

INVITATION

**THIRD CONGRESS ON  
TRADITIONAL SCIENCES AND  
TECHNOLOGIES OF INDIA**

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**LOKAVIDYA MAHADHIVESHAN**

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28<sup>th</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1998

Venue

Gandhian Institute of Studies,  
Rajghat, Varanasi

Organisers

**Patriotic & People - Oriented Science and  
Technology Foundation**

and

**Gandhian Institute of Studies**

## Background

The debate on the relevance of traditional sciences and technologies has added new dimensions to the process of identification of sources of strength of the people and the nation. The path of development pursued since independence has by and large failed to provide the people even the bare necessities of life. Therefore efforts at identifying traditional strengths of our society have acquired added significance. The first and the second *Congress on Traditional Sciences and Technologies of India* held in Bombay and Madras respectively in 1993 and 1995 have given an organised direction to the search of these forces and initiatives. In pursuance of this quest the Third Congress is being organised at Varanasi from 28th October to 2nd November 1998. This Congress is to focus on dignity of people's knowledge, value, skill and initiative and hence its name *Lokavidya Mahadhiveshan*.

## The Idea

The living aspects of traditional sciences and technologies exist today in our society as *lokavidya*. Ordinary people, in particular, peasants, artisan, adivasis and women constantly innovate and enrich such knowledge based on their needs, experiences and the genius. It is this *lokavidya* which, generally speaking, provides the basis of production of daily needs with all kinds of substances e.g., iron, wood, leather, cotton, soil (earth), stone etc. and the activities like agricultural production, healthcare and upbringing of children etc. Again it is *lokavidya* which is the source of art and recreation of the common man. Thus *lokavidya* is constituted of the knowledge, values and technical capability of people as distinct from institutionalised knowledge. In *lokavidya* perhaps lies that potent, live and unlimited source of the strength of the people that has the capacity to solve the basic problems of society and nation. Thus restoration of dignity and respect for *lokavidya* emerges as a major task.

## Objectives

To carry forward the debate on *lokavidya* started by the first two Congresses to :

1. give shape to public activity for the restoration of dignity to *lokavidya*, and
2. bring forward the potential inherent in *lokavidya* for solution of problems facing the people and the nation.

## The Challenge

The question of dignity of *lokavidya* involves on the one hand the issue of culturally respectable and economically sound life for the communities in command of it and on the other the issues of justice, wellbeing and self-reliance in relation to the larger society and the nation. Since *lokavidya* is regional (*anchalika*) it requires regional autonomy for its sustenance and growth. It requires that markets be organised such as to promote the wellbeing of regions. This means that the relations between capital, resources and trade will have to be so organised under the local markets that the activities based on *lokavidya* receive just return and there is effective control on alien, vulgar, parasitic and consumerist life-styles. It is a huge challenge and to meet it will require that the hurdles in the path of *lokavidya* be removed. In the economic sphere these hurdles are in the form of one-sided policies regulating taxes, credit, market, raw material & infrastructure and in the legal sphere they are in the form of laws debarring a great variety of practices based on *lokavidya*. There are cultural and social obstacles as well. After years of subjugation today we witness slow but steady assertion and resurgence of artisanship forces in society. Economically outcasted professional communities are asserting in public domain. Their knowledge, skill and value is their capital. Challenge is to weave resurgent, integral and shared vision of society building on the strength of *lokavidya*.

The Varanasi Congress proposes to give shape to the constructive aspects of this challenge. Following focal themes are expected to impregnate all the activities of the Congress:

- Self-reliance and Globalisation
- Regions, Diversity and Autonomy
- Local Market
- Life-Styles and Energy

## Programme and participation

*Lokavidya* experts, those who take interest in and know a great deal about *lokavidya* and those who sympathise with *lokavidya* and see great possibilities associated with them are expected to contribute to the Congress. Peasants, artisans, advasi-s, women, shastri-s, scientists, social workers, educationists, thinkers and experts are expected to come together in this attempt to bring to the fore the potential inherent in *lokavidya* residing in regions and to identify those arrangements of things and men which are required for the reestablishment of the dignity of *lokavidya*.

The Congress will be mainly organised through the following events :

**1. Conference :** Seminars, conferences, debates and panel discussions on the subjects of agriculture, industry, medicine, forests, metal work, mud work, textile, food processing, civil construction, water management etc. Participation in conferences will be based on written articles and papers. Such articles and papers are expected to reach the Varanasi office by the end of April 1998.

**2. People's Conferences :** Public conferences of peasants, artisans, women and adivasis with the object of focussing attention on *lokavidya* as the basis of *lokashakti*. People from all the regions of the country shall participate in these conferences. To ensure this, delegations of participants will be organised in different regions. Those interested in organising such delegations may contact any regional office or the office in Varanasi.

**3. Local Market :** A regional market consisting of stalls with products of the local producers from different regions focussing attention on the need of a market where *lokavidya* fetches a just return. Artisans from all over the country are invited with their products to participate in this local market. Those interested may contact the Congress office nearest to them.

**4. Demonstration :** A series of demonstrations of metal work in command of the people away from the modern industry. Any one who has any information of such metal work and people doing it may kindly inform any one of the Congress offices immediately.

**5. Lokavidya Samvad :** The *lokavidya* stand point will be debated with various institutions of learning founded on different philosophies at Varanasi. Those interested in participating in this dialogue may contact the Varanasi office of the Congress or Director, PPST Foundation, Delhi.

### **Preparation**

As preparation to the Congress, seminars, conferences and meetings etc. will be organised in different regions along with a campaign to contact the potential participants. All interested can help us in this and play an active role to ensure participation in different events of the Congress.

Putting together of regional delegations to the Congress is the central task of the preparatory activity. All the participants of any region shall be organised into a delegation of that region. So these delegations will include everybody-social activists, artists, scientists, teachers, scholars of traditional sciences, different types of experts, peasants, artisans, women, and adivasis etc. This work will be done mainly by the regional offices of the Congress and by those who will specifically take up such responsibility. We invite people to come forward to assume such responsibilities.

Issues of *Lokavidya Samvad* will be brought out covering the philosophy, programme, organisation and preparation of the Congress. So articles are invited on related subjects which includes self-reliance, globalization, regional autonomy, local market, local energy resources, local industry, agriculture, water management, forests, metal work, health care, civil construction, textiles, food processing, *kisan vidya*, *nari vidya*, *adivasi vidya* and *karigar vidya* etc. These articles, discussions of preparation and reports of organisational activity shall go to constitute the issues of *Lokavidya Samvad*.

### **The Call**

We call upon all the individuals, groups, institutions and organisations interested in *lokavidya* to come forward to participate in this Varanasi Congress and play an active role in its preparation and the organisation of the events and financial contributions.

### **Financial Contribution**

The Varanasi Congress aspires for the financial contribution of all starting from the smallest contributions of the ordinary people to the contributions from the government and the businessmen. The burden of collecting the finances lies on the shoulders of friends supporting this enterprise. So we call upon all such friends to give detailed suggestions in this respect, contribute themselves and help in the collection of funds from different sources.

*Bank cheques or drafts may be sent in the name of:*

**Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi**

( 100% I.T. Exemption U/S 80G )

or

**Congress on Traditional Sciences and Technologies**

( 50% I.T. Exemption U/S 80G )

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