

Indigenous Knowledge System Among Meemure Inhabitants; Kandy District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is a set of knowledge belong to a specific group or a community which cannot be seen either in the mainstream or in a dominant society. The knowledge systems developed by the ancestors of these groups have transmitted this knowledge system to their succeeding generations. This knowledge system has shaped their traditional way of life and culture throughout the history. Meemure inhabitants are one of the minority groups in Sri Lanka that have remarkable indigenous knowledge system (IKS). The main objective of this study was to explore their valuable IKS as a whole. Thus, questioner survey, interviews and observation methods were used as data collecting methods. Though the village cultural heritage is rich in precious indigenous pertaining tangible and intangible cultural heritage those are at risk of disappearing at present with the effects of new technologies and innovations. Capturing these IK as much as we can and making documents, films and ethnographies are the best methods to safeguard this invaluable indigenous heritage.

Keywords: *Meemure Village, Traditional Medicine, Traditional Foods, Indigenous Knowledge, Sri Lanka*

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1. Introduction

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have defined by Julian T. Inglis (Executive Director of the International Program on Traditional Ecological Knowledge in 1993), as a “set of knowledge includes an intimate and detailed knowledge of plants, animals, and natural phenomena, the development and use of appropriate technologies for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry, and a holistic knowledge, or “world view” which parallels the scientific discipline of ecology” (Miraglia, 1998). Similarly, Mistry (2009) stated that it is spatial and/or cultural context and as a specific, collective, and adaptive system of knowledge (Mistry, 2009). The holistic nature of the IK highlights the idea of its inclusion of the knowledge (both tangible and intangible in nature) of all aspects related to the lifestyle of a particular group of people (those who have unique knowledge systems) (Kottak, 2012; Campbell, 2006). UNESCO has given priority to preservation, protection and collection of IK and has defined it as “Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings” (Anon., 2017). Its Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) program works to secure an active and equitable role for local communities in resource management; to strengthen knowledge transmission across and within generations; to explore pathways to balance community-based knowledge with global knowledge in formal and non-formal education; to support the meaningful inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation and management (Anon., 2017). Therefore, at present the knowledge system of the local/traditional or indigenous groups has given special attention internationally and nationally. Even though it was previously ignored in the fields of development and conservation, currently its being incorporated into development projects as an essential factor (Mistry, 2009). However, there are many issues surrounding the recording of indigenous knowledge and its transference to other localities and contexts (Mistry, 2009).

IK has been evolved among groups/communities according to the geographic areas they live. Specially environment and culture affect the development of specific IK. To continue the transmission and growth of the IK that are owned by specific cultures/groups of people, the next generations should acquire and accept this knowledge system. Otherwise, it will be remained only among the older generations of the cultures/groups and will be disappeared without transmitting for tomorrow’s world (Barnouw, 1982).

Sri Lanka, located on an island near India, is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country with a majority Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic population (75%). Among around 10 of the other ethnic groups that reside in the country, 11% are Sri Lankan Tamils and 9.2% are Sri Lankan Muslims; these are the second and third most prominent ethnic groups (Department of Census and Statistics 2012; Sri Lanka Demographics Profile 2019). Even though the Vedda people of the country represent only 0.05% of the country’s population, they are considered to be one of the unique Indigenous groups with a specific cultural identity (Silva & Punchihewa 2011; Department of Census and Statistics 2012; Ananda 2019). The island of Sri Lanka is exclusive in its topography since this distinctiveness

has given birth to various colorful, precious communities which are holding specific indigenous knowledge systems that cannot be found from anywhere else. Especially all the mentioned populations/groups own specific IK that can be considered as a treasure that should be revealed and preserved for future generations. Some of the subcultures under these main ethnic/religious groups have been formed as long-term geographical isolation. Those consist of unique cultures/IKs that are different and rich when compared with the IK of the prominent/dominant cultural system.

