

---

# Editorial

## Challenges Of A Global Invasion And Traditions In The Containment Of Viral Diseases

The survival of the human race has been at risk on many occasions throughout the last Millennium through the emergence of inhuman pathogenic invasions. The latest being the appearance of what has been referred to as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Corona virus 2 (SARS – CoV – 2).

Since its initial appearance in the Wuhan Province of China in late 2019, it has since then invaded over 200 countries across the globe causing in the wake demonic fright, and taking the lives of several millions of people.

Pathogenic virus invasions have come in various forms. Many surviving elders may recollect the emergence during the initial post World War 2 era, of four well known virulent and contagious pathogenic virus infections, which were popularly recognized by layman as deities illnesses. These were Small-pox, Measles, Chicken-pox and Mumps. Of these, Small-pox was an acute, and often a fatalistic contagious viral disease with symptoms of fever, and inflicting lesions or pustules, that usually left permanent scars on the body.

In the case of Measles, the infection by the virus was often marked by mild fever, which was the first stage of this disease. This was then followed by the outcropping of a skin rash on the third to fifth day of the disease, which was the culminating phase of the infection.

On the other hand Chickenpox, which was less virulent, and very much confined to the younger generation, had symptoms of fever and rash of small blisters. The fourth contagious disease Mumps was an infectious viral disease that caused a swelling of the parotid salivary gland in the face. Two features that were observed in this particular disease were,

first the fact that this swelling appeared in the front of the ear and filled the wedge between the angle of the mandible and the mastoid process. The second feature was that, the inflammation of the gland was associated with great oedema and tenderness.

Treatment regimes for most of these viral diseases were not as rigorous as could be expected. Nevertheless, because of the contagious nature of these diseases total isolation and bed rest were the measures that helped the induction of immunity to fight back the virus.

However, in the case of Mumps, one may recollect that it was customary to apply externally around the affected mandible, a paste prepared from Red Sandalwood (*Sinh. Rath-bandhun*), which had provided relief and facilitated early recovery.

Tradition also has it that maintaining a veil of secrecy about the outbreak and prevalence of these virulent infectious deities' diseases in the neighborhood, and total bed rest were features in the management of the disease.

Finally, in addition, village folk, in a show of cooperative participation in the redress of these victims of “demonic” diseases, invoke the blessings of the tutelary gods with various offerings, as well as organizing performances of customary rituals (*Charithbra-varithbra*), while also at the sane time conducting special religious ceremonies such *Pujās* as well as the chanting of '*Seth Pirith*'. Among other traditions are the reciting of specially formulated ritualistic verses (*Yāthikā*), performing secretive spiritual prescriptions (*Kem* and *Manthra*), and reciting incantations (*Yāthikā*) seeking the blessings of tutelary deities (*Kannalavu-yāthikā*) for the protection and early riddance of these virus diseases.

**M. Asoka T. De Silva**