

THE MARAA-IPADDIMA RITUAL DRAMA IN SRI LANKA

Iranga Samindani Weerakkody [ඉරංගා සමින්දනී වීරක්කොඩි] ¹

Abstract

This article aims to study the ethnomusicological characteristics/expressions of a ritual drama in Sri Lanka that has lacked comprehensive research conducted about it so far; the *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) ritual drama. This ritual drama is performed in reverence to the Goddess *Pattini*, who holds a special place in Sri Lankan culture and society for personal and social well-being such as fertility, health, and protection. The study employs a qualitative research method using both primary and secondary sources. The data has been collected through field observations, structured and semi-structured interviews, case study analysis, and literature reviewing. Study outcomes show that the ethnomusicological aspects of the ritual drama are expressed through *kavi* (poetic verses) sung while performing drama, traditional musical instruments, costumes, dance, and harmony. The study helped to understand the ethnomusicological expression of ritual drama performed, and it is also evident that the musical expressions performed in the ritual drama also work as a treatment in the collective healing of people (catharsis).

Keywords

Ethnomusicology, Group therapy, *Maraa-Ipaddima*, *Pattini* cult, Ritual Drama.

INTRODUCTION

Goddess *Pattini* is a well-renowned deity worshipped by the masses in Sri Lanka, revered for her divine ability to eradicate pandemics, diseases, and to bring prosperity. There is a subculture built around *Pattini* reverence among the folks using different rituals and practices. Several shrines also have been constructed around the country for the worshipping of the deity. The existing studies of *Pattini* have not been comprehensively studied with the ethnomusicological aspect of the ritual drama, *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection). Therefore, the study focuses on *Pattini* rituals and the music, melody, composition, instruments, casting, and performances attached to the folk drama, which mainly act on two folklores of “*Pattini*.” The following are some research questions to be asked:

1. What are the elements and nature of the ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) of folklore *Pattini*?
2. What are the Ethnomusicological characteristics expressed in the *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) ritual drama?

Taking these questions as a point of departure, this paper derives the objectives as follows:

1. Understanding ethnomusicological perspectives expressed in the ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection).
2. Knowledge dissemination and preservation of an intangible cultural heritage of Sri Lankan culture.

¹ Director, C. De S. Kulatillake Archival and Research Unit, Faculty of Music, University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, Sri Lanka. More information can be obtained by contacting through email: iranga.w@vpa.ac.lk.

REVIEW OF AVAILABLE LITERATURE

“The Cult of the Goddess *Pattini*” by Gananath Obeysekara (1984) is a primary source that analyses the rituals form around *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection). Obeysekara describes how the *Maraa-Ipaddima* ritual drama is performed. The book also details the poetic verses and their interpretations of the ritual drama (ibid, 243-253). It cites that the *Maraa-Ipaddima* was performed in Matara and Rabaliya in 1956 (ibid, 29).

Sarachchandra’s “*Sinhala Gami Natakaya*” (Sinhalese Folk Drama) also identifies *Maraa-Ipaddima*. The author provides a basic understanding of the rituals performed in the drama as well as includes a few songs of the ritual drama (Sarachchandra,1999: 68-72). The book contains a description of *Maraa-Ipaddima* written by Obeysekara, which had been sent to be published in the 1st volume of the magazine called “*Javanika*” (Sarachchandra,1999: 69).

According to legends described in daily sayings, it seems well-known that rice, the main staple food of Sri Lanka, was invented by the goddess *Pattini*. She is assumingly considered the goddess of prosperity. The legend states the story of cultivating rice and giving alms within seven hours after harvesting rice. Another source reveals that there are seven expressions of *Pattini* that comprise of *Paalanga Pattini*, *Thenda Pattini*, *Orupaali Pattini*, *Gini Pattini*, *Amba Pattini*, *Siri Pattini*, and *Mal Pattini*, all of which depend on the tale of her birth (Amarasekara, 2007:36-37; Rathnayaka, 2013). Alternative tales suggest that the seven expressions of *Pattini* classified based on the birth are such as from fire, wind, mango fruit, tears of the cobra, *Nuga* (Banyan) leaves, *Demata* flowers, and water (Amarasekara, 2007: 33).

There is a different story telling about the birth of the said deity. Epics such as *Cilapatikaram*, *Palaga Halla*, and *Pattini Halla* might have a compelling influence on these stories. The goddess *Pattini* is considered as a symbol of faith, loyalty, and extreme devotion to her spouse irrespective of his disloyal behaviour. Worshipping the Goddess *Pattini* is considered to have started in the reign of King Gajabha II (225-136 BC; Obeysekara, 1984). Literature suggests that Indian stories have impacted the further establishment of a *Pattini* devotion² in Sri Lanka. *Cilappatikaram*, a Tamil epic written by the poet Ilango Adigal, is the primary source that details the inception of goddess *Pattini*. The meaning of *Cilappatikaram* stands for the story of the Anklet. According to the epic, the main female leads of the poetry are *Kannagi*, eulogized as a great woman who later became the goddess *Pattini* (Amarasekara, 2007: 17).

