

A Study of Psychotherapy through Ethical Communication Methods of Nursing Mothers' Donations by Buddhist Religious in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The worship of the goddess Paththini 1, who is considered as the patron goddess of fertility and health, and the almsgiving associated with Nursing mothers called *Kiri-amm?warungè d?naya* (or Milk mothers' alms-giving) was a blessed offering of Sri Lankan society based on Buddhist and Hindu religious communities and folk beliefs. Sinhalese Buddhist believe that the goddess Paththini, who took refuge in Tisarana², helps those who come to her, thereby aspiring to acquire a masculine self for her. Thus, the devotees who perform this puja with "milk" (milk treatments in rituals) to seek the blessings of Goddess Paththini, who wish to become a Buddha, expect good health and prosperity from it. Sinhalese Buddhist pray to goddess Paththini and seek protection from mental anxiety, cure diseases and relieve troubles; some people also give alms to nursing mothers to seek the blessings of goddess Paththini. One of the main treatment methods used here is psycho-acting / primary forms of therapy. This psychological performance by explaining the meaning of Prayer, so called *Yatika* can be recognized as a dramatic or theatrical therapy. The use of sound, voice control, intonation and rhythm are also used in the psychological therapy of the person. This is simply a positive treatment or positive mental attitude is created in the minds of those who seek God's help.

Keywords: Goddess Paththini, Kiri-amm?warungè d?naya, folk beliefs in Sri Lanka, ethical communication, psychotherapy

INTRODUCTION

The person who lived in the past inherited a very busy life because they went beyond their simple lifestyle and moved on to a complex lifestyle, relying on globalization. A person's unfulfilled ambitions drove him to an endless struggle for life. consequently, person inherited an extremely physically oppressive lifestyle. The main reason for this was experiencing the mental discomfort due to an unsatisfactory life struggle. According to the famous psychologist James A. Williams, 60% of the major physical illnesses that people experience are caused by mental discomfort. They believe that if the mind is healthy, then the tendency to develop physical illnesses are very low. Therefore, achieving comprehensive mental health is one of the greatest challenges for a modern individual.

According to the interpretations of famous psychologists, Robert Lifton, Jacques Lacan and Margaret Mailer, human beings gradually suffer from mental discomfort due to constant exposure to various diseases, enemy threats, loss of children, as well as unfavorable conditions in life and career. As a result, people suffer from accidents ranging from minor mental illnesses to loss of life. These are called anxiety states in psychology.

Since ancient times, the nation's rural residents have been influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism. They

have undertaken several studies on mental illnesses and received therapy utilizing rituals (“pudapooja”) and different behavioral techniques. It is a blessed offering based on Buddhist and Hindu religious customs and folk beliefs, which were related with the worship of Goddess Paththini and the almsgiving of nursing mothers. According to Hindu tradition, Paththini is the incarnation of goddess Parvati. According to Hindu tradition, a woman named Kovalan or Kannagi, who resided in India, city of Mathura, (now it is western Uttar Pradesh state, Northern India) with her husband Palanga is revered in a similar way. According to Sinhalese tradition, she is Paththini, who will become the future Buddha. The Sinhalese Buddhist believe that Mother Paththini will assist anyone who approach to her and believe that the goddess Paththini, who has found refuge in Tisarana, help people, in exchange for her desire to realize a male personality so she can become the next Buddha.

Thus, the devotees who perform this puja with “milk” to seek the blessings of Goddess Paththini, who wish to become a Buddha, expect good health and prosperity from it. Sinhalese Buddhists pray to goddess Paththini to protect her from mental anxiety, cure illnesses and to solve problems, and some people also give alms to nursing mothers to seek the blessings of goddess Paththini. This study was carried out based on the assumption that treatment for mental illnesses and diseases is done through the ethical communication methods of nursing mothers’ charity, and the purpose of this study was to study the psychological treatment methods used to eliminate mental illnesses through the ethical methods of nursing mothers’ charity. For this study Tripitaka and Paththini Creed were used as primary sources and the “Paththini Maniyo Book” and “Kiri Amma Danaya” written by Nilantha Kumara Dhanasekara and the book of “Paththini Deviyo” written by Rev. Hissella Dharmarathana were used as secondary sources. Media interviews, books and articles were used as tertiary sources.

The primary source for this study was used “The cult of the goddess Paththini by Professor obeysekare. Obeysekare’s book explores various aspects of the Paththini cult, including its historical origins, its connection to regional and local beliefs, and its transformation from a village goddess to a figure of broader religious importance. The author also analyzes the rituals, myths and social dynamics associated with the worship of Paththini, shedding light on how this cult has shaped the cultural and religious landscape of Sri Lanka.

