

Breastfeeding and Transpersonal Values: An Organic Inquiry

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This inquiry explored the impact of breastfeeding on mothers' transpersonal values. It acknowledged societal obstacles mothers' experience when attempting to breastfeed and included 12 participants who had a breastfeeding experience that reflects the current recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), meaning six months of exclusive breastfeeding followed by a combination of breastfeeding and solid foods for at least two years. The study followed an Organic Inquiry design which allowed for the incorporation of elements of feminism and environmental responsibility. Participant stories were collected through semi-structured online interviews, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis. Participants felt that breastfeeding enhanced transpersonal qualities at a personal level and noticed that these gave rise to transformative action at a community level. Six themes were identified: Transpersonal self-concept, spiritual insights, interconnectedness, discernment, alignment with nature and transformative changes. All participants regarded breastfeeding as a transformative experience which contributed to a sense of alignment with the natural world. Participants insights suggest a congruence of transpersonal psychology's current focus on social engagement and environmental protection and global breastfeeding support efforts carried out by the WHO.

Keywords: breastfeeding, transformation, sustainability, transpersonal psychology, transpersonal values, archetypes, feminism

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Transpersonal research is expanding into areas of social engagement with the intention of facilitating collective transformation and helping us solve wider social problems. Friedman and Krippner (2023) have argued that the future of this humanistic psychology subdiscipline depends on succeeding at offering practical solutions to contemporary challenges – “If it is useful, it will survive” (p. 117). On a similar note, distinguished transpersonal scholars, Bockler (2021) and Daniels (2013), have encouraged transpersonal research and practice that contributes to mitigating ecological deterioration.

A body of knowledge demonstrates the far-reaching physical and psychological benefits of breastfeeding for mothers, babies and communities (World Health Organization [WHO] & United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2022) and for the environment (Karlsson et al., 2019; Smith, 2019). According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2023 2018) breastfeeding protects children from a vast range of illnesses, including infection, diabetes, asthma, heart disease and obesity, as well as sudden infant death syndrome. The World Health Organization (Horta & Victora, 2017) adds that breastfed children perform better on intelligence tests. Current recommendations call for exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continued breastfeeding for at least two years (WHO & UNICEF, 2022). The beneficial effect of breastfeeding on a mother’s health includes a negative correlation regarding cancer, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular effects, osteoporosis, arthritis, and cognitive decline (Del Ciampo & Del Ciampo, 2018).

Smith (2019) explained how infant formula requires mass production by the dairy industry and exacerbates waste. She pointed out that production of unnecessary formula in just six Asia Pacific countries was calculated to be equivalent to 6 billion miles of car travel, and that 4 kg of greenhouse gas is generated during the production of each kilogram of milk formula.

Despite most mothers’ expressed desire to breastfeed their babies, lack of social support, uninformed advice offered by health professionals, and predatory marketing of breastmilk substitutes have been proven to be colossal obstacles to overcome (WHO & UNICEF, 2022). Beasley and Amir (2007) observed that the mother-baby dyad is marginalized - a mother is not allowed to keep her baby with her in a classroom, and baby-wearing mothers are kept out of the formal employment sector. In most countries, this dyad is not protected through extended maternity leave programs that according to the minimum requirements stipulated by the WHO should extend to 24 months. Mothers are left alone to shoulder infant-care options that do not take into account mothers’ health, maternal instincts and the needs of their babies. According to the WHO and UNICEF (2022) the lack of support and social isolation suffered by the breastfeeding dyad reinforces maladaptive behaviors. In the U.K., for example, only 1% of mothers manages to still meet optimal breastfeeding goals (Thompson et al., 2020).

