

Traditional Healing Rituals in Tamil Nadu, South India

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KEY WORDS: Body. Traditional healing. Rituals. Music. Religion. Tamil Nadu.

ABSTRACT: Study of traditional healing practices is an important area in the discipline of folklore and anthropology. In traditional societies most of the bodily illnesses are related to supernatural power and several kinds of rituals, vows, and offerings are performed in order to heal the illness. This paper is an attempt to document some significant folk healing practices that are existent in Tamil Nadu. It tries to understand how the human body is culturally professed, purified, and healed through rituals in a particular cultural context.

INTRODUCTION

Healing practices and their study is remarkable in the Indian socio-cultural context because there is heterogeneity in medical beliefs and practices. Besides, the well-known and widespread systems such as Ayurveda, Allopathic, Unani, Homeopathy and Siddha, there are a number of traditional beliefs, rituals, customs and practices connected to the human body and diseases. The concepts of etiology of illness, methods of diagnosis and treatment, and ideas of prophylaxis, were developed and preserved as a traditional lore of every society and have had been orally transmitted from generation to generation. The body of beliefs and concepts which existed in a society with regard to the nature, origin and treatment of diseases, was found always integrated with other institutions and organizations of the society. Religious beliefs, moral codes, and social values have influenced the beliefs and practices of etiology of illness and treatment. Cultural patterns and religious beliefs, economy and morality, social values and medical beliefs are all found together to form the health culture of a society (Boban, '98).

In traditional societies, rituals play a vital role in the construction of human body. The social construction of the body differs from the medical

construction in so far as it positions the body in the center of human interaction. That is, the body is seen as the existential basis of human interaction within given social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions (Hall, '77). Robert Crawford ('84) described the human body as a cultural object. The human body is subject to social power structures and relations because it is shaped, almost configured, according to them (Shilling, '93). The human body is constantly being altered by natural and cultural processes. These alterations leave visible traces, which, in many societies, are associated with religious ideas, beliefs and forces. Rituals are centres on the body, and if we understand ritual we shall have to take the body seriously as a vehicle for religious experience. Ritual is more than merely symbolic action. It is hieratic. Almost all human activity is symbolic, even the most "rationally" pragmatic. However, ritual underlines and makes emphatic its symbolic intention. Ritual behavior is repetitive and consciously follows a model. Repetition, after all, is a natural way for the body to proclaim, enact, and experience the choice of true as opposed to false things and ways, and to dwell self-consciously in determinative model realities in the "holy." In ritual, people voluntarily submit to their bodily existence and assume very specific roles with highly patterned

rules — rules and roles that conform the self to all others who have embodied these typical roles in the past. To contact reality, in short, the conscious self must sacrifice its individual autonomy, its freedom in fantasy to “be” anything. Edmund Leach (’68) suggested that the term ‘ritual’ should be applied to all “culturally defined sets of behavior,” that is, to the symbolical dimension of human behavior as such, regardless of its explicit religious, social, or other content. For Leach, such behavior should be regarded as a form of social communication or code of information and analyzed in terms of its “grammar”. Ritual is treated as a cognitive category.

‘Ritual’ is those conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centered on cosmic structures and /or sacred presences. Verbal behavior such as chant, song and prayer are of course included in the category of bodily actions. Even more fundamentally, ritual is intentionally bodily engagement in the paradigmatic forms and relationships of reality. As such, ritual brings not only the body but also that body’s social and cultural identity to the encounter with the transcendental realm. By conforming to models or paradigms that refer to the primordial past and that can be shared by many people, ritual also enables each person to transcend the individual self, and thus it can link many people together into enduring and true forms of community. Rituals draw into itself every aspects of human life, and almost every discipline of the social sciences and humanities has something to say about it. The body is evidently more important in religious experience than is often thought (Eliade, ’87).

In traditional societies, whenever the body suffered from certain kind of illness or defects, they are always connected with supernatural powers and several rituals are performed in order to heal the body. Healing is a part of culture which is closely related to rural religious practices. A number of folk healing practices are existed in Tamil Nadu and these healing rituals are related to the folk religious practices of the region. Several vows, offerings, music and rituals are performed in order to cure their bodily diseases. The komarathadi or samiadi (shaman/priest) plays an important role in healing rituals and generally performs in sacred sites on allotted days such as

Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays, and also during the annual worshipping celebrations.

