

**ART AND TRADITION
OF
SRI LANKA**

VOL 11

DANCE OF SRI LANKA

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Dr. Priyanka Virajini Medagedara Karunaratne



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Dedication

*For my loving mother
Eminent agriculturist, creative idealist, who induced
creativity in my soul*

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ART AND TRADITION OF SRI LANKA - VOL 11

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Preface

The Art Tradition of Sri Lanka volume II Dance of Sri Lanka is a unique piece of work. The page by page coverage is of the development of dance forms through Sri Lankan history sumptuous imagery and experts' accessible guide to the dance tradition of the country. This will serve as a great text book for University students who involve in the appreciation of art traditions of Sri Lanka as well as academia. The use of forms of dance permeates every culture and tradition from the earliest times to the modern day. Combining aesthetic impact with cultural significance, the dance form adorns all types of surfaces from stone, wood and ivory and also covers some of areas of Buddhist and Hindu architectural sites.

The Art Tradition of Sri Lanka Volume II dance of Sri Lanka reflects this ubiquity by presenting a biography of dance forms in a variety of forms – painted, architectural and carved dance forms are displayed in more forms. Each chapter also contains the uniqueness of Sri Lankan dance forms spread throughout history where dance forms are plucked from history where brought to the fore with essential details isolated and framed. This permits a detailed study of how dance form become a part of tradition and culture of the country, how the artisan has been recognized by the society and what aspects artisans look forward to, how different eras celebrate dance as an art form by poetical literature, paintings, sculptures, carvings associated with cultural and religious aspects, how the classical dance form developed

in the country and how the costume played a pivotal role in dance in Sri Lanka.

The writings provided here are from the ancient history to the dance costume. The Art Tradition of Sri Lanka Volume II dance of Sri Lanka discovers intriguing cultural elements and connections, narrated of stories of the great patterns of innovators and creates original reference to inspirational design resources.

The present text book grew out of the early seeds which had their origins in my teaching of appreciation of Art tradition of Sri Lanka to BSc Engineering undergraduates of the University of Moratuwa which started in 2013.

Foreword

Historical evidences prove that dance has been rooted as a cultural institution in the tradition of Sri Lanka. The references found in literary and historical writings corroborated by archeological evidence prove beyond doubt that the island nurtured and maintained highly developed dance forms.

Dance can be defined as a cultural form that results from creative processes which manipulate human bodies in time and space. It is a cultural form and is a visual manifestation of social relations which have an elaborate aesthetic system. Besides, dance is a form of art containing traditional knowledge, values, norms and methodologies of continuous practice which highlight the tradition of a society. The content of the work is highlighted through visual and textual descriptions leading to panoramic scholarly dimensions.

Acknowledgements

I have to thank many people for the interest taken and the help rendered in this publication. First and foremost I have to thank my guru and my supervisor Vidyajothi Emeritus Professor Nimal De Silva, who has driven my interest to study dance and its costumes. I am also grateful to my loving mother who gave birth me endowing me with creativity and creative thinking and is a towering pillar behind my success. My gratitude also goes to all my teachers who laid the foundation for my creative education. I must also thank Mrs. Janz for proof reading and careful reading which I have throughout received at her hand and Nishanee for guiding me through the intricacies of Microsoft In-design software. Finally my thanks are also due to Deshamanya Mr, Sirisumana Godage and his dedicated staff for their continuing commitment to high standards in book publication.

Last but not least my heartfelt thanks go to comrade and companion my loving husband Lakshitha and my precious children Sandeev, Lakdiv, and Princess Ayuni for their loving support and encouragement throughout the process of writing this book.

Introduction

Reading Dance

This text book will take the reader on a journey through more than 1500years of dance .It shows how dance forms were created, reassessed, transformed and recycled in myriads of styles and combinations through time. Taste, fashion, politics and ideas about the past change continuously and are reflected by the creativity of artists and ancient patrons, who produce patterns in all media in physical forms within their own culture and society.

Dance forms are developed as cultural elements of tradition that interrelate with each other art form like musical forms, literature and legends. Dance forms are composed of motifs that interrelate with symmetrical, asymmetrical or linear ways with objects such as decorative paintings, carvings of ivory caskets, sculptures, carvings of architecture and palm leaf manuscripts. Reading a dance form involves enquiring into the cultural and social context of its design and of the object it deform decorates- why was the form made? who designed or decorated it? Who was permitted to see it? What were the function and the purpose of the form? and how did it relate to the interior or exterior world that surrounded it.

Dancing forms have an agency: they engage and influence the viewer with visual qualities of materials and

techniques that enchant the eye. Their attributes of colour, shape, costume and body forms can communicate ideas and emotions. People may also be merely wonderstruck by the virtuosity of the artist without necessarily understanding the function or historical context of the dance form. Dance forms attract the viewer's gaze, but they also connect people to the decorated object and the social context in which it is, or was, seen or used.

Dance forms are important for human society, influencing the way people engage in creative activities. By encouraging the viewer to spend time looking at forms ensures an unending interaction. This is important for a sense of appreciation but also for individual or group expressions of cultural or political status and power. For example, a decorative freeze of dancers might reflect the taste of the artist or the people or the society in which they live: its artistic qualities and may signify wealth or power; and the origins of its patterns may be displaying connections to the past in order to communicate identity or status.

