

# INNOVATIVE MALE DANCERS TAKING THE ART OF SOUTH INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE

SIVARAMAN.P

PhD RESEARCH SCHOLAR (REG.NO: PhD 2017/D/PT/19)

UNDER THE GUIDENCE OF

DR. Y. SUNITHA, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

KALAI KAVIRI COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS,

18 BENWELLS ROAD, THIRICHIRAPPALLY- TAMILNADU.

## Introduction

This chapter, with a general introduction, explains the title of the thesis, the chapterisation, the definition of the problem, the scope of the research, the objectives, the methodology, the original contribution.

### 1. The title

Innovative male dancers taking the art of South Indian classical dance.

### 1. 2. Chapterisation

Literary sources (male dancing in literature)

Nataraja, the supreme deity of Indian dance art which is related with Indian mythology, is the great iconic symbol of male dance. Description of Nataraja dance is given in the books like Natyasasthra, Vishnu Dharmothara, Nritha rathnavali and Dasaropaka etc. The Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharatha also describe the male dancing.

Chapter -2- Gurus through their tradition.

This chapter describes the contribution of Tanjore quartet and their followers, Vempathi traditions and other traditions in kuchipudi, different styles and contributions of Gurus from Pattikkamthodi Ravunnimenon to Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair in Kathakali.

### Chapter -3- Various dance forms exclusively for male.

How Kathakali, the thandava dance became male oriented art and its vigorous elements in advances are described. The male participation of Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi also is portrayed.

### Chapter -4- Role of male dancers in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The important of male dancers and their roles in developing Indian dance art and culture are described.

## **Chapter -5- Innovative methods adopted by present male dancers.**

The efforts of the dancers who took roles in the innovations in classical dance without deviating from its natural methods helped South Indian dance forms to be propagated and popularised. The chapter portrays the new methods adopted in music and aharya, angika, vachika concepts.

### **1.3 Definition of the problem**

This innovation of male artists exists widely in all South Indian classical dances. They have set changes in basic adavu methods while some have made modification in Kathakali and Kuchipudi. Gurus especially male dancers have set innovation in their own style, revealing its individuality.

The present research throws light on the importance of innovation of South Indian male dancers.

### **1.4. The Scope.**

There is great scope to explore this handling of innovations made by South Indian male dancers. There for many gurus and dancers have been taken for study and the evolution of classical dance from olden times to the modern century has been known to have great significance. Thus this research help us to understand the different aspects of aesthetics made by male artistes.

### **1.5 The objectives**

The aim of this research is to create awareness about present day classical dance which has come from gradual process of enhancement.

### **1.6 The methodology**

For analyzing the research on the innovations of male dancers in South India and books of several authors were referred to, as preliminary source of data.

“Concerts of CDS were referred to understand the different structures of modification in classical dance.

“After attending the lecture demonstration of experts, conversation with the professors and their approach, the research has thrown light in to the subject

“The notable compositions of the Gurus have also been collected, from internet sources.

### **1.7 Original contribution**

The development of male dance has been traced out from the concept and the various aspects of present day dancing. The structures of innovations have been analysed through the different methods developed in Kathakali, Kuchipudi and Bharathanatyam.

## **Conclusion**

South Indian classical dance has been handled by many Gurus and composers. This research reveals the importance of the innovations of the South Indian male dancers. In addition, this research has analyzed the structure of male dancing in South India.

A study of the innovations made by well known classical reveals the importance of the historical passage of present day dancing it is hoped that this research will enable the students and dance lovers to have a better understanding of innovative male dancers in South India.

## **THE DERIVATION OF KALLUVAZHICHTTA AND OTHER TRADITIONS IN KATHAKALI.**

Kathakali, the well structured dance art which has traditional method in every aspects came from ‘Gurukula’ tradition. Impossible dancing and acting becomes possible through long years of practice as well as every effortful technical art forms. The victory is the calibre of personality development based on the intimacy towards science and technology of the art. The literature of ‘attakkatha’ (story of the play) meant for ‘thrividha abhinaya’ and vachika motivated musical mood and abhinaya, sringarapadams and slow padams are widely portrayed in ‘attakkathas’ and slow padams are the basic stones of abhinaya. Communication through words is not applicable in Kathakali which narrates the importance of bhavarasas through angika abhinaya. Character becomes more enjoyable in Kathakali and most of the stories are not absolutely played programmes. So the continuation of transformation is not seen in attakathas.

Like other classical dance forms, Kathakali has travelled through the decades of transformation process through the genius artists and gurus in Kerala. Different kinds of traditions rolled and contributed for its development. In addition, the vital participation of Olappamanna Kalari (The residence of Brahmins who conducted kathakali practice) is very prominent in the history of Kathakali. Kaplingadan, Kallidikkodan, and Kalluvazhi were the relevant methods and Kalluvazhi is the final method derived from other styles and based on Natyasasthra.