This paper is an attempt to document certain significant folk healing practices that exist in Tamil Nadu and tries to understand how the human body is culturally professed, purified and healed through rituals in a particular cultural context. Empirical data have been documented through fieldwork in the natural cultural context of ritual performance and the triangulation research methodology, i.e. observation, interaction and visual documentation have been followed.

SUBMISSION OF BODY AND WHIPPING IN PERIANDAVAR CULT

The festival of Periandavar, a male folk deity, is celebrated for fifteen days once in two years at Kulianoor village in Darmapuri district of Tamil Nadu, south India. The first ritual of the festival is *kall naatuthal*, i.e. posting a stem. For this, the villagers worship the deity and dig a small pit on the right side of the temple. Then, they take a lengthy branch of the *neem* tree, apply turmeric powder, vermilion, and sandal paste, and place a garland made of different flowers on that branch. The important persons of the village and the temple administrators join together and erect the branch of *neem* in that pit. This ritual is called *kaal naatuthal*. This signifies the inauguration of the festival.

From the day of *kaal naatuthal*, people in that village, especially those who are actively engaged in various ritual activities in the festival, give special attention to their body in order to purify them. They abstain from meat, have bath twice a day, and have conjugal continence. They do not wear footwear inside the village. All the core rituals of the celebration are performed during the last two days of the celebration. Rituals are performed at two places. One, at the temple situated in the center of the village and the other, in the paddy fields two miles east of the village. Both temples are temporarily erected during the celebration. At the beginning of the ritual, two deities made of clay are kept in the center of the village. A small shelter thatched with *neem* leaves is erected above the deities. The name of the deity is Periandavar. They apply sandal paste and vermilion on the deity. In front of the deity, they spread banana

leaf and upon it, coconut, bananas, betel leaves, vermilion, turmeric powder, and sacred ash are placed. By that time, people start gathering around the temporary shrine. Then two people come near the deity performing music with a *pambai* (percussion musical instrument). When they start performing the *pambai*, people join in clapping their hands joyfully. After the music one of them begins to sing a devotional song and the others repeat it. At that time, the men folk put their two fingers in their mouth and make a whistling voice in order to invoke the deity.

The shaman then brings two feet long swords and places them in front of the deity. He lights the camphor and waves the flame around the deity. During this, the male mediums among the crowd are possessed by the deity and dance vigorously. Each person picks up a sword kept in front of the deity and begins to beat it vigorously across their chest, first looking at the deity and later turning to the people. On completion of this, each male medium prostrates before the deity and receives the sacred ash from the priest and applies on their forehead and chest and become normal. When the last male medium begins to dance with the sword the noise of the crowd is very loud. He dances for a while and then run for a distance of nearly three kilometers. There in the midst of the field, he places the sword into the ground, and immediately a rope fence of two meters radius is put up in that place. Fifteen young men begin to dig a well on the spot marked by the male medium. The persons who dig the well go through the ritual prescriptions. They are forbidden from wearing footwear and eating meat. They must adhere to the practice of conjugal continence, and they cannot cut their hair. Even tools like spades, iron rods, buckets etc. used for digging are kept away from contact.

The young men who dig the well tie their mouths with a cloth to avoid polluting the place with their saliva. The digging begins at 10.30 pm. By around 4.30 am the water begins to ooze from the well. When people see the water springing forth they shout out in joy. The diggers came out of the well, bow in reverence before it, and covered the well with coconut leaves. If water is found soon it signifies more agricultural production for the ensuing years. If it is late, people believe there would be less agricultural production.



Figure 1: Terracotta horses- Votive offerings

The ritual of purification or driving away the evil spirit from body is held in the outskirts of the village on the 14th day of the festival. Music is performed vehemently and the shaman runs at a high speed to the place where devotees, who are waiting to purify their bodies, are present. Most of the devotees who take part in this ritual generally offer a horse made of terracotta as their fulfillment of vow. The shaman wears flower garlands around his neck and carries a terracotta horse on his shoulder. Two men on either side hold the horse from falling. At a specific place about two hundred women and few men lay down on the ground facing downwards towards the earth in order to submit and surrender their body and self. The shaman walks fast atop the men and women lying there. This is repeatedly done, and the walk becomes faster and faster. As he walks, some evil-possessed women begin to writhe and move. The shaman would then stamp harder on the possessed women. Once the shaman takes off his feet, the possessed women are pulled by a few men to a tamarind tree nearby. There they take a small bunch of their hair, and nail it to the



Figure 2: Whipping ritual

tree. They made three knots and clip off their hair. They believe that the evil spirits are cut off thus.