A spiritual dimension of breastfeeding was suggested by Athan and Miller (2013), who looked into motherhood as opportunity to learn spiritual values. They found that all

breastfeeding mothers who participated in their study mentioned “similar moments of awe, wonder, compassion, thankfulness, and a new sense of being on a journey” (p. 248). Transcending our egoic self through bodily experiences is a theoretical approach to transpersonal psychology which Daniels (2005) called a descending path to transformation. Despite this acknowledgement of the potential role for the body to help us transcend our ego, Wright (1998) denounced the conspicuous absence of female bodies as a focus of interest within transpersonal psychology. Over twenty years later Hartelius (2023) recognized only a modest increase of women’s experiences in transpersonal psychology literature. Ferrer’s (2017) transformative model offers a clear example of this failure to include women’s bodies. Ferrer’s model sought to promote the development of human potential by highlighting the physical body for its transformative and creative powers. However, women’s unique biological functions (Newton, 1955) - menstruation, ovulation, childbirth and lactation - were missing in Ferrer’s view of the human body. It should be surprising that to this day, the bodies of women are not routinely and specifically included in transpersonal literature for their unique potential to connect us to the flow of life, and for their central role in the creation, and transformation of life.

The initial question “How might breastfeeding activate a mother’s transpersonal qualities?” helped the author explore a transpersonal dimension of breastfeeding for a group of mothers whose breastfeeding experience reflects what is considered biologically normal for our species, as reported and recommended by the WHO (Horta & Victora, 2017).

Method

Organic Inquiry (OI), a research method employed in the present study, centers on the stories of participants as main sources of knowledge. This study made use of commonly used methods of data collection and analysis, like semi-structured interviews, transcription, and thematic analysis to identify common themes, within an OI framework. OI was developed by Clements et al. (1998). It originated in feminist methodologies and is grounded in responsibility for the earth, using the personal experience of researcher and participants (also called co-researchers) to propose transformative change. The research question was formulated with an intent to contribute positively to social transformation, and to the advancement of transpersonal psychology studies.

Participants

The inclusion criteria focused on mothers who breastfed exclusively for the first six months and then continued to breastfeed for at least two years. Recruiting participants among mothers who have been involved in breastfeeding advocacy groups guaranteed that participants had access to evidence-based breastfeeding information and support.

This study recruited twelve women of ten different nationalities (Table 1). Seven of them gave birth and/or breastfed in foreign countries and were themselves supported by mothers

of different cultural backgrounds. All of them have volunteered for at least three years to breastfeeding advocacy groups after their first successful experience. They all breastfed at least one baby, for at least two years.

Each participant was interviewed once, online, for one hour. All interviews were semi-structured and synthesized highlighting relevant codes and emerging themes. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Table 1
Participants

Participant pseudonym	Country of birth	Other countries where participants lived, gave birth, and/or breastfed
Flor	Australia	--
Indah	Indonesia	Botswana, Timor'Leste, Pakistan
Paua	U.S.	Viet Nam, New Zealand
Sozo	Japan	U.S.
Diana	U.S.	--
Kaz	Australia	--
Selkie	U.K.	--
Dhia	Malaysia	Japan, Paraguay
Sipho	England	Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi
Mica	Spain	Japan, Canada
Nyx	Italy	Netherlands
Rain	Singapore	--

Data analysis

Following Clements (2011), data analysis was structured into three parts: preparation, inspiration, and integration. Preparation involved the conscious use of meditation in the formulation of a research question that aimed to contribute positively to social transformation. Carl Jung's four cognitive functions (Clements, 2011) were taken into account in the preparation stage and research design. These functions, which include thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation, highlight the importance of keeping a balanced perspective. Inspiration was integrated by acknowledging my own emotional reaction to the stories of participants, and by allowing their stories and insights to become key sources of knowledge. Integration involved engagement in creative practices (like painting) to give form to nonverbal aspects of data analysis, and the active search for archetypes that would illustrate participants' experiences.

Common procedures for qualitative inquiry were employed, such as the elaboration of a code book and the use of spreadsheets to organize the data. Simultaneously, I actively searched for myths where some of the patterns emerging from participants stories would be reflected, as the OI method welcomes Carl Jung's (1970) theory of archetypes. An exploration of relevant archetypes found in myth and ancient sacred scriptures serves the purpose of reminding us of the cyclical nature of society's challenges and of the value of a transpersonal lens.