Meemure inhabitants are one such community that holds distinctive IK. They are Sinhalese Buddhists that have been living isolate (with minimum contact) from the dominant Sinhalese over hundreds of years. The name Meemure is said to be formed by the “*Mee trees*” (*Madhuca longifolia*) that can be seen around the Meemure area (English- “Honey Tree”). According to folklore “*honey*” that could have collected from the Meemure area had been another reason for the name Meemure. Sinhala term for honey – “*pani*” or “*mee*” has derived from the name Meemure. Besides the terms “*Mihi*” + “*Mure*” have been known to be formed as Meemure; the meaning is protecting the earth. Meemure Village is located in Sri Lanka’s mountainous and thickly forested interior. This mountain region has been described in the chronicles as “*Girimandala*”, “*Malaya Ratta*” or as “*Malaya desha*” (Ariyapala, 1969). It is mentioned in the first map of “*Taprobane*” by “*Claudius Ptolemy*” as “*Maleamount*” (Thomas, 1999). Sinhalese residents have traditionally referred to the area as *Dumbara Kanduvetiya* meaning mist-laden mountain range. Early British surveyors had assigned the name “*Knuckles*” to the mountain range because of the resembling shape of “*knuckle*” when viewed from certain locations in the Kandy District. The vast mountain range consists of 34 peaks in total such as “*Gombaniya*” (6248Ft), “*Knuckles*” (6112Ft), “*Dumbanagala*” (5339Ft), “*Kalupahana*” (5300Ft), “*Dothalugala*” (5164Ft), “*Lakegala*” (4324Ft) (Goonewardene, et al., 2006; Rajapaksha, 2007, Ananda & Nahallage 2014). Though the Meemure village is situated in the middle of this mountain range, the majority of the Meemure prehistory have built based on the mythical stories that have connected with “*Lakegala*” Mountain. “*Lakegala*” is a giant monolith-like projection at 1 km north of the Meemure village with an almost 90-degree angle. In ancient times this rock was known as “*Lanka Pabbata*” or “*Lankagiri*”, “*The Rock of Lanka*” is the meaning of “*Lakegala*” in the Sinhala language. Meemure people believe that the name ‘*Lanka*’ is derived based on the term “*lakegala*” (Lokubandara, 1959).

Further, the village is famous for its legendary stories related to King *Rawana* and for the unique cultural heritage it has. *Lakegala* Mountain situated in the corner of the Meemure village said to be King *Rawana*’s kingdom and the place prince *Sitha* was hidden. Prince *Rama* had come to the Meemure region to seek Prince *Sitha* (according to the folk tales of Meemure inhabitants). Although these legends revealed to us about King *Rawana* and his *yaksha* tribe, Meemure village had been habituated by people in the era of King *Wimaladharmasuriya* I (1542-1604). *Vedda* named *Beduruwa* was the first owner of the Meemure village and then cousins; *Herath Hami* and *Riti Hami* had moved to Meemure village with their families from *Poddalgoda* (Village in the Kandy District).

Henceforth they have adapted to the physical environment and have gradually developed their invaluable cultural heritage. The indigenous knowledge they own have accumulated throughout history, shows significant characteristics. Their agrarian lifestyle has been dependent on both paddy and Chena cultivation (Ananda & Nahallage 2014). There were no chemical toxins in their diets or water; the village was abundant with fresh vegetables and fruits. The only illness they acquire is tiredness resulting after hard agricultural works. For that, they had enough of popular medicines (*Ath beheth*) in their gardens. If they suspect that the illness is a result of a supernatural being, they have their powerful village deities to whom they pray for a cure. This simple and successful way of life is a consequence of their valuable indigenous knowledge system (traditional knowledge/ folk wisdom). Therefore, the main objective of this research was to study their remarkable indigenous knowledge system and to make ethnography a preservation method for tomorrow's world.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Area

Meemure Village is situated in the Central Province, in Kandy District [N 07.433330 and E 08.833330] (Meemure, 2013). It belongs to Ududumbara Secretariat Division and Meemure Grama Niladari Division [Fig.1]. From Colombo to Kandy there are 115 km, Kandy to *Hunnasgiriya* 75 km. To reach Meemure village from *Hunnasgiriya*, one must go another 38 km. Both electricity and sufficient transporting facilities are absent to Meemure village.

