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## *A Comparative Study of Therapeutic Rituals (Zaar, Parikhani) with Psychodrama*

VIDA KHANBABAEI, ELHAM ZOLFAGHARIAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study is a comparative study of therapeutic rituals (Zār, Parikhani) in different regions of Iran with psychodrama. These rituals are a therapeutic function for mental and psychological problems and have a long history which is done by using the library techniques and the field studies. Among the natives of different regions of Iran, such as Sistan Baluchestan, it is believed that some disease are due to the presence of winds and evil airs that penetrate the human body and cause mental and even physical illnesses. In such circumstances, the inhabitants of these regions, with the help of ritual ceremonies such as (Zār, Parikhani), calm these winds so that the patient can be freed from those winds and evil air. Psychodrama, which is popular all over the world today has dramatic concepts and dramatic elements that*

*are be used for psychotherapy. Therefore, the present article seeks to find out whether these rituals are similar to this modern method in terms of theatrical methods or not? In a comparative analytical study, it is concluded that these rituals in order to benefit from elements such as, form, dance, action, music, narrative, therapist, scene, therapist, main person, the supporting person and so on, which they have something in common with psychodrama. They also have common concepts between the two therapies, including, identity, spontaneity and purification of the soul.*

PAROLE CHIAVE: Psychodrama, Zār, Parikhani, Comparative literature

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### AUTRICI

*Vida Khanbabaie is a MA student at Alberta University, Department of Drama. She is interested in comparative literature studies, and she had research on a comparative study of the plays Curse of the starving class (written by Sam Shepard) and No Happiness, Miserable people (written by Alireza Naderi) based on Characterizations. She also has been a soloist Tar player in Rang E Mehr Orchestra since 2014. In addition, she translated a book named Las narraciones españoles from Spanish to Persian. [khanbaba@ualberta.ca](mailto:khanbaba@ualberta.ca)*

*Elham Zolfagharian is an instructor in Iranian performing Arts and Tazieh, and she is a member of the Tehran Taziyeh association. She is the author of essays on Iranian performing arts in the Iranian traditional theater festival. She works at the Department of Dramatic Literature, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran (Iran). [elham.zolfaqarian@yahoo.com](mailto:elham.zolfaqarian@yahoo.com)*

## *Introduction*

In these therapeutic rituals, it is believed that a kind of air has penetrated into the patient's body and infected him/her. However, the people of the sea believe that this wind is no longer air and comes from the sea. Here the spirits are divided into Zār, winds, jinn and Mashayekh.

It hypothesizes that is there any relationship between the traditional therapeutic rituals of Iran and psychodrama? If it could be found a logical relationship between the two by receiving logical results, then the second case should be considered. Although it should be noted that there are some books and scholarly articles are written around these therapeutic rituals such as Psychotherapy with dramatic methods by Howard Blanner, rituals and myths in theater by Jalal Sattari, people of the air by Qolamhossein Saedi, Zār with two Balochis by Ali Riahi.

Plus, Spontaneity in Moreno's definition is a new response to an old situation, rather than the same old stereotyped response and an adequate response to a new situation, rather than the inability to deal with something just because it is new and finally an adequate response to a combination of old and new. And here, role functioning can be perceived as requiring spontaneity in order to achieve the appropriate response. Indeed, improvisation is considered as a significant and practical element both in psychodrama and therapeutic rituals. This method is used to get the patient to spontaneity. Therefore, reaching this level requires creating a sense of calm and reducing anxiety.

All the methods and the elements which are used in the psychodrama and therapeutic rituals should be compared and considered meticulously. For example, catharsis used for the first time by Aristotle and after that Freud expanded this term and explained it and finally, this term turned to a psychodrama theory by Moreno. As psychodrama is a refining technique so, it offers solutions for self-cultivation and provides the condition for it. For instance, identification could be considered as the well known method in this, through which the person reaches the stage of identification and awareness. Identification has different techniques for using, some cases in point are identification by visible signs, by words spoken, identification by recollection, but it is best when identification comes from within us. In Zār, Parikhani, through music, words therapy and play, the patient unconsciously becomes ecstatic, and, it seems to be associated with a transcendental forces such as, wind, spirit and jinn dominate him/her. Then, he/she can experience catharsis. What does wind sickness mean? It means that a change in the state of people that makes them have a different experience from the world, or they are affected by wind power.