The cultural, social and political environments of the people who commissioned and made decorative elements in architecture or drawn on manuscripts and walls of Buddhist temples gave rise to psychological complexity, historical meaning, and ritual symbolism inherent in the patterns that decorated them. The ways that instigators and producers of design have reacted to earlier dance forms enable a rich continuity that, in turn, inspires further exploration of techniques and patterns.

Chapter 1

The Dance Tradition of Sri Lanka

Introduction

Dance is a motion has inherent and aesthetic value and symbolic potential. Furthermore dance can be considered as an intimate and constitutive aspect of cultural identity, and like language is a window to person's world view. Dance altered states of consciousness flow, secular and religious ecstasy. The tradition of dance in Sri Lanka usually assembles poetry, temple murals, sculpture, carvings, music, subtle emotions, rhythmic body movements, ambiguity, multiple meanings in costumes, and other stage accessories which signification of cultural practices and experiences.

Early Tradition of Sri Lanka: Historical Influences

Indian culture and tradition have no doubt influenced the Sinhalese from ancient times. The people of Lanka come under the cultural influences of the tribal cultures that prevailed before the development of the urban cultures in the Indus valley. Immigrants may have introduced at least some elements, the spirits the way of life and beliefs and superstitions of the Vedic Aryans. The recorded history of the island and its people starts with the Aryan colonization marked by the advent of Vijaya¹(543 BC)and his 700 followers

1 Basham suggests that Vijaya arrived Sri Lanka in early 5th Century BC .Basham A.L, 1995, Asirimath Indiyava'(sinh.) ,third ed, p. 605

from North India². When he landed heard sounds of music and dance. A wedding was in progress in *Yaksha* society and there was much merriment. Prior to the advent of the Aryans, the island had been inhabited by *Yakshas*, *Rakshasha* and *Nagas* whose civilization has been described by early historians based on obscure legends. *Cilappadikaram*, was a South Indian classical epic poem of second century AD valuable source book for the study of dance. It classified dance into three distinct forms *Desi*, *Vadugu*, *Singhala*. It means that *Singhala* may be undoubtedly Ceylon. The distinct entity that the studies reveal of *Sinhahala Natya* as an art form its own in the scheme of the ancient dances of India opens a new epoch altogether study of dances of Ceylon.

Introduction of Buddhism in the 3rdBC bringing of Buddhism by Rev Mahinda son of Great Asoka of India created the strongest link for Aryan influence on the people. Kinship and the coronation followed the *Aryan* pattern of North Indian rulers. North Indian life styles lifestyle entered with the bringing of the sacred Bo Sapling in the same era, sixteen artisan groups of painters, craftsmen, musicians came with the Bo sapling. Herman Goetz thinks that the tradition of pre *Aryan* times is best preserved in Sri Lanka. This influence languished forwards the 5th– 6th Centuries until the *Chola* and *Pandya* interfering the Sri Lankan affairs. The pattern of their interaction and development resulted in art traditions, themes, and social institutions. There has no uniform and consistent trend in their interaction even within each country.

Dance, Tradition and Culture

Beside the history direct and indirect Indian contacts had considerable influence on the tradition and culture of

² De Silva K.M, 1981, 'A History of Sri Lanka', Oxford University Press, Delhi, P.3

the people. Senake Bandaranayake's (2012) statement is very much important which gives insight of how Sri Lankan developed culture in different phases by following strategic changes accordingly. Internal dynamics of culture in Sri Lanka in his book *Continuities and Transformations* is that there were at least four interconnected and often inseparable paths of development, one the organic development by any given culture of its own existing forms and concepts ; two, the invention or innovation of new forms and concepts on the basis of its own experience and resources, three , the acquisition and adaptation, according to its own needs and possibilities , of the forms and concepts that have been developed in similar or in more advanced or less advanced cultures among its neighbors. The last four, form of development which constitutes another level of unity- it is in fact what is usually termed influence and developed into such theoretical constructs as "Indianisation", "Sinicisation", etc. The Sinhalese trace their origin in the western or Eastern India. The early new comers would have brought traditional cultural elements of their Indian forebears. The Island population continued their traditions and culture absorbing the former inhabitants of the Island. Naturally there is uniformity and common elements between due to contacts did not change the pattern of beliefs except the tradition and modification of existing ones. (Wijesekera, 1984)

Dance can be defined as a cultural form that results from creative processes which manipulate human bodies in time and space. It is a cultural form and is a visual manifestation of social relations which has an elaborate aesthetic system. Dance is a form of art containing traditional knowledge, values, norms and methodologies of continuous practice which highlight the tradition of a society. John Mccole in his book "Walter Benjamin and the antinomies of tradition" stated

that Benjamin observes that the earliest work of art originated in the service of a ritual and it is of decisive importance that the work of arts auratic mode of existence never entirely separates from its ritual function. According to Benjamin central concepts embrace traditional culture such as creativity, genius, eternal, values and mystery. The dance tradition of Sri Lanka exhibits coherence, communicability and thus the transmissibility of experience.

