. Hence the practice of chena cultivation in any case is losing its significance as a great economic factor and therefore even though very reluctantly we will have to accept that it will remain only as a thing of the past. Yet as genuine appreciators and conservationists of intangible cultural heritage we are bound to hold it in high respect for what it had bestowed on us. Hence there is the urgent need today of collecting and recording all the wisdom and knowledge the chena cultivation system had passed on to the mankind before it is perished and lost forever to be deposited in the repositories in the hope that this wisdom and knowledge we had gained from it can be

made use of for the betterment of the humans where necessary and feasible in the future as well.

The belief system and rituals, customs and manners, traditions and practices, wisdom and knowledge associated with chena cultivation can be considered a very proud acquisition to the ICH. The folk-lore, including stories, poetry, magic, puzzles, riddles, mantras (sorcery) and many more by-products of this particular vocation will compel us to pay more attention on them before they are lost forever to the mankind. How the cultivators predicted correctly the coming of rain, signs of nasty droughts, impending dangers from the wild animals, appropriate and useful first aids in the jungle are all locked inside them and we have heavy responsibility of eliciting them out from wherever they are for the benefit of the mankind. Equally important will be the host of paraphernalia-instruments and implements associated with the vocation since they enlighten us on the appropriateness of the technology suitably developed to the vocation and to the indigenous situation.

Coming back to the agricultural cycle attention can be concentrated to the paddy cultivation in the wet fields since it is the surviving form of cultivation today. Here we see the cultivators getting rather busy organizing the next stage of the cultivation cycle namely the sowing or replanting. Every farmer was proud to be self-sufficient in the supply of seed paddy. Having tested the germination capacity of the different seeds, the right variety will be measured and packed into sizeable bags and kept at the auspicious hour in the water for 2-3 nights to germinate. Meanwhile the last ploughing (Tun-hiya) or the preparation of the field for third time (final) will be completed. On the day before the sowing the bags of paddy left for germination will be brought home and dumped on the plantain leaves or habarala (*Alocasia indica*) leaves spread on the floor and loosened and separated by thrusting between the two palms for easy sowing. On the sowing day the farmers will gather in the morning at the home of the owner of the paddy fields and enjoy the morning meals before going into the field for the auspicious duty. First the owner or an elderly person considered by everyone to be lucky or fortunate and evil-free will descent on to the field and start work for others to follow him. The leader will mark the channels in the plots and others will complete them properly and the work will continue until all the plots are prepared with short stoppages for tea and victuals. The gates in the dams will be kept open for the

water to drain out since otherwise paddy seeds will be submerged or drained out.

Once the preparation is over the seed paddy brought from home will be carried in a specially designed basket (Vi-pettiya) hung on the shoulders by a “fortunate” and experienced person and sown in the plots to be evenly scattered. At the end of the sowing a bunch of flower from an areca nut tree will be planted on the dam in the middle of the field. This is considered to be a magical action to keep off the evil influences on the paddy field. At the end of the entire work load for the day the cultivators would be entertained to a sumptuous lunch which happens to be the only form of remuneration for the heavy load of work done (Robert Knox 1681). The villagers participate in these activities as a voluntary and mutual help.

However the real period of hard work starts only after the sowing is completed. It is the period when utmost care of the cultivations is absolutely essential. Seeds sown have to be protected from the birds and beasts. Water needs be conducted in time for the tender plants to grow up. Tender plants have to be protected from the plant eating animals like rabbits, deer etc. Plants have to be taken care of to prevent from different infections, insects and other forms of diseases. It is therefore not surprising that the period of protecting the crops in the field is considered the most strenuous part of their vocation since deep vigilance and personal attention throughout day and night is imperative and sacrificing one’s own comfort and happiness is unavoidable. Hence this period in the agricultural cycle will certainly be considered the most important from ICH point of view since most of the rare and deep meaningful practices are found here.

The cultivators of the past unlike the “farmers” of today devoted almost their full time on the cultivation and hence it was rightly described as most hazardous yet very enjoyable and above all most righteous vocation since ultimately it was their sweat and labour that they ultimately enjoyed as the product or the harvest . They never left the field to the mercy of the wild beasts and remained at home until it was time for reaping the harvest. Proper and controlled water supply to the field had to be maintained, seeds had to be protected from birds and insects and plants had to be safeguarded from birds, beasts and animals until the plants come up of age to bear fruits when even more care had to be taken if the

harvest had to be rich and plentiful. This could not be achieved by staying at home. Hence this necessitated a hut in the field to stay day and night to watch the crops. It was a second house for them. Much entertainment was there in the huts since to keep up the nights to drive away the animals they engaged in reciting poetry to a meter one after the other thus making the entire vicinity almost like an entertainment ground. Since a rich heritage of folk-lore consisted of songs, music, literary skills, expression of experiences, deep feelings, ups and downs in the life and many more could be collected here its value as a storehouse of ICH is immeasurable.

The cultivators in the past never believed in fertilizing the plants after sowing seeds. Instead the organic manure they procured was used before the sowing since their main objective in using the manure was to enrich the soil rather than the yield. On the one hand the philosophy behind the use of manure was that since, we extract in the form of harvest the essence of the soil, we owe the soil much and therefore by manuring the soil we try as much as possible to repay to the soil even a part of what we have extracted from the soil. What a wonderful philosophy!. On the other hand concerted effort was not necessary for them to enrich the soil since the soil was allowed to acquire regularly the deficient qualities through natural process. Exposure of the water filled plots to the sun rays over a period of time caused accumulation of nitrogen requirements. Composed manure out of cow-dung, domestic waste, etc. was added to the field in addition to the shrub clearance in and around the field thrown to the field, paddy stems and grass etc in the field once decayed added richness to the soil. Since this was a continuous process it helped a lot to allow the regeneration of lost fertility of the soil uninterrupted.

The weeding process was yet another way the forefathers resorted to look after the crop while at the same time ensuring the successful growth of the plants. The village ladies in number took to the field during this process and forming a row started moving forward removing the weeds and competing plants and burying them in the field itself to decay. While in this process they removed excess plants and replanted them where necessary. Furthermore the trampling of the tender plants by the weeding ladies helped them to shoot out in numbers thereby contributing to the swelling of the yield.

The pest and insect control was no problem to them despite numerous insecticides and pesticides so rampant today were unknown to them at the time. Whatever the pest they were confronted with was checked and wiped out by adhering to a set time schedule in attending to the various activities by all the cultivators of a particular village as a group. This is besides indulging in charms and customary practices which though appear to be mere superstitious acts, display much scientific basis. Chanting of Pirith (Pariththa- Stanzas invoking the blessings of the Lord Buddha), sprinkling of pirith water, charmed sand, ashes, juice of various unpalatable herbs, roots or fruits on the top of the crop was resorted to along with several other methods. Lighting of lamps in the night at the four corners of the field is still considered a form of charm but in actual fact it had a very scientific explanation in that it helped to attract the harmful as well as other insects and destroy them instantly.

Planting of certain varieties of herbs like habarala (*Alocasia indica*) inguru (ginger - *Zingiber officinale*), niyada (*Sansevieria zeylanica*), randomly on the bunds of the field soon after sowing seeds was intended to destroy the earthen creatures like rats, pests and insects through the disagreeable taste and odour of the root system. A bundle of crushed herbs, fruits or roots of certain varieties was deposited at the mouth of the topmost vakkadaya (an opening for water to flow into the field cut on the weir or bund) which helped to destroy much of the insects and creatures harmful to the paddy roots and trunks since the juice was carried all over the field through the channels.

It has become an absolute necessity today as a primary method of environmental protection to encourage and mobilize the people to resort to bio-technological methods in their cultivation activities. Glad to mention that our forefathers had been masters at making full use of bio-technology in agriculture from the distant past and despite all the distractions emanating from the modern day foreign chemical dealers Sri Lankan cultivators can still be seen making use of all these environment friendly methods without any body's instigations or instructions but solely as an inherited tradition. Excellent example of this phenomenon of harnessing the bio-technology in the cultivation is the planting of coconut stems or similar stems all over the field with tender plants to accommodate birds of prey day and night in the field. This helped the birds of prey to frequent the fields day and night to feed on insects and

other creatures like rats and crabs thriving in the field. It provided easy access to a resting place within the field itself when dashing to and from the prey. The validity of this can be measured only when considering the fact that the fields with large stretches do not have trees or any other suitable places for the birds of prey to watch from and dash into the prey and come back to rest after the successful mission. Thus it can be seen that the traditional cultivators have been making full use of the inherent habits of the predators to their benefit.

Yet another method through which the traditional cultivator had been controlling the pest and caring the cultivation was by planting mixed vegetables on the weirs after the sowing. This on the one hand was an example of multi-cropping and making maximum use of the land. Secondly it helped to distract the insects from the paddy crop. Depending on the varieties planted they acted as a repellent to the insects. The vegetable plants helped to enrich soil as well while at the same time helping cultivators to manage their food requirements. Therefore it would prove to any one that the crop protection process in the traditional agricultural cycle stands out as the most interesting and rich repository of most valuable intangible cultural aspects which can be harnessed for the benefit of the modern day requirements as well.

Many more are the mechanisms used in the fields to protect the crops from the various sources of attack. It was customary in the rural areas for the cultivators to set apart a portion of the field untapped leaving its harvest to the birds. This portion was named kurulu paluwa, (reserved to the birds) signifying that it had been set apart for the benefit of the birds. They believed that this portion nearest to the jungle would prevent the birds from destroying the crop in the other part since they had enough to feed on in the kurulu paluwa. In the similar fashion, the fruits on tree tops and ends of the branches are left alone untouched for the benefit of the birds and beasts that thrive on fruits.

