



## **Colloquium: Is There an Indian Way of Doing Science?**

Speaker:

A. V. Balasubramanian, Director, Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, Chennai

Date / Time:

August 1, 2013 - 3:45pm - 5:15pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

In the last twenty years, there has been a significant rise in interest and work on various aspects of traditional knowledge systems the world over in general, and in India and other parts of Asia in particular. It is now widely recognized that traditional knowledge has much to offer in varied areas such as, for instance, medicine and agriculture. However, differences and divergences of viewpoints exist on what constitutes the nature of traditional knowledge. As per the “classical viewpoint” that has its origins in the later colonial period, what goes by the name of traditional knowledge today was deemed a collection of recipes of empirical knowledge and was seen as a mixture of observations and details about the use of bio-resources coexisting with superstition and wholly incorrect or imprecise information and observations. In this view, in order to make sense out of traditional knowledge and “separate the wheat from the chaff”, one needs to make an examination and assessment of all the worthwhile aspects of traditional knowledge could be recovered by subjecting the latter to modern scientific research methods. However, a different perception on this issue, which views traditional Indian knowledge as an entire knowledge system, has slowly gained ascendancy in recent times. This view points to the civilizational specificities underlying the values and world-views of this knowledge system and to the latter’s distinct methods and criteria for knowledge generation, validation and propagation. In this presentation, I attempt to provide an introduction to the nature of traditional knowledge and highlight: (a) the theoretical parameters in traditional knowledge (b) aspects of traditional knowledge that differ from modern western scientific methods such as the idea of measurement, the idea of controlled experiments (c) the necessity of comprehending traditional knowledge as an entire knowledge system. I believe that we are not in a position to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the nature of traditional knowledge, but it is still worthwhile to explore and comprehend at least some aspects of the latter. This presentation will make a beginning in this direction.

A Note on the Speaker:

A. V. Balasubramanian is the Director of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems – an institution devoted to exploring the contemporary relevance and applications of Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly in the area of sustainable agriculture. He obtained his M. Sc. degree in Chemistry from Bangalore University and did a Post M. Sc. diploma in Molecular Biophysics from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. He later studied Physiology and Biophysics at the State University of New York at Stonybrook. Since 1982 he has been involved in work relating to various aspects of traditional Indian sciences and technologies and trying to explore their current relevance and potential.