



Art Forms Related to Kalarippayattu

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Abstract

Kalarippayattu, known as the mother of all martial arts also displays various dynamic aspect of performing arts that can be easily incorporated into dance and theatre. It helps the dancer to enhance his performance by improving his physical attributes for easy execution of movements. There are large number of art forms and festive events in Kerala that are closely related to kalarippayattu. These include classical art forms, folk arts, folk dance drama, and religious art forms etc. many of which are closely related to kalarippayattu and interesting to witness and learn about.

Keywords: Kalarippayattu, art, Chavitti uzichil, Krishnanattam, Kathakali, Theyyam, Yathrakali, chuvadu, Bharatanatyam, Folk dance, Vedic, Classical dance, ritual art, Salutation, Meiyarappu. chikilsa, krishnageethi, Kerala, Gurukkal, Kalari, manaveda, urimippayattu, kalarichuvadu, vadivu, adavu, upanayanam, vedas, meiyabhyasam, body, sanghams.

INTRODUCTION

It is believed that the origin of martial art kalarippayattu, classical dance form Bharatanatyam and yoga were all originated from lord shiva and traces back to Vedic times. Kalarippayattu is one of the oldest martial arts in the world that is still alive. The impact of kalarippayattu on various art forms of Kerala is remarkable. Various performing art forms such as Krishnanattam, Theyyam, Kathakali, etc has drawn several aspects of kalarippayattu within it. Apart from this, semi religious art form like Yathrakali, folk art forms and several art practises along with many other tribal art forms incorporates kalarippayattu movements and traditions within it.

CLASSICAL DANCE KATHAKALI

Kathakali, one among the Indian classical dance directly relates to kalarippayattu. The influence of kalarippayattu can be greatly seen in kathakali. Just like kalarippayattu, even the place where krishnanattam and kathakali practitioners were trained were also been called by the name Kalari. Majority of the movements used in kathakali training can be easily related with that of kalarippayattu. These movements are used to enhance the mobility, flexibility and strength of the dancers. Apart from this Kalari uzichil has been imparted to students of kathakali to enhance body conditioning. The rigorous training routine of kathakali requires high level of physical fitness which is maintained through Kalari chikilsa and exercises.



The movements of kalaripayattu were greatly useful in giving vigour and life to the male characters in kathakali plays. Just like krishnanattam kathakali also followed many traditions of kalaripayattu right from offering salutation. kathakali also inherited the practise of Chavitti uzichil (massage using legs) which were mainly given to kalaripayattu practitioners. Many of the leg, hand and body movements of kathakali along with jumps and bends were derived from Kalari movements. Similarly, the use of kaccha can be seen in both which provides immense benefits for the practitioners during movement execution.

TEMPLE ART KRISHNANATTAM

Krishnanattam, from which the kathakali was derived, was created by manaveda, who was the then zamorin raja in northern kerala. Krishnanattam was based on krishnageethi written by manaveden raja in the seventeenth century. It is in this art form the more consistent utilisation of kalaripayattu techniques were found. It could be because manaveda, himself was a warrior and the practitioners who were trained in krishnattam had background on kalaripayattu. Since the art form demands greater stamina, strength and flexibility, warriors who were trained in kalaripayattu were greatly entertained to learn this art.



Though the overall structure and exercises remains same, there existed slight variation within the art creating different styles depending on the ruler under which they come in. The salutations, leg movements, meiyarappu used in krishnanattam are closely related to those in kalaripayattu. It was also a tradition in krishnattam Kalari to let the practitioner undergo uzichil (massage) in order to gain greater flexibility.

RITUAL ART THEYYAM

Theyyam is a traditional ritualistic art form, which is prominent in northern kerala. The performer's dress up and takes the role of the deity associated with the temple. Practitioners of this art form usually undergo kalaripayattu training along with massage in order to make them capable of taking various characters. During the part of thottam kalasham, the usual theyyam engages kalarichuvadu and body movements.



Most of the theyyam holds any of the Kalari weapons in hands. In some of them like thacholi othenan theyyam, they even perform urumipayattu. Similarly, kathivannur veeran theyyam holds sword and shield in hand and exhibits combat techniques and movements. Unlike kathakali, theyyam involves very selective use of specific techniques of kalaripayattu.

SEMI RELIGIOUS ART YATHRAKALI

Yathrakali is a form of semi religious art that is indispensable to kerala brahmans. Sanghakkali, Shastrakkali, Catthirakkali, Panankali, etc are some other names of the same. The brahmans who gained training in martial arts were considered a bit low than those who were educated in vedas. They were mostly called as yathra brahmans. It used to entertain the people along with having socio-political aspect at that time. There are different segments for this art form which sometimes even lasted for three four days. The meiyabhyasam (body exercises), vadivu (animal stance), chuvadu, circling, usage of weapon can all be seen as part of this entertainment.



The training of yathrakkali entertainment even consists of extensive body massage and physical training along with other aspects of it. There were around 18 sanghams (group) of yathrakali and each of them acquired trained in 6 different styles of Kalari. It is believed that thus there come 108 different kinds of Kalari. Yathrakkali was performed on all major happy occasions such as upanayanam, marriage, etc. apart from the martial character; different segments of yathrakkali also included slokas and praises as well. Though it is specific to one particular group of society it highly upholds the heritage of kalarippayattu.

CONCLUSION

It is notable that today kalarippayattu provides a greater scope for practitioners of various performing arts in widening their sphere of performances. Productions and choreographies of great artists like Chandralekha and Daksha sheth draws inspiration from kalarippayattu. Kalarippayattu has played a major role in shaping many of the art forms and still can contribute in enhancing the skills of existing performing artists of various fields. The bodily movements and techniques used in kalarippayattu provides immense benefit in conditioning an artist's physical prowess and ability to execute the movements with ease along with better control and body awareness.

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