Another very interesting and innovative method of protecting the crops resorted to by the local cultivators is the scaring away of the birds and beasts from the cultivation. In adopting this method the variety of means and mechanisms invented is very astonishing. Often the fields can be seen accommodating several scarecrows, white-spotted pots on sticks, wasted animal skulls on the fences, bunches of tender coconut leaves,(now stripes of polythene have

encroached), in the middle of the fields to the height of the eye-level. This is resorted to by the cultivators to gain twin objectives. On the one it helps to drive away the animals especially in the night when the moonlight falls on these objects and gives the appearance of a human being in the eyes of the animals. On the other hand it is a precaution taken to distract the attention of the evil-men from the crops or the cultivation. People believe that ill-effects of evil-eye, evil-mouth and evil-thought will fall on the crop if first and direct attention of the evil-person is attracted to the crop. Therefore if any object above the crop can attract that attention, then the evil-effect will be avoided since it will fall on the dummy. How scientific is this explanation the traditional cultivators had known for centuries?

The other main mechanism of scaring away animals is by the use of noises. Sri Lankan traditional cultivators had been experts at the using of this mechanism. Takaya (a barrel or a piece of wooden board with accompanying heavy sticks attached to them) is hung on the fruit trees with one end of the string going up to the house. Every now and then somebody at home will manipulate the string when the sticks will bang on the barrel or the board producing a noise to scare away the animals. This can be manipulated even by a child and hence this has become a very popular mechanism among the fruit cultivators today due mainly to its low-cost, simplicity and the success rate. Hulang Holmana or the wind ghost is yet another sound maker but without any human intervention. It is also hung on a tree and manipulated by the wind and the sound is produced when the wind cause the stick to hit against the plank.

There is yet another ghost of course manipulated by the flowing water and hence it is called Diya-Holmana or the Water-ghost. A bamboo stick of about 3 feet long is cut with one end opened. The bamboo is pierced across in the middle and a stick is sent through the hole. This will be fixed to a vakkadaya (a gate to flow water in and out cut on the weir) with the help of two supportive sticks carrying the two ends of the stick piercing through the bamboo. When the bamboo is fixed the opened end must be able to take in water coming from the opening. Just below the other end of the bamboo is a large size stone. Mechanism involved is that when the bamboo gets filled on the upper side it lowers itself due to heaviness and then empties itself and as a result the other end which had gone up will bang on the stone creating a loud noise. As a

result the birds and beast will run away. This is a continuous process.

In both these instances it would be seen that there is no known creator of the noise or the action but there is an action. Hence the name ghost originated. In both cases it would be again seen that the traditional cultivator had been very wise in harnessing the power of natural sources. More over the innovativeness of the traditional cultivator is much appreciable since he had made full use of the freely available materials of the surrounding without having to spend anything other than his creativeness. This is where the traditional Sri Lankan cultivators stand out above almost all others when it comes to environmental friendly activities.

List may be incomplete if mention is not made of another mechanism of course used mainly by the children as a plaything but serves the purpose of protecting the crop in the remote villages. It is called Burum petta-flat bamboo stripe tied to a long and strong string. A flat piece of bamboo of about 9-12 inches long is tied to a strong long string at one end. The children after school go to the fields where the parents are at work and play about with the burum petta held from the other end of the string. As they run about swirling the burum petta round the head fearful noise is created as a result of the bamboo stripe cutting through the wind. This is one instance where the innocent children' play efforts are harnessed in the economic activities and in this instance, protecting the cultivations since the sound they produce through their play instruments scare away the birds and beasts. Here again it is an inexpensive mechanism and a very simple technological creation that had been serving immensely in a useful purpose. What a valuable piece of traditional wisdom that speaks high in ICH.

Charms and Magic

There are also numerous charms and magical practices the cultivators are expected to perform by compulsion in some most abnormal and even sarcastic manner if they are keen to obtain highest results and increased yields. One such charm is the sprinkling of ashes on the crop very early in the morning before the sun rises. Stipulated conditions to follow are that the cultivator should go to the field very early in the morning before sun rises. He should be naked and should not be seen by anybody and without even a murmur with anybody. Having gone to the field the ashes will be sprinkled over the plants all over the field and get back

home. In actual fact the only charm that can be seen here is the absolute necessity to sprinkle the ashes at the opportune time namely, before the sun rises since with the sun rise the flies will move away and the dew will be dried out.

Here the nature of the human behaviour has been given due recognition. People can be lazy and tend to postpone their activities to their convenience and hence the proper time to administer the solution may be missed. The need to sprinkle the ashes that early morning is due to the fact that flies will have dew on them before the sun rise and the ashes sprinkled will cover their bodies thus damaging their sight, bodies and even progenitor system thus eradicating the pest. Hence to achieve the maximum benefits the application of the remedy has to be done at the proper time. It is with this intention the stipulation of nakedness, refraining from been seen by anybody and even murmuring with anybody had been introduced to compel the cultivators to attend to their activities at the right time. But for that the tendency would to postpone the job for his convenience.

Furthermore when one studies the actual meaning behind the protective measures adopted by the ancient Sinhala people there is an interesting feature underlining the entire process of protecting the crops. It can be seen that all the measures adopted are intended to produce a sound or noise and even a sight which will scare away the wild breasts and birds from the crop. None of the methods used had been intended at killing or harming the wild creatures and therefore it has to be borne in mind that these people who had been moulded by the teachings of Lord Buddha who preached the doctrine of non-violence had never intended any harm to any even in their laborious attempts at protecting the cultivation that had been their bread and butter.

Folklore

A very significant portion of the ICH from Sri Lanka can easily be obtained from the field of agriculture as had been explained above. Still there is much more to talk about in the same field especially in the area of folk-lore, songs, tales, myths, beliefs, customs, rituals etc and most importantly the paraphernalia of objects, instruments and implements associated with traditional agriculture. There is much singing and reciting associated with agriculture from the beginning to the end of the cycle. Often they have been considered as essential items to ease the fatigue of continuous hard work in the

field while on the other side it provided them the opportunity to express their feelings in addition to avoid the feeling of solitariness. Hence singing by the ladies at replanting, weeding and reaping have become a common sight even today while the males who are not ready to be outdone kept on reciting poetry from the huts in the night and their loud voice kept the entire environment awakened when they started their reciting as if they are engaged in a competition of poetry recitation. What is important is the fact that these songs and verses all give expression to the religious feelings or the personal feelings of the men involved in the hard work. In either case they reveal storehouses of information very important as ICH.

The vast sea of Folklore prevalent in the country on the one hand speaks volumes about experience and the knowledge behind all the creative objects and instruments while on the other hand they draw our attention to the sharp and deep wisdom with which we had been able to achieve all that we are proud of today. The marvellous agricultural technology our forefathers had invented is still considered as very appropriate to the environment of the country and to fulfil the requirements for which they were invented. Robert Knox, the Englishman who was an open-air prisoner for 19 years in this country clearly states this in his monumental work on Ceylon namely *An Account of Ceylon and its Inhabitants* (1681).
Astrology and the cultivators

All the activities associated with every aspect of the life of the natives take place according to the readings of the astrologers. One can say it is even more carefully adhered to in the case of their cultivation activities where the cultivators embark on each phase of the cycle according to the auspicious times and other instructions prescribed by the astrologers. Yet another outstanding custom adhered to by them is the worshipping with clasped hands every time they touch a new object or start a new task. This is one of the most conspicuous sign of their respect towards the job they are engaged in and the sacredness attached to the vocation they get engaged in. The final activity of this long cultivation cycle is the various religious rituals attended to. It is in other words thanks giving ceremony or a show of gratitude to who-ever who had been instrumental in making their efforts successful and bestowing heavy yields.

High degree of discipline and devotedness the hallmark of success.

However when a serious study is made about the various aspects of traditional agriculture as it is the case with any other field what is most outstanding about the success they have achieved is its relationship to the discipline and the devotedness displayed to any vocation or activity by the members of the Sri Lankan society. Some of the mechanisms described above as instrumental in the protection of the crop clearly prove that unless the cultivators had been fully devoted and disciplined no success could have been achieved in their vocations. What is even more conspicuous is the high discipline displayed in keeping to the proper time frame in the cultivation cycle.

When it is time for the start of the initial work, the head of the village community sends out the message to the village and everyone would be there in time for the work to get going. In this manner every step in the cultivation cycle will be carried out in the entire village. Preparation of the fields, sowing, consolidation of the common fence etc will be undertaken as a group and hence no one can lag behind. The great achievement brought to the entire village through this means is that maximum results are achieved with minimum efforts. Protection is implemented by all as a group with a common fence right round the entire stretch of the field. The crop does not suffer from mixing of varieties, pests and insects, lack of or over supply of water and other similar factors since all the fields are worked simultaneously leaving no room for spilling from one to the other. Hence the production of good high quality seed paddy was achieved with ease. This in other words is the total achievement resulting from the cooperative efforts, correct and proper time management in the activities and the full devotion towards the activity engaged in. Hence this aspect of time management needs to be highlighted as a cardinal factor in the success of the traditional agriculture in the ancient society.

