

Public Health of Ancient Sri Lankans in The Face of Epidemics

Panapitiya S.¹✉, Samarakoon K.²

Abstract

Today, the covid-19 epidemic is disabling all countries, creating various problems and challenging people's rights to life. It must be remembered that all countries worldwide have faced similar experiences in the past. This research is expected to show how the people of Sri Lanka in the past faced such epidemics and successfully solved them by providing solutions to them. The methodology used for this study is to analyze the facts obtained from the interviews with the senior community of Sri Lanka. Modern media attempts to portray the methods used to deal with these epidemic diseases as modern. However, this research aims to describe these methods as commonly used tactics by ancient peoples of Sri Lanka. Isolation of the house and village was used for this purpose, restriction of travel, restriction of interpersonal relations, hand washing, and wearing face masks were identified as popular methods used in the past. The *Paadiya Baduna* was used for hand and foot washing. The house is isolated by hanging *kohomba* (*Azadirachta indica*) branches in front of the entrance to the house. Prohibition of entering the village by hanging medicinal leaves and *gokkola*. Taking action to increase immunity by giving medicinal porridges and drinks to the infected. Communicating one's own needs to others by producing different sounds using voice was a great process that was used. This research has shown that doing old things in a new way is not a modern finding or a modern concept. In the past, people believed that plagues spread with intense sunshine. They identified diseases such as measles and chickenpox as epidemics. These were called "God's diseases". They called them Pattini diseases. In fact, the research concludes that the ancients successfully adapted to nature and maintained mental concentration for these diseases.

Keywords: *Isolated, pandemic, rituals, mental wellbeing, adapting*

¹ Department of Ethnomusicology, Faculty of Music, University of The Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka

² Department of Western Music, Faculty of Music, University of The Visual and Performing Arts, Sri Lanka

✉ Corresponding author. saman.p@vpa.ac.lk