What is dancing?

Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group. Dance in human behavior comprises purposeful, intentionally rhythmical and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements. Furthermore dance is a way to translate music into space. At individual level people dance at different levels of occasions for physical pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment to express themselves and also on a social level people dance to accompany work or war, to cure illness, to drive away evil spirits or to honor ancestors and gods. Furthermore dance can be considered as a way to be with others. Besides it is a way to express sentiments and reinforce cultural identity. The rhythm of the dancers can be described as “they swirl and they whirl. Their elaborate costumes twirl. As the beat of the drums rise and reach a throbbing crescendo, they swivel like tops set in motion. It is a treat for the eye and the ear for the human body”. The epitome of dance lies in rhythm. Rhythm is fundamental to dance. Rhythm is produced in natural as well as cultural way. Natural rhythm is not controlled by man like the ebb and tide

of the ocean, rising and setting of the sun, seasons of the year and one’s own life cycle and at a more personal level, heart beat and breathing. But the human body becomes more and more a cultural fact, in the way humans walk, dance, sing and make music. Rhythm exists in time and space. Some types of rhythm are audible, others visible.

Dance & Abhinaya

Dance in the medieval ages of Ceylon had inspired *Bharatha Natya* standardized by the Bharathamuni’s *Natya Sastrawas* an ancient Indian philosopher and musicologist who authored the *Natya Shastrain* the 1st Century BC to the 3rd-Century .Dance in Sri Lanka bears well harmonized elements of *abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* is a Sanskrit word which means the art of expression in Indian aesthetics. (Sanskrit *abhi-* 'towards' + *nii-naya*, 'leading/guide') Moreover it conveys the expression (*bhava*) conveyed of a sentiment (*rasa*). The concept, derived from Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, is used as an integral part of all Indian classical dance styles. *Abhinaya* can be divided into four, according to the *Natya Shastra*.

1. Expression of the limbs (*Āṅgika Abhinaya*)
Expressive body movements and foot work
2. Expression of speech (*Vāchika Abhinaya*)
3. Costume and scene (*Āhārya Abhinaya*)
Expressive of the complex of several constituents, costumes, coiffure, jewelry, ornaments and stage fitting.
4. True expressions (*Sāttvika Abhinaya*)
Expression of subtle emotions, all contributing to the aesthetic appeal of the audience and to the *Rasa* (Sentiment)



Figure 1
Āṅgika Abhinaya



Figure 2
Vāchika Abhinaya



Figure 3
Sathvika Abhinaya



Figure 4
Performing Sringara Rasa

Chapter 2

The Artist and Society

The artist in ancient society

The artist of ancient society was enthralled by rhythmic poses of various types of dance performed in different context of ancient society. The artist was fascinated by the rich possibilities of tension, shape, musculature, and expressiveness contained with the professionally trained body and inspired by the challenge of representing the dynamics of motion and flight. The role that dance played in ancient artist's art is explored in form of sculptures, stone, wood, ivory, carvings and paintings of temple walls illuminated to see how widely his response to the subject in detailed manner. The artist also show tremendous interest in the social and theatrical context of dance models as he observed in their bodies. The dominating images of carvings at Yapahahuwa and Ganegoda sculptured and drew in artist signature pose, is the torsion and power of that pose, the artist enjoyed too the fact that it so frankly exposed the female body. The artist create a series of disparate body parts , limbs, torsos, and heads in which he could play artist choreographer assembling these pieces into sequences of jumps, stretches, and tip- tiled

balances. It is assumed that the art was responding with excitement to the liberating physicality that he saw among the dance forms, played during the ancient days. The artist entranced by these court dancers by the intricacy and delicacy of their hand movements and the serenity with which they moved. These beautiful rapid carvings of these dancers have a distinctive softness and suspension of line of female bodies in details such as inward curl of the hand, the hinge of the foot, the delicate tilt of the head, also attempt to capture more accurate formal details of style. To find his own dance variant of all these figures twisted and falling and pouring through this vertical surface.

According to the *Mahawamsa* Emperor Asoka dispatched a large number of families to accompany the Sacred Bo – Tree sent through his daughter Their *Sangamitta*. Among them were different classes of artisans who performed various services for the Bo – Tree. In ancient society social institutions were set up according to different caste systems. Different artisans of society belonged to different caste systems. According to Sinhala *Bodhivamsaya*

(13th Century) the *Gandamba*(gandharva) offered the sounds of the drums. They belong to *Berawakula* or drummer caste. The *Ruwanmal Niganduwa*(14th Century) stated that dancers and drummers belong to the *sudra* caste.(lower caste)

