

MARIAMMAN மாரியம்மன்

Every sickness has an alien quality, a feeling of invasion and loss of control that is evident in the language we use about it.

The Shaking Woman, or A History of My Nerves— *Siri Hustvedt*,

Quote: Cholera? Yes my love. Dengue fever? Of course, my Duck. Chagas Fever, Malaria, Tetanus? All those and more. Now, tell me of the offerings you brought to make me happy. I pray they are pleasing to me, else bloody shit will down your legs in crimson rivulets and fever burn away your mind.

The Mariamman is a Goddess in India, worshipped as a Goddess of health and happiness, but outside of the Perfumed Empire, down through the Halls of Golden Lions, there is a whole lineage of feared Hantu (Kith) that share her name. The Mariamman are an all-female line of illness-Fae, witches of illness and misery. Those within Earshot of the Mariamman will lovingly proclaim that they are venerated. Yet everyone, including the Mariamman themselves knows the truth. They are feared, not loved.

From the moment of their Chrysalis, they move out to the edge of town, and set up shop as hedge-wives and wise-women. Mortals know about them, and fear or hate them in turn. Every small village throughout Southeast Asia boasts at least one, and all are known amongst their community. Even if the mortals involved are unaware of the Mariamman's Athurakal (Changeling) nature, they are still fully aware that she is more than she appears.

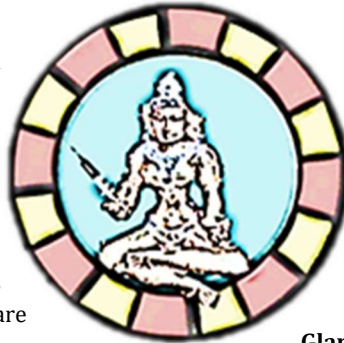
The other Hantu know about them and feel the same. The Mariamman are hated, feared, sometimes even reviled. But they are always treated with respect.

Appearance: The best way to describe the Mariamman is pretty but severe. The Bumi Hyang (Mortal Mien) is rather non-descript, but attractive in an earthy way. There on the edge of town, they wear non-descript clothing, and smile when it's time to smile, frown when it's not time. The Hantu Hyang (Fae Mien) could be considered more attractive, but perhaps handsome is a better word. They are stately, and tall, but with none of the heavenly grace that accompanies the Devi Goddess that they are mistaken for. When angered, however, there is something distinctly otherworldly about their visage.

Lifestyle: It is important to note that the difference between the Hindu Goddess of health known as Mariamman, and the village Hantu of the same name. Many a small village throughout the realm has one, and all are feared, if not hated. The Mariamman pays little heed. They have a job to do, and a way to do it. If they have to be feared, hated, or even seen as an object of disgust, so be it.

Muda Mariamman would seemingly be thought of as a sad, so young, yes? After all, they are feared and reviled for their role, right? Not so. The *Muda Mariamman* couldn't care less about how they are viewed. From the moment of their Chrysalis onward.

Sembrono Mariamman have been around long enough to build something of a reputation. The more Yetkhat (Seelie, if such a thing can be said of their number) do well keeping their villages



moderately healthy. The more Suanggi (read the majority) of the Hantu have a village full of fearful sycophants who secretly hate their "disease-keeper" out there on the edge of town.

Kawakan *Mariamman* are veritable goddesses of dis-ease and plague. They demand great tribute and get it.

Glamour Ways: The Mariamman regain Weth from the gratitude of the healthy, who appreciate their temporary condition. Or the contentment of the wise dying mortals who understand that the body is fleeting and illness and death can come at any time. They also regain Weth from the fear of the same.

Unleashing: Cantrips cast by the Mariamman have the unmistakable heady perfume of too much incense and sweet medicine, but just under that, the sickly-sweet smell of rot.

Affinity: Time

Birthrights:

Blessings/Curse (*Sumpahan/Berkat*): The Mariamman can either heal or curse their constituents with a wasting sickness. To do so costs a point of Weth spent, and a successful roll of Medicine + Manipulation (to curse) or Charisma (to heal). The difficulty is based on how sick the individual is to heal, or how debilitating of a disease the Mariamman wants to impart. The more successes on the roll, the quicker the healing or sickness takes place. One success is within a week, two successes within 3 days, 3 successes within the day, and 4 or more almost immediately.

It would also be easy to say that the Yetkhat (Seelie) prefer to heal, and the Suanggi (Unseelie) prefer to curse, but to do so would be lazy. Each Mariamman has her own agenda, and her own vices. Their ways are their own, and no assumptions should be made of these stern ladies.

Frailties:

Reputation (*Nama Baik*): The Mariamman are not loved. It is hard to love someone who controls your health and hordes it with a taloned fist. The most that can be said about them is that they are respected. Any social rolls (not including the Manipulation or Charisma pool for their Blessing/Healing Birthright) made by anyone who knows the Mariamman are always at a +2 difficulty. This includes the Mariamman's closest friends and family - if she should have any.

Rochana, taking her meal alone in her hut, gives honestly painful assessments of the others.

Chinthe: Armor rusts, and lion's bones break. These beasts last only as long as the rest of us.

Gerasi: Hunger is a painful way to die. They had my sympathy once. No longer.

Jenglot: Their origins are darker than even they know.

Mambang Air: There are many things I could do to the water, which would keep all mortals away forever. Shall I do them? Would the Mambang Air be grateful I wonder?

Nang Tani: I hate them. I hate their sad whimpering voices. I hate their salt-stained faces. I especially hate their would-be lovers and stacks of gifts and hundreds of sympathetic prayers offering meaningless wishes for happiness.

Orang Bunian: Kings and Queens and Rajahs and Courtesans and viziers and how many other royal titles for a bunch of wizard-snogging fruits. I have no time, nor love, for any of these miscreants.

Pelesit: It is easy to disregard them as simple slaves. Did any slave ever choose such lives? Before you dismiss them, think about why they are, and who they are. Perhaps you might learn some empathy.

Huirvviu: You think us dark? You think us evil? Manipulative? Scary? Perhaps we are. But there are older darker things out there, that would ensure you a darker, more evil, scarier view of the World.