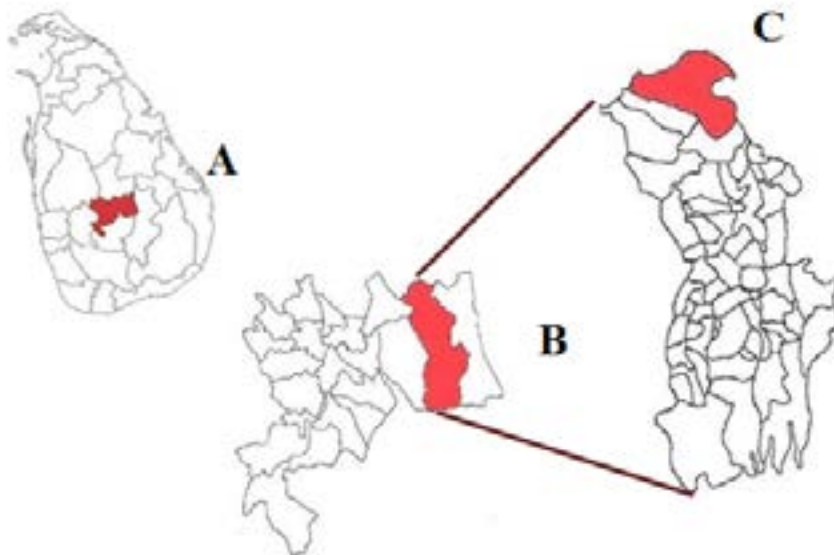


Figure 1: Location of the Meemure village: A Kandy District, B Ududumbara Secretariat Division, C Meemure Grama Niladari Division (In Red Colour) Maps were collected by researcher from the Meemure GN Office records and edited.

2.2 Data Collection

The total population in Meemure Grama Niladari Division according to the census in 2011 consists of 331 people belonging to 115 families (primary data collection report 2011: *Ududumbara*). Out of this, forty families (40) were randomly selected and gathered information via a questionnaire (One member from each family belongs to Meemure village from the distant past). Thirty-five percent (35%) of the informants who participated in the questionnaire survey were females and 65% of them were males (14-Female, 26-Male). Their age ranges from 23 to 75 years. In-depth interviews were conducted with 8 informants (3 females and 5 males, age above 50) to gather information on their Indigenous Knowledge System. Qualitative data were analyzed using SPSS (16.0 for windows) and the content analysis method was used for the qualitative data analysis. This study was conducted from April 2013 to March 2014.

3. Results and Discussion

Indigenous knowledge on various aspects of Meemure people's life has been shown and discussed below under sub-themes generated through the analysis.

3.1 Indigenous Knowledge Pertaining to Agriculture: Chena and Paddy Cultivations

Every work in chena and paddy cultivation started in an auspicious time after lighting a lamp for Lord Buddha. All the works are done by balancing with the environmental condition. They decide a day to clean the canals in the paddy field after observing the sky (for rainy clouds). They listened carefully to the grasses; the sound of the lizard signifies the time when to start the cleaning of the lands for chena cultivations. Traditional paddy varieties such as *Sudu Vee*, *Heenati Vee*, *Kalu Vee*, *Kalu Kumara Vee*, *Murugakayan* and *Pachcha Perumal* are sowed. Even these traditional paddies produce small harvests it endured hard climate conditions throughout the season (*Kannaya*). *Divi Kaduru* (*Strychnosnux vomica* - Snakewood tree) and *mee* trees (*Madhuca loggifolia* - Honey tree) were farmer's friends which were used as organic fertilizers. The flock of bats that come for the fruits of *mee* tree with their feces fertile the entire paddy land with nitrogen and trace nutrients.

For the protection of paddy from weeds farmer control the water level; water must be spread into the entire field evenly, if not the places that water has not filled give opportunity for weeds to grow. As the fields begin to mature farmers increase the level of the water flow (*wakkada*) and control the water level of the field. When harvesting time is near paddy covers the earth and prevents sunlight from falling on the earth. During this stage, weeds cannot grow as sunlight is absent.

In chena cultivation, the major task is to make a strong fence around the entire chena land for the prevention of animals entering the chena (even small rodents) to feed on the crops. The knowledge of making *Pendi Wata* (type of a fence they create) is highly effective and is a unique feature of Meemure inhabitant's IK system. First, at the bottom of the land forked prop is placed and timbers are used to fill the forked prop. The spaces

between timbers are filled with stones or small logs. As a starting point of the *Pendi Wata* they select cliff place or any other place that prevents animals from entering the Chena such as boulder or peak place of the Chena land [Fig. 2]. Furthermore, every practice of their cultivation is adorned by the indigenous knowledge they have inherited from their forefathers [making of *Chena Pala*, *Piduru Panthala* - mushroom-shaped hey store, *Vee Atuwa* - traditional paddy storing system similar to *vee bissa*, etc.] (Ananda, & Nahallage, 2014).