Dance in ancient Society

Historical evidences prove that dance has been rooted as acultural institution in the tradition of Sri Lanka. The references found in literary and historical writings corroborated by archeological evidence prove beyond doubt that the island nurtured and maintained a highly developed dance forms. The great chronicles *Mahawamsa*, *Poojawaliya*, and secular

poems (*sandesakavya*) made frequent references to the art of dance in a secular context. It has been amalgamated with social life in formal and informal ways. The formal dance is considered as a cultural ritual performed at religious places, in religious processions and in the King's court as an amusement or way of recreation in the King's life style since early times. Besides ceremonies and rituals relating to the legitimating of royal authority and conceptions of dynastic and royal power derived from Hindu sources were incorporated into the court ideology. Professor Sarathchandra (1953) firmly stated the court of the Sinhalese Kings were the same as the court of the India. As 'would be natural to expect, the culture of the Sinhalese court has been entirely Indian in the early period, but it is interesting to note that it seems to have continued to be so right through the centuries, the difference being that, in later times, the influences came from more from South India than from the north. The fact that the kings became Buddhists and actively patronized the religion, made no change in this state of villager was free to adopt the non – Buddhist folk culture. The King was installed as a ruler according to the Hindu custom of *Abhisheka* and in respect of his paraphernalia such as the white parasol, the state elephant, the state carriage, the state horse, dancing girls, and harem he was similar to an Indian King." The authors described the beauty of the dancers at court likening them to those who perform in Indra's heaven. It is very clear that dance was employed for the amusement of royal elites.

During the Polonnaruwawa era(12th Century) dance could be identified as a more organized form of society in which the profession of dance was highly accepted and highly honored socially and evidence proves that dance way even practiced by royal princesses too. Historical documentation

provides three types of unique terms which highlight dance and its institutional affiliations. They are,

1. Dance ensembles (*rangamadulu*)
The place where the dancing took place
2. Dancing families (*viddatkula*)
People who engaged in dance belonged to a certain caste known as *vidathkula*
3. Dancing women (*nalanganun*)
Female professional dancers were known as *nalaganun*

Types of dance popular in ancient Sri Lanka

1. Acrobatic dance
2. Clownish dance
3. Masked dance
4. Folk dances (Stick dance,,Kalagedidance,Raban dance)
5. Dance forms referred to as *Puramattu*, *Komalin*, or *Konam* remind us of South Indian Influences

Places of dance performed during ancient period

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. King's court | - for amusement of royalty |
| 2. Buddhist Temples | - for religious dance |
| 3. Hindu temples | - religious dance (devadasi) |
| 4. Public | - processions and carnivals |

Development of Dance Tradition in early History

Dances of Sri Lanka have been evolved from far distant epoch, since the early period of inhabitants' time. In most countries music and dancing has developed in close affinity with religious observances. However Theravada ideology

does not encourage sensual arts like dancing and music. Buddhism was not only a religion, however way of life for the people received patronage from the temple. Buddhism has no codification of any data pertaining to music and dancing in its worship. The annihilation of Buddhism in India its land of birth and the growth of the *Bakthi* movement in Hinduism, music and dancing were integral parts of its worship. In the *Bakthi marga* of Hinduism dedication of everything to God and ultimate possession of the God by the devotee is the highest attainments of *Moksha*. Music and dancing is related as a means to create love and passion to the God. Towards this manifestation the *Devadasi* cult advocated in Hinduism had to play a major role. The practice of conducting dances in temples in the eleventh century became a regular feature of religious worship in the Hindu temples of the Polonnaruwa period. In the post Polonnaruwa period this practice was adopted by the *devale* institution of Buddhism. (Kalyani, VOI V & VI, 1986/ 87) In the Hindu temples that flourished at several localities in the kingdom men and women professionally trained in the arts of music and dancing attached to *Devale* on a permanent basis with and land given to them as life –tenure.

This study concerns from Anuradhapura period to Kandy period existed stone, metal, and wood preserved low relief, full relief and pictorial indications of dance narrations in the temple paintings. Beside these artifacts early classic of Sri Lankan literature, *Poojawaliya*, the great chronicle *Mahawamsa*, *Chulawamsa*, Sinhalese secular writings such as *Sandesa* poems, *Kandauruasiritha*, *madarampurapuwatha*, and historical legends support the existence of a developed art form. Most of the dance forms described in these sources to have been of a mimetic nature.

Sri Lanka has been divided six main administrative kingdoms in the past. Anuradhapura kingdom established during the 2 BC and lasted after 493 years. The kingdom shifted to Polonnaruwa and lasted 214 years and had several invasions from South India. Centers of Sinhalese dynastic power were shifted out of the North Central plain which gradually reverted to jungle and dynastic capitals were established successively at Yapahuwa 51years (1293- 1344 AD) ,Gampola 68 years (1344- 1412AD) ,and Kotte 179 years (1412- 1591AD). Kandy is the last kingdom of that chain lasted after 223 years (1590- 1815 AD) where the most influences came.