Rituals worshipping the goddess *Pattini* can be seen in upcountry dancing, low-country dancing, and *Sabaragamuwa* dancing traditions of Sri Lanka. It can also be discovered that these rituals are also practiced in low-country folk dramas performed through dance. There are rituals related to worshipping deity *Pattini* that can be seen in performing *Shanthikarma* and folk games such as *Olinda Keliya* with the purpose of obtaining prosperity (Weerakkody, 2015).

The poetic verses of the lament of *Pattini* are sung in a slow tempo while performing the folk drama. Both Obeysekara and Sarachchandra admit that a similar performance takes place in Sinhala folk dramas that depict grief or lamenting which could have been influenced by the performances of *Pattini* lamentation in “*Maraa-Ipaddima*” (Killing and Resurrection). However, existing literature has not studied the ethnomusicology aspect performed in “*Maraa-Ipaddima*.” However, it is noted that studies of a musicological aspect (music/melody, composing of *kavi* (poetic verses), musical instruments, casting, and costumes) used in *Pattini* ritual dramas lack a systematic exploration in the existing studies. This research aims to address these gaps.

² It has been observed that parallel to Aryans that may have established their power in Northern India, people originating from Tamil speaking lines started to establish themselves in the southern region (south to the Vindya-mountain range), to develop the area socially and economically. There were three kingdoms named *Soli*, *Pandi*, and *Chola (Kerala)* in the southern region. Northern culture and their worship practices of deities, too, spread later in the southern region. Brahmins of the Northern region also have practised their Hindu culture in the southern region. Hence, Tamils have been able to protect their native cultural practices. The *Pattini* worship practice assumingly begins with the Tamil lineages.

APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Allan P. Merriam was at the forefront of those who developed a theoretical framework for the systemic study of ethnomusicology. He views music as a part of the specific culture (Merriam, 1964:113). In his book “The Anthropology of Music,” the author states that "Music is the product of human behaviour shaped by the people's values, attitudes and beliefs, belong to a distinct culture" (Merriam, 1964:33). The theory presented by Merriam has been partly applied to this study. The following represents the Merriam theory:

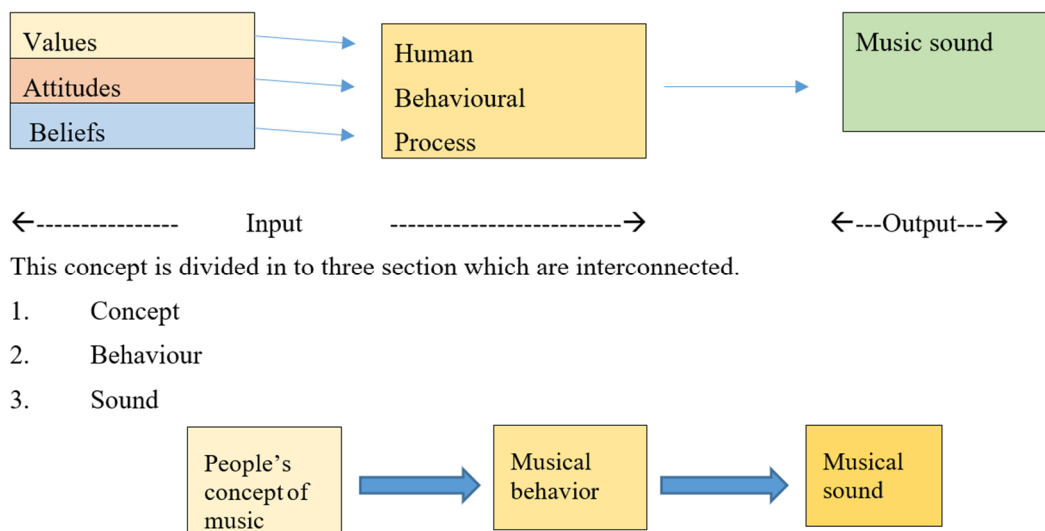


Figure 1: Simplified scheme of philosophical assumptions used in this article (scheme by the author).

According to the above illustration, people’s attitudes on music shapes musical behaviour, and this leads to musical sound. This means that the musical sound of music is a product of human behaviour and all three aspects are interlinked. Alan P. Merriam has presented a structure to study ethnomusicology, but it is a bit outdated with regards to deeply rooted behaviorism and cultural dependencies that were often criticized for their ahistorical explanations.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was done mainly using the case study method, structured and semistructured interviews, audiovisual methods, literature review, and field observations. Review of literature on the existing knowledge regarding the practice of *Abhichara* (rituals) in the folk drama *Pattini* in different contexts, approaches used were referred to identify the contextual and methodological gaps in studying of *Pattini* devotion and practices/performances interlinked with *Pattini* reverence in Sri Lanka. Literature review of various primary, secondary, and electronic sources also provides the context to the study.

Structured interviews were conducted with *Kapu Mahathwaru*, who are the leading priests of the shrines established to worship the god/goddess and are called *devalaya* and traditional dancers and members of two separate families performing the ritual drama of *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection), which has been passed down through various generations in Sri Lanka.