Kottayam tradition is derived from the modifications of basic infrastructure of Kathakali, from Kottayam Swaroopan. Later this tradition is also known as Kalladikkodan in Palghat district in Kerala just as Kaplagadu tradition is derived from Kaplingad Mana (residence of Brahmins) in trichur district. The name Kaplingad Narayanan Namboothiri is prominent in the history of Kathakali.

### **DIFFERENT TRADITIONS**

#### **Kalladikkodan Tradition**

Kalladikkodan tradition has no existence without Kottayam style of Kathakali. The basic modification of Kathakali came from the continuation of Vettath style became known as Kottayam tradition and hence this same style propagated in kalladikode area of Palakkad known as Kalladikkodan tradition. Valiya Thampuran who was the uncle of Kottayam Thampuran understood the methods of Ramanattam in his early childhood. This inspired him to create and compose ‘attakkatha’ and these were enriched with poetic

quality and different from Ramanattam.

Kottayam Thampuran wished to make a new style adopted from the techniques of Vettathu tradition with strict basics of scientific methods in abhinaya. He invited chathupanikker, the 'asan'(teacher) of Ramanattam from Perumpatappu palace and conducted a Kaliyogam under the supervision of Thampuran and Chathupanikker. Dancers of the Kaliyogam presented arangattam of attakkathas like Bhakavadam etc. One Unnithampuran and Iravichakyar participated in this efforts which became the vital part of Kathakali.

### The modifications

- 1) Accepted chuttimethod for characters<sup>2</sup>
- 2) Prescribed Krishna's hair style as in Krishnattam and absorbed several changes in aharya abhinaya.
- 3) Expansion of "kuttichamara" (shoulder costume like fan from a plant) for villain characters like Bhaka and Kalakeya.
- 4) Prescribed red 'uthareeyam'(kind of upper body dress) in addition to white uthareeyam.
- 5) Determined greeting slokas like.....
  - a) Mathamganana.....
  - b) Kalambhodara.....
- 6) Iratty (double) added beside 'Panchamasa kokile.....'
- 7) They brought hairharavidinatha sahithyam for thodayam and sung in the talas wise champa, chempada, panchari and muriyadantha.
- 8) Villain characters different from its features like big hair settings which helped to palingenesis from other satvika characters.

Another important feature of this tradition was the mixing of abhinaya with dance and examples of irattikal (doubles) in kalayan sougandikam and kalakeyavadam were significant. Mudras used (gestures) in this plays were of Chakyar's and supposed to be the gestures used in Kalladikkodan tradition were from vettath traditions. It might have resulted attangal (dances) in Kathakali art. It gained the featured organs when changed from Ramanattam. In other words, with the existence of Kottayam-Kalladikkodan traditions, Kathakali developed through dancial elements and absorbed new techniques for perfectionism. The constant transformation needed the blending of pure nritha and abhinaya with classical infrastructure and Kaplingat Namboothiri, well known musician and scholar did it with his essential caliber.

### KAPLINGADAN STYLE

It was Kaplihgat Namboothiri, the genius and significant who developed the techniques of Kathakali which related with repertoire and practice, had got the knowledge and musical talent before handling Kathakali and aimed at embellishing the caliber with music in Kathakali. He wished to nurture Kathakali with the dance and acting method of Koodiyattam. He invited Nanumenon from Thrippoonithura to conduct

a 'Kaliyogam' (class of practice in Kathakali) in his illam (house) and Menon gave a well known practice to Ittiripanikker who was one among five students he had, became a good 'adyavasankaran'<sup>1</sup> (well learned Kathakali dancer). Namboothiri, a well known musician who might have got equal importance for practising in Kaliyogam. After five years of rigorous practice Kaligadan kaliyogam formatted and played a vital role in the history of Kathakali techniques.

Kapligat Namboothiri and his contemporary Ittiripanikker, Unniri Panikker renewed the methods of presentation and practice, modified and polished it with their creative knowledge.

#### The Modifications

- 1) 'Chutti' is compulsory with 'arimbu'
- 2) Prescribed chuttippoovu in nose and forehead for kathi, thadi characters.
- 3) Hair designed the back side of crown
- 4) Saints prescribed with 'Vellamanayola' etc.

Angika was enriched with hand gestures from Hasthalakshana dweepika. Satvika become more important in abhinaya abhinaya embellished with vocal and rhythm.