2. Kotahalu Yaagaya, The ritual pertaining to Sinhalese puberty rites in Sri Lanka

Sinhala culture regards the attainment or coming of age or the puberty of a girl as an event of utmost significance in her life. Once a girl reached puberty, she is kept indoors and isolated from others and even the males of her own family for a certain number of days until the time for bathing comes. Sinhala people have been

celebrating this event for an immemorial time in the annals of their history originally on a very low key at family level but eventually leading to grand scale celebrations signifying its commercialization as we find it today. Sinhala people refer to this event leading to the girl being taken out of doors as Kotahalu Mangalya.

This custom which is followed to make the physically matured girl to become mentally matured consists of many features. The main objective of all these features is to instill in the newly attained girl the discipline and restraint while gifting her knowledge and wisdom useful in the initiation of her to the society with a new identity. Through all these customs pertaining to puberty, the girl is socialized by subjecting her to various exercises and techniques leading to play her future role as a woman, wife and mother. KotahaluYagaya then is the final ritual of the puberty ceremony performed on the evening of the day the girl is bathed for the first time after her attaining of age.

History of the Ritual

Sinhala people refer to the coming of age of a girl as kotahaluweema. Scholars have various opinions on the origin of the word kotahalu. According to some of them, kotahalu mangalya refers to a new clothes festival or a festival where the girl who comes of age wears new clothes. According to J. E. Sederaman (1968), a well known exponent of the traditional healing ceremonies, the ritual has derived the name from the keti saluwa or kotahaluwa (short cloths), used in the blessing of the girl. According to him the exorcists or shamans who perform the ritual recite poems to exorcise the girl of any evil spirits and bless her, refer to a saluwa or haluwa (cloth) in the poems and bless her using this cloth or saluwa and therefore this is called keti saluwa or kotahaluwa, It is quite possible that keti has become kota since both terms keti saluwa and kotahaluwa mean a short cloth. In this regard, it can be assumed that what in fact happens when a girl comes of age is the removal of kotahalu (short clothe). This means that a girl used to wear short dresses during her childhood and should wear long dresses after she comes of age.

There are also various legends about this ritual. One such legend is regarding King Maha Sammatha who became King with the consent of all. His wife died and when the King's daughter came of age, he entrusted his sister and her husband to perform the rituals. She bathed this daughter and tore a salu or cloth into two and gave one

piece to wear and the other piece to cover her up. Piece of cloth given to the young girl to wear was shorter which came to be known as kotalalu or short cloth.

There are several stories connected with the puberty ceremony in Sri Lanka most of them shedding light on the origin and history of the ritual. Among them the prominent ones are the stories connected with Neela maha yodaya, a giant by the name Neela and king Maha Sammatha and his queen Ma devi. The story about Neela tries to depict Neela as an earliest known descendant of the washer-caste and hence the reason why washer woman takes part in the bathing of the girl.

According to Sedaraman (1968) a book called, 'Kotalalu Upata' (The birth of kotalalu) written by a poet, Middellawa Korale of Sath Korale in the Upcountry refers to another story of birth of this ritual.. According to this book, 'Ridee Nenda' and 'Hene Mama' (washer woman and man) brought a long salu (cloth) from heaven and gave it to the King, When the princess Saraswathie saw the salu she requested the King to give it to her. The King tore the long salu into two parts and the long salu became short or kotalalu or kotalalu and the King gave it to her. Since then the name of Kotalaluwa came into use.

Kotalalu Ritual

It appears that the birth of the kotalalu ritual was a result of a variety of beliefs. The kotalalu dance is a feature in Sinhala culture which dates back to time immemorial. It is probable that the kotalalu dance was performed during the time of Sinhala Kings, in the households of the nobility as well as in those of the village elite. A few books or manuscripts pertaining to the kotalalu mangalya which help to enlighten us on the history of this shanthikarma or 'ritual of blessing' are known to be in the possession of some individuals in the country.

According to Sedaraman (1968) there are a few families who had become well known as performers of the kotalalu dance, in places such as Udunuwara, Matale and Sath Korale. He was of the opinion that the kotalalu dance which has become obscure and unknown with the passage of time is beyond revival. The last occasion he had seen the performance of the kotalalu mangalya was when he was a child. Professor Tissa Kariyawasam (1986) too in his article on "Our Folk Arts Which Are Disappearing", has included the

information about this yaga which he has gathered from the few persons living at that time in Nochchiyagama and Hiriyalagama. This writer too had the opportunity to gather valuable information, when the same shamans were performing the kotahalu yagaya at Pandulagama in Anuradhapura on March 19, 1990.

How the Kotahalu Yaga is performed

A special hut will be constructed for the purpose of performing the yaga. Here a mat is spread and all the offerings are placed on the mat. This mat is known as pidum karachchi. A heap of paddy is placed at the center of the mat on which an unhusked coconut tied with a pirith nool (a chanted thread) is tied and the other end of which is given to the girl to hold. On the right side of the paddy heap, is the "pas moru kulla". Pas moru kulla consists of kevum (oil cakes), plantains, kiribath (milk rice), white rice, thala (sesame), mung (green gram), paddy, cotton seeds and the hath maluwa (which consists of five vegetables and two varieties of meats of species living on ground and water). On the left of the paddy heap is the malwila (a basin with water, having flowers and a coin in it). Behind the paddy heap is a pestle with a sheaf of betel and rice placed on a tray. A coconut is placed on the mal bulath thattuwa (a tray woven with bamboo leaves on which seven betels, seven arecanuts, a mirror, a comb and a silver coin are placed). The atamagala enda (the octagonal bed) is on the paddy and the rice. Scholars say that the atamagala denotes the atakona or the eight directions. There is no clear idea as to why the pestle is placed on the pidum karachchi. It is possible that it represents Neela's yagadawa.

Kiri leeya (milky wooden plank) known as the magul poruwa is placed behind the pidum wattiya (offerings tray). Magul poruwa is made by wrapping white cloth around a plank from a milky tree. There is a mortar on either side of the magul poruwa. When the Shamans enter the mandapa, they place the two copper trays with yellow rice used in blessing the girl on the mortar. The yaga is performed throughout the night. During this period as it is impossible to keep the girl standing on the special dock right throughout the girl and the two blessing women are provided with a folding bed which is covered with a white cloth to make them comfortable.

Shamans (exorcists), who perform this blessing dress up with dhothi and tie up a turban on the fore head and a belt made of

cloths to the waist and a silver chain over it. Also he wears ringing hand bangles and a special ringing ring on each thumb. It is known as wendama. Shamans hold a white cloth in the hand. Every shaman wears a blessed tying thread diagonally running over the left shoulder and the hip, known as poona noola – Poona thread.

Shamans, the attained girl and the two blessing women enter the hut in an orderly fashion. Chief shaman and the four other shamans holding wicks in their hands come inside the hut one after the other. The attained girl who is after her ceremonial bath dressed in new clothes follows them with the other two blessing women. The attained girl's body is covered with a white cloth. The blessing women are dressed up with white osariya (a sinhala saree). The shamans who enter the hut put the wicks to the coconut oil lamps which are placed on the wooden mortar. The attained girl and the blessing women stand by the side of the special dock.

This blessing consists of six stages. The chief shaman commences the blessing with the rest joining him. The veil is removed while reciting the verses. Thereafter the girl is taken to the dock amidst reciting of blessing verses. The girl has to take the chair in the midst of the blessing women and stay overnight keeping her feet on the ceremonial dock.

The wonder of a white magic could be observed right throughout the kotahalu yaagaya. The shamans recite kotahalu verses and the sober manners are maintained throughout the ceremony. The shamans sing the verses while shaking the wendama (special ring on the thumb) and the hand bangles and keeping their feet rhythmically. It is interesting to note that no other musical instruments are played or no dancing is performed during the kotahalu yagaya. Prominence is given to the singing of kotahalu verses in this ceremony. Verse by verse the shamans invoke blessings and wave the white cloth over the attained girl. At that time the girl is also being blessed by the two women beside her, by touching the yellow rice in the plate and moving their hands from head to toe of the girl. Traits of Buddha are included in many kotahalu verses. It is evident that the kotahalu yagaya is directly influenced by Buddhism, inherited with the arrival of Arahath Mahinda. The girl's puberty evil effects are dispelled by the powers of the Lord Buddha.

As the kotahalu yagaya, as a ritual is rapidly disappearing from us, it is of paramount importance to preserve this in record so that we could study the socialization of the early adolescence through this ritual. Let us consider one of the kotahalu verses under the title, gabha uppaththiya (conception of the foetus) which is unfolded as a dialogue among the shamans. This verse explains the formation of the foetus, the step by step growth of the foetus and finally the delivery of the baby.

<i>Sathosa vadana mithurani ahapa</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Mama dën melesa kiyanu pada sathutu sithi</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Nidosa bilindu vadumata anganu</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Nisi koyi vayase sitada mata kiya diya</i>	<i>n</i>

(Meaning: *Friends, who bring joy, please listens to my verses that I am singing merrily. Let me know the suitable age for a young woman to give birth to a child.)*

<i>Savu satha hata upathak ëthi vilasata</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>Kavuruth dënagena ëthi dën bohokot</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>Avurudu dasaya pirunoth elandut</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>Kivu daru upadithi ethanin pasuwat</i>	<i>a</i>

(Meaning: *Now it is evident that once a woman reaches the age of sixteen (16), she is in a position to give birth to children thereafter.)*

Arrangements were made in the past for a girl to get married once she reached puberty or soon after. Therefore it is evident that the kotahalu yagaya had been cleverly used to educate the girl to acquire the knowledge required for a married life.