On completion of the ritual of “driving away the evil spirit” the ritual of “whipping” commences. Three young men whip the devotees who come forward with raised hands above their head. The young men beat them rapidly on their hands. Some women massage their hands unable to bear the pain. They believe that the evil or sin in them would be removed this way. Women are dominant in the purification rituals in terms of numbers. Traditionally, these purification rituals are also related with the “fertility” of the female body. It is believed by the women that by participating in these rituals they would be blessed with good health and fertility. Another important factor associated with women body is “menstruation.” Menstruation is traditionally considered as profane in Tamil societies. It is a traditional rule that women should not take part in any rituals during menstruation, or else they would be severely punished by the deity.

HEALING PRACTICES IN ST. ANTHONY’S CHURCH

St. Anthony’s church at Puliampatti village in Tuticorin district of southern Tamil Nadu is known for its miracles. Saint Anthony is popularly worshipped by large numbers of people irrespective of religion. There are two saints by the name of St. Anthony worshipped in Catholic Christianity. One is *Vanathu* Anthony and the other is *Pathuvai* Anthony. *Vanathu* Anthony was born in Egypt during the third century AD. *Vanathu* comes from the term “*vanam*” referring to ‘forest’ or ‘desert’. This saint spent most of his time in forests and deserts and performed miracles. Therefore he is prefixed with “*vanam*”. He is popularly worshipped in the northern region of Tamil Nadu. The other saint is *Pathuvai* Anthony, who was born at Lisbon city in Portugal on 15th August 1195. His real name was Ferdinand, and at the age of 15 years he joined St. Augustine congregation to learn theology. Afterwards at the age of 26 years he left St. Augustine congregation and joined another congregation. Because of his faith on *Vanathu* Anthony he changed his name to Anthony, and because he spent most of his life at Pathuva city in Italy, he came to be known as *Pathuvai* Anthony. During his lifetime he did several miracles and passed



Figure 3: St. Anthony’s Church

away on 13th June 1231. *Pathuvai* Anthony is worshipped at Puliampatti village.

Large numbers of devotees come to this church for worshipping St. Anthony and most of the devotees are non-Christians. Tuesday is the special day for worshipping St. Anthony and the annual festival is celebrated in the month of January. St. Anthony’s church is popularly known for healing and miracles. People believe that the evil possessed, mentally disordered and sick persons are cured by the power of St. Anthony. Large numbers of patients stay in the church premises, and there are separate rooms for the patients. Mentally disordered and evil possessed patients are tied with iron chains and kept in the rooms within the church premises. Many have stayed for months altogether, worshipping St. Anthony and performed several rituals, vows and offerings in order to get cured.



Figure 4: Rituals in Kodimaram

Kodimaram, the flag post erected in front of the church, plays a vital role in healing rituals. *Kodimaram* is believed to be powerful in driving away the evil spirits and in healing diseases. Prostration, touching and kissing the *kodimaram*, lighting camphor, candles and incense sticks are some of the rituals performed by the devotees in order to get healed. The evil possessed persons also dance vigorously near the *kodimaram*. Devotees offer small images of bodily parts like eyes, nose and legs that are made of silver or other metal to St. Anthony in order to cure the illness of that body part. Eye-images are offered if a devotee has some problem in his eyes; leg-images are offered if a devotee has some problem in his legs etc. This offering is locally known as *vuruvam koduthal*. As a fulfillment of vow, devotees also sacrifice lambs to St. Anthony. The sacrificed meat is cooked and served to all the devotees. This food is known as *asanam*. It is believed that *asanam* is sacred and has the power of healing diseases.

HEALING PRACTICES AT ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

St. Michael is worshipped by a large number of devotees at Rajavur village in Kanyakumari district in southern Tamil Nadu. Rajavur is situated fifteen kilometres away from Nagerkovil junction towards eastern direction. In this village, converts, of St. Francis Xavier during 15th century AD, are settled. During the 18th century, a small shrine was erected for St. Michael in this village and later this small shrine was developed into a big church. Opposite to this church a fifty feet high *kodimaram* is situated. On the right side of the church a shrine for St. Michael is situated. This shrine is locally known as *kurusadi*. St. Michael appears in a life-size statue in *kurusadi* holding a javelin-like weapon in his hands to kill the evil demon. He wears a crown on his head, feathers on his shoulders, and shoes on his legs. He appears like a soldier. This statue is set upon a platform and iron grills are fenced around it.