Chapter 3

Representing Dance as an Art Form

Decorative purposes :Panels of historical buildings

1. Yapahuwa temple of the tooth(daladamaligawa), Ganegoda temple in Bulathkohupitiya, Niyamgampaya temple in GampolaMariyakade
2. Gadaladeniya temple in Gadaladeniya, Embekkedevalaya

Doorways and pillars

3. Panavitiyaambalama(way side inn), Galapatha temple in Benthara , Ranbawa door jamb at Udaaludeniya temple in Gampola.

Mural paintings

4. Painted dancers figures in temple murals
5. Kandyan temple paintings
6. (Gangaramaya, Medawalatempitaviharaya, Dambulla temple)

Other decorative aspects

7. Ivory combs(Kandyan era, Colombo& Kandy museum)
8. Ivory caskets(Kotte period at present kept in Munich treasury, Germany)



Figure 5
Door way of the Galapatha temple
Kurunegala



Figure 6
Dalada Maligawa at
(Palace of the tooth relic)
(Kotte era)



Figure 7
Dalada Maligawa
(Palace of the tooth relic)
at Kurunegala

**Royal performance for relaxation, amusement, and festivals.
(Anuradhapura period(250 AD- 11 Century AD)**

King Bhathikabaya (22 BC -6 AD) manifested his devotion to the *Ruwanweliseyaby* conducting amassive ceremony. He used loads of pearls to make a plaster covering for the great *thupa* in addition to his previous order for the yearly plastering, which in honor of the *Mahathupa* accompanying regular mimic dances and concerts with all kinds of music with drum beaten twice a day. After the death of King Bhathikabaya, his younger brother Mahadhathika Mahanaga Tissa (6Ad -18 AD) ascended the throne. He held a great festival marked by unique features called *Giribhanda* Offering which was illuminated at night with chains of lamps, while mimic dances, singing, and all manner of music enlivened the place both day and by night.

The great chronicle *Mahawamsa* mentions dancing goes back to the time of the King Pandukabhaya (337 -307 BC) when on festival days having gods and men to dance before him , the king took his pleasure in joyous and merry wise in honor of *Cittaraja* and *Kalavela* demons.

During the reign of King Duttagamini (101-77BC) providessufficient evidences about court dancing. It was said that the king after his great victory over *Dravidianshe* “sits in his royal chamber “in the midst of dances and ministers”. A more sumptuous reference could be finding in the court life of great King Gajabahu (1137 -1153 AD). According to the *Chulawamsa (chronicle)*stated that “when he had this made peaceful the province of *Malaya* where owing to its inhabitants there had been no peace, he dwelt at ease in his town and passed the time with games in the garden and in the water, with dance and song like fulfilling the duties of a King” .



Figure 8



Figure 9

Half reliefs of Dancers on the freeze at Polonnaruwa Vishnu Devale



Figure 10

Bronze figurine of dancing woman found Kuttampokuna,
Anuradhapura.

Polonnaruwa Period (11 Century AD- 1310 AD)

Dancing had been developed with Buddhist ceremonies. There were many festivals held in honor to worship the sacred tooth relic. Literature provides that “round about the *mandapa* (stages) he (King) placed splendidly attired dancing girls in many hundreds of other costly *mandapas*, each of these being accompanied by people bearing lutes, flutes drums.

The *Chulawamsa* gives more details of the art of dance during the reign of King Parakramabahu I (1153-1186 AD). Literature proved that dancing and music was essential component of early education of the Kings. There were some instances proved that Kings had thorough knowledge of aesthetic subject as “he tarried there harkening to the singing given by numerous songstresses, feeling out the underlying motif as one who is first among those versed in the knowledge of moods”. Furthermore the consort of the great King Parakramabahu I Queen Rupawathi was a accomplished dancer and singer. The King also kept a team of twenty four dancing girls to dance and singing to him until he fell asleep after an arduous day’s circuit or *Uyan Keli* (garden sports) by chariot or an elephant’s back. This team was subdivided into *Katana* or groups of four or five with a leader. While one group danced another sang and kept time with the cymbal or *talampota*. The men drummed upon the *davul* (cylindrical drum) the dances would sing their petition to the guard to be permitted to enter the palace and after this was granted, they begged King’s permission to perform and in doing so, whether his mood was gay, tired, or angry and danced to suit it and the *samaya*

(period), whether he was after food, after sport, or about to sleep. The dancing ended when the King fell asleep.



Figure 11 Dancer
Cymbal (*talampota*) player



Figure12

Elephant oil lamp from Dedigama

There were three bronze figures discovered from the bronze oil lamp Dedigama, Kegalle. There was a male dancer and two male instrument players accompanied by cymbal and a drum. The male dancer seems more similar to the *Bharatha Natya*, which is similar to the pleated and fan shaped frontal lower dress of the dance costume.

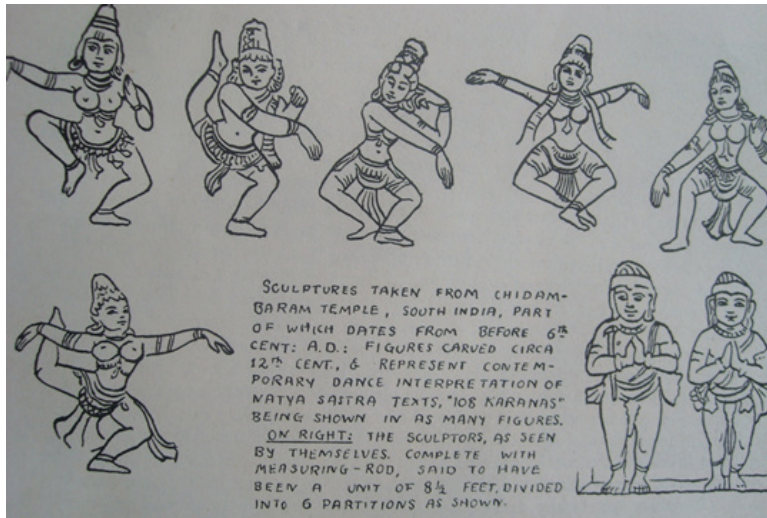


Figure 13

Classical dance of 12th Century South India (Ambross)

