

**Dr. Malathi de Alwis**

KIRI AMMAWARUNGE DANE: THE FEEDING OF SEVEN MILK MOTHERS

**Abstract:**

The feeding of seven milk mothers is a simple but very meaningful ritual associated with the goddess Pattini that takes place within the domestic space, rather than at a devale or Buddhist temple. It is also one of the very few rituals that is conducted solely by women and gives women, albeit fertile women, pride of place.

This paper will focus on the special dish, kiriya, that is prepared solely for this ritual and often involves a gendered division of labour. It will also discuss the seven kinds of foods that are offered on these occasions and their symbolism. The paper will conclude with a brief discussion of the politicisation of this ritual by President Premadasa as well as President Rajapakse.

**Biography:**

Malathi de Alwis received her PhD in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago and is currently affiliated with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo. She has published widely on nationalism, humanitarianism, social movements, suffering, displacement, 'disappearance' and memorialization. She is the co-editor of *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (with Kumari Jayawardena, 1996), *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across War Zones* (with Wenona Giles et al, 2003) and *Tsunami in a Time of War: Aid, Activism and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka and Aceh* (with Eva-Lotta Hedman, 2009).  
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