The study is conducted based on two geographical areas as per the sampling requirements. The two study areas are as follows:

1. *Galkanda Pattini Devalaya*
(*Minuwangoda* Divisional Secretariat–*Gampaha* District)
2. *Doonagaha Pattini Devalaya*
(*Divulapitiya* Divisional Secretariat–*Gampaha* District)

The knowledge system of the *Maraa-Ipaddima* rituals belonged to a few generations of artists as currently in use. The rituals were performed by a few artists who were well-trained disciples of the *Raigama* dance tradition. Two *devala* that have traditionally been practising this specific *Pattini* devotion were chosen. Marasinghe Gunarathna is one of the traditional artists who has worked and is attached to several *devala*. Following is his generational tree.

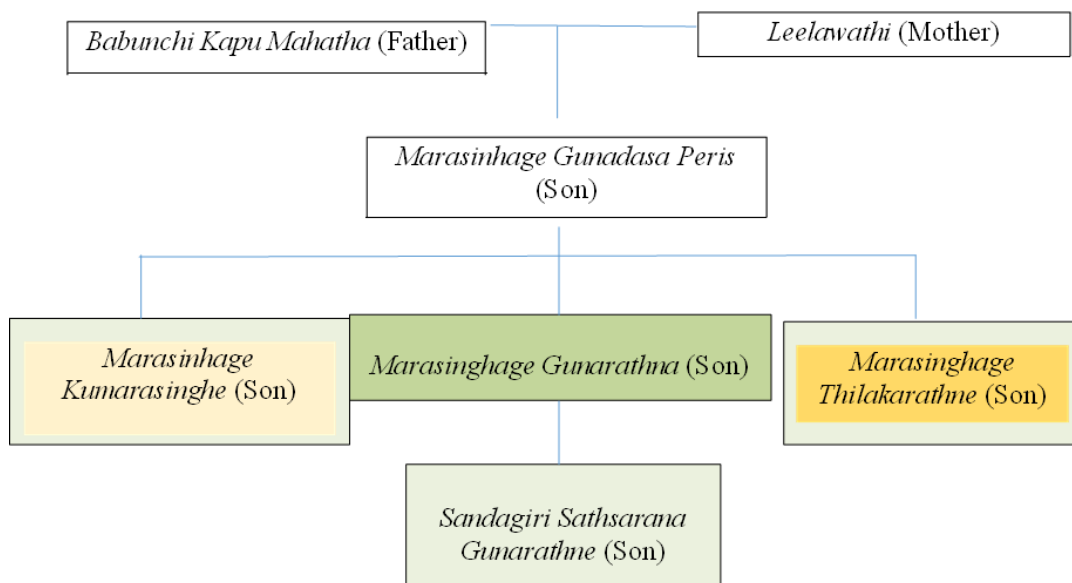


Figure 2: Generational tree of Marasinghe Gunarathna (scheme by the author).

The third generation of those who perform *Maraa-Ipaddima* is represented by Marasinghe Gunarathna. His two brothers also have been supported to perform the drama. Presently, Sandagiri Sathsara, son of Gunarathna, performs the *Maraa-Ipaddima*. This dance that is devoted to goddess *Pattini* was the only one protected and kept alive to the present day, solely because of the dedication and artistic capacities which has been given to the younger generation by the older generations of the same family.

Apart from the Gunarathna family, rituals related to *Maraa-Ipaddima* are also performed in the *Galkanda devalaya*. Janith Adhikari (*Kapuwa*/lead priest of a *devalaya*) performs as *Pattini* in this *Pattini* ritual drama at this *devalaya*. He is a university graduate and works as an executive in a private sector company as well while belonging to a traditional *Kapu* (*Devala* priest) generation (Adhikari and Weerakkody, 2016).

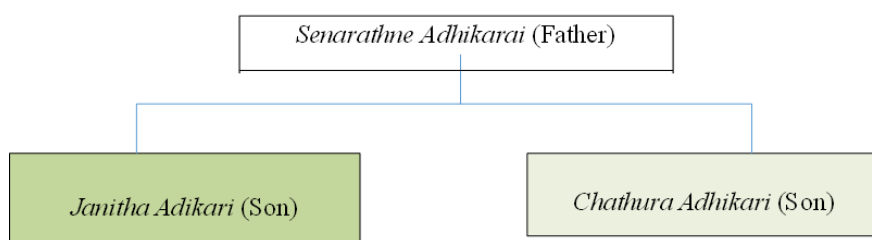


Figure 3: Generational tree of Senarathne Adhikarai (scheme by the author).

Unstructured interviews were conducted with devotees who visited the *devalaya* (temple) and the spectators who joined to watch the ritual drama performance at random. Data acquired from direct interactions with the interviewees was used for the discussion. The study uses participation observation to observe the dance's sacraments performed and dramatic movements in the *Gammadu Shanthikarma* (dance). Observations were done by observing the dance in the two selected *devalaya*. Mainly, dance and rituals practised in *Gammadu* were recorded as audiovisual support for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is observed that there are various *Shanthikarma* (ritual dramas performed with the objective of healing) rehearsed in upcountry, *Sabaragamu*, and low-country dancing traditions to portray the devotion towards the gods and to portray devils and ghosts (*Devi*, *Yaksha*, and *Raksha*). The beliefs, rituals, and legends entwined with goddess *Pattini* can be observed similarly in every regional tradition, irrespective of the geography.