The ancient Sinhala society, nourished and shaped by the culture and ethics, considered sexual matters as extremely confidential. Therefore the young women in the past did not have an opportunity to learn about those matters. The elders believed that it is unethical to discuss such matters with their younger generation. But it is essential to provide a sex education covering from conception up to giving birth to the girls who reached puberty, in order to prepare them to face future responsibilities. The kotahalu yagaya was strategically utilized to provide the necessary sex education for the girls who had come of age. It is often

explained very clearly how to indulge in sexual activities in a healthy and fruitful married life.

Thun dina ethulatha rudhiraya dutu then a
Kamrasa vindeemen sathahata leda en a
In dahasaya dina thula daru pala den a
Min mathu wata daruwan noma upadin a

(Meaning: *Having sexual intercourse during the first three days of the menstrual period would lead to diseases and from then onwards to the next sixteen days (16) are ideal for having sex to get conceived. After this period conception is impossible.)*

Accordingly, although the age old villagers did not discuss the sexual issues openly, the knowledge they had about it is quite clear. Thus they practiced the natural birth control successfully and healthily.

Further knowledge they had about the sexual intercourse and the knowledge about the practice of lesbianism is explained thus.

Kama sepehi nirathuruwa kamathi wan a
Prema ithiri dedenek ek vee men a
Boma raga paha kara gatthoth den a
Keema kusehi eta netthek upadin a

(Meaning: *Union of two women who are lust for sexuality though help to bring enjoyment will not give birth.)*

Accordingly it is evident that even at that time women had engaged in lesbianism in order to release the sexual tension.

Thus the verse unfolds a fraction of the human behavior which had continued throughout the human history. It also reveals the breadth of knowledge that our ancient people had, and their disapproval of the lesbian activities. This is indicated by stating that those who indulge in lesbian activities are exposed to the possibility of giving birth to abnormal babies. In a dialogue which clearly reveals the knowledge that our ancients had about the conceiving of a child and the development of the foetus.)

Kuhul wenda mokatada dangalann ë

*Avul sandu bas motada kiyann ě
Vipul palamuveni gebaya landunn ě
Sevel watura piri dalambuwa wann ě*

(Meaning: *Why do you have doubts? Why do you speak in a provocative tone? Human embryo in a womb is like a caterpillar in a pool of greasy water.)*

This is how the monthly development of the human embryo in a womb is explained by the verses in the form of questions and answers. In the final two verses it is questioned in verse as to how the mother gives birth to the child at the age of ten months, and the answer is given in the following verse.

*Dasa masa pirilaa bihivena kala kumarunn ě
Is mas den bihi vennata siritha bolann ě
Dosa vedi unu thena venas velaa bihivenn ě
Kohomada koi setiyata deyi thava pavasann ě*

(Meaning: *On completion of ten months, normally the head of the baby comes out first. But due to some fault the baby may come out in a different orientation, please tell us more details on the child birth.)*

*Isath payath katiyath elayath athakin loo
Pitath elath kondath namilla bihivē loo
Thavath bendun thum polakin etha kivvaa loo
Namuth meyin luhunden vaga nima keruvaa loo*

(Meaning: *The baby comes out bending by head, by feet, by hip, by back, and by spine. In addition to this there are three other bends in the body. Thus the detail of the child birth is summed up in short.)*

It is clearly evident that the information available in the kotahalu yagaya brings out the social history related to folk beliefs. This cultural event (kotahalu yagaya) will be extremely helpful in gaining sufficient knowledge regarding the ancient social system, the world view, the values and the attitudes on life acquired by these people through their interaction with the nature.

Therefore it is important to investigate the socio-anthropological concepts arising from the historical kotahalu yaga. This cultural event consists of ideals important for a prosperous life.

The ancient adults hesitated to discuss a number of matters pertaining to life with their younger generation as a result of the culture they inherited. From the distant past the nature has provided numerous legacies to the human beings, among which male-female dichotomy and the roles associated with them, which are inevitable. The role entrusted by the society on a girl who has reached puberty is enormous. In order to bear those responsibilities she has to understand number of things. It is anthropologically important to investigate the subtle manner how the kotahalu yaga was utilized to provide that understanding.

The ancient women developed their personality based on modesty which is common to women hood. They did not have the understanding and the experience of the present day women. Therefore they had to maintain the modesty essential for the ancient social order at a certain level so that the modesty was not a hindrance in gaining an understanding the vital events of life. Kotahalu yagaya is a creative attempt by the ancient people to educate the girls who had come of age about their responsibilities and experiences through a legend. The fact that this legend was based on the attainment of the Umayangana the daughter of the Great King provides the understanding to the attained girl that puberty is an episode common to every woman. That understanding provided the mental stability of the attained girl which in turn enhanced her personality.

A girl who has reached puberty is eligible for a marriage and therefore she should have a proper understanding of sexual matters. We have already discussed how the verses titled 'Gabha Uppaththiya' (getting pregnant) in the kotahalu yagaya provide the sex education needed for an attained girl. Unlike the present day, the ancient young women did not have the opportunities of learning from books and mass-media. Therefore the attempt made through the verses of 'Gabha Uppaththiya' in the kotahalu yagaya is extremely useful in imparting a sex education to the young women.

The kotahalu yagaya reveals, numerous information regarding the ancient social system. During that period young women were isolated from the social relationships to a large extent. But it was

extremely important to convey the message to the society regarding the availability of a prospective spinster in order to make arrangements for her wedding. We can infer that kotahalu yagaya was instrumental in facilitating this communication.

While the spinster has to fulfill the expectations of the society, the society should also provide the necessary protection to her. Through the rituals of the kotahalu yagaya certain social control is established around the young girl, at the same time creating a responsibility on self control in her mind. Among the puberty rituals of a girl, the first bathing after her isolation period was done very secretly. It was a ritual solely restricted to women. But many villagers collectively participated in the kotahalu yagaya. During this whole episode, the attained girl had to face the audience bearing in mind her newly acquired status and the role. This creates a sense of control and responsibility in her mind. Therefore it is of anthropological value to investigate how the kotahalu yagaya is instrumental in socializing the newly attained girl. A highlight during the entire kotahalu yagaya is the fact that no musical instruments were played and no dancing was performed. The reason for this may be to create the necessary atmosphere so that the girl's attention is not distracted from the message of the verses.

Kotahalu yagaya is also extremely important in respect of the solidarity and interdependence which is evident in village life. Since the villagers were accustomed to a self sufficient socio-economic pattern, there was no need for competition and exploitation of labour. As an example the shamans who performed this yagaya were rewarded with agricultural yield instead of cash. Unlike at present where everything is valued commercially, the ancient villagers gave priority to collective social interactions. When considering in these lines the kotahalu yagaya brilliantly denotes the cultural inclinations of the ancient village folk, thereby revealing many important features of their life pattern and the early stages of our non-material culture.

It is also important to investigate the reasons for this type of cultural events becoming obscure with the passage of time. Sedaraman's (1968) explanation in this regard is that, with the decline of the prosperity of a society people tend to retain only the rituals which they can afford and let the rest to disappear. According to astrology there are some cases where the time of

attainment of a girl is inauspicious. Sederaman (1968) further states that at present the expenditure incurred in performing the kotahalu yagaya is unaffordable to many people. Therefore in spite of the fact that this yagaya helps to eliminate the evil effects of the inauspicious time of attainment of a girl, most villagers are unable to afford it.

The economic hardships experienced by the villagers largely contribute to the disappearance of such important rituals like this yaagaya. Sedaraman (1968) provides another reason for the disappearance of kotahalu yagaya, according to which less expensive white magic has replaced it. He also mentions that the shamans are looked down upon in the present society, and their children and grand children do not continue the shaman tradition. Therefore with the demise of the remaining shamans the kotahalu yagaya is bound to disappear from the villages.

One of the most notable reasons for the disappearance of the kotahalu yagaya is the western cultural hegemony. The western cultural hegemony infiltrated and still been maintained mainly through the western education system imposed on us by the British. As a result of this, the generations that were moulded through this education system were inclined to look down upon our knowledge systems and the associated culture, by condemning our rituals and practices as myths. In addition, this western cultural dominance is further aggravated through the mass media.

It is highly unlikely to resurrect this long lost cultural event namely the kotahalu yagaya which contained so many melodious and meaningful Sinhala verses. Therefore like many other cultural events kotahalu yagaya has also faded into the history. It is a tragedy that such an important ritual like kotahalu yagaya which was so rich in educational, social and psychological values has become obscure with the passage of time.

3. The Marriage Ceremony as a rites of passage

Sri Lanka is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean with a rich civilization and a rich heritage going back to a long past. The introduction of Buddhism enabled the people to establish a tangible

as well as an intangible culture of their own and develop all aspects of their culture with an identity of its own.

Yet the history of culture and rituals in Sri Lanka has been fashioned over the centuries by a synthesis of several intrinsic and extrinsic factors some of which were unique to the country. Being an island, Sri Lanka was insulated to a large extent from external forces that influence culture by a heavy and strong natural barrier. But India, Portugal, Netherlands and finally Britain succeeded at different times in penetrating this natural barrier. The cultures they introduced had a significant effect to determine the state of tangible and intangible cultures in the country.

With Indian influence many Hindu beliefs and practices have also entered the Sinhala Buddhist practices. Religious beliefs have brought in ritual practices to the fore. The ritual is a symbolic expression attached to the given situation. Rituals and associated ceremonies have always played a vital role in the Sri Lankan society from ancient times. They have been transferred from one generation to the other in the island.