Creative techniques like painting and collage, and movement such as repetitive athletic practice, were employed with an intent to relax and reduce the influence of preconceived points of view. The data was also examined four separate times, to observe feeling, intuition, sensation or thinking. Once this examination was complete, an edited story or synthesis, for each individual experience was constructed with special interest in any anecdotes that highlighted transpersonal qualities.

Each participant was asked to read and validate a summary of her interview composed by the author. Eleven out of twelve participants validated their individual synthesis. One participant did not reply. Six participants volunteered as early readers and they all validated the final assertions of this study. This collaborative approach strengthened the validity of the study findings.

Ethical approval for this study was granted by Liverpool John Moores University School of Psychology and Natural Sciences Research Ethics Panel.

Results

Six themes were identified:

1. Spiritual Insights: A Discerning Journey on the Spiritual Path

Participants saw breastfeeding either as an expression of their existing spiritual beliefs or as a practice that was compatible with such beliefs. Indah felt that breastfeeding was an act of compassion towards the mother, as it incorporated her natural urge to nourish her baby, and an act of compassion towards a baby who exhibits a need to be in close contact with the mother:

We learn compassion, from the mother's breast, from that skin contact, that nurturing. [If we] separate mother and the baby and begin formula feeding [that is] a very uncompassionate approach, because the mother's risks of postnatal depression rise, her risks of breast cancer rise. The risks increase for the child, with childhood cancers. I don't think that's compassionate!

Kaz reflected on the image of Mary in the Christian tradition, explaining how Mary, by breastfeeding, gave herself to Jesus, flesh and blood. She reflected on how Jesus' flesh and blood is believed, during rituals, to transform into bread and wine, just as mothers' flesh and blood turn into milk. For Kaz, this is how "being a mother is one of the closest things that you can have to the idea of God." For Indah, the baby is also a god.

Selkie's self-image transformed with the miracle of breastfeeding:

This new life has come into the world through my body and I am keeping her alive and she is growing and thriving, because of my body and the milk I'm producing, and it felt [...] so powerful at times almost goddess like.

2. Breastfeeding as Nature

Participants claimed that breastfeeding connected them to a compassionate mammalian nature. Mica claimed that breastfeeding facilitated a dialogue between primal/ instinctual wisdom for mother and baby:

For many women, finding our identity among the damaging stereotypes, is hard enough. Some of us feel that we came to a place where we finally learned to love our bodies and our reproductive functions [...] Breastfeeding can play [a role] in this process.

Sozo described how the best of our human nature is made evident to the breastfeeding mother:

Helping others, the values of the older helping the younger [...] I could see in breastfeeding, and also, in [mother-to-mother breastfeeding support] when I became a volunteer counsellor too [...] I was in a place that was comfortable, because I didn't have to change those [values].

Diana also elaborated on the societal attitudes that discourage interest in women's natural biological processes and anatomy. She shared that her mother one day asked her, "How many holes are there down there?" This was after she birthed three children and had several miscarriages.

3. Transformative Changes

All participants referred to breastfeeding as an empowering experience. Rain also referred to the breastfeeding experience of mothers she has supported over the years, observing a marked difference in mothers' positive self-image when they are able to meet their breastfeeding goals:

So that's why after this, if they can get over this hurdle, then it becomes a success. 'Wow! That's amazing!' Right? Then the story changes completely to one that is positive and empowering. And that's when transformation happens. That's when

she, as a mother, changes and then that translates into change as a woman. That is very powerful!

Sipho believed that not only breastfeeding her baby was transformative, but that transformation occurred when she helped other mothers breastfeed:

Breastfeeding transforms women's lives. Time after time, [volunteer counsellors] attest to how breastfeeding and being helped to breastfeed has changed them forever. Also, the experience of helping other mothers to breastfeed has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life.

Indah envisioned the impact that a natural breastfeeding experience could have on society as women's sense of empowerment come hand in hand with physical and emotional benefits for the community:

An empowered woman is unstoppable. This is so important. We are so disempowered by the patriarchy in all our patriarchal societies. Women have forgotten their power. And it is our job as breastfeeding counselors, to help them remember. [...] Breastfeeding, for me, is giving the power to the mother.

