

**HISTORY OF DANCE FORMS IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO PALGHAT DISTRICT
(PAVAKATHAKALI AND THOLPAVAKOOTHU)**

Thesis submitted to Bharathiar University in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

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PSGR Krishnammal College for Women



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Conclusion

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The summing up part of the entire thesis is the major objective in the concluding part of the thesis. The objective of the study was to examine Kerala dance forms through the ages and the origin of Palghat dance forms, especially Pavakathakali and Tholpavakoothu. The Scholar has tried to focus on the dance forms of Pavakathakali and Tholpavakoothu in Palghat District. The work brings to focus the changes in dance forms in Palghat District and its socio cultural importance with the above objectives in mind.

Every culture has its own dance forms, rhythmic stylized ways of using the body to communicate and celebrate. Many cultures have perpetuated their legends, mythology and history through dance. Dances are a form of coherent expression of human feelings. Dances are created according to our fundamental values, aesthetics and mores. Dance as an art is a deliberate activity that involves purpose, rhythm, culturally patterned sequences and extraordinary movements of aesthetic and inherent value. One of the oldest artforms, dance, is found in every culture and it is performed for purposes ranging from the ceremonial, liturgical and magical to the theatrical, social and simply aesthetic. Dances give richer recreational content, to daily relaxation and seasonal jubilation.

Gods created dance as a device for entertainment. Dance is the synthesis of human life, depicted by human agencies for the delectation, appreciation and understanding of the people. Dancing is a general means of enjoyment and a means of re-affirming social unity. Dance gives dignity, refinement and charm, as it is invested with idealistic rather than realistic quality. The use of dance is explained as it adds beauty and grace. Dance forms are not static and they move across time and space and adopt new classifications and meanings and they naturally change. Some dance forms are reshaped to such a degree and they are undocumented for such a long time, that tracing their roots presents an enormous challenge.

Dance itself is a ritual in all its manifestations and therefore, has to be developed and cultivated in the masses from the grass root levels itself so that the rich culture, tradition and heritage continues to live and should be propagated to such an extent that it

takes over all sections of the society as it has in the past few Centuries, irrespective of the religion, economic or social statuses.

Dance has been a regular activity of the human race from the primitive to the most advanced times of today. Today, although dancing has been resolutely reinstated, gurus and dancers are faced with the task of extending and enlarging the classical repertoire to include subjects which will be pertinent and meaningful to the 21st Century. Today the dance artists create dance compositions, from the inspiration, obtained from such beautiful dancing sculptures. They give a form to their inner creativity. They also devise costumes after carefully examining these ancient dance sculptures.

The history of the dance, as an expression of emotion natural to man, is almost as old as the history of man himself. Primitive people danced in the forests in simple imitation of nature as they found it. Tradition and culture of a country are generally seen in the art of the dance. India, being a huge country, has a great and rich culture, that has been handed to the present generation by the preceding ones. The diverse cultures have enabled the emergence of a huge number of folk, traditional, classical, martial, devotional, ritualistic dance and theatrical forms. Over the past two millennia, the dance, as a formal art, has evolved in India through a process of negotiation between a highly formalised tradition and a looser, broad based practice. Indian dance has evolved from Divinity. In India, dance has a message for the audience. In ancient India, the dance was presumed to be of such aesthetic richness that it was thought to be a direct gift of gods to men. The Indian dance survives today as one of the world's most fascinating and complex forms.

The Dance is a form of expression and communication, that brings out the innermost feelings, depicting the cultural aspects of civilization. Each dance style draws inspiration from stories depicting life, ethics and beliefs of Indian people. There are many types of dances in India, from those which have deeply religious content, to those which are based on more trivial happy occasions. Classical Indian dances are commonly always spiritual in content, although this is often true also of folk dances.

The Indian classical dance forms mainly translate our philosophical ideals, legends and mythological stories into Bhava as well as Tala. Indian classical dance

reflects the deep philosophical and religious nature of Indian people. The classical dances of India are widely practised and regarded as art forms descended unchanged from the earliest period of Hindu culture. The classical traditions of all the regions of India are inspired by Bharata's analysis of the aesthetic of dance.

The traditional and ritualistic dance forms attribute importance to the lower sections of society, who are otherwise a neglected lot and go unnoticed. The tradition and culture, that have propagated the very system of folk dance and theatre in India, must be preserved with utmost interest and care. They are deeply rooted in the rituals and the religious practices, as a result of which they must be nurtured and developed for the further generations. Folk dance forms are not as complex as the classical dance form but they are beautiful because of the rawness in it. The most interesting part of the folk dance is the attire required for its performance. These dances range from simple joyous celebration to ritualistic dances.

The Hindu dance is referred to repeatedly in the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The Jaina tradition is known for its contribution to the arts of India, and majority of dance texts come from the Hindu tradition. Some Buddhist communities do admit dancing, as a part of worship, as we see in the religious practices of Tibetan Buddhism today.

Kerala is a land of different cultures and at times, one comes across certain traditions, that are untraceable in the pages of history. Arts forms of Kerala reflect the customs and traditions, that are indigenous to Kerala. The State has countless number of art forms, which represent a rich repertoire of performing arts, reflecting man's intense relationship with nature and his constant desire for communication with the unknown. Kerala has evolved from very old days its typical dance forms, which are highly expressive of the way of living and the outlook of its people. From the earliest times of human settlement in Kerala, people danced to the village goddess, for protection, to the sea god, for successful trade and to the land gods, for fertility and good harvest.