A large number of devotees sit in front of this shrine and worship. They touch the shrine and kiss it, kneel down and worship, walk thrice around the shrine and worship, and light candles and incense sticks. Most of the rituals performed by the people are centered on the *kodimaram* and the *kurusadi*.



Figure 5: St. Michael's shrine

This church is a separate parish in Nagerkovil diocese. Catholic priests administer the church. The catholic priests at this church perform regular masses. However Saturday is the special day for rituals. Thousands of devotees gather from various places of the state and from neighbouring Kerala. Generally a special worship service is held on Saturday at 11 pm in *kurusadi*. The devotees consider this Saturday mass to be powerful in heal the diseased. The annual celebration is celebrated for ten days during the month of May.

Devotees believe that the power of St. Michael will cure the evil possessed and the mentally disordered persons. Therefore large numbers of devotees bring their relatives who are possessed by the evil spirit and mentally disordered to the church. They stay there for days or months altogether, take regular bath in the sacred water available in the church, attend the worship service and apply the paste of *neem* leaves together with sacred salt that are available at the church. Persons who are severally affected by mental disease are tied with iron chains in the church premises. The church administration also appoints some doctors to check these patients.

On Saturday during the special mass at 11pm, a number of evil possessed persons danced vigorously around the *kodimaram* and in front of the *kurusadi*. The evil possessed run fast, jump, and hold their hands on the altar, and beat their head forcefully at the iron grills that are fenced around the shrine. This is continuously performed throughout night. It is believed that the *kurusadi* and *kodimaram* has the power to cure and drive away the evil spirit.



Figure 6: Mentally disordered person

The church administration keep large amount of salt and water near the shrine. Salt and water that are available in the church are considered sacred and it is believed that it heals the body. Most of the devotees carry this salt and water to their homes. Number of vows and offerings are performed by the devotees for fertility, to heal the diseases and to get more agricultural yields. As a fulfillment of vows, devotees generally offer flower garlands, gold and silver anklets, and small bodily images like eyes and legs made of silver.

DIVINATION AND HEALING IN SUDALAI CULT

Worshipping of *pey* or *bhuta* or demon occupies a significant place in the folk tradition of southern Tamil Nadu. No visitor to the region can fail to notice the numberless truncated, often shapeless, obelisks of brick or plastered mud, which are to be seen almost everywhere on the roadside, on waste grounds, cremation grounds, on mounds standing dry above the paddy fields, in the village lanes and even in the backyards of inhabited houses. Often these pyramids stand in groups or clusters of groups; they are placed as a rule on a pedestal cut into two or three steps. A ferocious human figure may be depicted in colours on one face of the pyramid. Sometimes, all faces are perfectly plain. These symbols are locally called *pudam*. They are called *pey kovil* (temple of devils). It is only an expert or Shaman who can decide what deity each *pudam* in a group represents. In some places, huge human structures with ferocious faces replace the *pudams* in the out skirts of the village and worshipped. These deities are believed to relish the sacrifice of animals and human blood, failing which they go around the world giving trouble. If not pleased, they inflict disease on men and cattle; they attack lonely women, especially if they are with child; night and midday are the worst times and the blackest days are Tuesday and Friday. The places in which demons are worshipped are known as *pey kovil* or temple of demons. Among all the demonic deities, Sudalai, a male deity is considered as a chief of all evil spirits. In Tamil literature, there are two meanings for the word Sudalai. One refers to the ground for the burning of corpses — a graveyard and the other refer to a deity whose sanctorum is generally situated near a graveyard.