Flor expressed a similar vision when she said, "The outcomes for the mother, the children and our society must surely be better, kinder, wiser and more considerate of each other when we nurture our infants."

For Nyx, her personal transformation propelled a need to fight the hostile environment other mothers experience. Breastfeeding advocacy and social activism emanate from her own breastfeeding experience:

I believe that my own work in restoring the importance of the presence of the mother, her visibility, helps me heal myself while I contribute to society. I want to help build environments that favor the continuum; environments that respect the mother-baby dyad. [...] As a society, we must learn to respect the mother.

4. Breastfeeding Integrates the Discerning Mind

Participants acknowledged the counterproductive advice they received from hospital staff, and how discernment came into play as they went about doing their own research and compared it to evidence-based breastfeeding information they received from mother-to-mother support groups. Dhia spoke of the emotional pain of weaning her first baby, following her doctor's unfounded orders, before her baby was ready:

It is so heartbreaking the lack of information for us mothers. So, it was a very painful time for me, emotionally, when I had to wean her off the breast before she was ready. She would ask for it, she would say, 'Mama, mama!' And my mother-in-law would take her away. It felt brutal.

Flor clarified that an unsupportive system is always to blame when mothers cannot meet their breastfeeding goals:

I had an unsuccessful breastfeeding experience with my first child. [...] When I had my second child, and I found out how I had been failed...That it actually wasn't my fault, that I had implicitly trusted the system [...] I was really moved by that. [...] that emotional closeness was something that I realized I had missed with my first child, that I needed to work hard to get back [...] You don't know what you're missing until you've got it.

Sipho described the gradual expansion of knowledge and how her own intellectual growth incorporated the needs of other mothers:

First, I experienced it, then I became familiar with the scientific literature that supports it, and then I saw that there was a need for that. When you hear other mothers say "I wish I had breastfed my baby," I just felt so sorry for them because they sounded... They always sounded so wistful. You know, as if it was a wish that they had not fulfilled, and I already knew that breastfeeding was actually not very hard. You just needed the right information at the right time.

5. Interconnectedness

There were significant changes in the way in which participants felt connected to other mothers through their breastfeeding experience. From this sense of interconnection, the mother-to-mother support groups are born. Dhia understood breastfeeding as more than food and referred to it as a "system" that not only connected her to her baby but also to people in general. Diana's explanation of this system overlapped with the transpersonal self-concept of the mother-baby dyad:

Historically, the symbol of a woman is a circle, the symbol of a man is a straight line. So, we are open. And when we're pregnant, we're even more open, and you can explain all the physiology about that, and the psychology of that. In breastfeeding, we are open in a different way. We're together and separate. [...] And it is unlike any other two entity relationship. It's not like men and women. It's not like two sisters. And it changes hourly, not just changes dynamically, we know during pregnancy, which is passive, but during breastfeeding, it changes dynamically, deliberately, intentionally with caring.

Selkie understood this connection as one that expands beyond time and place, which in her words, "has a sense to me of something sacred. Failing to respect this bond is a direct harm humans cause upon ourselves and our planet." Flor described this bond placing the emphasis on mothers across time: "We've been doing this for millennia together, as women".

6. Transpersonal Self-Concept

Breastfeeding gave the participants a tangible awareness of their old sense of self extending to incorporate another human being. They felt incomplete when their baby was not with them. All participants experienced ‘mother-baby’ as one unit, one inseparable dyad. Sozo spoke of this experience of being two in one, incorporated in the act of breastfeeding, as opposed to imposed separations: “Mothers have to kill something within themselves - hold back greatly - when they must separate from the child.” And she added:

They have to harden themselves to their child’s cry, and they become numb to that. And if only... if mothers didn’t have to... You know? To harden yourself against your child in order to do something that society wants... It’s just - that’s wrong and unnatural.

Selkie’ sense of self extended beyond the breastfeeding dyad: “Across class and culture and ethnicity, [...] women are all connected by this experience, which [...] empowers women and sort of strengthens women.”