Dance during the Dambadeniya period (1220 AD -1345 AD),

King Vijayabahu IV (1270 - 1272 AD) held a great festival for the tooth relic and the Alms Bowl by accompaniment of fivefold music (*pancha thurya nada*), dancing and music. In devotion there surrounded dancers and actors who performed dances and sang songs delighted to see and hear. A similar festival was held by King Parakramabahu IV (1303-1333 AD) which included sound of the five musical instruments, dancers, musicians and the actors (Senevirathna, 1984).

Kandavurusiritha, a Sinhalese text in the 13th Century described the daily routine of the King's life. Also it revealed music and dance sessions which held at the palace. In the morning while seated on the throne the King enjoyed dance and music. He also had an ensemble of dance and music known as "*Srngara mandapaya*". In the evening thousand eight hundred women performed the "light dance" in the *Alaththi Mandapaya*" and the "*Nataka mandapaya*".

The King also maintained two ensembles of music one for the Tooth Relic "*Daladagei Vijjatun*" and the other "*Rajagei Vijjatun*" for the services of the court. *Kandavurusiritha* further states that nearly three hundred sixty dancing guilds (Gosti) of the country received wages from the Royal treasury. The King addressed with the honorific epithet *Nambara Kalikala Sahitya Sarwangya Panditha*. *Kalikala* is a title given to the musicians.



Figure 14

Dancers drawn on the palm leaf manuscript of "*Chullawagga*" presently at the Colombo museum. During Dambadeniya period (1272-1293) the reign of King Parakramabahu 11.

Dance during the Yapahuwa period(1272 AD -1284 AD),

King Parakramabahu 11 (1236- 1270 AD) celebrated a festival in honor of the sacred Tooth Relic. The *Chulawamsa* recorded the beauty and the lavishness of the festival as “ravishing by reason of the many exquisite dances and songs of the dances that on splendid stages erected here and there performed, while assuming different characters diverse dances and songs”. Architectural remains at Yapahuwa, Gadaladeniya, Nalanda Gedige, Upulvan shrine provided sufficient indication of remarkable influence exerted by the Hindu tradition on the construction of Buddhist monuments. In the preceding periods the influence of Hindu tradition on Sinhalese monuments was confined largely to the superstructure with the notable exceptions of *Nalanda Gedige* and the shrine of Upulvan described as *Galge*. But, since the late 13th Century the elements of Hindu traditions were blended than ever before the Sinhalese tradition as evident in the remains at Yapahuwa. D.T Devendra in his description *A Guide to Yapahuwa* said “the work at Yapahuwa is Pandyan modified by Sinhalese, and it never approaches the art of Anuradhapura with genuine tradition and expressions of Sinhalese art”.

Group of dancing freeze on either side of the stair case of the palace at Yapahuwa, the capital of King Buwanekabahu 1 (1271- 1282) The character of the costume of Yapahuwa dancers much weathered as they are in their exposed condition, definitely *Baratha Natya*.



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21
Dancers at Yapahuwadaladamaligawa,



Figure 22



Figure 23
The art of India JC Huntindon

Dance during the Gampola Period (1341 AD-1374 AD)

According to historical evidences the Kingdom of Gampola (1341-1374 AD) can be considered as the source for the Kotte culture. Bhuvanekabahu V (1371 -1408 AD) King of Gampola ruled Kotte as well in the early part of his reign. The Gampola period shows superiority in both art and architecture during the seventy years of its existence under four Kings. South Indian influence came to a zenith during this period. The best examples of South Indian inspired temples were *Gadaladeniya* and *Lankathilaka*. *Gadaladeniya* was built by South Indian chief architect *Ganeshwaracharya* under the patronage of King Bhuwanekabahu IV (1341-1351 AD) and *Lankathilaka* was built by the architect *Sthapathi Rayar* on the directive of the chief minister *Senadhilankara*. *Senadhilankara* was descended from the South Indian *Mehenawara clan* and, the sculptors who were employed at *Gadaladeniya* and *Lankathilaka* were brought from India. The South Indian *Vijayanagar* Empire was at the peak of its development during the Gampola period. Dance and music developed in Hindu temples of the time and are depicted as graceful rhythmic figures in architectural friezes. This style was merged with Sinhala tradition. *Gadaladeniya* and *Niyamgampaya* dancing friezes are similar examples. The *Devadasi* dancing style had emerged during the Vijayanagar period as a ritual function in honor of the Hindu gods. Similar to this function a '*Digge Dance*' began at some of the Gampola temples with distinct elements. Coomaraswamy says that these *Digge* dancers were supposed to be of Tamil in origin. Practitioners of the art would have migrated from the Gampola Kingdom in the service of the court of Kotte. Craftsmen of the Gampola period would definitely have brought the art tradition to the Kotte period because; the Kingdom had been

already shifted to Kotte while the Gampola Kingdom still existed as a regional kingdom.