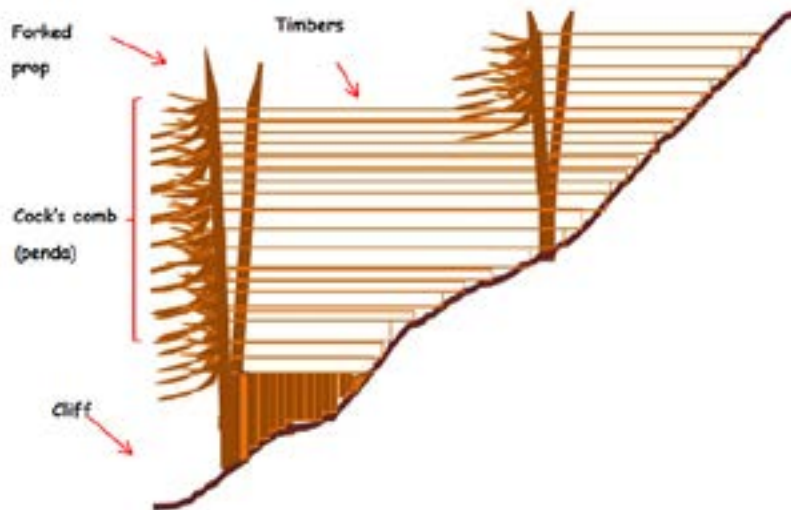


Figure 2: Structure of *Pendi wata* (Ananda & Nahallage 2014).

3.2.1 Secrete Treatments (*Kem Karma*)

Meemure inhabitant's indigenous agricultural knowledge consists of extraordinary secrete treatments (*Kem Karma*) that used for the protection of the harvest. Small buds of *Kurakkan* (*Eleusine coracana*) and green chilli plants are highly effective to prevent crop damage by the small verity of locust called *Golawella*. Before sunrise or birds singing farmer goes to the middle of the chena land and captures 4 or 5 locust and put them into dried chillies. While chanting a *manthra* (charm) he puts these chillies into a fireplace. No locust will ever harm the plants thereafter. For the rats in the paddy field, they get sands from a place that human haven not stepped. A powerful *manthra* (charm) is chant to the sands and spread to the stretch of paddy land. Diseases of their cattle are also treated by using these secrete treatments.

3.3 Food Preservation

The knowledge of food preservation for future purposes is useful since those foods are not available year-round. Kernel of the jack fruit, sliced bread fruit, jack fruit seeds, long beans, papaw, *Kiri Alakola* (*Dioscorea alata*), manioc, manioc bark, salted lime, orange etc. are stored using various methods and consume when these foods are not available.

Kernel of the Jack Fruit and sliced Bread Fruit dried and stored in the loft (*Massa*) for use when jack fruits and bread fruits are not available. Dried jack fruit called “*Atukos*” and bread fruit called “*Delatu Kos*”. Also jack fruit seeds stored under the sands for preserve, it calls “*Valli Kos Ata*”. These dried foods can be consumed even after one year.

Long Beans stored on the loft (*Massa*-wooden made rack above fireplace use to store foods) after dried under sun light. *Malluma* is prepared from it. Papaw also stored in the same way and used to make *Malluma*. *Kiri alakola* (*Dioscorea alata*), sliced into small round pieces and dried, then can be used to make *malluma*.

They prepare *Irigu Bath* (buck wheat rice) same as milk rice using buck wheat. Buck wheat pound to get rice size pieces. Then mixed it with green gram and long bean nuts and fried. These grains cooked with coconut syrup and ate with *Lunumiris* (onions, chillies, salt mixture)

Sliced Manioc can preserve after dried. Then it can be used to make curries and fried with chillies. Also fried manioc slice is eaten as a sweet with honey. Manioc bark washed well and dried then store on the loft. After fried in deep oil it can eat like appalams. IKS regarding food preserving methods among Meemure inhabitanancies are valuable as those are natural and healthy and as vary from junk foods which causes to increase health problems in contemporary society.

3.4 Traditional Foods

Traditional food consumed by Meemure Inhabitanancies are another evidence for prove the richness of their IKS. “*Pusnambu*” is one such example for that. *Pusnambu* is famous food among Meemure inhabitanancies which is made for special occasions such as Sinhala New Year, ploughing ceremony, *Paritta* ceremony, alms-giving ceremonies (*Dana*), and for weddings etc. It is made of rice flour and *Undu* flour (*Phaseolus mungo*). (They have grown *undu* plants in their gardens) *Undu* and rice flour mixed with water and then keep one night. After sugar and honey are mixed again to that mixture and steamed well. Steamed *Pusanambu* is like a cake and can taste after cutting into pieces.