Discussion

This study focused on the stories of twelve mothers who claimed to have experienced breastfeeding as a transformative and empowering journey. Breastfeeding expanded their understanding of their human nature whilst enhancing or activating some transpersonal qualities, like transpersonal self-concept, spiritual insights, interconnectedness, discernment, and alignment with nature and transformative changes.

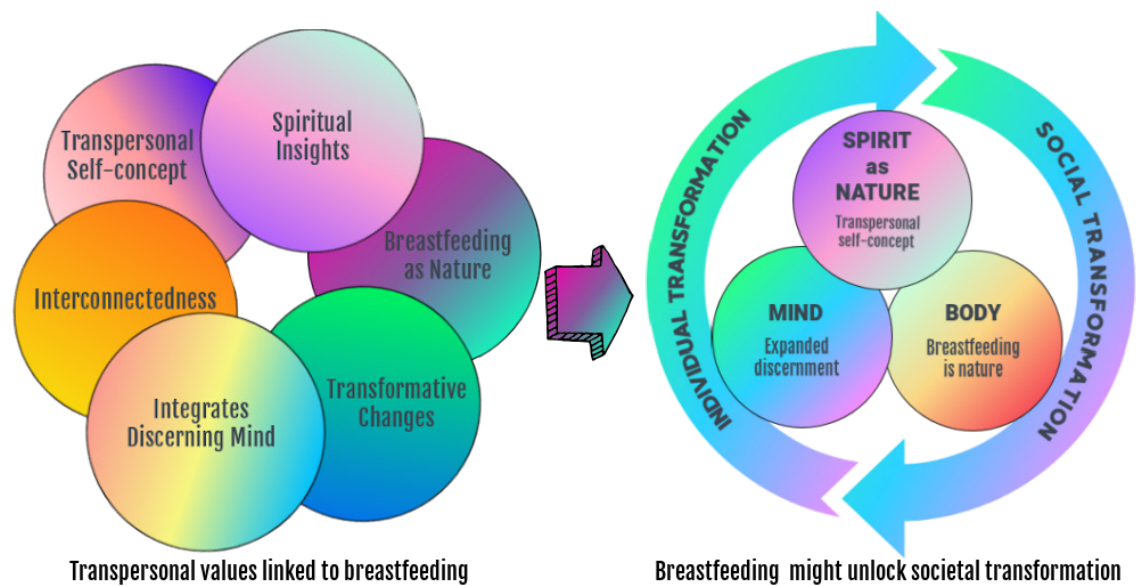
Participants’ experiences represent a key source of knowledge as breastfeeding is largely unexplored in transpersonal psychology literature. Transpersonal psychology has long recognized the importance of restoring our relationship to a larger natural order (Devall, 1980). Anthropologist van Esterik (1994) recognized that the Western disruption of breastfeeding as the natural mother-child feeding ritual reinforces disembodied social relations at every level.

Figure 1 synthesizes how the six emerging themes can be arranged in a way that shows the progress in participants’ experience. Participants became aware of their own sacred nature or accepted the miracle of their female bodies. After that, they underwent a need to process information that came in conflict with their instincts, followed by a sense of having been transformed.

In very basic terms, it would seem that the new awareness brought about by participants’ breastfeeding experience promoted an alignment of body, mind and spirit. From this alignment a sense of empowerment might have emerged. This sense of empowerment found expression in compassionate action which has been reported to bring about social transformation through participants’ volunteering efforts for breastfeeding advocacy groups (Dodgson, 2019; Smith, 2013).

Figure 1

Thematic map (left) rearranged to show participants' transformative process (right)



Spirit as Nature

Breastfeeding was considered by participants to be an expression of their own human nature - a breastfeeding mother is nature. The altruistic behavior that all participants engaged in, following their breastfeeding experience, was reported as “natural” in every instance. Offering their breast to their infant was described as an act of compassion towards their baby and also towards themselves, as mothers. Their own need to give themselves to their baby was honored.

