

## **An Analysis into the Understanding of University Students in the Knowledgebase on the Palm Leaf Manuscripts**

**Neththasinghe, N., Nishanthi, M. and Premarathna, M.**

nishanthi@sjp.ac.lk, rajapelapatha.prem@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

*With the advancement of technology in the world, discoveries have emerged. This has resulted in many changes in the local and foreign education sectors. When it came to local education, it was clear that the indigenous qualities we inherited from the ancestors of the past should be preserved in an era of decaying age. In this case, particular attention was paid to the nationally highly valued Palm Leaf Manuscripts which anyone is not paying attention nowadays. The Palm Leaf Manuscripts contain a wealth of local knowledge related to various subject areas. The research investigates whether Sri Lankan university students were aware of Palm Leaf Manuscripts. It examined the students' understanding of why Palm Leaf Manuscripts are a locally valued heritage that should be preserved. The contribution of students from the Department of History and Archeology of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura was obtained for this purpose. Students were provided with a questionnaire to collect the data needed for the research. Data analysis showed that they had a general understanding of Palm Leaf Manuscripts.*

*Keywords: Palm leaf manuscripts, Indigenous knowledge, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Department of history and archaeology, University students.*

### **Introduction**

Mahindagamanaya can be described as a turning point in the history of Sri Lanka. As a result of this, the art of writing in Sri Lanka has become widespread. It is also stated that permanent positions were established for the writing of this period (Lagamuwa, 2006, p. 60). However, a special place in the art of writing is found in the Aluviharaya which Buddhist monks wrote and preserved the Tripitakas during the reign of King Walagamba (Mahavamsa, 33.102-103). It added a new dimension to the Sri Lankan art of writing. With this state patronage, Sinhala writing art was developed in and around temples (Vihara Arama). The Pothgula (library) in these temples was nourished by Palm Leaf Manuscripts.

Kotte era is known as the golden age of Palm Leaf Manuscripts writing. During this period a new set of Palm Leaf Manuscripts was written and a large number of Palm Leaf Manuscripts were copied. Among them were religious, language literature, medicine, veterinary medicine, astrology, yantra mantra, fictions, customs and ceremonies, law, border (Kadima) , story (Withthi), history, taxes and income, agriculture, state governance, Buddhist education, world

detail and a large number of Palm Leaf Manuscripts on various subjects such as music and art (Lagamuwa, 2006, p.84).

The University of Sri Jayewardenepura, which is the basis for this research, has a long and illustrious history. The Vidyodaya Maha Pirivena, which was honored by the world with a unique contribution to the Sinhala Buddhist culture and a wide variety of languages studies from 1873 to the end of 1958, it became the Vidyodaya University of Sri Lanka on 18 February 1959 under the Universities Act No. 45 of 1958 (University act no. 45,1958, section 2(1)). Since its inception, the University has been teaching and studying a wide range of scopes with the objective of systematically and systematically expanding universal knowledge. The subjects were Buddha Dhamma, Bharat philosophy, Logic theory, Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi, English, Ceylon History and Linguistics.

The university has provided students with the opportunity to study archaeology from its inception. The Department of Archaeology which was started in the year 1960 under the Chief Prelates of Reverend Welivitiye Sri Soratha Thero: is now making arrangements to educate students on various subject areas. Since its inception, the Department has been working to educate students under the art of writing on Palm Leaf Manuscripts and Inscriptions. The problem with this research is that the University students are aware of the need for preserving the Palm Leaf Manuscripts, a decaying national heritage for the University's undergraduates.

### **Objectives**

- The purpose is to Examining the understanding of the university students regarding the Palm Leaf Manuscripts which is containing the Indigenous Knowledge.
- To examine the suitability of the Human Resources of University to update the society understands of Palm Leaf Manuscripts.

### **Methodology**

For this research, 33% of the total population according to the sounder's theory was selected from the students of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, representing a total of four years student, and a random questionnaire was distributed for them. Also, primary, secondary and tertiary sources were used.

### **Results and Discussion**

At the research, the primary questionnaire was asked about the general understanding of the



Palm Leaf Manuscripts from the sample data contributors. There were concerning the four academic years 96.22% of students with the said level of understanding and 3.77% had no ordinary understanding.

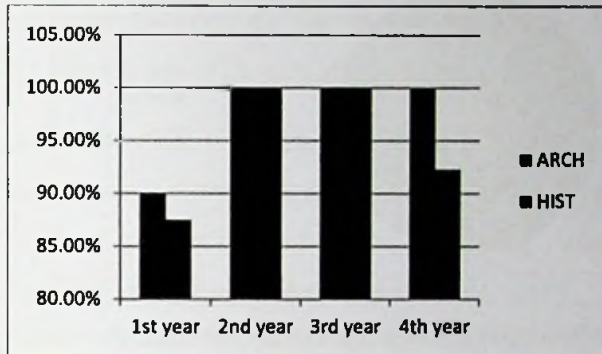


Figure 1: Undergraduates who have general knowledge about palm leaf manuscripts

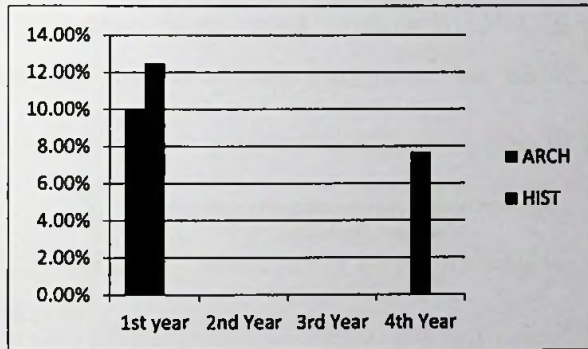


Figure 2: Undergraduates who haven't general knowledge about palm leaf manuscripts