For the ***Adukku Pujawa*** (*Adukku Pujawa* or *Adukku* offering is a religious practice of Meemure inhabitants. The first portion of their harvest is kept aside and offers it to the village deities on the *Addukku* offering day) they prepare *Kiriroti* or *Kiri Kawum*. It is made out of rice flour and coconut milk. This mixture pours on to the *Rotti Kabala* (plate use to make *rotti*) and can be made one by one *kiri roti* (Ananda & Nahallage, 2015a; 2016).

Kiripani hodda is made to eat with *kiri rotti*. It is made of coconut milk and sugar. Small amount of ginger, pepper and garlic are added into it.

Hathmaluwa (curry made of seven vegetables) is one of common food they prepare in special occasions to eat with rice, *Kiri Rotti*, *Madu Thalapa* and *Kurakkan Thalapa*. It is made by pumpkin, ash pumpkin, bread fruit, young jack fruit, ash plantain,

melon and cucumber. These vegetables mixed well with spices and cooked with small amount of coconut milk.

Kiri Rotti, *Kiri Pani Hodda* or *Hath Maluwa* are prepared for religious practices such as *Adukku Pujawa* only by men. But after offering it to the deities everyone gets permissions to collectively taste these foods (Ananda & Nahallage, 2016).

Nikadawula Asmi is another traditional sweet it is made of *Nikadawula* leaves (*Vitex negundo*), rice flour and coconut. *Nikadawula* leaves cut into small pieces and mixed with water. Then leave it for 2 hours to mix well with water and then filtered to get the syrup. Then rice flour and coconut mixed with this *Nikadawula* syrup. Using sieve this lotion strain into the deep heated oil as strings. The oval shape is made by spoon while fried. Then honey can be bedaubed on the fried *Nikadawula Asmi* for get tastier.

3.5 Traditional Self-Medication for Common Illnesses and Traditional Medicinal System

Meemure Inhabitancies are highly knowledgeable about popular medicines and village is abundant with popular medicinal plants. For joint pains, the most common disease among the Meemure villagers, they use verity of self-medication practices. Most common one is *Mee* oil (*Madhuca longifolia*) massage. They use dried *Mee* seeds to make *Mee* oil. First dried *mee* seeds are pounded using mortar. Then powder was steamed well covered by *Hakarilla Dalu* in a large earthen pot. Places that steam can be exits were covered by *Humbas Mati* (ant-hill clay). Then the steamed powder was put into the *Mee ata paha* (pouch made of cane) and press tightly using *Pattale* (wooden made small pestle). Then the *mee* oil was strained through *Mee Ata Paha* [Fig.3].



Figure 3: A- *Mee* seeds B- Dry *mee* seeds under the sun light C- *Mee ata paha* and pounded *mee* seeds (Photos by Author)

In addition, dried *adathoda* leaves (Malabar nut-*Adhathoda zeylanica*) barks and a root were boiled and was given to drink. Also steamed *adathoda* leaves, barks and roots are used to ferment the joints. *Yak naran* (*Atalantia zeylanica*) leaves, orange leaves (*Citrus aurantium*), lemon leaves (*Citrus aurantifolia*), and ginger and garlic boiled together and drink for arthritis as well as for cold. For worm diseases they eat *katu eramudu* leaves (*Erythrina suberosa*) *malluma* (mixed with coconut). *Kowakka* leaf (Baby gourd-*Coccinia grandis*) *mallum* is used for diabetes and *thepu* leaves (Crep ginger-*Costus speciosus*),

kowakka leaves and (*thoratiya mallum*) are used for blood pressure (diabetes and blood pressure was reported in lower than 1% of adult inhabitants).

Meemure specific IK has become more brighten with its glorious medicinal system. From the beginning of the Meemure village traditional medicinal generation too has established in the village named

“*Valithuduwe Veda Paramparava*” (*Valithuduwe* medicine generation). At present fourth generation contribute its traditional knowledge for the welfare of the villagers. Mostly this “*Valithuduwe veda paramparava*” is famous for Serpent’s venom (*Sarpa Visha Vedakama*), Fractures (*Kadum Bindum Vedakama*), Treatments of boils (*Gedi Veda Kama*), Rheumatic disease (*Vatha Roga*) and for Arthritis (joint pain).