Participants found breastfeeding transformative, and they believed that helping other mothers to fulfill their breastfeeding goals is an act of compassion that is transformative at a society level. Participants experienced their bodies as one with nature, one with love. As van Dussen (1996) confirmed, it is through actions that we express our spiritual life; sometimes we do what we need to do, and sometimes we do what we love doing. Participants felt that by breastfeeding, they did both. Love in action was described by van Dussen (1996) as “communication in the spiritual” (p. 110).

Most participants found that when they challenged social convention in favor of meeting optimal breastfeeding goals, they often found themselves breastfeeding more than one child at a time, or breastfeeding while pregnant, or breastfeeding twins. One participant, Kaz, reflected on this embodied female experience of God as a Trinity. When a pregnant mother breastfeeds, she embodies the ‘three in one’ mystery of the Holy Trinity. This feminine trinity was described by Edinger (1992) to derive from the world of nature. The breastfeeding mother embodies these concepts as her body turns into life sustaining milk.

Kaz’s insights revealed that the breastfeeding mother embodies God. She is at once the source of food, comfort, and love. As Indah pointed out, this is a non-hierarchical experience of God, because in a mother’s eyes, a baby is also God.

Breastfeeding Brings Body into Alignment with Nature and with Spirit

Participants acknowledged the challenges for women to develop a positive relationship with their bodies, and how this changed when they discovered the nurturing function of their maternal bodies. They spoke of insecurities, negative self-image, which are common in societies where the female body is routinely undervalued (Newton, 1955). Participants described their breastfeeding experience as transformative and empowering.

Participants thought of a breastfeeding mother and her baby as one unit. Friedman (1983) remarked that “the degree to which individuals manifest expanded self-conceptions reflects the extent to which they accept their unity with their true unbounded selves” (p. 39). What Friedman (2018) referred to as transpersonal self-concept was expanded as a result of participants’ experience of breastfeeding. Caplan (2009) argued that without developing a healthy connection to our bodies we cannot summon the necessary energy to integrate spiritual transformation. Leonard and Murphy (1995) agreed with the transformative power of the human body when they stated that “where deep down human change is concerned, there is no more effective teacher than the body” (p. 145).

It is relevant to mention that Grof (2000) maintained that biological birth “has a strong psychotraumatic impact on the child” (p. 29) but did not explore the possibility that breastfeeding might be nature’s way to heal that trauma. Research shows that breastfeeding is emotionally healing, for mothers and babies alike (Borra et al., 2015; Krol & Grossman, 2018). Participant statements describing breastfeeding as a divine experience is symbolized in Hindu mythology which locates god Vishnu’s abode on an ocean of milk (Pattanaik, 2013).

Breastfeeding Integrates the Discerning Mind

Caplan (2009) singled out discernment as “the most indispensable ingredient of an embodied spirituality” (p. xv). She explained that discernment can help us break away from conventionally accepted perspectives and facilitate access to a more meaningful reality. For Kjellgren (2023) this meaningful reality is essential to a transpersonal psychology perspective of the human experience, and it will always be linked to wholeness and health.

Participants had to confront misinformed health professionals and search for evidence-based sources of information that would validate their maternal instincts. Some of them described interactions with their doctor in which they were told to wean their babies off the breast before the baby was ready, or they were told that they could not produce enough milk to breastfeed their own baby. WHO and UNICEF (2022) has reported that industry makes false scientific claims to encourage health professionals to promote inferior breastmilk substitutes.

Participants’ spoke of the need for research to continue to help women find their way after the breastfeeding tradition has been interrupted for generations due to marketing of highly processed breastmilk substitutes. New mothers who don’t have a legacy that supports breastfeeding need health professionals and governments to actively provide accurate evidence-base information (WHO & UNICEF, 2022). Transpersonal psychology research, such as this investigation, can contribute to this effort by encouraging a better understanding of the transformative potential of a woman’s breastfeeding experience.