The performing art forms of Kerala have a special attraction among all audiences. These arts are significant pillars of Kerala's heritage. For centuries, the performing artists have colourfully presented great epics. The ritual art forms of Kerala are the cultural benchmarks, that have helped shape the very sense of right and wrong in the society.

Our folk performing arts forms are famous for their vibrant and insightful glance at the stories, legends and traditions of the past. Their mysticism lies in the intricate preparation, natural setting and the overall serene ambience of the display. Folk performing arts and traditions have contributed significantly to national integration, social change, socio economic development and overall preservation of cultural heritage and deposits. The contemporary forces of social change have affected the folk culture.

A common cultural phase can be identified in the folk art forms like Kalamezhuthu, Pooramkali, Theyyam, Thira, Padayani, Mudiyetu, Kannyarkali, Paana, Thidambu Nritham, Sanghakali, Thattinmelkali and Kummatti. In social hierarchies and inequalities, these down trodden people needed a voice, a place to hold on. The art forms of the educated and elite group began to flourish. These artforms grew interacting with each other. The saviours and well-wishers of classical artforms like Koothu, Kudiyaattam, Krishnanattam, Mohiniyaattam and Kathakali thus became the elite class of society.

The theatre of Kerala is strongly influenced by the Victorian theatres. Kutiyattam, Krishnanattam and Kathakali, ritual art forms like Theyyam, Mudiyetu and Padayani and folk theatres like Kakkarisi Nadakam, Porattu Nadakam, were under the tight grips of Victorian theatre. Some of the ancient classical arts such as Koodiyattam, Nangiarkoothu and Ottan Thullal were staged within the precincts temple theatres, called Koothambalam, which were out of reach to the lower castes for long. Many were based on the Epics and performed in Sanskrit, the tongue of the higher classes. Thus these classical performances effectively shut out the lower classes, until hybrid art forms that employed Malayalam and tackled issues to which the common man could relate emerged.

Puppetry is a popular theatre art form, which has its own unique styles all over the world. Puppetry is close to the hearts and minds of the people, as it has a personal and intimate attractiveness, along with a common format and content because of the colloquial dialects used. Puppetry is a traditional art form and it is used as a useful medium of entertainment and communication. It was perhaps the primitive urge of men to create life like movement through figures, which later developed into theatre form, imbibing elements of all arts forms. The puppeteer uses his or her skills to make the puppets, an inanimate object, talk, sing, dance and behave the way humans do.

Puppetry is the most outstanding division of theatre in India. The earliest puppet shows in South India are said to have used shadow puppets, which drew on tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The puppet tradition is very popular in many regions of India such as in the State of Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Rajasthan and in other States also. Palghat has played a significant role in preserving the tradition of Kerala. Thullal, Kathakali, Mohiniyattam and Chakyarkoothu are the most important dance forms of Kerala and the District has contributed many worthy artists to the mentioned dance forms.

Pavakathakali is a famous classical dance drama of Kerala. Pavakathakali is a traditional glove puppetry show, native to Kerala. This artform is performed commonly in the rural areas. This tradition can be traced back to almost 18th Century, from Paruthipully village of the Palghat District, after Kathakali reached that region. Pavakathakali is so simple a version of the Kathakali that it was welcomed by the illiterate rural people for whom Kathakali was inaccessible owing to its complexity. Few families of Andi Pandaram community in Paruthipully village of Palghat District are the traditional practitioners of Pavakathakali. It was Mr. Venu of Natanakairali, who adopted and effected innovations in this art form.

In Kerala, one can see the symbols of Tamil culture. Mainly Palghat and nearby places are the areas of traditional style of shadow puppetry performance. Among the ancient art forms of Kerala, Tholpavakoothu holds a position of significance. It is presented in temples not so much as entertainment as to propitiate the Goddess. Tholpavakoothu is an art form, which has been practiced since centuries. Since information is available everywhere in the Modern World, people do not like that type of narrative form and the duration and the time of performance. If they show interest, in the face of other communication media, the art form will have some hope for continued existence.

Today it has carved a niche for itself in the vast folk art canvas of the State. The performance of this art abroad has also fetched much acclaim. Today traditional puppetry is dying a slow death. Modern puppetry, on the other hand, is gaining momentum, albeit slowly and it is often used as an instrument for imparting social messages. Thus the performance of Tholpavakoothu is a vanishing performance tradition.

Findings and Recommendations

More opportunity must be provided to Pavakathakali and Tholpavakoothu artists, in performing the programmes in temples and other places. They could be enabled to conduct the programmes in schools and colleges in Palghat and other Districts. The Government protects and helps the art forms and artists. The Government and cultural organisations may honour the senior puppeteers, with awards and recognise their skill in shadow puppetry and glove puppetry. Women, from the puppeteer's family, may be given training in puppet work and other activities through self-groups operating in the respective areas and other areas. A training workshop, on the new technology of presentation for the younger generation through the dances to different academic institutions, will give new life to the existing performance as well as motivate the youngsters.

Suggestion

- It is suggested to the future researchers to take up similar study so as to bring the minute aspects of the Pavakathakali and Tholpavakoothu and its influence on the peoples in Palghat District.