Spiritualism or believing in spirit, the wind, or the exorcism, and the practice of exorcism have existed since ancient times, or animism in primitive societies. It is also found today in some Asian, African, European and Indian tribes. Hindus, for example, also attributed human anxiety and convulsions to spirits, and they acknowledge that a person who suffers a nervous breakdown or fainting, a demon has penetrated his body and this has caused disorder and seizures in him. Monroe Muslims in the Philippines archipelago considered by spirits and considered evil spirits to be the source of illness, especially mental health problems, and in these cases, with special rituals and practices, expelled evil spirits from the sick body.

### *Dualism in Iranian thought*

Iranian thought divides the world into two manifestations of light and darkness, or good and evil. According to this thinking, in the long past time, they believed in two types Vayu (God of wind) with a single personality but with different appearances and characteristics. One of this God is profitable and the other is the harmful demon. With the advent of Islam, these primitive hypotheses were mixed with religious beliefs and created the notion of wind dualism in the minds of Muslims. In Islamic culture, the wind was thought to be like a jinn, and like him an aerial creature and they were classified into two groups of believers and infidels, and they took the wind as an allusion to the jinn and called in the wind-jinn. In the southern and southeastern regions of Iran, spirit and jinn are thought of as winds that go inside the human body and conquer them. In other words, it makes them airy and shapes them into horses. Those who are captured one or more times by magical and mysterious and pathogenic winds but were able to get rid of this harm, are called inhabitant of the air. The horse of the tamed winds inside them are their means of communication and they are safe from their harms as long as they satisfy the demands of the winds.

### *Types of winds and the type of their connection with social groups*

In Iran and some Islamic countries, winds are divided into several types that are known as both male and female. The most famous wind is called Zār (Sar). The Baluchis of Iran divide the winds into two groups: immigrants and endemic. Immigrant spirits came to Iran and parts of Baloochestan with African blacks, such as, “Katmiri” and “Hongong” as well as this, endemic Arab spirits such as “Bellu” are residents of Dashtiari region and Chabahar port. And “Shorhe” which is the endemic Arab wind in the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Iranian, according

to their knowledge and experience, know several specific winds in each of immigrant and endemic. For example, Baluchis with 5 types of Zār wind, 5 types of jinn, 22 types of Sheikh wind and they are familiar with 2 types of demons, white and black. Among the coastal people of southern Iran, winds and jinns are more prevalent among the lower classes. Plus, some winds, like the Mashayekh winds, have a spiritual connection with certain social groups. Indeed, the people of the air are considered the Mashayekh winds from the category of the spirits of the Sheikhs and the pious elders who have a status among the people.

Each of the “Mashayekh” winds deals with one of the social groups of the society for making them sick. The members of each group consider that wind as their common spiritual spirit. As an example, The wind of Sheikh Faraj belonged to the poor class of the people, and the wind of Sheikh Odros belonged to the group of the chosen and the social elders and Babaha wind belonged to the group of divers, seaman and sailors. The followers of each of the Sheikh carried the flag of the Sheikh of the group to go to the Sheikh’s footsteps for releasing the wind from themselves. For example, Sheikh Faraj’s flag is red and rectangular with the role of the moon and stars.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit, the wind, the jinn demand the body of tired and troubled people, accordingly, it is more prevalent in areas full of anxiety and panic and in places full of poverty. For this reason, the slums of cities, and some areas of the islands of the south sea of Iran are a good bed for them.

### *Signs of reincarnation and conquest*

Reincarnation of jinn- it will be formed a relation between a person and wind, when the wind is penetrated the person. In any culture, in expressing this connection and how to relate, the spirit with the host terms such as “reincarnation in the host”, “marrying him”, are sometimes used to refer to an unstable and indefinite relationship.<sup>2</sup> The signs of presence in individuals vary depending on the type of wind that has captured him and, in most cases, it is accompanied by abnormal behaviors and tremors. From a psychological point of view, some of the signs of (BADZADEGI) are considered a sign of insanity or hysterical nature. According to Crapanzaro, which is based on a series of detailed and comprehensive studies, these symptoms are probably due to the (badzade) person’s psychological disorders and reactions to social pressures and tensions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. RIAHI, *Zaar, Bad, Balouch*, Tahouri publications, Tehran 1977, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> V. CRAPANZO, *The whites of south Africa*, Random house, New York 1985, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Ivi, p. 16.

