

## Abstract No 33

**Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Sri Lanka: A Study with Special Reference in the Field of Indigenous Medicine****C. K. Gamage**Senior Assistant Librarian, Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo,  
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Knowledge has become a key tool for the advancement of the human society. From the beginning of mankind, every civilization has developed its own unique knowledge systems. These knowledge systems have been linked with their culture, languages, health care, education, environmental conservation and deal with their whole patterns of lives. The transformation from agrarian to industrial economy subsequently and to the knowledge based society has to be considered as a result of the accumulation of knowledge and the advances in information and communication technologies. There are several types of knowledge viz. explicit and tacit knowledge, tangible and intangible knowledge and also indigenous and traditional knowledge etc. Indigenous knowledge, formulated by indigenous people or aboriginal tribes has been handed down from generation to generation for hundreds and thousands of years. Indigenous knowledge is a local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. Hence, it can be measured according to the measurements of the same culture itself. The earliest system of medicine that originated or was inherited by people, who lived in Sri Lanka before the advent of Ayurveda, was indigenous medicine. This system was handed down from generation to generation, and has a long tradition with its roots traced back to pre Aryan civilization. This study aims to explore the major information methods used in the system of indigenous medical field in Sri Lanka and how it transmitted this knowledge from generation to generation. The major research tools employed for data gathering are interviews, questionnaires and observation. Indigenous medical practitioners from two districts of Anuradhapura and Colombo were deemed as the study population. From this medical population, three practitioners are selected purposively from each and every ten broad categories of indigenous medicine ie. ***Kedum Bidum Vedakam*** (Local orthopaedics), ***Gedievana Pilika*** (Treatment of abscesses and tumors), ***Davum Pilissum Vedakama*** (Treatment of burns), ***Visha Vedakama*** (Treatment in toxicology), ***Es Vedakama*** (Ophthalmology), ***Manasika Roga Vedakama*** (Psychiatry), ***Bala roga*** ( Paediatrics), ***Pinas Roga Vedakama***, ***Vatha Roga Vedakama*** and ***Samanya Sarvanga*** (Internal Medicine). The study revealed that both of verbal and non – verbal methods are equally used to collect, record, transmit and preserve the indigenous medical knowledge in Sri Lanka.

Among them Vedageta, Dutha Lakshana, Incantations ( *Yanthra – Manthra*), and Rituals (*Yathu Karma*) are the major verbal methods used and ola leaf manuscripts, hand written manuscripts and methods of kem are the major non – verbal methods involved. This study highlights that the ‘Generational succession’ is the main method of transformation of indigenous medical knowledge and relevant expertise to the next generation.

**Key Words:** Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Medicine, Information Resources, Information transmission, Dissemination of Knowledge