According to the field observation, several procedures were observed in the first part of the drama performance. They include rituals of *Abarana Wedammaweema* (bringing forth the divine ornaments ceremonially), *milla kapeema* (A fire-trampling ritual involving the cutting of a *milla* tree to be used as fuel for the fire), *Thel wedammaweema* (bringing forth the sacred oil), *Halan wedammaweema* (bringing forth the divine Anklet), *Paththini Pada Karadu Nateema* (dance reflecting the devotion to *Pattini*), and *Yahan Kavi*³ (singing poetic verses expecting the goddess *Pattini*'s presence before the beginning of the ritual drama). These poetic verses were sung for the presence of several gods and goddess, including *Vishnu*, *Kataragama*, *Saman*, *Pattini*, *Dadimunda*, *Devol*, and *Gambara*. It was followed up by performances of *Devol Eliya/Kala Pandam Eli Malawa*, *Pandam Paliya*, *Theme Neranama* (dance using the traditional lighting). The second half begins with the legend of the birth of *Pattini* as a drama called *Amba Vidamana* (shooting the mango), which details the birth of *Pattini*. The next was the performing of *Mara-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection). The chief priest of the *devalaya* or the leader of traditional folk dancers comes to the theatre of *Gammaduwa* disguised as *Pattini*. This section of *Pattini* which comes in the epic, was not commonly seen in every *Gammadu Shanthikarma* in the present day. The two folklores connected to the birth of *Pattini* (*Amba Vidamana*) and the *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) were identified in the field research. These two stories also have been cited in a few sources that was found in the literature review as well.

Gammaduwa is a traditional folk drama that reflects the rituals performed in worshipping the goddess *Pattini*. It includes a performance of two folk tales of *Pattini*. The shooting of the Mango (*Amba Vidamana*) is one of the two folklores of goddess *Pattini*. The performance of similar folklore is observed during the field research. Following are the two folklores connected to *Pattini* deity discovered from both literature and the field visits.

EXAMPLE 1: AMBHA VIDAMANA (SHOOTING THE MANGO)

Tales of *Pattini* deities are usually performed in dramas. *Gammaduwa* (a dance ritual) is one of the rituals performed in worshipping the deity. It includes a performance of two legends of *Pattini*. The shooting of Mango (*Ambha Vidamana*) is one of the two (Sarachchandra, 1999). *Sinhala Gami Natakaya* describes it as follows. This was similarly recognized during the research in the field. The story reveals the following:

A ripe mango fruit was seen in a mango tree at the garden of King “*Pandhi*,” which was shining in gold and attracted many because of its precious shape. The gardener decided to gift the mango to the king hoping to receive valuable gifts in return. He attempted to pick this mango several times and failed and was scared. Then he decided to inform the king about the enchanted mango. So the king visited the garden with his ministers to see the enchanted mango. The people who came with the king also tried to pluck the mango and failed. So they tried to cut the mango tree, but when they used their axes, the axes turned back. The king commanded the archers to shoot the mango, but they also failed. God *Sakra*, disguised as an elder, declared the ability to pluck the mango. When the god *Sakra* shot the mango, it fell from the tree, making the king look up and lose the vision of one eye because of the milk from the stem of the mango. Scared, the king placed the mango in a boat and left it to sail in the

³ Field observations.

river of “Kaveri.” The mango which sailed in the river was found by a merchant prince called *Manahara* and his wife who were bathing in the river. They decided to keep the mango in their castle. After some time, God *Sakra* visited the couple disguised as a beggar saying that he was looking for a mango. When the merchant prince and his wife checked the mango, they found a gorgeous baby princess inside and named her “*Pattini*.”⁴

EXAMPLE 2: MARA-IPADDIMA (KILLING AND RESURRECTION)

Following is the second story related to *Mara-Ipaddima*, which is cited in the literature and was also found during the current field research.

Kannagi was married to a merchant prince, *Palaga/Kovalan*. He was charmed by an actress called *Ma Devi/Madhawi* and spent all his wealth on her. Later, he was disappointed and returned to *Kannagi* again. Then, they both moved to the city called *Madurai*. They were thinking of restarting their lives there. *Palaga* thought of selling *Kannagi*'s anklet to get some money and met a goldsmith. At that time, the queen's anklet was stolen, and royal forces searched for the lost anklet of the queen. It was described that the goldsmith was carrying hatred towards *Palaga* from their previous births. So, he handed him to the royal forces, and *Palaga* was taken to the King. Although *Palaga* denied stealing the queen's anklet, King *Pandhi* ordered to execute him. Meanwhile, *Kannagi*, searching for *Palaga* got to know from the King's two children that he was killed under a Neem tree. Her emotions of grief and anger seeing her spouse's death is expressed in the drama. She revives her husband from death by her determination and devotion towards him. Finally, she destroyed the city of *Madurai* and later became the goddess *Pattini*.

