

THE FOLK CONCEPT OF MALARIA IN SRI LANKA : SOME
EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED PURANA VILLAGE IN THE
EASTERN PART OF THE ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT

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Using ethnographic data from several purana villages in the eastern part of the Anuradhapura district, this paper attempts to find out the extent to which the local peasants identify malaria as a separate illness prior to the coming of western medicine; how they accounted for it in terms of prevailing notions of disease causations and folk remedies used and their possible effect on malaria control. It also examines the folk conception of malaria relate to modern efforts to control disease through the application of chemical insecticides and administration of modern anti-malarials.

On the basis of the symptoms attributed to Kōlegāya and ideas about its periodicity. This paper argues that Kōlegāya is the term used for malaria in the local area prior to the coming of western medicine. The etymology of the term Kōlegāya relates to wider cultural beliefs. Certain herbal preparations, based on substances extracted from plants available in the local area, were used as a cure for malaria (Silva 1987).

Further, it is evident that the indigenous local conception of Kōlaqāya and the practices associated with it, remained somewhat distinct from what appears to have been the dominant Ayurvedic interpretation of and treatment for malaria. Finally the relevance of folk beliefs and practices for modern efforts to control malaria examined.