A reviewed article from above book, “Cult and Culture: Paththini and traditional religion in Buddhist Sri Lanka was written by John C. Holt, “The cult of goddess Paththini at a time of pandemic: Gammaduwa as a strategy of supernatural protection, article written by Premakumara de Silva, also used as primary sources.

DISCUSSION

The almsgiving of nursing mothers is a method of sacrifice that has been rooted in the society over time. One of the main treatment methods used here is psycho-acting. During the praying of prayers (Yatika) by the main nursing mother, mental performances are performed for the people who need blessings or so called “Athuraya” (the person who need blessings are mentioned in the Yatika poems sung during the Kiri Amma Danaya). Usually, they select the eldest and experienced woman as the main or head of the nursing mother among the team. Psychiatrists usually use conservation effects to therapy the mentally ill, psychiatric patients. In particular, solutions such as non-resistance, projections, attractions, reactions, displacement etc. are among them. But Sigmund Freud has indicated that free association can be used as a psychotherapeutic treatment if a condition such as anxiety occurs through such preservation methods. Allowing free association or self-expression is quite difficult to do in practice. Performing a devil dance (thovilaya), opening a sacrifice or conducting traditional ritual ‘Gammaduwa’ ceremony are quite difficult and expensive to do in practice. In such a case, theater therapy can be called as a psychotherapeutic method that can be carried out to some extent or successfully. This psychological performance by explaining the meaning of Yatika can be recognized as a dramatic therapy. There the nursing mother uses both hands and eyes to

better explain the meaning of each prayer (Yatika) poem. It is a case of using non-verbal communication to strengthen verbal communication. Mano Rangana Chikitsana (psychotherapy) can be explained with the following poems which are sung during the charity of the nursing mothers.



Figure 1 – The main nursing mother praying Yatika (Hewawisenthi, P.2021. Sunday Observer, <https://www.sundayobserver.lk/>).

A time when diseases are scary

At the time of litigations and troubles

At a time when job security is diminishing

It is not the fault of the nursing mother, son.

In this case, while singing this poems the patient's condition is getting very serious, and the patient's condition is also getting very serious. When the last verse reads, "It is not the fault of the nursing mother, son", the head of the nursing mother is anxious to draw the attention of Athuraya to herself through performances mixed with gestures. There, she tries to provide service recipients with a social transaction in real and fictional time using dramatic structures. The leader of the nursing mother works to make people understand the power and glory of Goddess Paththini based on the moods created through that. It is important for her to be able to maintain a successful bond, eye contact between her and the client (Athuraya) on a regular basis. However, it is usually not as powerful as the hypnotic treatments that are usually performed at bali thovilaya (devil dance) or etc. The reason for that is the nature of this peaceful ritual. Specially bali thovilaya or devil dance performs to make peace sacrifices for different reasons, like diseases, demonic effects are mainly subject to conduct thovilaya. The main person who conducts those sacrifices is known as Yakadura. This bali thovilaya is performed for 18 diseases, in other words to treat 18 illnesses. The devil dance features 18 different styles of dresses. Masks will be worn at each event. The performances called Dolos Pali cures the mental deformity of the athuraya by creating humor, horror and fear in the performances" (Divaina newspaper, 2014). While conducting such devil dance, the client or athuraya use to cover with a white cloth, dance performed by selecting the relevant mask for the disease or illness. Dances performed by lighting torches with fire, drumming, as well as poetry singing can also be seen here.

The Goddess Paththini prays for Buddhahood with seven decades

Goddess looks at the world out of worship mode

Goddess is looking at the tablets given by kind hearted

Paththini goddess come over the flowered bed. (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25)

The first three verses of this are sung only by the head of the nursing mother, and the last verse is sung by all together people from Sabaragamuwa district, in Sri Lanka. This creates a certain monotony, a ritual atmosphere in the house. It is said that some kind of sound offering is expected for the inviting to the Goddess Paththini. Then the head of nursing mother invites the goddess Paththini in to the house, on to ritual worshiped table by using following ritual speech.

1. “Siddha Maduramala goddess Paththini, who works and resides in the world by developing the wills of the creatures of the world with infinite compassion, listen to our prayer with your goddess ears and look at it with your goddess eyes” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).
2. “Since Siddha Paththini Divyangana descended in this world seven times under the name Sat Paththini and having descended twelve times also with the name Twelve Paththini, who works and resides famously, who cares for you with the true spirit, we are here to worship you goddess Paththini, to pray for you to fulfill all their wishes” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).