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26

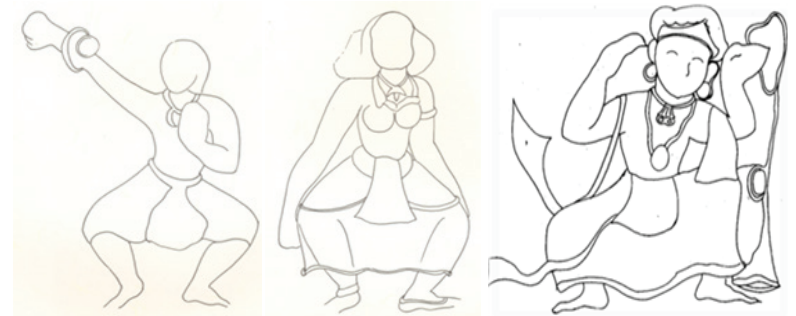


Figure 27

Figure28

Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38

Conscious descriptions of the details of dancing are rare in our early literature. The *sandesa* poems of the 15th Century contain some details of dances conducted at temples dedicated to Hindu Gods as well as in the Royal presence. The *Maura sandesa* was written in the 14th Century. The poets have presented a glowing picture of the dance arena couched in picturesque language captivating the imagination of the reader. The poet describes the dance arena as “the dance arena as strewn with full blown flowers” The most significant in this respect is the direct reference in *Maura sandesa* (verse 130) to *Abhinaya*. (Gestures) With hands like red tender leaves they gesture. *Thisara sandesa* sated some reference to the dancers’ jewellery. (Verse 162) (*Maura* 127 verse) 123, 37



Figure 39

Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44

Niyamgampaya(Gampola era)

The considerable advances made in the arts of dancing which was cultivated with the support and patronage of the court of the early kings. All references to the art of dancing in sources pertaining to the earlier period were made connections with the royalty and the court; every king had a dance platoon. Dances were performed with a considerable professional skill in front of the appreciative audiences at the court king. Wonderful performances scenes were picturesquely described in the 15th Century *sandesa* poems. Court dancer honored and gifted by the king and skill of dance has been appreciated.

The poets of the 14th and 15th Centuries emphasized the congenial form of the age. They were perhaps following a literary convention in describing dance performances either in the kings' court or in a *Devala* dances. The language of the *sandesa* poem projects a picture of a moving pageantry of dances with all the artistry and glamorous imagery that characterized in the art.



Figure 45

Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48

Ganegoda-Bulathkohupitiya-Dancers are playing gatabere(barrel shaped drum)

H.C.P Bell(1892) commenting on the Ganegoda devala at Kegalle says, such carved stone work as does exist bearing witness of Dravidian design and workmanship... of Ganegoda nothing can be at present definitely formulated ,beyond the possibility that Yapahuwa, influenced its dado, and perhaps in some degree its pillars and that the prevailing influence at both places , particularly at Ganegoda is south Indian. So too at Berendi Kovil , where though little more than the tasteful platform the Kovil is left... history and style unite in proclaiming with certainly its Dravidian conception . The dado of dancing figures and musicians contained in the molded bases of several monuments of this age was significant innovations in the style decorative sculpture in architectural monuments. That the inspiration for this innovation was derived from Hindu monuments found in earlier period. The changes introduced in the ideology and practice s of Sinhalese Buddhism through the assimilation of ideas and practices in the Hindu tradition seem to have had a decisive impact on the art and architecture of Sinhalese Buddhism.

Dr P.E .P Deraniyagala state, “The ancient rulers state that the girls should be between 15- 22 years of age of medium height and trained to waggle 32 pats of their bodies when performing The dancing is more upon the heel than the toe and the movement either slow and eurhythmic with a clay oil lamp each hand, or very rapid. Apart from the *talampotaval* or cymbals the dances wore anklets. Each with three *gigiri* (jingle) or bells attached to the outside an ornate foot chain or *pavalalla* was looped around the second toe and cross the arch of each foot. A *hathakada* or cobra hood shaped metal ornament covered the back of the hand with the cobras head directed towards the middle finger to which the binding cord was attached the dancer also wore a throat let and necklace

termed *papu male* which supported two metal cups or breast protectors and on the sides of the head were the *oliyal a mathe hatte* or flounced jacket was worn for dancing in public in the temple, but this was discarded when they performed skirt with a loose fold 3 pleats on each side which were colored out as the wearer danced, while the *salu pota* or light shawl was also employed most effectively. This gives an elegant description of the female dancer who performed in the temple.

Series of sculptures in the freeze of dancers at Gadaladeniya in the vicinity of Kandy belong to the Vijayanagar period (1350- 1600) Relating to the pose of the figures definitely relative to Bharatha Natyam in South India.