CASTING

The main character of *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) is *Pattini*, and is usually performed by a man disguised as *Pattini*, as women were denied from performing as *Pattini*. Therefore, the rituals depicting *Pattini* can be seen performed by masquerading men. *Kovalan/Prince Palaga* is another main character in this drama where all performers of the drama are restricted to a men-only cast (Gunarathne and Weerakkody, 2018).



Figure 4: An artist performs as *Pattini* at the *Doonagaha Devalaya*. Photograph by the author, 9 November, 2016.

⁴ Field Observation *Ambha Vidamana* (Shooting of the mango).

It was observed that the costumes of *Kovalan* consist of a white *Sarong* and white vest. However, he was taken to be persecuted not by the King *Pandhi* according to the legend. This was performed differently in the ritual drama where *Maruwa* (a devil) takes *Kovalan*. *Maruwa* is conceptualized by the imaginary character of *Yaksha* who is seen in *Shanthikarma* (traditional ritual drama) and beliefs of people. The character is enacted in a way to generate an emotion of fear among the spectators.



Figure 5: A scene showing *Pattini*, *Kovalan*, and the two supporting drummers at the *Doonagaha Devalaya*. (Photograph by the author on 9 November 2016).



Figures 6 and 7: The scene where *Kovalan* enters to the *Gammaduwa* at the *Doonagaha Devalaya* [Photograph]. The entrance of the *Maruwa* to the *Gammaduwa* and the death of *Kovalan* at his hands (Photographs by the author on 9 November 2016).

It was observed in the field research that the spectators were invited to enact the roles of children and *Kali*. It is important to note that the *Maraa-Ipaddima* folk drama is a theatrical drama enacted by singing poetic versus according to the music. Use of dialogues are nonexistent in the ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima*, which is a unique characteristic of the drama. Dramas informed through poetic verses were also called as theatrical drama, opera, and so on in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world. Yet, *Maraa-Ipaddima* ritual drama was not identified as one of them, although it has similar characteristics.



Figures 8 and 9: A scene depicting *Pattini* searching for her husband. [Photograph]. Sri Palitha, G. A. C. Here *Pattini* selects children from the spectating audience and asks them whether they have seen her husband (Photographs by the author on 9 November 2016).

It was observed in the field that the ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima* provides a form of catharsis to emotions of fear and sympathy and acts as a treatment which contributes to psychological wellbeing of the spectators.

USE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Gammadu Shanthikarma gets several drummer's services, and the main drum used is a low-country drum. It could be observed that *Maraa-Ipaddima* begins and afterwards the *Yadini* and *Kannalaw* who were requesting the gods and goddesses verbally, or at least, expecting their presence, permission, and security in order to proceed with the healing through Goddess *Pattini* that takes place inside the *Devalaya*. At the inception, sometimes there were six to eight drummers who used to perform in the first part of the ritual drama. It can be seen that drums such as the *Thammattama* and *Davula* are used here in worshipping and performing rituals towards gods and goddess. Use of "Sak" in rituals related to God and Goddess comes from ancient history which is also seen in contemporary practices.

Two drummers were observed serving for the ritual drama at the *Doonagaha Devalaya* and a single drummer served for the ritual drama at the *Galkanda Devalaya*. Drummers were also supposed to sing *Kavi* (poetic verses) as they played their drums. Poems sung by the person who is performing as *Pattini* is followed by the drummers for the second time in certain occasions. Drummers provide a unique contribution to the ritual drama and this was also highlighted in poetic verses sung to enunciate the lamenting of *Pattini*.

Playing of drum and its melody cased to demonstrate the climax of the drama through their melodies. It was also observed that the melody varied from poem to poem



Figure 10: The two drummers at the *Doonagaha Devalaya* playing low-country drums. (Photograph by the author on 9 November 2016).

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPOSING POEMS

Although there were *Kannalaw* (poems/prose of weep or grief), *Sthrothra*, or *sanna*, *Gatha* (Chants) or *Kavi* (prose), used in *Gammadu Shanthi Karama* based on *Pattini* devotion, it was noticed in the field observation that *Kavi* or the poetic verses is used for *Mara Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) ritual drama. The following three verses indicates the grief and suffering of *Pattini* caused by the loss of her spouse and her attempt to revive him from death.

ජීව කඳුළු ඒය වචින්න
 සියොගතකඳුණුවේය නිතින්න
 බැරි ඉවසාගන්ට ඉතින්න
 ගරුතර මගෙ හිමි නැගි ටින්න (මාත්‍රා 12)

(Reveals of grief of Goddess *Pattini* who was in tears as she could not bear the death of *Kovalan* and pleads for his revival.)

ඉහළින් ගහ දය ඉහළට බෙදුනේ
 පහළින් ගහ දය පහළට බෙදුනේ
 දෙගොඩ තලා මැද සුදු වැල් ජපුණේ
 එනැතින් පත්තින් සඳ වඩිමින්නේ (මාත්‍රා 16)

(Depicts an appreciation of the environment creating a moment for entrance of Goddess *Pattini*.)