The temple of Sudalai is considered powerful for divination and healing. Those who have suffered from illness, black magic and evil spirits generally go to Sudalai temple to get healed. Sudalai temple in Vijayanarayanam village in Tirunelveli region is known for healing. Devotees who are suffering from illness go to this temple and express their problems to the *komarathadi* – the shaman and request for remedies. Accordingly the *komarathadi* pray to the deity, get possessed and ask the deity that “this devotee from this particular place is suffering from this



Figure 7: Sudalai

particular illness. Kindly show the remedy to solve his illnesses”. After getting the divine reply, the *komarathadi* explains the cause and remedies for the illness. Sometimes the *komarathadi* asks the patient to come to the temple continuously on every Friday for five weeks or seven weeks and asks the devotee to bring coconuts, betel leaves, bananas, lemon fruit, a black cock, eggs and a pumpkin during the last visit. On the last day, the *komarathadi* takes the patient to the crematorium and performs rituals in order to cure the illness. In the crematorium, the devotee is asked to stand towards the east and the *komarathadi* shows the coconut, lime fruit and eggs around his face for three times and cuts it in to two pieces and throws it away. Then he takes the cock and shows it around his head three times, sacrifices it and throws it away. It is believed that the evil spirits, illness and the evil eyes will go away along with these things. It is also believed that the birds and animals will not eat the sacrificed cocks because it had the power of the evil spirit. In some temples the *komarathadi* slaps the patients with hands and gives blows on the heads in order to cure the illness. These healing practices are not common in all Sudalai temples. It differs from place to place. Generally in all the Sudalai temples they give sacred ash to cure the ill persons.

In some Sudalai temples female *komarathadi* also practice divination. In Sankarankovil village a female *komarathadi* practice divination with flowers. She is very popular in that region. During divination she spreads a skin of a deer on the floor and sits on it and prays. The devotees bring coconut, betel leaves,

bananas and a rope of jasmine flowers. The *komarathadi* performs divination by counting the flowers.

PAARVAI PARTHAL, A MAGICAL HEALING OF KAANIKARAR

Kaanikarar is one of the very few tribal communities of Tamil Nadu domiciled in the western Ghats of Tirunelveli district. The Kaanikarar settlement is about eighty kilometers away from Tirunelveli junction. The topography of this entire hill is known as *Pothikai*. The temples situated in *Pothikai* hill are known for its pilgrimage. People from various parts of Tamil Nadu pays regular pilgrimage visit to these places. In Pothikai hill, Mylar, Agasthiar Nagar, Servalar and Injikuzhi are the places where Kaanikarar lives. Each residential place of Kaanikarar is known as ‘Kaani *kudiiirupu*’. The total population of Kaanikarar in these regions is about one thousand. Earlier they were lived in the interior parts of the jungle. But after the colonial government they were asked to settle in these places. Kaanikarar are dark skinned and small in stature. They call their language as Proto Tamil, which seems to be mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. Their language is locally known as *Malampashai* i.e. language of the hills.

Kaanikarars traditionally practice a method of magical healing known as *parvai parthal*. Puvanentharan Kaani who resides in Mylar Kaani settlement is the only traditional medicinal practitioner of his kind among the Kaanikarar community. He is an expert in magical healing of snake and other

Figure 8: *Parvai Parthal*

poisonous bites. Patients from various Kaani settlements and also people from the plains get treatment from Puvantharan Kaani. He traditionally owns a magical stone named as *visha kal* i.e. poisonous stone. It is black in color and the dimension is bigger than a tamarind seed. He says that the stone is made from a mixture of secret herbs. It is kept in a small box along with some herb which is considered as food for that stone. It is believed that the stone has life and it eats the herb. This herb is known as '*Siva Mooligai*'. When a patient comes for treatment, Puvanantharan observes the spot of the poisonous bite in the body and identifies the nature of poison.

It is informed that there are four kinds of snakebites. They are *magadi*, *kalathri*, *kali* and *emathoothi*. After identifying the poison, he sits in front of the patient, worships his ancestors and holds a bunch of *mantha* leaves or *neem* leaves in his hand and shakes the leaves slowly in front of the patient's face. Simultaneously he says some *manthras* in a very low voice. Shaking of the leaves begins slowly and accelerates to high speed. It is performed for about five minutes. Then the *visha kal* is kept on the bitten place for some time. It is believed that the stone has the power to suck the poison and automatically it falls down after sucking the poison from the body. Then he gives a juice known as *kashayam* made from a mixture of herbs. The patient is asked to stay there for some more days if the affect of the poison is more. Separate diet is also prescribed to the patients.

