

Listen to Buddha's doctrine. The Dhamma is on my forehead; the Sangha is on my breast. Now on Vishnu's orders you [referring to the *yakkas*] will let me [speaking for Loku Manike] enter the palace.

The Buddha came to Mahayongana and controlled the *vas yakkas* [literally, evil-eye demons] even though they looked angrily at him. Lord Buddha spread his rays and all *yakkas* lost their powers. Vishnu's power is here. Saman's power is here. Nata's power is here. Kataragama's power is here [These are the four protective deities of Sri Lanka].

Yakkas now you have no choice, you must go.

The chief exorcist then beckoned Loku Manike to him. He placed an areca-nut cutter (*gereya*) on her forehead and let it drop to the ground. He examined it and then recited a *mantram* which was to return the curse to its originator. Thereafter, he cut 108 limes. Limes and the *gereya* are the food and tools recognized throughout Sri Lanka for cutting curses. In this sequence, there is a change in the metaphoric and symbolic content of the exorcism. Only items which are symbolic of virtue, purity, legendary heroes, and references to the Buddha and deities are presented. This paradigmatic set of culturally valued and potent symbols contrasts with the earlier paradigmatic set of symbolic elements associated with demons. In other words, the forces of good as understood by Sinhalese are being convoked.

#### Phase 5: Avamangalle (Funeral Time)

*Avamangalle* is literally translated as "death time." It opens with the chief exorcist laying down at the feet of Loku Manike and being covered by a white cloth, as if he was a corpse. Saffron string was placed in his hand and wound three times around the palace, the other end was given to Loku Manike. A *pidineya* was placed on his stomach and the audience, cued by the other exorcists, began to wail, "Oh beloved leader, when will we see you again?" This plaint was repeated for about ten minutes. Then the chief exorcist, lying prone, chanted as follows:

*Bille* (sacrificial body) is ready for all *yakkas*, come and take it. I belong to all *yakkas*, do not be stingy with this decaying body, eat my nerves and joints, eat my flesh and suck my blood. All of you must come and feed yourselves "now."

He repeated this basic chant a number of times. Thereafter a pumpkin was lain on his stomach and cut open with a machete by another exorcist. The *avamangalle* ended at 7 a.m. and the exorcists took a short tea break.

The *avamangalle* involved a number of symbolic transformations. Corpses are highly polluting and, thus, a favourite "food" of the demons. The

chief exorcist, as trickster, offered his own body as sacrificial "polluted" food. Saffron is a sacred, pure substance, serving to protect the chief exorcist, Loku Manike, and the palace. The purified string functions as a conduit between exorcist, arena, and patient, protecting and uniting them with its current of purity.

Concomitantly, other role transformations took place: the audience became co-conspirators with the exorcists in deceiving the *yakkas* while Loku Manike became a passive rather than active participant. These role transformations can be viewed as both metaphorical and therapeutic. They are metaphorical in the sense that both the chief exorcist and the audience engaged in a collective deception by adopting "fake" roles: the chief exorcist as corpse and the audience as the bereaved, Loku Manike as spectator. In a therapeutic sense, Loku Manike was given a moment to witness the exorcism and observe the "sacrifice" made in her behalf as well as the display of public support by the audience. Exorcists and audience are jointly participating in helping her get well.

#### Phase 6: Concluding Exorcistic Rites

At 7:30 a.m., the chief exorcist walked over to Loku Manike and beckoned her to stand. He then placed two bands made of branches over each of her shoulders so that they criss-crossed her chest and back. He recited some *mantrams* and then cut both bands.

He led her to the ring of seven flowers and while reciting *mantrams* he removed each of the flowers, concurrently saying that the *yakkas* were departing. With the removal of the last flower, the chief exorcist avowed that all the *yakkas* had now departed.

Loku Manike was then told to enter the palace. She had to crawl through the small and narrow entrance. Inside, she sat with her legs stretched out and the soles of her feet just outside the arched entrance. Her husband had been led around the back of the palace and sat beside her. A rice pounder was placed to the side of the palace entrance, and various fruits, nuts, and gourds were cut by the soles of Loku Manike's feet.

The chief exorcist then recited a *mantram* warning the *yakkas* never to enter Loku Manike's house again for she was now under the protection of the triple gem and Vesamuni, a deity placed in charge of the *yakkas* by Buddha.

After *mantrams* were recited the exorcists picked up machetes and with Loku Manike and