බෙල්ලේ ඉස්සු පෙත් ගෝමර ලැමද සිට
 කෙල්ලේ බලාපත් රුසිරු කොඳ රහට
 වැල්ලේ බොරාළු ගත ගත රත් නිද ඔබට
 මැල්ලේ නොවී හිමි නැගිටන්න හනිකට (මාත්‍රා 18)

(Depicts an appreciation of the beauty of Goddess *Pattini* and requesting *Kovalan* to revive from his death).

MELODY

It is noticeable that the composing of the poetic stanza and musical sound is informed in three ways. There are several poetic stanzas sung in a single pitch. The above poetic stanzas are presented with a mix of acting performance, music performance, and dance performance.

මල් මද අනුරාග මන්ත්
 මම දක් වීද ආම් රචිත්
 නුඹ ඉන්නේ මෙවැල් ජිවිත්
 රන්වන් මගෙ හිමි නැගිටිත්

Here, one line is sung by the person acting as *Pattini*, whereas the next line is sung by the person providing the accompaniment with drums. In certain instances, the same line is repeated again. It was observed that the same line was used melodically for the whole verse. The range of this verse is from Bb to Eb.



Figure 11a: The notation to melody 01, which was heard at both the *Doonagaha* and the *Galkanda Paththini Devalaya* (excerpt by the author).

ඉහළින් ගඟ දය ඉහළට බෙදුනේ
 පහළින් ගඟ දය පහළට බෙදුනේ
 දෙගොඩ නලා මැද සුදු වැල් ජිපුණේ
 එනැනින් පන්නිත් සඳ වඩිමින්නේ



Figure 11b: Notation 02. This melody too was heard at both the *Doonagaha* and the *Galkanda Paththini Devalaya* (transcription by the author).

Unlike earlier, here one line is sung by the person acting as *Pattini*, whereas the repetition of the same line is sung by the person providing the accompaniment with drums. It was observed that at times, the opposite of this was sung with the person acting for *Pattini* doing the repetition. This is sung *madum thani thitha kadinam laya* or an approximate 6/8.

එදා සළඹ අරගෙන නුඹ මේ පුරට
 ඔහු බලා ක්මය් හිමියන් ඔබට
 ආදා සිට නින්ද නැත රූ තුන් යමට
 බාධා නැතුව හිමි නැගිටින්න හනිකට

The melody starts in a descending order of notes, and a specialty here is the use of a D⁴ note in contrast to the usual D^b used in the previous melodies. In Eastern music notations, the previous melodies employed the use of the scale B^b-C-D^b-E^b for the range was seen, whereas here it switches to a C-D⁴-E^b. As in earlier melodies however, it is the same pattern of notes that are used for all the lines in the specific *kaviya*. These lines are sung alternatively by the person portraying *Pattini* and the drum player. Considering the supporting notations, we can discover the following characteristics which are unique to the discussed music.

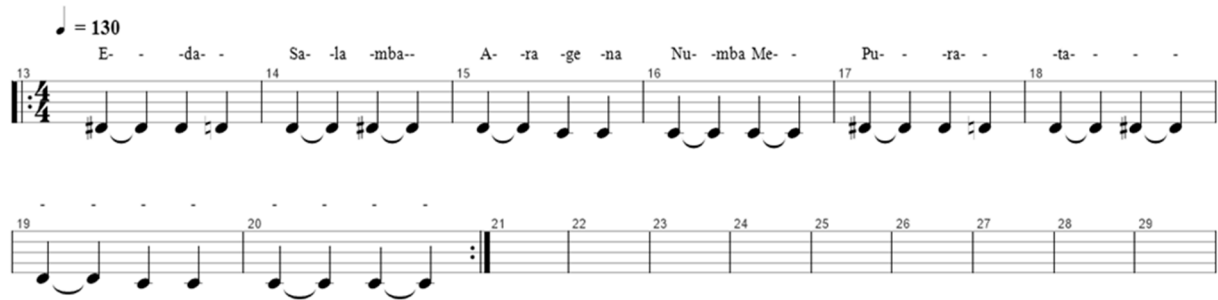


Figure 11c: The notations to melody 03, which was heard at the *Doonagaha Pathhini Devalaya* (transcription by the author).



Figure 11d: A scene from the *Galkanda Devalaya* where *Pattini* is lamenting the loss of her husband. (Photograph by the author on October 9, 2016).



Figure 12 and 13: Depiction of *Pattini* lamenting her husband's death seen at the *Doonagaha Devalaya*. (Photos by courtesy of Sri Palitha, G. A. C. on 9 November 2016).

The poems along with the music being performed, describe the lamenting of a devoted wife who lost her husband. The poetic verses sung reflected the grief, anger, and pain imparted in the mind of *Pattini*. It is not rare in a society that lamenting is used to manage grief. Therefore, *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) can be seen as an opportunity to advance grief and reduce the pain of someone who had already lost or someone who will experience such losses. It is observed in the field observation that the spectators were trying to engage with the drama as people had experienced grief and sorrow at various times.



Figures 14 a-d: The spectators of this ritual drama, and their expressions of grief in response to the drama of *Pattini* that is played out at the *Galkanda Devalaya*. (Photographs by the author on 9 October 2016).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS



Figure 15 a and b: The environment, or the open theater *Maduwa* of the *Doonagaha* (left) and *Galkanda* (right) *Devala*. (Photographs by the author on 9 October and 9 November 2016).