Among the Sinhalese Buddhists most of these rituals are embodied into their livelihood behavioral patterns especially in the social and religious spheres. Although Sri Lanka today appears to be advancing towards a more technologically oriented state with beliefs acquired via globalized technological progress, traditional customs and rituals seem to retain their strength within the Sinhalese Buddhist society.

It is also observed that those rituals and related ceremonies have been constantly centred on important life events or rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. In addition, those life cycle events are explicitly celebrated by the society and they attach precious significance to the kinship network within the society.

Among the rites of passage 'marriage' is one of the most important events in anyone's life. Marriage of a person is not considered as just a union of a man and a woman, it is a series of rituals performed in a ceremonial manner to introduce the couple to the four clans of relatives (satara varigaya) that is the relatives of the parents of both the bride and the bride - groom.

Among the Sinhalese Buddhists there are two types of marriages known as the 'Diga' the popular form of marriage and the 'Binna' a more restricted form followed by in certain geographical areas. The Diga marriage results in bringing a bride to the house of the bridegroom whereas in Binna marriage, the bridegroom takes residence at the house of the bride thus foregoing all his customary rights in the ancestral home. In the village, the marriage is contracted in different ways. There is of course the love marriage or where the young man and the young woman have fallen in love and desire marriage. Very often the two people belong to the same caste, clan and religion and if there are no serious obstacles, the parents may give their consent and blessing to such a marriage.

The traditional marriages are either proposed or arranged. The customary marriage is arranged by parents or through the help of intermediaries such as elderly relatives or friends. There are occasions when the parents of a girl would speak directly to the parents of a boy and arrange the marriage. Otherwise, they would have to rely on the services and advice of a third party. Accordingly, the marriage broker (Magul Kapuwa) has a valuable role to play in this socio- cultural event. In addition caste, clan and religion play an important role here. According to the culture and the tradition the first cousins are preferred but the blood relatives are tabooed. That is father's brother's children or mother's sister's children are not allowed to marry each other.

In a marriage among the Sinhalese Buddhists the horoscope (a description written on an Ola leaf or on paper describing what someone is like or what might happen to him in future based on the positioning of the planets at the time he or she was born) plays an important role. At the beginning horoscopes of the two are compared and out of the twenty factors (visi porondam) to be considered, at least fifteen should match. Otherwise, the proposal is dropped. If the horoscopes are matching then the groom's parents prepare a table of auspicious times (Nekat patraya) for the ceremonial ritual and present it to the girl's parents for acceptance and the date of the marriage is fixed. The 'Nekat patraya' literally means a 'statement of the astrological times prescribed for the performance of various ceremonies connected with the marriage. It is traditionally believed that eleven auspicious times have to be decided to embark on essential activities before the marriage takes place. For examples, offering of first betel leaves as a mark of formal invitation (Magul Bulat deema) to the closest relatives, the

construction of the wedding hall, preparing of the sweets (oil cakes), opening of the the wedding hall (for this purpose, a most suitable person from the area will be selected), and the departure of the groom from his house to the bride's house etc. are chief among them.

The marriage proper starts with the arrival of the bridegroom at the house of the bride on the propitious day. He comes there with a bulk of food items such as various kinds of sweets and plantains etc. (Nekath kanda or Dekum kanda- Pingo of presents) to the bride's family along with the elderly relatives of the groom's party. When the groom's party arrives for the ceremony the groom is received by washing his feet, by a younger brother of the bride and for that he receives a gold ring as a present, which is usually dropped into the basin of water by the groom.

The main rituals of the marriage are organized by the bride's family. The most important ceremony of the marriage is the "Poruwa ceremony" (a series of rituals conducted on the wedding day as the couple gets married) on a specially prepared stage which is considered sacred for the occasion and hence blessed. During the poruwa ceremony a series of acts, rituals that are associated with religion, myth and magic take place. Among the Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka "Poruwa Ceremony" holds an important place in a marriage due to numerous cultural implications and obligations. It is assumed that the history of the Poruwa goes back FOR than two thousand years. There is a remnant piece of decorated granite "magul Poruwa" in the Magul Maha Viharaya at Lahugala in Ampara District of Sri Lanka. The popular belief is that it was used during the marriage of the King Kawantissa of Ruhuna and Vihara Maha Devi of Kelaniya, the parents of the well - known Sinhala King Dutugemunu (161 B.C. - 137 B.C.).

As already mentioned, poruwa is a ceremonial pedestal or platform made with planks out of a tree with latex, mainly of a jack tree (*Artocarpus indicus*) On the top of this a mat is spread and red rice is sprinkled on it and covered with a white cloth which is known as 'pawada'. Anthropologists describe 'Magul Poruwa' as a ceremonial dais built with wooden planks decorated with young coconut leaves'. The colourful construction of the poruwa is the responsibility of the bride's family. The artistic outlook of the poruwa differs from ceremony to ceremony and it displays the innovativeness of the designer.

The placement of the Poruwa is also vital. It should face the direction that gives prosperity to the couple as stated by the astrologer at the consultation of both horoscopes. In constructing and decorating the poruwa the people of different localities use different materials like plantain trunks (*Musa acuminate* or *Musa balbisiana*), arecanut logs (*Areca catechu*), the coconut flowers (*Cocos nucifera*) the young coconut leaves, Na Leaves, (*Messua ferrea*), kohomba (*Azadirachta indica*), koboleela (*Bouhinia*), lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) and lily (*Nymphaea stellata*). Kohomba is used by the people because of its qualities like hardness, medicinal value and the divine affiliations.

The poruwa is covered from above under the roof or ceiling of the house with another white cloth which is known as 'Viyana' or uduviyana (a cloth placed above the head of the people who are standing or seated). To denote the prosperity the flowers, paddy or rice (*Oryza sativa*) or both and grains, betel leaves (*Piper betel*) and coins are strewn on the poruwa. The strewn paddy, rice and the grains depict that the couple's future life will not suffer from any wants for their survival. The strewn betel leaves too indicate the prosperity in the relation to foods. According to the local culture betel is the symbol of fertility. The coins strewn on the poruwa too denotes that the couple will have the much needed and desired economic or financial stability.

On the four sides of the poruwa four 'Punkalas' (the earthen pots that symbolize prosperity) decorated with arecanut (*Areca catechu*) or coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) flowers are kept. These are placed to denote the prosperity. It is covered with white cloth and coconut oil lamps are lit on all sides. One of them is for Triple Gem (to Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha). Four coconut oil lamps at the four corners are for the 'Satarawaram Devivaru', (four Gods of the four directions) namely Drutharashta, Viruda, Viroopaaksha, and Vaishravana. This symbolizes that the couple that gets wedded will be protected by these divine powers at their 'good and bad' times.

The couple is mounted on the poruwa at the auspicious time by their uncles, the elder or younger brothers of the mothers. There is a specific direction the couple and the uncles have to face when they step on to the poruwa. In the Sinhala Buddhist tradition the people are highly concerned about the 'time' and the 'direction'. They believe that there are 'good' and 'bad' times in their lives

according to the planetary movements of their horoscopes. So in the poruwa ceremony too time and the direction are vital.

As the couple is mounted to the poruwa by the uncles at the auspicious time the conch shells are sounded and the drums are played. The conch shell sounds are used to convince the dignity and the majesty of the activity and the environment is filled, with its gorgeous sounds. The sound of the “magul bera” (the drum played at the auspicious hour) also fills the entire surrounding with charming and a majestic atmosphere. The rituals are conducted by an elderly uncle of the bride or another elder proficient in conducting of the ritual. The rituals always begin with recitals in honour of the Buddha.

The recital of ‘ashtaka’ (stanzas recited at poruwa) or sanskrit verses by proficient elder to invoke the blessings of the gods and any other super human powers on the newly wedded couple follows. At this time both Buddhist and Hindu ‘ashtaka’ are sung or recited. These ashtaka are not only to invoke the blessings of the divine realm but are also intended to protect them from the ‘evil eye, evil mouth’ and ‘evil breath’ of the people and to minimize the influences of the malicious planets. In addition the ‘jaya mangala gatha’ (benedictory Buddhist verses) are also sung usually by a bevy of young girls dressed in white to bring blessings of the Buddha.

While the ‘ashtaka’ are being chanted or recited the elderly officiator ties together ‘Sulangili’ (the small fingers) of the bride and the groom with a sacred cotton thread chanted with ‘pirith’ and by pouring holy water on to the tied fingers in front of all relatives present legalises their marital union. This indicates that this tie should remain forever, and the couple should not get separated or divorced. According to the Sinhala culture water is another valuable symbol since time immemorial. Water is life, without which no one can survive. So water poured on their hands means that they will never be in want of anything in their future life.

The next important item of the poruwa ceremony is the offering of the ‘redi kachchiya’ or ‘kirikada selaya’ (a large bundle of white cloth) to the bride’s mother as a gift of gratitude. It has many meanings. First, it is the paying back for the suffering the mother of the future wife has undergone in nurturing the bride till now. The mythical implications of this action too are note worthy. According

to the tradition during king Okkakas time daughter of Malathi was given in marriage to the son of the Brahmin Subrahma. The mother of the bride, Malathi started crying because she could not bear up the separation of her daughter. At this moment the groom handed over a pile of white cloth to soak the breast milk of the bride's mother according to the verses of this story sung by the lay priest in front of all the relatives and the kins of both parties make us believe. The mother accepts the gift and carries it on her head showing the value of the present.