Figure 2 – The main nursing invites goddess Paththini to appreciate their hard work (Hewawisenth, P .2021. Sunday Observer, <https://www.sundayobserver.lk/>).

The sound prayers of the above-mentioned prayer carry the nature of a deity in the house or like character of a temple. It gives us a sense of a deva Yatika performed by a person who performs rituals in a temple. The head of the nursing mother ties a red shawl around the body and takes a small bell in her hand and starts the Yatika by ringing it. In addition to all this head of nursing mother blowing the jaws can be seen in the Kiri Amma danaya held in some areas of Rathnapura district in Sri Lanka. It is a therapeutic medical procedure that is performed out using sound. Yaticas especially performed using sound can achieve good mental development or any positive change in the existing confusion can be expected. The beautiful voice, voice control, intonation and rhythm are also used in the psychological therapy of the individual. The blessing

poetry (seth kavi) chants recited during the charity of the nursing mothers also have a powerful sound therapy that can have a positive effect on the individual's moods. Image therapy and art therapy are also used here.

“The goddess Paththini..... After receiving your help and protection, I invited all the Gods who did not invited before and who allowed my nursing mothers to pray for this house until the light of day... Mother Patthini's help and protection to bless this house and all those nursing mothers. Welcoming goddess Paththini to bless again and again to all who participated this ritual, wish you good health and long life” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).

“These two children who are trying to overcome life beyond here say that they will give as much charity as possible to others who seeking help always, they say, they will cross over here and return to the motherland and do alms work for you. Mother of God, do not let these children suffer any illness, sorrow, trouble or conflict. If there is a fault between the eyes, the mouth, and the witchcraft, the harm or malefice, the bad spell, and any jinx or curse, if there are any those faults, let them all be diverted and protect the future affairs of the children and protect this family's property and estates” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).

“May God bring peace to all of this family. May God, bless you welcoming goddess Paththini to bless again. wish you good health and long life, I entrust you with these seven milk pots to bring peace and good” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).

“May the triple gems help everyone. Buddha dhamma and Sanga... May the fourfold God pray from the all sides”(The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).

“Here it is to express the grief to goddess. Paththini. This allows the mind to get some kind of relief at a time when it needs help. They expect Goddess Paththini, who possessed great power and capabilities, can will help them. It is a mentally developed strength” (The main nursing mother, associated with the worship of Goddess Paththini, Public Communication, 2023.01.25).

Charity of nursing mothers is simply a creative process. Image therapy and art therapy used there are related to each other. Art therapy begins from the moment when the date of the nursing mother's charity foundation is set. Starting from the appointed day, it is customary to use a “milk pillar” in front of the house to cross the way to the house. Some people refer to a milk pillar shown here as a milk branch. A branch cut from a milky tree is known as a milk branch. Since the installation of this milk column, the residents have to get rid of the sewage. Non-verbal communication is done by crossing the path of the house using a milk branch. In order to get rid of certain situations that are identified as kili (bad spells) in Sinhalese culture, the way to home is crossed with a milk branch.

There are 05 types of idols in Sinhalese culture. Those are listed below:

1. Vadum Killa (a woman delivered a baby)
2. Kotahalu Killa (in woman's start her menstrual periods)
3. Osap Killa (in woman's menstrual periods)
4. Magul killa (after someone got married)
5. Marana killa (after somebody death)

According to this, they expect a ban on the participation to this function of people caught with these 05

types of ticks /bad spells (killa). Applying a milk branch is a feature that can be seen in Sabaragamuwa province. In the Sabaragamuwa province, a milk pole or a milk branch is used in the alms of nursing mothers, but in some provinces, a string tied with gok (young coconut leaves) is used for that purpose. This can be noticed as a simple art therapy. It is able to provide some mental strength to the clients. This ensures that the client is furthermore protected from those five types of kilis. In addition, art therapy is usually used in psychotherapy to provide mental relaxation to those who have suffered trauma or various physical disabilities. Residents are encouraged to realize that their home and households are safe and secure from pests and to be careful not to get caught by any pests. Through that, they feel that they are ready for charity. It is a kind of mental therapy.



Figure 3 – The preparation a flower couch decorated with gok leaves is the main art therapy in Kiri Amma D?naya (Hewawisenth, P.2021.Sunday Observer, <https://www.sundayobserver.lk/>).

A beautiful image of Goddess Paththini is placed in the flower couch where image wise treatment is done along with art therapy. Especially by looking at the disciplined image of Goddess Paththini, it is possible to suppress the impulse in the mind and to settle the mind. Creative arrangement of flower beds using flowers, oil, incense sticks and lamps etc. can be seen in the charity of the nursing mothers.