Conjuring and capturing the wind and the spirit and expelling and taming it in the subjugated body of the spirit, is the responsibility of the inhabitant of the air (Baba and Mama) whom are called Babazar and Mamazar. Actually, they have this responsibility because they themselves have been involved in various winds many times and have been released, it means that they have been succeeded to conquer and subdue the winds for themselves. Babaha and Mamaha, like the shamans in the Shamanic religion, their job is spirit mediumship and establish communication between spirits and humans, and also to control and conquer spirits.<sup>4</sup>

During a special ceremony, with a group of wind inhabitant which are men and women, by playing an instrument and beating drums and reciting special poems and epodes, dancing and playing a game, they summon and tame the spirit of these wind inhabitant.

In all cultures, beliefs about nature and the causes of wind disease (Badzadegi) and ways to treat it, have created a single, interconnected socio-cultural system. And where there are such assumptions about recognizing the cause of neurosis, the treatment is based on the same assumptions. Therefore, the purpose in such cultures is to eliminate the causes of diseases, or to eliminate the conditions that the patient imagines suffering from them.

### *The method of exorcism*

Removing the wind (Badzodae) among the communities that believe in it, will be done by two ways, permanent and transformational. In the first treatment (permanent), the captured person recovers and returns to his pleasant normal life. But in the second treatment (transformational), profound changes occur in the patient's condition and personality and the patient is in a new state connected with the spirit or wind that has captured him and the patient joins a group that has a social identity and the characteristics of a particular religion in the society. A transformed person that is entered to a new social group whose members are all treated through the transformational treatment. The patient finds legitimacy to attend the ceremony for summoning and conquering the wind and also feels empowered as a member of the (removing the wind ceremony or Badzodae), which acts as a brotherhood and fraternity association.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. FIRTH, *Tikopia ritual and belief*, Beacon press, Boston 1967, p. 374.

<sup>5</sup> V. CRAPANZO, *The whites of south Africa* cit., pp. 16-17.

The wind inhabitants of Iran, are from the jinn group or transformed patients, after the exorcism ceremony for them, their identities have been changed and they join to the (wind remover, practitioner, magic) groups.

Moreover, the transformed person with his/her new identity will be safe from the persecution of the spirit or the wind as long as he/she obeys the spirit or the wind that has penetrated him/her and fulfills the desires of the wind and spirit. Plus, when he/she disobeys the commands of the spirit, the crisis of exorcism returns, and this ceremony of summoning the spirit or exorcism must be performed for him/her again. "1986"

In addition, in Iran, if the patient is not able to meet the needs and wants of the wind during the exorcism ceremony, here, Babazar or Mamazar ties a rope around the patient arm and they do not open it until the patient fulfill the needs of the wind.

Wearing white clothes, perfuming the body, refusing to drink alcohol, refusing to disrespect the religion are the duties of this ceremony.

#### *Stages of Zār ritual treatment*

The treatment ritual is summarized in three stages: curtain, invitation and spreading the tablecloth.

First, if a person who is involved with wind is not treated with normal methods, he/she will be handed over to Mamazar or Babazar/

1: Curtain or hijab: if he/she has one of these Zār disease, he/she would be kept out of sight for seven days.

2: Invitation: a woman who is from the wind inhabitant, starts to walk by a bamboo and knocks each door and invite the wind inhabitants for playing a game.

3: Spreading the tablecloth: a variety of foods are placed on the table, including dates, herbs, goat meat and blood.

(It is believed that if the wind does not drink blood, it will not spoke).

Babazar and Mamazar with shaking the bamboo, should start the ceremony. And also drumming and reading the poems begin.

#### *Executive elements in the therapeutic ritual of Zār*

In the therapeutic ritual of Zār, there are elements such as the therapist, patient, the place of ceremony, play equipment, music and the wind inhabitants, that, each of which has different tasks and functions.

1. Therapist is Mamazar or Babazar, both of them are woman. They are therapists because they were able to overcome this disease. They know a lot of poetry and have studied in this field.
2. Patient who is involved with fantasies and feels another person in him. This invisible person who is in the patient mind, may talk to the patient and force him to do something.
3. The inhabitants of the wind: those who have suffered from this disease before and come to help Mamazar and Babazar in this ritual.
4. The ritual is performed on the beaches and the attendees form a circle and the patient is placed in the middle of them.
5. Play equipment: drums, bamboo, special concoctions.
6. Music: music is one of the main pillars of this ritual. Each wind has its own music, and the patient responds differently to each particular song and the wind within him starts to move. Music expresses the patient's negative emotions, and creates spontaneity and dance-like movements in him, he experiences joy and ecstasy and can reconcile with what is inside him.