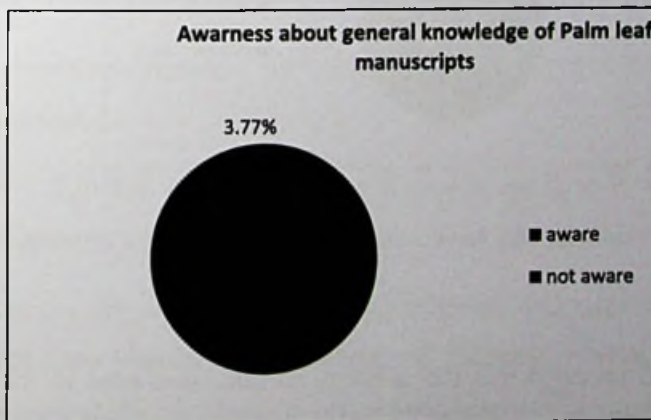
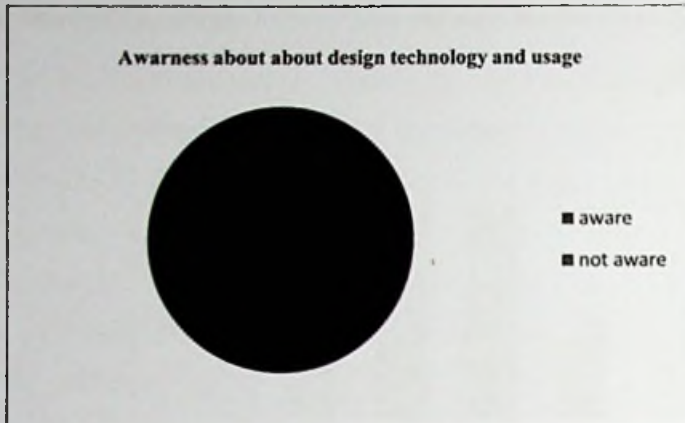


Figure 3: Awareness about general knowledge of Palm leaf manuscripts

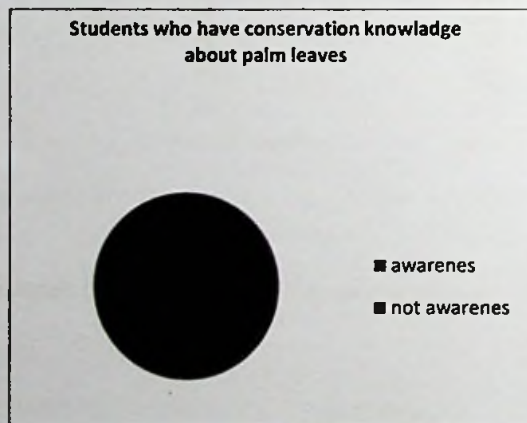
Database understanding of Palm Leaf Manuscripts usage and its context, the overall understanding of raw materials, design technology, and usage of Palm Leaf Manuscripts

design is 25.51% positive and 68.43% negative.



*Figure 4: Awareness about design technology and usage*

Considering the knowledge of Palm Leaf Manuscripts preservation and conservation theories, as well as the awareness and understanding of databases of Palm Leaf Manuscripts conservation institutions, 21.37% of students know about conservation of Palm Leaf Manuscripts. Also, 64.77% do not understand that Palm Leaf Manuscripts should be preserved.



*Figure 5: The students who have conservation knowledge about palm leaves*

### Conclusions

- The data also revealed that the majority of undergraduates in the Department of History and Archaeology have a general understanding of Palm Leaf Manuscripts writing.
- When looking at the percentage of total data contributors, it is evident that the second year, third-year and fourth-year undergraduates' general knowledge of Palm Leaf

Manuscripts is always higher than in the first year undergraduates and it also means that undergraduates who study archaeology have more understanding than history undergraduates.

- The most undergraduates do not know about Palm Leaf Manuscripts design technology and the materials used and their use.
- According to the data obtained, it was concluded that fourth-year archaeology undergraduates have a deeper understanding of Palm Leaf Manuscripts. The main reason for such a conclusion was their study of conservation and Palm Leaf Manuscripts as a subject in the Archaeo-chemistry unit.
- These Palm Leaf Manuscripts are a heritage to be conserved, and it is evident that there is considerable awareness among the fourth-year archaeology undergraduates of the Department on conservation theories.

### **Recommendations**

- It is proposed to organize programs to educate students of the Department of History and
- Archaeology and the entire university on the national significance of the palm leaf manuscripts.
- Awareness programs for students on palm leaf manuscripts preservation and providing practical training.
- Create awareness campaigns for school children and utilize these human resources for the purpose.
- Launching National and International Research Seminar-Workshop on palm leaf manuscripts.
- Establishment of museums, research laboratories, and laboratories specializing in palm leaf manuscripts. Establishment of knowledge propagation centers and establishment of this heritage in a systematic preservation manner.
- Archaeology students, as well as history students, should be given a deep understanding of palm leaf manuscripts. Curriculum revisions and workshops should be launched for this purpose.



- Enrolling students in archaeological special degree for palm leaf manuscripts conservation institutes and further empowering them to become practically mature professionals.

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