Collective treatment methods are also done through Kiri Amma donation (nursing mother's almsgiving). This group treatment basically begins with the nursing mothers gathering together and blessing the house with Seth Kavi. From that time, collective treatment is carried out by all nursing mothers working together. Athuraya gets the blessings of all the seven women there. Athuraya is the one who falls to the Seth Shanti, or the candidate who needs the service. As well as in other rituals in the almsgiving of nursing mothers, the one who propitiates Sethkavi and the treatments is called Athuraya.

In order to get rid of the fear of disease of the victims of diseases such as smallpox and measles, which are especially known as the diseases of the gods, lighted lamps touched from head to toe are extinguished with milk. This can be identified as a kind of polite communication method. This communicates all types of debugging non-verbally.

There are also donations of nursing mothers, which are done with the aim of providing Seth Shanthiya (mental treatment) to patients with incurable conditions. There, intense mental healing is generated in the mind of that person through the singing of poems (seth kavi). It is believed that this intense mental healing can develop into mental strength and overcome physical weaknesses. Yatika, especially sung as seth kavi, can also be introduced as a stimulant to awaken mental energy. It also calms individual impulses. Sound and

rhythm are important here and the divinities contained in these poems have the ability to awaken the individual's emotional energy. The positivity of these Seth poems permeates the individual's mind and guides the individual positively and strong mindset.

Another important ritual that comes from the charity of nursing mothers is the act of extinguishing lit lampshades by placing them in a container of fresh milk. First, the leading nursing mother takes a screen of a lighted lamp and rotates it three times around the Athuraya and then extinguishes it by putting it in a bowl of fresh milk.



Figure 4 – The group treatment with the nursing mothers gathering together and blessing the new born baby with Seth Kavi. (Gayashan,S. 2016,Shutterstock, <https://www.shutterstock.com/>)

This is expected to protect the residents from destructive behaviors like witchcraft or black magic on the part of the enemy and other people in the house. Since ancient times, there were those who practiced witchcraft to take revenge on the enemy and when they could not bear the progress of another person. By cutting any witchcraft done in this way, a belief of safety is confirmed in the mind, and thus the lampshades are extinguished in fresh milk. It means that all kinds of evils and sufferings faced by the patient are extinguished. This instills a strong confidence in the clients and also has a great effect on the relief of mental illnesses.

SUMMARY

As a conclusion we can discuss that the belief in Goddess Paththini is fundamental. The belief that Goddess Paththini protects and provides protection in people affects this mental therapy. In cases where medical treatment fails to cure certain ailments, people turn to God Mother Paththini. It is in such cases that one is tempted to seek help from an invisible God. Also, those who believe in evil eyes, evil spirits, etc. are naturally tempted to seek help from a benevolent God in order to be protected from them. Especially regarding deities like God gambhara and Mother Kali, people believe that they are very tough deities. However, due to the widespread belief among people that Lord Paththini is a goddess who helps people very kindly, her devotees expect help from the charity of nursing mothers.

According to the facts we discussed, the almsgiving of nursing mothers is held to perform the promises to the god or to seek the help of Goddess Paththini. This is simply a positive treatment on the mental condition of the people seeking the help of Goddess Paththini. The mental therapy is done under several methods. Examples include psychodrama, sound therapy, image therapy, art therapy, group therapy, etc. Through

these treatment methods, the mental thinking of the devotees who are in a weak mental state can be brought to a positive state. That state is not a strong mental catharsis of the kind that is done in Bali, devil dance (thovilaya), etc. It is a subtle yet positive mental therapy based on a strong belief in Goddess Paththini.

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FOOT NOTES

1. Paththini (Sinhala: පත්තිනි දෙවියෝ, 'Paththini Deviyō', Tamil: கண்ணகி அம்மன், lit. 'Kaṇṇaki Am'man', Hindi: पत्तिनी, lit. 'Devi Kannaki'), is considered a guardian deity of Sri Lanka in Sri Lankan Buddhism and Sinhalese folklore. She is also worshipped by Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus by the name of Kannaki Amman [1].
2. In Buddhism, refuge or taking refuge refers to a religious practice, which often includes a prayer or recitation performed at the beginning of the day or of a practice session. Since the period of Early Buddhism until present time, all Theravada and mainstream Mahayana schools only take refuge in the Three Jewels (also known as the Triple Gem or Three Refuges, Pali: ti-ratana or ratana-ttaya; Sanskrit: tri-ratna or ratna-traya) which are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha [2].