

## PARITTA OR PIRIT AS A HEALING POWER

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**P**irit – chanting is a very popular ritual among the Buddhists of Sri Lanka; no important function domestic or social, can be considered complete without this ritual. The essence of the *pirit* ceremony consists in the ritualistic chanting of certain Pali canon, collected and arranged in a particular order in the *Catubhāṇavārapāli*. It is, among the common people in Sri Lanka, known as “*Pirit – Pota*”. The content of the *Pirit* –chanting varies according to the situation for what it is to be chanted. Suppose, the *Aṅgulimāla sutta* is chanted only in an occasion of blessing to a pregnant. *Pirit* is very essential ritual in Sri Lanka which starts from the womb and continue up to the tomb and thereafter. Therefore, on one hand, *Pirit* chanting, is a ritual which can be compared with the *Samskāra* ritual in Hinduism, and on the other, it is very much popular as a healing power chanted to recover from illness.

*Pirit* is a collective term designating as set of protective chants or runes sanctioned by the Buddha for the use of both laymen and monks. As the term itself denotes the meaning safety, the ceremonial recital of it is believed to warding off all forms of *vipatti*, the even evil influence of planets, spirits, etc.

The use of protective spells against various dangers has been a common practice among the Indians from very early times. The Buddha himself is said to have adopted the practice on several occasions. The public recitation of the **Ratana Sutta** at Vesali is the best known instance. The **Khandha**, **Atanatiya**, and the **Metta Sutta** have received the sanction of Buddha himself.

We, therefore, hope to discuss, in this paper, how **Pirit** is used in Sri Lankan society as a healing power.