There are certain rites to be performed by the couple at the poruwa ceremony. A primary act in the poruwa ceremony is the wrapping of the couple together at the waist level with a white cloth. The use of 'white' always symbolizes 'purity' because the purity of the bride is a prime concern of both parties and all the invitees gathered. The bride who has preserved her purity till her formal marriage brings dignity not only to herself but to the parents, relatives and all her associates. Thus the use of white colour becomes extremely symbolic in the context. Then the groom dresses the bride with valuable cloths and jewellery such as gold necklace and rings. Wearing of the jewellery too becomes symbolic because jewellery signifies the value the husband has place on the wife and the economic security.

The poruwa ceremony ends with the presentation of betel leaves to all elders by the newly married couple. They bend and pay respect to the elders and the relatives. Each sheaf of betel has forty (40) betel leaves symbolizing the fingers of the one who gives and receives in their hand and legs. The first seven (07) sheafs are offered in memory of the 'hath muthu paramparawa' (the seven generation) that are dead and gone. This ritual too signifies the recognition of the sufferings and sacrifices the past generations have made to build the present generation up to this level. Likewise, the presentation of betel leaves is a demonstration of accepting the new couple to the family.

The wedded couple descends from the poruwa at an auspicious time with their right foot in front. At this time a coconut is broken by cracking it with a knife to drive away any evil influences that will plague them in future. If the coconut is broken into two equal halves and fall down facing upwards it is lucky and auspicious and if both are facing downwards it is inauspicious. After the couple get down from the poruwa an oil lamp is lit and partake 'kiribath' (milk

rice) as the first meal after marriage by each feeding the other. A rich and delicious sumptuous mid – day meal for all the relatives and friends of both parties will follow.

Finally the washerman or woman from the 'rajaka' caste without whose services the entire process of the marriage and poruwa ceremony cannot be completed will be rewarded with many things like rice or paddy, money, clothes, betel leaves and other food items. They are the ones who deal with the two main concepts of 'Purity' (being pure or the status of the purity) and 'killa' (being impure or the status of impurity) in the local tradition.

A day or two after the marriage depending on the circumstances whether the young couple spend a honeymoon (it is a totally new concept to the locals) or spend the days at the home of the bridegroom, a ceremonial party of elderly relatives of the bride visit them at home. This is a very important ceremonial day of the marriage procedure. If the bride has proved her virginity a bunch of red flowers is displayed by the elders of the bridegroom. Otherwise a bunch of white flowers is sent as a symbolic gesture. This visit is known as 'Isadiya' or pouring of water on the head. That means the bride is ritually bathed for the first time after the marriage. The arrival of the bride's relatives is for the purpose of ascertaining proofs about the presence of virginity. This is done by examining the piece of white cloth on which the couple slept on the wedding night. Once the proof of virginity is ascertained the overjoyed relatives of the bride and the bridegroom join in to enjoy a very happy feast that follows. The absence of virginity leads to much embarrassment and straining of relationships between the two parties. In some cases they go on to such extremes as sending away the bride to her relatives after been rejected and despised.

All these rituals were built up to emphasise the responsibilities of the young couple towards each other and towards their relatives and vice – versa in a traditional social setup. Social ethics behind all these rituals are to highlight a sense of responsibility to each other and ultimately to have a sustainable family life. However they have changed now and foreign influences are so strong that traditional rituals and social mechanisms which bear up all the ICH traits are fading away.

4. Indigenous Traditional Medical Practices

Heritage information

Official name: Gurukula education (Education under the tutelage of a Master)

Local name: Parampara vedakama igeneema

History, background: see below

Area: Indigenous System of Medicine (ISM)

Relevant information

Community-involvement: Sri Lankan Ethno-medical knowledge base is generated through community's intellectual treasures and ISM inherent and found within the cultural repository of the natives.

Preservation association: Ministry of Indigenous Medicine, Department of Ayurveda, National Institute of Traditional Medicine, Provincial Departments of Ayurveda, Divisional Ayurveda Preservation Boards

Activities: Ayurveda Medical Council with Ayurveda Hospital and Education Board has initiated a national programme for the preparation of an inventory of "parampara" or traditional family lineages of indigenous medical practitioners (IMP).

Practitioners: Indigenous medical practitioners (IMPs) hail from various traditional family lineages in different communities living in different localities all over the country. Also their practices belong to different disciplines of healthcare and heterogeneous healing traditions in non-formal knowledge system.

Relevant events: Gurukula education is obtained by an acolyte under the tutelage of a master for a long period of apprenticeship to be competent in the practice.

Explanation: Over the centuries, the ancient indigenous communities have developed their own ways of treating illnesses. These systems are known to international agencies as "indigenous medicine or native medicine or folk medicine". They are based

totally on their own Indigenous knowledge (IK). IK is the practical common sense based on technologies and experiences passed on from generation to generation. This knowledge is more or less verbally and empirically transcended in a well-controlled and disciplined manner. Very few documented sources are available and these documents in manuscripts forms are primitive, rudimentary and symbolic literatures which need a scholarly effort to get decoded.

It is a known fact that the IK cannot be compartmentalized, fragmented and abstracted from the culture in which it is embedded or from the people who hold it. IK is rooted in the environment, culture and language of the people. Therefore it is multi-dimensional and pluralistic. This knowledge is entirely bound to the culture, territory and the natural resources. It is a way of life, an art of living and a science of nature. But always it is an authoritative system which has an obligation to share. It is a dynamic, cumulative, stable and collective wisdom which is integrated with all other sources of knowledge related to any life event. It gives credibility to people who own it and ultimately becomes a media of cognition, perception, validation and application of life-skills. Various researchers all over the world are interested in IK but have not given a precious etymological explanation or unanimous definition for this word. ISM is also a part of Sri Lankan IK which had been nurtured throughout the history of civilization for thousands of years.

Anthropologically, ISM in Sri Lanka has a very long history dating back to the paleolithic era where our ancestors had used natural healing methods for their health problems. Sri Lankan ISM has been influenced and reinforced specially by both North and South Indian systems of Ayurveda from ancient time as is the case with most of our socio-cultural heritages. But the history and the tradition explicitly reveal the existence of our own system of knowledge inherited by the people of the soil. Sri Lankan tradition of ISM consisted of well-preserved literary sources with some great texts and a personal manuscript is an invaluable national treasure trove of knowledge. Non-formal knowledge base in traditional medicine in Sri Lanka is called Paramparika Vedakama or Deshiya Chikitsa (traditional medical system), which is the inherited indigenous knowledge of this country. Over thousands of years, this knowledge system had thrived within the territory of Sri Lanka nurtured by various cultural values and norms. ISM has its own system of epistemology and ontology on nature and universe and is called the

theory of Macrocosm and Microcosm in which the universe represents the human and the human represents the universe. It expands hypothetical correlation between cosmological form of human biology and anthropomorphism of nature.

Traditional system of Indigenous medicine is neither a mere system of medicine nor a system of health care. It covers a broader area of life. Therefore it can be called a system of living or a way of life. It is not confined only for diseases, ailments, illnesses, maladies, impairments, disorders, dysfunctions of the body or mind. It is dealing with religion, culture, rituals, environment, culinary, agriculture, customs, norms, values, ethics, morals etc. This ranges from inner seed of soul to outer boundary of universe as a collectively contextualized wisdom of community. Sri Lankan ISM had been thriving within the indigenous socio-cultural system and positioned with national tradition of healthcare in a sustainable manner. But inevitably the entire system was devastated due to foreign invasions over five centuries and as a result the system of traditional medicine had to struggle to regain its genuine identity after independence.

Preserved ISM knowledge is passed down from a master to pupil on hands to hands experiences and is basically found on tradition of palm leaves manuscripts. But the relationships between the traditional healers and their patients and the medicine prescribed not only preserve a medical knowledge, they preserve knowledge and wisdom as well which is of a cosmological order. This has three major areas like written, oral and practical sources. These written sources are originally embedded in palm-leaf manuscripts which are several centuries old. The written segment is small and these literary sources had been extradicted or destroyed by invaders at several occasions. It is evident that foreign invaders had eliminated and robbed these manuscripts in a vandalising way and destroyed the expert human resources. Most of the remaining manuscripts kept in temple libraries or personal custodies are not well-preserved. Important and valuable part of this knowledge is not written, instead kept orally as family treasures. These traditional medical practitioners in the past had served the community with distinction to have received royal honours.

Traditional medical knowledge had been transmitted through family lineage by Guru Kula system of education which accommodates skill-based and practice-oriented training. This was

prevailing for many centuries as an effective mechanism of transmitting ISM knowledge from one generation to next. This system explicitly relies on language and socio-cultural sources where linguistic roots are playing a key role implanting and propagating ISM knowledge in a proper way. Since the language is mandatory basis of ISM learning, one must be born and thrived in a naive socio-cultural context and belong to the same community.

Terminology of ISM articulates vernacular identity of language and usages and it is the tool of traditional healthcare communication. A Sinhala proverb says, Asakkuvata Mateyapputh vedaralalu (Even Matteyappu, an ordinary villager also can be a physician in an emergency). It shows the way normal people cope with problems through positive thinking and maximum human resource utilization at primary level. Sinhalese community is very optimistic and their folklore is enriched with many epics, anecdotes, fables, legends, tales, episodes, narratives, parables, apologues, allegories etc. which can be entertained in a constructive manner. The simple lifestyles as well as altruistic social relationships were the foundation of quixotic peaceful states described by some medieval time writers.