### *Parikhani*

The Turkmens of Iran have a ritual for treating which is called Parikhani, during this ritual Parikhans perform dancing, praying and playing Dutar. Parikhani have different examples. In this ritual, the patient is placed in a pavilion. Parikhan runs around with a whip in his hand. He reads and reads sentences and repeats them until his mouth foams. All this is to keep the jinns away from the patient. Parikhan repeats it until he faints, during this strange ritual, Parikhan also whips on the back of the patient.

### *The elements of Parikhani*

The basis of Parikhani is based on the connection with supernatural forces which is an integral part of nature, or conversely, nature is part of the supernatural.

### *Therapist (parikhan)*

Because of the importance of supernatural, the therapist (Parikhan) must know it and Parikhan gets help from the same supernatural forces for treating.

Music: Dutar is one of the most important and traditional instruments of the Turkmen, which in this ritual is played by a person who is called Bakhshi. In this ritual, they believe that music delights the supernatural forces.

Theatrical dimension of this ritual: In this ritual it is used swords, ropes, sticks that are hung on the ceiling. At the time of ecstasy and the joy, they perform dramatic movements with sticks and climb the rope.

Islamic dimension: Prayer writing is part of the Parikhani therapeutic ritual. After the ritual, Parikhan writes down the prayer for each treatment and gives it to the patient.

The first three dimensions are attributed to Shamanic culture and the last dimension to Islamic culture.

Application of objects in the third dimension:

Sword for the mentally disorder patients, in this case, Parikhan places a sword around the patient's neck to scare away the evil spirits that have penetrated the patient's body. As well as this Parikhan strikes the swords with a stick, which of course is performed for all those present in this ritual.

*The similar elements of psychodrama psychotherapy with the rituals of Zār, and Parikhani*

1. Psyche or wind: psyche comes from the Greek "Psykhē", which means "the soul, mind, spirit, or invisible animating entity which occupies the physical body." According to Pneuma (πνεῦμα, Lat. spiritus) is connected etymologically with πνέω, breathe or blow, and has a basic meaning of 'air in motion', or 'breath' as something necessary to life. In Greek tragedy it is used of the 'breath of life' and it is the 'Spirit' of the New Testament. In early Greek thought pneuma is often connected with the soul; in Aristotle it frequently denotes 'warm air', sometimes 'heat', and the term is also used of seismic winds which are trapped within the earth. Its precise meaning, then, must always be determined in its context. The word may have been used first by Anaximenes (1) of Miletus to describe both elemental air in motion in the world, and 'psychic air' in man. 'Psychic pneuma' also constitutes the soul and underlies sensory and motor activities in a number of ancient medical theories. In Hippocratic and post-Hippocratic writings (see Hippocrates (2)) it is widely used of inspired air or breath inside the body, with no apparent reference to any particular theory. In the medical theory of Erasistratus, 'vital pneuma' travels from the lungs via the heart into the arteries. One ancient medical sect, the 'Pneumatic' (see pneumatists), was called after its central use of such concepts. Pneuma-theory forms a cornerstone of Stoic physics (see stoicism), and the Stoics are particularly associated

with the doctrine that pneuma provides the universe both with cohesion and its dynamic properties.

Apparently, in the orient, the word psyche also has such a root, this is why in myths and legends the word “psyche” or “wind” is likened to a bird. So, what is dealt with in psychodrama is the psyche, and what is referred to in the Zār, Gouat and Parikhani, is the wind. Thus, both of them refer to the same subject. Besides, the names used in psychodrama, which are medical and specialized expressions, have many similarities with the names which are used in these rituals. For instance, in Sistanbalouchestan, patients suffering from seizures, mental paralysis, psychosis and delirium are called “Gouati” which is reminiscent of hysteria. In other words, symptoms such as paralysis and suffocation are similar to those of hysteria.

These traditional treatments can be found in many parts of the world, as well as in African countries. People who, without knowledge of modern therapies, but act in accordance with modern psychological therapies. As William Sargant said after watching the African therapeutic ritual: what happened during the treating ritual was a psychoanalytic ritual, which is also used in the treatment of modern medicine in another way.<sup>6</sup>

2. Play: For Freud, play is kind of a game that eliminates the conflicts. Plus, activity is the result of the play and bring relaxation that is followed by pleasure. For example, to get rid of the fear of encountering animals, humans used to wear animal clothes in the past, and this is now happening to children. In this therapeutic rituals, too, a kind of play occurs to relieve the patient’s tensions.
3. Patient (Client) Or, (Badzadeh in these rituals means, (Someone who is involved with the wind). It should be noted that there are 72 types of wind, each of which has its own characteristics and diseases for the patient.
4. Director or Therapist, (Mamazar-Babazar, Parikhan, Khalife or Califa, MadarGuat), each Mamazar in these rituals has their own name and own treatment method regarding to the type of wind and other invisible and visible element that penetrates to the body of the patient.
5. Auxiliary ego or (Man haye yavar, Ahle hava (People of the air), singing women). The presence of auxiliary ego is necessary both in psychodrama and these rituals. They play an important role in engaging the patient in specific situations.