The creative process involved in ritual drama expressing one's self artistically with its creativity in preparing the environment helps people resolve issues, develop and manage their behaviours and feelings, reduce stress, and improve self-esteem and awareness. One doesn't need to be talented or an artist to receive the benefits, and there are some professionals who can work with everyone to dive into the underlying messages communicated through art, which will aid in the healing process.

It was observed that decorations using young coconut leaves, flowers, and banana trunks was used to create a calming environment to the spectators. In the early days, the outdoor theatre was lighted with

“*Coppara*” (a dried coconut used to get the lights) which created a soothing lighting environment that helped the spectators to calm themselves. Unfortunately, the current practice of using high-resolution lights, seems not to be supporting the objective of performing ritual drama.

Buddhist literature reveals the emotion of lamenting/grief using women roles. *Jathaka Katha* such as queen *Mandhri Devi* in *Dharmabala Jathakaya*, and daughters *Krishnagina* and *Yasodara* in *Wessanthara Jathakaya*, *Sanda Kiduriya* (Mermaid) in *Sanda Kiduru Dha kawa* are some of the emotions of weeping revealed in Buddhist literature (Weerakkody, 2021). In addition, the expression of weep/ grief also can be found in Sinhala literature and “*Shanthi Karma*.” For example, the weeping of *Kuweni*, *Dasiya* in *Huniyam Kapilla*, also expresses emotions of lamenting/grief centralized around women (Ibid). These are examples that expressed women’s emotions. We can see that women lament over the loss and distancing from their loved ones. Lamenting is a medium of releasing the emotions of pain and suffering and is evident in society. Emotions of lamenting expressed in *Pattini* ritual drama is a unique cultural character as it is linked to the countenance of pain from death. We can identify several categories of tools that have been used to manage grief.

Traditional Methods

- Crying and lamenting

Workmanships linked to traditional physical engagement

- Dancing, Playing the drums, singing, chanting, knowing the text patterns

Performing religious rituals

- *Pooja* (offerings). *Kap Situweema*
- Poetry, drama, *Gok Sarasili* (decorations done using young coconut leaves and trunks of banana trees)

Performance of the ritual drama *Pattini* reflects the use of music by melodies generated through singing, playing, and dancing to heal people. Music is a treatment and a healing method practised and linked to various cultural events in Sri Lanka. Evidence of the practice of musicological treatment also not novel but can be found in the ancient history of Sri Lanka. They are mainly mirrored through folk drama, *Bali*, *Gammadu* (ritual drama) performed among the people of the country. Music is the most significant factor of the drama. Music acts as a powerful medium to connect with people who suffer from severe mental conditions where the gods and ghosts and any kind of black magic are involved. It was evident that the musicological treatments link better communication and balance the spectators' physical and mental conditions. Therefore, it is proven that the musicological aspect of ritual dramas acts as a medium of healing or treatment.

Current Sri Lankan society is living under alarming pressure, which has caused an increase in mental stress among people. It was identified in the studies that one among the many reasons for increased child abuse, rapes, criminal activities, addiction to alcohol and drugs is that people try to uncontrollably satisfy their never-ending desires and their impatience to achieve them. In such context, catharsis could be one of the instruments that can be applied as a treatment to the psychological issues of stress and depression which rise from the above discussed conditions. It is a well-recognized phenomenon that the current Sri Lankan society is primarily affected by environmental disasters such as droughts, floods, and landslides, which causes loss of loved ones and property. Furthermore, the questions of unemployment, changes in consumer patterns, and complex lifestyles cause stress among people. According to psychologists, these issues could also lead to severe mental problems if left untreated. Studies show that most of our health issues, such as headaches, rashes, and sometimes nonpandemic diseases such as diabetes, arise from stress. Therefore, it is believed that such diseases cannot be treated only by medications, but the treatment should focus on the patient's physical and mental well-being.

Emotions which arise from social depression and leading to social unrest can be relaxed through innocent folk dramas that help to liquidize the strong emotions of social oppositions.

Production of grief is a way of releasing emotions and revive emotions more satisfied. Therefore, this can be called a “Homeopathy Treatment (Suraweera 2001:54).

Sri Lankans have their traditional ways of coping with grief which are bound to their culture and religion. Rituals such as chanting and listening to *Pirith* as a collective, *Bodhi Puja*, *Perehara* are some methods used to release the emotions. Such methods are used to discharge emotions used in agricultural societies of Sri Lanka engaged in paddy cultivation. Performance of folk dramas such as *Sokari* and rituals *Gammadu Shanthi Karma* performed during New Year celebrations occur in Sri Lankan society. Masses were taught about tragedies through *Jathaka Katha* such as *Sanda Kiduru*, *Wessanthara*, *Dhahamsoda*, *Maname* that also act as a method of discharging emotions of grief among people, by purifying grief that leads to mental healing. Unfortunately, these cultural characteristics are not often being applied anymore in society and are not commonly seen in present-day life. However, the *Gammadu Yagaya* performed in *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) performed in the ritual drama, which helps to collectively heal people become more applicable, considering the mental issues faced by the people in present-day societies.