Sinhalese language and colloquial usages have been reinforced by this cultural heritage and this figurative linguistic identity is absorbed by the traditional medical terminology as well. Rajakama nettam Vedakama (if not the kingship then the medical profession) is a famous proverb to describe the dignity of the profession where it is depicted as secondary only to the royalty or the kingship. It uplifts the honourable image of ISM practitioner and encourages the professional involvement with a reputed social status. In ancient society doctor-patient relationship of ISM practice prevailed in priestly model in which practitioner was highly regarded as a supra-human personality. The renowned role of ISM practitioner in a ancient culture was only second to the priest or monk in the temple. He was essentially a part of decision making hierarchy and socially supremely important person in all events.

There is a famous proverb saying Leda Malath Bada Suddai which means even if the patient died the bowels were purified. It was the general perception of health that enhances the credibility of the treatment since it ensures that the patient is free from his illness by the time of his death. Ugurata hora beth kanna behe is also another proverb which describes that nobody can take medicine unnoticed

by the throat. It indicates the bitter taste of traditional medicine. Paya barawayata pitikara beth bendeema is the execution of a treatment where medicine is applied not to the affected part but some other place physically unrelated to the affected place. This is the way of treating some diseases through some extraordinary techniques. Ateesareta amude gahanawa also refers to another method of treatment for diahorea by using medicinally treated underwear.

Sinhalese community uses an amazing word for greeting or saying Hello to their visitors or companions; Ayubovan! meaning “may live long!” wishing

them a long life. That may be the oldest humane greeting form connected to longevity and good health in the world. Normally, villagers are saluting each other by saying; Kohomada Ayubovan? which cannot be articulated in English in similar meaning but it can be literally translated as ‘how is your health’. Then they ask Kohomada Vase Dese Sepa Saneepa? Which is an inquiry about one’s livelihood, habitat or environment, pleasure or happiness and health? Opposite of Sepa Saneepa (good health) is Leda Duk, which means illnesses and sorrow or suffering. Most of the time, they wish to live without Leda Duk and that is their foremost ambition or desired state of well-being. When older people suffer from sicknesses they call themselves as Leda Duka, the person who is sick and suffering. Also they use various different terms to describe their situations as they perceive and there are several words specially used to explain the pain such as; Emma, Evililla, Kekkuma, Rudava, Kaduththuva. They are words expressing different sensations of pain.

Therefore physician and patient are communicating through a comprehensive mode which enhances the rapport and empathy. This is first impression of efficacy that is nurtured by compassion, sympathy, clemency, mercy, kindness, benevolence, bounteousness, generosity etc. and which leads to the final effect called Athgunaya (excellent quality of healing inherent in the physician or hands that heal). Our society believes that a competent physician is full of all the excellent qualities that enhance the healing process and medicinal value of drugs. When they consult a physician, a sheaf of betel leaves is offered. There is no fee involved but a gift called Panduru which has a meaning of sacred gift is offered along with betels. It can be gifted to or accepted by a noble person like a god, a king, a physician, or a teacher since it is a noble gift. That is the way

adopted to pay respect and express gratitude to the physician who plays a conscientious role in health promotion.

The dignity of the profession is very high and second in importance only to the royalty or kingship. The house of physician is called Veda Gedara which gives an idea of shelter provided for sick people who are seeking a relief. In this term ancient Veda Gedara was a home for patients and they get basic facilities like food and lodging during their stay. This was not just a dispensary or medical center but the homely center of healthcare as well as focal point of counselling service within the community. Concept of family physician has originated from this kind of community-centered practice which had taken care of individual's health in a socio-biophysical model.

Indigenous system of medicine is sometimes called Goda Vedakama to describe medical practices not considered as professional. The literal meaning is Terrestrial Remedy. Home remedies are called Ath Beth which means the medicines in hand or medicines that can be prepared easily without any professional prescription. In the local usage there is Beth Heth, which gives the meaning for medicines and commitment that is needed to achieve healthy state. Vedakama and Hedakama are words having similar meaning of therapeutic measures and nursing procedures. When this caring process is applied to a patient suffering from a chronic condition, it is called Epa Upasthana Kireema which means "nursing with an accountable commitment." Caring mentality is totally fashioned out of Buddhist practices and regarded as a good deed which can lead to heaven after death. In a diseased condition the routine to be followed by the patient is called Pattiyam Rakeema, which means "restricted lifestyle in wholesome conducts leading to healthy state." In that period patient is fed only by Leda Kema, which clearly indicates the "food and dietary habits instructed as therapeutic nutrition." This knowledge is inherited from mother to mother and enriched through professional inputs. Even basic preparations like pattu, mallum, thelivili, kashaya, anupana, thembum, were part of culinary knowledge inherited by a housewife.

Even equipment used in preparing medicines is honoured in their names. i.e; Beth Gala - grinding stone, Beth Vangediya - wooden mortar, Beth Heppuwa - casket used for keeping medicines, Beth Ge - where medicines are manufactured, Beth Muttiya - earthen pot used for boiling decoctions, Beth Handa - the spoon used for giving

medicinal liquids, Beth Peha – the device used for compressing medicinal oils, Beth Vattiya - the basket used for drying medicinal substances, etc. Every word starts with the adjective Beth or medicinal to differentiate that specific instrumental purpose from others. Also there are some herbs that are believed to be medicinally valuable, bearing this adjective Beth, i.e.; Beth Gotukola (*Centella asiatica*), Beth Sarana (*Boharvia diffusa*), Beth Suduloonu (*Allium sativum*), Beth Babila (*Sida cordifolia*), Beth Kohila (*Lasia spinosa*), Beth Nelli (*Emblica officinalis*), Beth Endaru (*Recinus communis*), Beth Anoda (*Abutilon indicum*)

There is a proverb saying; Payabarvayata pitikara Beth Bandeema literally meaning the applying of medicines on the backside of neck for treating filarial edema of leg which gives the idea of doing things without proper coordination. But in actual fact it is not its true meaning. It is interesting to note that therapeutic burning a point on backside of neck with medicinal herbs is an effective treatment for the same condition and it was widely practiced by local physicians specialized in therapeutic burning. Traditional physicians use their ring finger which is called Veda Angilla or Finger of Physician, to apply or mix medicine because it is believed to be connected with the heart and having healing powers. Padama is famous term used to describe the standard quality of a product at domestic level. It clearly manifests ultimate result of good manufacturing practices which is highly appreciated in modern pharmaceutical industry. Padama symbolically covers all the aspects of quality of the end product and the process in a controlled manner.

The whole manufacturing process is personally supervised, monitored and evaluated by the physician himself. They strongly believed that giving below-quality medicine to patients is kind of cheating or deceiving them and violating basic ethics of humanity. Therefore ISM practitioners were socially and spiritually bound to protect basic rights of individual who expect treatment from them. There was no written code of ethics but it was a value-oriented social behaviour endorsed by the master's oath. In ISM master's word is only second to god's word because master is respected as a earthly god.

To describe the diseased states or maladies Sinhalese people use very specific words which are having epistemological meanings. Therefore indigenous Nosological terms are absorbed by the

vernacular usage and vocally adjusted to their day to day language. Physical causes are called Thun Dos Kipeema or aggravation of natural humours, and the conditions are classified into Ata Anoovak Roga (Ninety Eight illnesses), Nava Anoovak Vyadhi (Ninety Nine Diseases). Sudden and disastrous situations are called Athuru Anthara. All the evil inhumane forces which cause diseases are described in Demonology are called Butha Dosa, Yaksha Dosa, Ammanussa Dosa etc. There are some genogenic malevolencies like Es-vaha (evil eye), Kata-vaha (evil tongue), Ho-vaha (evil mind) or Anavina Kodivina (charms dispelled for disaster), Hadi Hoonoyan (black magic), which are believed to cause serious maladies.

All the conditions resulted by cosmogenic negative forces or bad celestial influences are called Apala (fruitless) and Upadrava (repercussions). Incurable or untreatable conditions are considered to be caused by Karume or results of sinful actions of previous births and the condition is accepted as a mandatory. Vaduru Vasangatha is a term used for describing epidemics or pandemics which are seriously hazardous. There is a famous proverb saying Leda Malath Bada Suddai which means even if patient died the bowels were purified. It was the general perception of health that enhances credibility of treatment and the patient is free from his disease by the time of death.

This knowledge is considered to the wisdom of a tradition which is sometime claimed to be having a supra-mundane and para-human origin. It is common to any oriental tradition to entertain celestial sources of their own sciences, arts, literature, religion etc. This creates the sacredness which ensures acceptability and respectability through authenticity, validity, authority, legitimacy of the derivation. The erudite sagacious intellectuals called Rishi who secularize this divine discourse, were the linkage between extraterrestrial authors and earthly acquirers. All the holders of this kind of knowledge are treated as greater persons or leaders of the community as they are perceived to be useful and powerful. Also they traditionally live in morally good conducts reputed by the society. Therefore the learner or the student is expected to be having moral qualities accepted by the teacher or the holder of wisdom. In the process of acquisition of knowledge, this learner becomes an acolyte while the teacher holds his guardianship.

Initiation into the learning will take after a comprehensive selection test on criteria in various aspects. Basically the acolyte

should bear an in-borne destiny for becoming a physician which is proven by the horoscope. It gives a descriptive explanation of the inherited character and personality with special psycho-spiritual compatibilities for being a physician in future. Then family background, physical health, general knowledge and behavioural features will be assessed carefully. After the basic selection student must go through a preliminary phase of aptitude testing for about two to three years of observatory period. This is very difficult, laborious and vigorous but critically evaluated by the master for student's endurance, compatibility, courage, enthusiasm, personality, aspirations, attitudes, devotedness, dedication and achievements.