Herbal plants and other medicinal herbs are collected from forests that have spread around the village. These forests are abundant with valuable herbs such as *Iru Raja*, *Sanda Raja*, *Vanaraja* (*Anaectochilus setaceus*), *Gururaja* (*Moringa oleifera*) and various kinds of other herbs. Thus, there are no need to cultivate herbs in the garden and *veda mahaththaya* (village physician) believe that natural herbs are powerful than cultivated herbs.

Veda mahaththaya and few men go to the forest twice a month to collect herbs before sun rise and before birds wake up. When the herb collecting day is reached, they observe higher precept and prevent eating meats or any kinds of impure foods (fish, dried fish, eggs, maldive fish etc.) herbs are collect carefully without harming to the forest’s biosphere. Medicines are prepared in the house by *veda mahaththaya* with the help of villagers.

All the treatments and other duties are done without any of charge until diseased person get well. All the expenses for treatments are manage by the *veda mahaththaya*’s own income he gets from paddy farming.

3.5.1 Serpent’s Venom Medicine

Verities of serpents are living in Meemure village. Dense forest around the village and the presence of small bushes, other trees, and plants inside of the village have given opportunity to them to spread well. Medicines and treatment methods differ as the serpent that has stung. When the serpent has not recognized special charmed herbs are given to the attacked person. Those herbs useful for reduce the venom.

Treatments for Cobra Venom

- I. *Bombu* (*Symplocos cochinchinensis*) leaves, barks, and roots were crushed and apply on the wound.
- II. *Hathawariya* (*Asparagus racemosus*), curry leaves (*Murraya koenigii Spreng*), garlic (*Allium sativum*), honey and *endaru* (*Jatropha curcuras*) mixed gruel.
- III. Pepper; curry leaves, garlic, tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), *sahindalunu* (kind of salt) mixed curry.

- IV. Lemon, orange, curry leaves, leaves of the neem tree (*Azadrchta indica*), *savandara* roots (*Andropogon squrosus*), traumatic mixed herbal water bath.

Treatments for Tholissa (kunakatuwa) sting (Merrem's hump-nosed viper- Hynnale hypnale)

- I. *Tholaboo* leaves (spider lilly -*Crinum asiaticum*), traumatic, salt, lemon crushed together and apply on the wound.
- II. Indian sarsaparilla (*Iramusu-Hemidesmus indicus*), butter leaves (*wedaru*), coconut milk, *sahinda lunu* mixed gruel.
- III. Lemon, orange, curry leaves, neem tree leaves, *savandara* roots, traumatic mixed herbal water bath.

Treatments for Divimakuluwa Venom (Tarantula- Poecilotheria fasciata)

- I. All the parts of the *divikaduru* (Snake wood tree-*strychnos nux-vomica*) tree used for the treatments. *Divikaduru* leaves, fruits, barks, roots, traumatic, sat, lime mixed well and apply on the wound. And this mixture used to foment the body it used to prevent crouch the person. (they believe after stung by *divi makuluwa* stung person is crouched)
- II. Foment the body by steamed *Mee muruwata* (recrement of *mee* seeds after oil is extracted)
- III. Let person to drink *Udupiyaliya* leaves (*Desmodium triflorum*), lime, coconut milk, ghee, and jiggery mixture.

3.5.2 Fracture Medicine

When bone is fractured *veda mhaththaya* examine the place by touching and find out which bone has fractured and how. If there is contusions and wounds treatments are differing and must treat the wound at first. Though there are wounds in fractured place before treat to fracture wound must be treated. For wounds crushed *Hakarilla* leaves (*Solanum mauritianum*) are applied. If there is a contusion *Milala* leaves, bark pounded and applied.

For fractures most famous herbal plant is “*Samadana*” (*Blepharis repens*). Its leaves crushed and applied on the fractured place. And “*Gonu Kaa Kola*” (*Hoya ovalifolia*) used for joining the fractured bones. There is folk tale around the *Gonu Ka Kola*. A bull had fallen down from high place and its bones had fractured. It had been laid down in the place and had eaten leaves that had grown around it. After few days bull had been able to stand and walk. Its fractured bones had been joined together with the power of leaves that it had eaten. That leaves named as *Gonu Ka Kola* (leaves eaten by bull) and used for fractures from that day for humans too.