### KALLUVAZHI TRADITION

The combination of kalladikkodan and kaplingat traditions gave birth to new form of style named kalluvazhi tradition from olappamanna mana, the first school of kathakali. The real blending of kalladikkodan's angika abhinaya with Kaplingadan's ranga prayoga portrayed in kalluvazhi chitta. It was olappamanna chithrabhanu namboothirippadu, karumanassery krishnan kutty bhagavathar and sankupaniker who did the preliminary creation kalladikkodan designed four qualities for dancer's body, they are ayavu, ulavu, balam, murukam (loose, curvation, power and tightness) besides kalluvazhi prescribed othukkam (discipline) and kalluvazhi is better than exhibiting gestures with thalam and padams. Kalluvazhi tradition focuses five chuzhippu in the chest. Angavikshepa in kalladikkodan is not aesthetic like kalluvazhi. Their angavikshepa are not disciplined, but spreading and kalasangal are large in number but done without sthayeabhava. Kalluvazhi tradition has solved all these disadvantages by improving gesture position chuzhippu and it caused kathakali to become more aesthetic, clear and powerful. They reduced the kalasams from its large number and it resulted in giving good experience to connoisseur. It insisted in reflecting kalladikkodan and kaplingadan traditions those advantages were not applicable.

After the period of ittirarissa Menon and Sanku Panikar the great Ravunnimenon entered the scene and then kathakali has got a golden era in the history of different traditions. Ravunni Menon renewed this kalluvazhi style with knowledge of natyasasthra<sup>3</sup>. He familiarized all features of kathakali with story and character, and the changes he brought in kalari (centre for practice) were very relevant. He prescribed enough exercises for the body in aiming the repertoire. Kalladikkodan kaplingadan styles blended with former form of kalluvazhi tradition, but yet uapanga abhinayam did not expand. They considered bhavarasabhinayam as the movement of eyeballs, eyebrows



and lips. So Ravunni Menon changed this method by the application of rasabhinaya as a part of practice<sup>4</sup>.

Kalluvazhi method of Kathakali is indebted to the sacrificed life history of Pattikkamthodi Ravunni Menon.

Ittiraricha Menon was the significant representative of the first half formation of Kalluvazhi tradition and till the period of Ravunni Menon Kathakali passed the process of innovation in angika, aharya, vachika and satvika concepts. This transformation should be considered as the growth of technical advantage. Strict - instructed learning method had resulted in strong, disciplined body movements with appropriate vocal and rhythm, changed it into an extra ordinary, aesthetic picturesque with joyful habit of enjoyment of passion which involved in the systematic and pure symmetry of 'chollyattam'. It was Ravunni Menon who made modifications in Kathakali dance and Kathakali enjoyment. Perfect motivation of Kathakali is based on the concept of story, duty of the characters and the actor should be conscious and moralistic.

Even though Ravunni Menon was a confident and distinct personality in Kathakali, he had to face strong criticism in abhinaya from those whose criticisms had to be taken into consideration. So he went to Kodungallore gurukulam for higher studies<sup>5</sup>. He learned natya from Kodungallore Kochunnithampuran and Kunhunni thampuram with the practice of eye movement and face massaging. They composed Sanskrit slokas around hundred in number for dancing before and after of padams within the five years of hard practice.

Before Ravunni Menon, eye practice didn't exist and actors were not aware of facial massaging. They were ignorant of four Mukha-ragas namely prasannam, raktham, syamam, and swabhavikam. Actors gave much importance to 'gramyam' with song, did not consider sthayi, vakyartham, sanchari, padartham etc. Ravunni Menon prescribed appropriate swaras for rasas. He stressed the unity of song and natya and underlined the presentation of padams in slow tempo. Vakyartham and padartham are important only in slow tempo and 32 aksharakalam in chollyattam is necessary.

The renewed abhinaya system in Kalluvazhi is the transformation of sthayi from 'angi' with the concept of all features as angas. Ravunni Menon maintained lokadarmi in 'rangakriyas' and instructions. He brought changes in Kalari and 'arangau' to practicalise the above mentioned abhinaya concepts. The prescription of the practice of eye movements in brahmamuhurtha and the modification of mudrabhinayam and upangabhinayam through the Chanakya of natyasasthra were highly significant.

He had codified in eight kinds of rasas except 'bheebhathsa' in 'aravindadalopamanayathe' in Balivijaya and more over, he added more innovative methods in practice to be continued through his disciples. Present system in female roles is matured with the abhinaya - dance concepts of Ravunni Menon.

The positions, while doing the demonstrations of some gestures like I, and you in female roles were systematized and instructed the sitting position on peedam (stool). He avoided big quantity of 'kalasams' which would affect the beauty of characters and

reduced the numbers of jumping before 'Meyyurachadavu'. Ravunnimenon did not compromise with the deviation of natya dharma in to lokadarmi from the genuine style of Kathakali.

In brief, we can see today's Kathakali came from the systematic and directive modification of Kalluvazhi chitta by Ravunnimenon followed by Kalamandalam Padmanabhan Nair, Padmabhution Ramankutty Nair and Padmasree Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair and other prominent dancers.

### **Notes and References**

1. K P S Menon , Kathakali Rangam , P35
2. Killimangalam Vasudevan Namboothirppad, Kalamandalam M P S Namboothiri, Kathakaliyude Rangapada Charithram. P 81
3. Ibid P 135
4. Ibid P136
5. Olappamanna Kathakaliyude Rangasree P 103