Maraa-Ipaddima performed today seems to be a single act of the ritual drama by forgetting its value of healing the people. Even the traditional dancers highlight the exhibiting value of the drama compared to the aspect of purification of the emotions. According to the observations in the field, it was noticed that the exhibitionist nature of today’s performance is impacted by the competition among *Pattini Devala* (Shrines worshipping the Goddess *Pattini*) operating in the country. It also seems that the purpose of drama performance is to attract more audience and, in the process, forget or provide less attention to the traditional rituals and customs. It is observed that the performing ritual drama in contemporary Sri Lanka has become a highly commercialized project. The aim of performance has shifted from healing to a profit-making production. This was proved in the field observation where the stage and the area are filled with high-resolution lights. Using high-resolution lights restrict creating the ideal environmental background that supports healing. These practices lead to deviation from the purpose of performing the ritual drama, which is to purify the emotions leading to healing. The changes and commercialization of performing the ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima* and other ritual dramas seem to compel people of contemporary Sri Lankan society to detach themselves from the value, acceptance, and taking part in these traditional ritual dramas.

CONCLUSION

The field research identified that the performance of ritual drama *Maraa-Ipaddima* (Killing and Resurrection) consists of rich characteristics. The study of the music applied poetic verses, singing, playing musical instruments (mainly the drums used), costumes, performance, casting, and creating an environment all add to this richness. Apart from the importance of the ritual drama to society, it was also observed in the field study that the performance of *Maraa-Ipaddima* contributes towards collective healing of people because of its ability to engage people, open up their grief and help to reconcile with their conflicted feelings. Some characteristics used in the ritual drama have had a significant contribution towards creating the necessary condition for the mental healing of the spectators.

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GLOSSARY

| Term | Definition (loosely based on translation) |
|-----------------|---|
| Abhichara | Traditional Sri Lankan ritualistic “white” magic. |
| Bali | A type of Sri Lankan ritual held to balance the effects of the planets according to astrology. |
| Bodhi Puja | A form of <i>Abhichara</i> used in Buddhist culture for millennia to signify the importance and reverence towards the Bo tree that gave shelter to Lord Buddha when he attained enlightenment. |
| Dasiya | Helper/servant. |
| Davula | A traditional Sri Lankan percussion instrument (drum/membranophon) prominently seen in Sabaragamuwa dancing traditions, played with a stick in one and the palm of the other hand. |
| Devalaya | A structure built to house statues and other paraphernalia used in ritualistic practices to worship various gods. The plural of the word is Devala. It can be seen that some Devala are built for one particular God, and some to house more than one God. |
| Devi | Goddess. |
| Gammadu | A type of ritualistic dance and drama. |
| Huniyam Kapilla | A low-country ritualistic dance held for devils. |
| Jathaka Katha | A Buddhist literary text that depicts Buddha’s previous births and life spent as the Bhodisatta. These are represented as stories (katha). |
| Kannalaw | A salutation to the Gods that is sung in a prose style or chanted in a verse style in rituals. |
| Kapu Mahathwaru | The priest in the <i>Devalaya</i> who coordinates the timings for the rituals according to auspicious times and performs chanting. At times, this position is passed down based on caste. |
| Kavi | A poem that usually consists of four lines. |
| Kuweni | The first wife of King Vijaya and a tribal leader in Sri Lanka. |
| Maraa-Ipaddima | Ritualistic drama that revolves around the idea of killing and resurrection (literal translation: Killing and Resurrecting). |
| Olinda Keliya | A game that is played by (mainly) females during the time of the New Year in Sri Lanka. |
| Pattini | The only Goddess in the Parthenon of Gods worshipped in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture and represents fertility. As Sri Lanka has an agriculture-based lifestyle and daily practice historically, Goddess <i>Pattini</i> plays a large role in Sri Lankan culture. |
| Perehara | A procession held by Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka as a form of worship. |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Pirith | Buddhist chanting form used to talk of the Dharma in the Sutra Pitaka of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. |
| Raksha | A type of devil worshipped in Sri Lanka. |
| Sabaragamuwa | A province of Sri Lanka where a traditional form of dancing and percussion had been passed down from for centuries. |
| Sanda Kiduriya | Mermaid. |
| Sarong | A lengthy fabric that is used by men (mainly) that is wrapped around the waist. |
| Shanthikarma | A ritual which can be seen in various parts of Sri Lanka with identifying factors according to the area which it is conducted in. Used in both white and black magic. |
| Sokari | Oldest drama tradition found in Sri Lanka which symbolizes the Goddess Pattini and is done to obtain her favor in crop and sexual fertility. |
| Thammattama | A traditional percussion instrument in Sri Lanka that is played with the use of two stick-like structures. Used greatly in the functions of temples and Devala alike. |
| Wessanthara Jathakaya | One of the more famous Jathaka Katha that signifies the fulfilment of the Dana Paramita by the Bhodisatta. |
| Yadini | A request to the Gods that is sung in a prose style in rituals. |
| Yaksha | A type of devil worshipped in Sri Lanka. |