Fractures are not only treated by applying herbs but *veda mahaththaya* use *paththu* (made of bamboo flakes) to join the fractured bones. Bamboo flakes use to strap around the fractured place. Several of herbs use and the time that *paththu* must be wore depend on place and type of the fracture.

3.5.3 Treatments of Boils

Mostly Boils are occurred when blood get poisoned. And bacterial infections, insect's bites or allergies may cause to boils. In the traditional treatments of boils at first herbs apply on the boil to rive it. *Kumburu* leaves (*Caesalpinia bonduc*), lime juice mixed and heat together and apply on the boil for rive. And then wound is covered after applying heated *masbadda* leaves (*Gymnema syivestre*), raw traumatic, and sesame oil mixture on it.

3.6 Indigenous Embalming Knowledge

After someone died in the village and if the body is kept in house for more than one day it needs to be embalmed. For that they use traditional knowledge of embalming. Soon after a person dies, honey is poured into the mouth of the diseased person. Honey helps to postpone the putrefaction. Then the body is washed, and rectum is closed by cotton or small piece of cloth for prevent body fluids coming out. Then the throat is filled with betel and arecanut mixture. *Mee* (*Madhuca longifolia*) leaves, seeds, barks and traumatic are pounded and applied on stomach around navel and bandaged to prevent putrefaction. A large earthen pot with charcoal is kept near the coffin. Citrus leafs such as lime, orange, musk lime, tangerines etc. were put on charcoal and its smoke was used as germicide (Ananda & Nahallage, 2017).

3.7 Indigenous Knowledge Used in Architecture

In the west side of the Meemure village there is a house with different features that cannot be seen in other houses in the village. This house is the only house that shows ancient house planning and architectural features. It is made above the ground on about 70 cm height soling basement. This house consists of 6 rooms. Doors and door frames were elaborated by designs and for doorstep a rectangular shaped stone has used. Cow dung is applied on the floor. There is a stone path goes to the door step of the house. Then ancient door opens into the squire shaped compound which would have made to lighten the house in the daytime.

In the corner of the compound there is a flat stone layer which was used to pound grains (rice, *Kurakkan*, *undu* etc). It reveals the art of traditional pounding of grains. Five women can use pestles at one time to pound grains standing around the flat stone layer. After bringing the harvest in to the house responsibility is handed over to the women to take care of rest works such as pounding, drying under sunlight etc. which would be the reason of having stone ponding layer inside the house. [Fig. 4]. Stone path and stone fence also specific features of their housing systems. All over the village these kinds of stone fences can be seen. They have not used any kind of cement or plaster to harden the

stones together. Only they used is the traditional knowledge of their forefathers for build these stone fences. Oval and round shape stones can be seen all around the village thus the task have not hard for them to collect those and to arrange one on another carefully until about 25 m fence is finished [Fig. 5].



Figure 4: Stone Fences in the Meemure village (Photos by Author)



A



B



C



D



R



F



G

4. Conclusion

Antique household instruments, religious practices were also a part of their indigenous knowledge which represent both intangible and tangible cultural heritage. Minority groups like Meemure people have been exposed to innovations and technologies. Consequently, indigenous knowledge that they have hold become less and less usable with the new technologies. Present young people do not follow their ancestor's indigenous knowledge as they prefer modern technology that needs less physically strenuous work (Ananda and Nahallage, 2015b). The speed of the increase in the human population

throughout the globe has caused many global crises. Human is the only animal that makes conscious choices which are bad for his survival.

Today many scholars and organizations such as UNESCO, World Bank, World Health Organization have given their attention to the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of communities throughout the world.

Their nature-loving knowledge systems are the best methods that we can use for making tomorrow's world a better place to live. Padmasiri (2017) in his research has shown that the universities, museums, and libraries as the Government institutions that have the responsibility to identify, collect, preserve, and disseminate indigenous knowledge for the benefit of the local and global community (Padmasiri, 2018). Also, the methods such as ethnographies (e.g. present study), digital library systems, database systems, community archives can use to preserve the IK in the forms of images, videos (films/short films), recordings, documents, drawings, paintings, diaries (ethnographies/virtual ethnographies) for the protection and preservation for the future (Padmasiri, 2018; Poorna, et al., 2014).

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