The period of Gurukula education can have four different stages or phases of learning namely;

1. **Dena purudda:** Gaining Knowledge through rote learning or some times by reading manuscripts, listening to the master. This phase is initially based on self-exposure and understanding fundamentals through memory improvement.
2. **Deka purudda:** Learning through observation and self evaluating the knowledge gained at the first step. In this phase pupil is assisting to the master and getting familiarized with ground level practice and application of theories.
3. **Kala purudda:** In this phase student is assigned to trial out, do testing and get practical experiences by applying the self-realized knowledge. This kind of training gives a full term understanding of safety and efficacy of the therapy.
4. **Pala purudda:** This phase is more or less like an internship where skill enhancement through experimenting takes place. Innovations are encouraged through confidence and competence which lead to generation of new knowledge to ISM.

Traditional medicine had been educated and trained in well-known Buddhist monasteries as one of the curricular of their major disciplines. It was recorded that a student should complete a period of seven to twelve years to become a skilled physician. That is the apprenticeship period which belongs to Gurukula. Meaning of Gurukula is master's family. In this period pupil should become a part of teacher's family and living within the norms of the same. During that training he should learn not only medical subjects but

also subjects like astrology, poetry, languages, spiritual rites, horticulture etc. Especially astrology is practically applicable to practice of medicine and performing spiritual rites is an essentially a part of healing. Maintaining herbal gardens and medicinal plant forests is a mandatory tradition which had been practiced for centuries in order to promote the sustainable utilization of natural resources.

At the end of learning Guru Mushti (final essence or the most secret part) is given by the master as the ultimate and supreme gift of the master. This is sometimes most valuable secret coded family recipe or chant or therapy inherited through generations with a great respect. All the effective therapies are traditionally endorsed as 'atdutuwai sattai pitanodenu maha papayai". It is the cultural authority of safeguarding ISM heritage. Atdutuwai means efficacy is tested and proven. Sattai is never become a false or wrong. It is totally safe. Pitandenu maha papayai means should not be given to anybody out of circle or restricted for unsuitable persons. If it is done so it will be great sin. This was a cultural mechanism established for safeguarding IPR and restricting access levels to ISM database. Also moral obligations and ethical interventions are naturally and gradually encountered through active involvement in case studies based on patient-oriented evidence based learning.

The knowledge of therapeutic measures is well-admitted by enhanced skills on nomenclature, identification, cultivating, collecting, harvesting, processing, preparing, manufacturing, storing, using medicinal substances. For medicinal use raw materials are acquired from natural sources like plants, minerals, animals. Every phase of therapeutic process is strengthened by a ritual or sorcery or occult practice and personally monitored or handled by the physician. Then and there he ensures the efficacy and safety of the medicine. Most of the treatments are customized and individualized in accordance with the patient's humoral uniqueness. Traditional physicians use minimum medicines to get maximum relief. He has various medicines for the same ailment and same medicine for various ailments to be used in different forms and vehicles. Always he administers the medicine in the safest and most effective route.

The role of local physician is more or less similar to family physician who knows the patient as well as his family background, livelihood, habitat, history of previous diseases etc. The patient is not considered as a "case." He is recognized as a living organism or a person. Physician starts with his second, third and fourth fingers

of right hand to feel pulse of the patient. Social distance or professional gap is inactivated by touching or holding hand and create trustworthiness and rapport. Physician – Patient relationship in traditional medicine can be explained in three models, viz; Priestly model, collegial model, Contractual model. These three models are respectively operated in framework of guardianship, friendship, and stewardship which consecutively take place in the process of treatment procedure.

Most apparent technique that is used to diagnose is pulse reading by which expert physician can describe all the symptoms without any inquiry. This is very exclusive method which is specifically different from pulse checking and pulse diagnosis. Pulse reading is a cultural context where the patient's body is completely understood by physician through his wisdom. That's why the word 'reading' is expressively having a comprehensive meaning for local people. Pulse reading is not done only to understand the pulse or heart rate condition. It is totally a tool to describe and analyse the whole situation of the patient. These techniques are not similar or identical in all family traditions. They can vary from one to another. But these are not documented since almost all of the practices are entirely cannot be textualised. This is sometimes not only a proficiency of knowledge, skill and competency. But it is matter of empirical wisdom of veteran practice and diverse experiences for long time. In some cases, like snake bites his diagnostic tool is messenger's verbal behaviour or body language and the same person who brought the message is slapped as a preliminary therapeutic measure. Sometimes physician use special techniques to verify the disease by using Threads, Dreams, Oil lamp flame, Omens, Vital points, Drugs which are unique to indigenous system of medicine. The student should attend all most all the cases during his training and get familiarized with discourse of teacher.

Especially the horoscope is used significantly as a reliable diagnostic contrivance to reveal the para-clinical side of the disease. Then he is able to prescribe some remedial measures in term of medical astrology to repel any supra-terrestrial resistant which can diminish efficacy of medicines. In chronic cases or obstinate conditions, physician provides astrological counselling and guidance to reinforce the therapy through ritualistic practices with support of an exorcist. That is the multidisciplinary approach of therapeutic process conducted in traditional system of medicine. Sometimes the physician, astrologer, priest, exorcist altogether play

responsible and conscientious roles in same therapeutic process as a joint venture which aims expel unhealthy condition.

In this process the sick person is also very important because he has a major role to play in the context of self-responsibility and accountability of regaining the healthy condition. Therefore reliance on therapeutic procedure in a confident manner is essential. There is a very restricted routine to be followed by a sick person in accordance with traditional system. Especially dietetics and behaviour are proscribed and regularized according to the medical advice. Therapeutic diet and lifestyle are recommended and closely monitored by physician. In long term management of chronic cases, in-home care is highly accepted and effective. Ancient society was an oasis for well-being of sick persons in terms of social relationships to enhance healthy atmosphere in convalescence.

Medicine is the utmost substance in therapeutic process which is considered to be having the heavenly powers, in ISM. All medicinal substances are honoured as vital parts of environment with the blessings of nature and extraction is performed as a holy practice. Every time physician's effort is to utilize genuine medicine to cure the patient without any side effect or adverse reaction, or after complication. As the medicines prepared by knowledgeable persons under the supervision of physician, authenticity is ensured and that leads to rapid efficacious results. Technology is environmental friendly and economically sound as well as appropriate technology invented through IK. All the material facilities needed are designed to get the maximum efficacy.

Quality control is maintained from the beginning through good manufacturing practices (GMP) which ensures the standard finish product. It is developed and implemented on skill based technical know-how which utilizes natural resources in a sustainable manner.

For the sake of adsorbing healing force prevailed in nature, range of medicinal raw material (herbal- mineral – animal) varies from quantum to solar system, i.e.; solar and lunar energy, cosmic influence, heat, air, water, soil, biogenic vital force, mutagenic morphological differentiations of species, supernatural forces (sorcery – occult practices – exorcism) etc. Ancient drug manufacturing process was operated as a small scale and domestic level process which was not industrialized and commercialized in terms of monetary values. Since the TK is localized generic recipes are not available and products are customized according to the

personal requirements. Therefore large scale multiple uses of limited resources for top ranked formulae is avoided.

Ancient medical artefacts are another heritage of national treasure of traditional medicine. Especially surgical instruments are well-designed and properly engineered for performing very subtle and critical surgeries. Instruments and devices used for Vidum Pillissum Vedakama which is a special branch of medicine executed for curing severe diseases by puncturing and burning vital points on the body. With all these instruments physician's hand is considered to be the greatest instrument among all. Also there are equipments and apparatus used for medicinal preparations by grinding, extracting, crushing, boiling, fermenting and storing. Traditional medicine has special way of preparing medicines with all the natural healing properties encapsulated into a preferred form. In this process medicinal substances are collected from the proper source, during the right season, at correct time, with performing ritualistic offerings and spiritual rites.

For understanding the proper medicine there is a secret key which is called Nigantuwa. This is a traditional document of codified names of medicinal plants and remedies which should be decoded with orally transmitted guidelines. This is also a mechanism to protect critical ISM sources from exploitation by outsiders or foreigners. It is basically cultural taboo to avoid unnecessary human manipulation in nature. Traditional medicine respects the nature and it gathers nature's potencies with the permission of nature. That is the way of healing with nature's blessings. All these practices should be learned by the student by working experiences and practical involvement in the process for long period. Therefore this Gurukula education system was sustainable and effective way of transmitting ISM from one generation to next.

Safeguarding projects

Under the Ministry of Indigenous Medicine Sri Lanka Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants Project funded a 3 year training program for 5 selected areas and recommended a national level program based on the outcome of the pilot project.

Rewarding of the Practitioners

Physicians who are involved in preservation of ISM through Gurukula education are rewarded by the ministry of indigenous medicine and All Ceylon Ayurveda Congress. These recipients are conferred with some honorary titles or medals as token of appreciation. Most of the fora where ISM practitioners are awarded this, their performance is essentially evaluated and it has become a mandatory criterion. Sometimes provincial councils also confer honorary awards for their services rendered in propagating ISM through Gurukula education.

- (a) Sahashrabhisheka Vaidya Shoori
- (b) Vaidyachintamani Pandita
- (c) Ayurveda Visharada Pandita

During the British colonial period some elite ISM practitioners were rewarded with titles such as Veda Arachchi, Ved Mudali, Veda Muhandiram etc. These individuals were actively involved in enhancement and advancement of ISM in the country. Some eminent ISM practitioners were rewarded and honoured with honorary titles and awards by the British royalty as well.