Learning of medicine is spiritual in Kaanikarar society. It is informed that there are two types of schools to learn the medicine. One is *Maya Padipu* i.e magical learning. In *Maya Padipu* the person learns the knowledge of medicine through dream in his sleep. It is believed that their ancestors appear in dream and teaches the knowledge of medicine. Sometime the persons leave their home and stay in the jungle for months together to learn. During this type of learning they avoid salt in their food and stay away from family life. *Palliitu Padipu* is another kind of learning. Generally it happens in the Tamil month of Karthigai. A group of persons worship their ancestors and jump into the river. At that time their ancestors or their family deity select the suitable persons and teach the knowledge of medicine in the water. Every day they stay in the water for hours together and learn the

medicine. This will continue for about six months. Sometimes they leave their homes and stay in the forest for months together and learn medicine. These kinds of traditional learning systems do not exist now.

THE MUSICAL THERAPY, KODANGI

Kodangi is a small double-sided musical instrument that is performed in several rituals. The two sides of the instrument are circular in shape and covered with tender leather. The center portion of the instrument is narrow in shape. The two sides of the instrument are joined with threads at the center. The performer holds this around his neck with one hand and taps with the fingers of his other hand. *Kodangi* is performed by the men of Kambalathu Naicker community who worship Sakammal as a family deity. The performer who performs the musical instrument is also known as *kodangi*. The *kodangi* performance is also known as *kodangi paatu*, *vuduku paatu*, *peyviratu paatu* and *kuri paatu*. When the performance is performed to drive away the evil spirit, it is known as *peyviratu paatu* and when it is performed for divination it is known as *kuri paatu*. *Kodangi paatu* is performed to invoke the spirit of gods and goddesses and to drive away the evil spirits. *Kodangi paatu* is performed at the house of the *kodangi* performer. Persons who are affected by evil spirits or black magic, and who seek divination visits the *kodangi's* house on a Tuesday or Friday. By playing the musical instrument the *kodangi* worships all the deities and drives away the evil spirits. Apart from the musical instrument, the *kodangi* also whips and beats the evil possessed persons to drive away



Figure 9: *Kodangi*

the evil spirits. At the time of healing, if the *kodangi* is not able to drive away the evil spirit, it is believed that the evil spirit is very powerful and then he invites three other *kodangi* performers to perform together and drives away the evil spirit. The *kodangi* performer uses a small shell called *muthukuri* for divination. With the help of this *muthukuri* he tells the cause for the problems and remedies to cure. Generally the *kodangi* performer gets Rs.50 for divination and Rs. 200 for healing.

CONCLUSION

In traditional societies, healing practices cannot be considered independent; rather it is interdependent with other elements of culture. Every religion suggests performing certain kind of rituals, vows, offerings to the devotees in order to get rid of their physical illness and purify their body. In traditional societies people believe that the cause of illness is divine and it is believed that the body would be affected if they do anything against the wish of gods and goddesses. As a result people worship and celebrate an annual festival for the deities, invoke the spirit of the deity through several folk arts and offer food, sacrifice animals and perform several rituals in order to please the supernatural forces. It is believed that if the deities are pleased they will not cause illness to the people. People prevent themselves from the diseases by satisfying the supernatural forces.



Figure 10: Offering of cradles

The above described ethnographic notes on healing practices reflect that the folk healing practices are purely magico-religious. Generally there are no prescribed medicines to consume or ingest. It is the shaman and the sacred site that plays a vital role in healing. The shaman finds out the cause and remedy for the illness through divination and instructs the devotees to perform certain rituals in order to get rid of the problems. In Tamil folk culture, rituals like whipping, offering of cradles, fire pot, milk pot, lamps made of lime and flour, prostration, animal sacrifice, offering of foot wears, offering of small bodily images are performed in most of the folk religious practices in order to get rid of illness. Lamps made of flour and limes are generally offered to the goddess Mariamman in order to cure chicken pox. It is a traditional belief that the anger of the goddess Mariamman causes chicken pox. Therefore in order to cure chicken pox the devotees perform these rituals. Cradle is offered to the goddess Isakiamman in order to get fertility. Offering of old footwear to the deity Muthupattan in Tirunelveli region is also practiced in order to cure the illness of the legs.

Thus, it is seen that the cause and remedies for illness are not human but is divine in nature. From the above ethnographic descriptions it is clear that the human body is constantly purified, healed, and constructed through different rituals.

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