A Normalization of Breastfeeding as Socially Transformative

Rain described this transformation underlining emotional strength, fortitude and courage as qualities that emerged from a mother's breastfeeding experience. Participants agreed that this is a transformation that extends to other breastfeeding mothers who manage to overcome systemic challenges. Concurrently, Pattanaik (2013) observed that in South Indian folklore, a woman's power resides in her breasts.

Co-researchers talked about breastfeeding as a source of power --a power that seeks compassion, protection of those most vulnerable, and an autonomy of women and children over our own bodies. Smith (2013) pointed out that maintaining breastfeeding while returning to paid employment is one of the biggest challenges for mothers in many countries where paid maternity leave has not been implemented.

Archetypal Connection

The author presented the study findings to participants, for the purpose of validation, alongside a story from Hindu mythology. The Ramayana is one of the most influential religious epics of our time (Pattanaik, 2013), and it helped connect participants with other mothers across time and space. The realization of the archetypal nature of their experience expanded participants' sense of self beyond time and place, and reinforced their sense of working towards a higher purpose. All six participants involved in the validation stage of this study reported to have been deeply moved by Sita's story and they agreed that the patterns revealed in her story spoke of the cyclical nature of mothers' social struggles.

Hillman (2007) explained that myth is transformative because it speaks a truth that is descriptive. According to Lancaster (2023), one focal point in transpersonal psychology is the understanding that we live in myth and that myth is transformative. He explains that myth is a story that embeds our reality and which we must identify if we are to create awareness of the dysfunctional patterns that afflict us at the individual and the collective levels. The Ramayana illustrated the hostile environment women have historically faced when attempting to explore the transformative potential of their own bodies.

The Ramayana tells the love story of King Rama and his Queen, Sita. Rama is an avatar of the god Vishnu, and Sita represents nature as the daughter of Mother Earth. Rama rules over the richest kingdom on Earth, Ayodhya. When Sita becomes pregnant, Rama -in an effort to uphold patriarchal order- asks his brother to take Sita to the forest and abandon her there. Sita, heartbroken and confused at first, collects herself and emerges transformed, empowered, as she gives birth and nurtures her twin babies according to the laws of nature. Sita, the goddess, gives birth to twin gods, "All the hermit women loved them, and watched those boys instead of offering worship to the gods" (Buck, 1976, p. 9).

Twelve years after Sita was abandoned, King Rama organized a big party in the forest for all his subjects to celebrate the unprecedented wealth of the richest kingdom on Earth. By the side of the dispirited King was a golden statue of Sita in the place reserved for the King's wife.

At the party, Rama noticed Sita in the crowd and beckoned her to step forward. He gave Sita a chance to return to him, but Sita refused, choosing instead to return to her Mother Earth. And this is how, a broken-hearted Rama walked into the river, chanting Sita's name, while all of Ayodhya stood on the riverbank weeping (Buck, 1976). A civilization that ignores the essential balance of nature reflected in a woman's body, is bound to collapse --Rama never rose again.

According to Jung's (1970) theory, by identifying the archetype at work, we can prevent its destructive aspects and build a better society.

Limitations

The findings might have been impacted by participants' high level of education in general, and in the topic of breastfeeding in particular, as all participants were breastfeeding advocates. One participant, Siphon, suggested that it would be useful to include more research of the experience of mothers from traditional or indigenous societies who might be free to breastfeed to natural term without interference. The results of this study may have been attenuated by this lack of representatives.

The Ramayana is a very complex and far-reaching epic. The author's interpretation showed value to participants and early readers involved in the validation stage of this inquiry. Different people might interpret the text differently.

Conclusion

The voices of twelve mothers shed light on dysfunctional patterns entrenched in our Western society and on promising future developments in transpersonal psychology. The organic inquiry conducted by the author suggested that supporting mothers' wish to breastfeed might assist us in our return to nature and to Spirit and promote positive transformation for individuals and societies. Consequently, this article aligns breastfeeding advocacy efforts of the WHO with the enactment of transpersonal values that impact the individual, the community and the environment. Through archetypal identification, this article suggests that a transpersonal tool might be used in research with the purpose of encouraging transformative processes which are socially and environmentally meaningful.

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