

Rajarata Chronic Kidney Disease: Unidentified etiology



By Nalin de Silva

We at the Chinthana Parshadaya became interested in the Rajarata chronic kidney disease unidentified etiology (RCKDunet) about four years ago, as we were worried about the patients and also due to the spread of the disease in the so-called border villages in the Rajarata. Of course, today thanks to the President and the heroic soldiers there are no 'border villages' though the NGO and other pundits who used these terms still occupy the centre of the 'intellectual landscape' thanks to the hegemony of the western Christian modernity. These pseudo intellectuals who are nothing but imitators who have not produced a single new concept or a theory have to be sent to the boundary from the centre, and I can see that the writing is on the wall even if they do not realise it.

The western medicine men in the Chinthana Parshadaya first suspected cynobacteria but it was found that it was not present in sufficient concentrations. The Chinthana Parshadaya did not have sufficient funds nor laboratory facilities to continue with the work and we had to be mere observers or rather receivers of information from those who were actively involved with the "research" connected with RCKDunet. However, recently some of us promoted ourselves from being passive observers to active "researchers" and formed a group in the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya under my leadership. Though I am not a western biologist, a western medicine man, not even a western Mathematician or a Physicist, by virtue of being the Dean of the Faculty I have been invited to be the leader of the group. There are western Biologists, Chemists, western medical practitioners (from other universities) and a western Mathematician (for Mathematical modelling) in the group and we have already obtained some preliminary results that are not in agreement with results already published by others.

As the terms unidentified etiology imply the causes of the RCKDunet are unknown to western medicine. Though diabetic patients and those with high blood pressure could end up as chronic kidney patients, Rajarata patients do not suffer from these ailments in general. The unidentified causes have to be identified, and we as a group are not merely

interested in the identification of the causes alone as we would like to find a cure for this chronic kidney disease from which our innocent poor people in the Rajarata or Vev Bandi Rajya suffer. Our work is multidisciplinary in the true sense of the word and we will come out with more details as we proceed. At present it would be sufficient to say that we are somewhat different from other groups involved in western science.

Our approach is holistic, and we do not separate the sources of water from the environment and confine ourselves to an analysis of water found in wells and Vevas in the region. The Vevas of the Sinhala are not mere tanks or reservoirs and we have a good knowledge of the Vevas from writings of late Mr. Mudiyanse Tennakone in the Divaina about twenty five years ago. Since then we have accumulated knowledge from other sources, Oh! Not from western sources, and we know the involvement of the Nagas in the construction of the Vevas. The Naga symbols found at the Vevas not only indicate the fact that they are associated with water and that they protect the Vevas but also the fact that they were involved in the construction of these massive structures.

The late Mr. Mudiyanse Tennakone had taught us about vev thavulla, poshana pradesha, kulu Vevas and their functions, nivun (or twin) Vevas etc. Recently we came to know of the trees that were planted in a systematic way to make sure that the water in the veva or the well was purified. Remnants of this habit could be found in planting of kumbuk trees near wells.

Our group did not find *Microcystis*, a cyanobacterial species in well water in the areas affected by RCKDunet. However, we have found traces of Green Algae, and according to the western Botanists in the group there is a possibility for these algae to be identified as blue green algae mentioned by some others. We also do not have evidence to conclude that cadmium is the cause of the RCKDunet.

Then where do our findings lead us after the preliminary investigation. As I mentioned above ours is a holistic exercise and we are of the opinion that Arsenic and Mercury found in water and soil in Rajarata where the RCKDunet has been spread and kivula (hardness) of water are two of the main causes of the disease. Then there is another important factor that is now lacking in Rajarata. These are the trees that were planted systematically in the surrounding areas of the vevas. The roots of these trees were involved as a kind of filters and the removal of these trees during the last few decades have caused havoc as far as the chemical constituents found in the water.

The western practitioners in our group have found similarities between arsenic poisoned patients in other parts of the world and the Rajarata Chronic Kidney patients. The Rajarata patients are different from kidney patients found in rest of the country and our group is investigating into these similarities and dissimilarities. We are also startled by the large numbers of arsenic poisoned patients in Bangladesh and would like to find out the role of the genes in spreading the RCKDunet in Rajarata.

However, we are mainly interested in finding a cure and our team has considered some plants and their fruits and nuts in this connection. We are guided by what I would call the Borupana Thesis, I first heard from the late Borupana Vedamahaththaya of Rathmalana. I know that some pundits will object to it citing the so-called scientific methods and research methodologies, but all that I know is that there is no scientific method as such and genuine research cannot be conducted according to so called methodologies. The uninitiated western scientists may read 'Against Method' by Feyarabend as a first step.

In any event Borupana Thesis mentions that a cure for any disease can be found from the area in which the disease is spread. Recent discovery by western scientists that there are life forms based on Arsenic is a good example in this connection. The Rasa (mercury) Vedakama found among the Sinhalas and others also points in the same direction. However, we are not proposing to introduce Arsenic or Mercury as a cure but to have a cure based on certain plants that could be grown in the area. The soil that has the potential to destroy life also has the ability to maintain life is the maxim behind the Borupana Thesis. Finally I would definitely say that RCKDunet is a result of introduction of western Christian modernity that has changed the life patterns of the Rajarata farmers.