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<sup>6</sup> W.W. SARGANT, *The mind possessed; a physiology of possession, mysticism, and faith healing*, Lip-pincott, Philadelphia 1974, Part two, *Zar Possession*, p. 42.

6. Scene: In these rituals the spectators sit around each other like a circle in a way that, the therapist and the patient are in the center of this circle. The place of therapy in modern therapies refers to a place that can give objectivity to any idea.
7. Play equipment: In Parikhani wood, spatula, whip, kind of bag, in Guat, paper, cotton and bamboo, and in Zar, tablecloths, special foods and blood are used and these equipment help the patient in the treatment process. Besides, in psychodrama, objects such as paper, painting tools, chairs, etc, help the therapist and the patient.
8. Music: music provides the self-expression tool and reinforces the self worth feeling. Music in psychodrama makes more easily the connection between the group members and it strengthens the patient's sense of self-fulfillment, and finally, it can lead to emotional relief and calming the patient. As well as this, in these rituals, the music instrument is also considered a very important element and the instruments themselves are considered very sacred. For instance, Dutar is one of the most important and traditional instruments of the Turkmen in Iran, which in Parikhani ritual is played by a person who is called Bakhshi. In this ritual, they believe that music delights the supernatural forces.
9. Group Therapy: Group therapy is the most important point in a therapeutic rituals and psychodrama. Attendees, when coordinated, create vibrant emotional behavior. The presence of a patient among these attendees causes expressing of his/her social behavior.
10. Identify: in Zār ritual, first, the people of the air accompany the patient and then identify with him/her. In psychodrama also, the result of identification is the participation of the attendees with the patient. They first communicate with the patient and then become the auxiliary element for them. And when the helper appears in the role of dual, he identifies with the first person and subconsciously, it experiences the first person's emotional processes. But, this is a little different for these rituals. In these rituals, everyone is accompanied by a performance based on their own experiences.
11. Mirroring: In western culture, as illustrated in fairy tales and Greek mythology, the mirroring concept is an archetype for self-infatuation and idealization, as well as disillusionment and destruction. The stories commonly describe a person who first watches himself or herself with admiration in a mirror but who later is confronted with the fact that he or she is not the center of the universe. The most well-known example are perhaps the idealized self-reflection of Narcissus and the stepmother of Snow White, who both end in misery. In Zār and Parikhani, Parikhan calls the wind, jinn and spirit and invite them for a conversation. The basic of this

work is similar to psychodrama. It means that instead of throwing away the spirit and ignoring it, it comes to express its feelings and talk about everything that wants. It can bring the unique gift of self-discovery. Here, it should be given an identity to the spirit, and provides an environment for spirit to be able to talk. The scene in psychodrama is the dream world. They have to enter to the surrealism world and bring back the past to present tense. From a theoretical perspective, the psychodramatic mirroring technique is based on universal interpersonal feedback process that evolve during our entire lifespan to reinforce our sense of itself. We continue to rely on the various more or less appreciative responses toward us all through life. But mirroring is not limited to the responses of other human beings toward us. There are an endless number of things and events that mirror us in every aspect of life.

12. Spontaneity: Improvisation and spontaneity are two basic elements in these rituals, and any action that accompanies these two will be treating. It facilitates new responses to unfamiliar situations. The question here is that how spontaneity is achieved in psychodrama and these rituals and why it causes treatment? Through improvisation, the patient first achieves spontaneity, which also reduces his/her anxiety, and the patient achieves creative spontaneity during spontaneity.
13. Catharsis: To achieve catharsis, the patient must reach the stage of recognition and awareness. There are different types of recognition. Like using the words that are said, the recognition that is achieved by reminders.

### *Conclusion*

Today, the patient has the right to choose any treatment, and the purpose of this article is merely to compare these rituals with psychodrama psychotherapy, and it does not give any privilege to these rituals compared to psychodrama. Whichever one they choose can be effective for the patient due to the similarities of these rituals have with psychodrama psychotherapy.