Dance during the Kotte period(1371 AD-1594 AD)

In Sri Lanka the sixth Kingdom was in the 16th Century Kotte period (1400-1594AD) in which literature and Fine Arts came to the fore. Pursuit of the art of dance led to the regular and important feature of entertainment in the King's court. Poets of that period have excelled at placing dance and dress styles in literature. The literature of the Kotte period provided evidences regarding the two different forms of dance. Informal dances were performed during some occasions in the cities, and also performed in some instances at regular life style activities especially during water sports. Dancing may be observed as a ritual or the other side of recreation. Where ritual is formal and governed by rules recreation is on the other hand supposed to be more informal even if it is not necessarily less rule – governed.

Religious dance during Kotte period

Historical writings corroborate two categories of religious dance which took place in Kotte; these were the

dances of Hindu Shrines and the dances of temples. P.E Pieris state that when 1344 Ibn Batuta had visited *Deundarashrine* he mentions thousands of Brahmins serving as the ministers of the gods and there were five hundred notch girls who danced and sang before the god's image. (S. Pathmanathan, Kalyani, Vol V & Vi, 1986/87, Kelaniya) Furthermore Pieris, P.E stated there were villages allocated for dancers called "*Tanavera*" by which the Portuguese knew the place was derived from the name of the village of the dancing women. Buddhism develops as a synthetic religious tradition incorporating with its fold elements of the Mahayana and the ideology of Theravada Buddhism. It was during this period that the concept of the four guardian deities of Lanka was articulated in a developed form and the worship and honor accorded to them in Devalas or shrines dedicated to such deities' attained considerable importance in the Buddhist tradition Pathmanathan, Kalyani, P82. The forms of worship rituals conducted in shrines were adopted from Hinduism. Music and dancing performed by men and women in the Hindu temple tradition associated with the devale and inspired for the development of Sinhalese vihara music and dance forms. Temples for Siva, Vishnu, Kali, Skanda, and Pattini can be found in the Kotte period. There was a temple of the goddess Kali near the Wanawasala monastery at Bentota and Upulvan Devale during the Kotte period. A group of dancing girls was attached to the shrine and their charms are described in an elegant verse in the paravi Sandeha¹(Wijesooriya, 2004)

According to the Ceylon Littoral in 1593 AD dancers were paying *decum* mentioned as 1 garden, and 20 palms. There were some dancers attached to the *Delgamuwa* Devale

also. In the full description given by Alagiyawanna regarding temple women in his poem *Saul Sandesa*, Pieris, P.E, identified probably the *Dalada Maligawa* at Delgamuwa (temple of the Tooth Relic). The description was important to trace their dresses and decorations which they utilized in verification of the dresses described in poetic literature. He describes the temple women of the *Delgamuwa Devala*, performing their worship with platters of gold and silver in their hands and they wore flimsy dresses with flowers entwined in their long hair, dancing to the rules of the *Bharatha Sastra*.



Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51



Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54



Figure 55



Figure 56



Figure 57



Figure58



Figure 59

Kotte Perhara National Museum, Colombo

There was another most celebrated *Devalas* (abode of god) in the Island ranked after the one at Deundara and *Saman Devale Ratnapur* which also maintained the dance platoon consisting of sixteen women. The same writer indicates that the attached dance women were removed by the Prince of Uwa when he invaded the Low country in 1630 AD. With the conclusion of the peace seven out of sixteen returned to their village. The writer identified them as *Devadasis*, “slave girls of the gods”. As for religious dance temple dancers have always been honored and rewarded by royalty in appreciation of their skill. King Parakramabahu VI (1411-1466 AD) has given many land grants to the temple dancers called “*Alaththi Ammas*” who performed *DiggGe* dance at the shrine. There were twenty four female members in that group. Furthermore temple dancers known as *Alaththiammas* and the service attached to *Devalayas* (abode of god) of the period called *Alatthi Bema*. *Alaththi Ammas* had only a

handkerchief around their necks with the other ends tied up round their waists to cover the upper portion of their bodies. These services were in existence only in *Aluthmuwara Devale*. According to the literature at *Sabaragamuwa Saman Devale* there were twenty five dances. They dressed in white cloths with a *Manthe Hatta* (jacket) with short sleeves and the frill behind falling eight inches below the nape of the neck. The leader was known as *Manikka Mahage*.



Figure 60

Dancing men Rambawa ,
(Door frame) at Uda Aludeniya
Temple ,Gampola (belongs to Kotte era)



Figure 61
A dancer is playing a drum (bera)



Figure 62
A dancer is holding a some object by left hand



Figure 63
Galapatha temple at Benthara- A dancer is playing
agatabere(barrel shaped drum)



Figure 64
Acrobatic dancer



Figure 65
A female dancer



Figure 66
An acrobatic dancer



Figure 67
A female dancer

**Dancers at Ambulugala Rajamaha Vihara,
Uthuwankanda, Mawanella**



Figure 68



Figure 69



Figure 70



Figure 71

Famous *Manikka Mahagela*(dancing families) groups.

1. *ManikkaMahage Sabaragamuwa,*
2. *ManikkaMahage Egoda Kuttama,*
3. *ManikkaMahage Hunuwila,*
4. *ManikkaMahage Kandeniya*

P.E.P Deraniyaga states that women temple dancers *ManikkaMahagela* were part of a tradition which had existed from the earliest times. Women dancers would perform in the drumming hall as a form of service to the temple, “*kavisalakaranda*”. The rules of the *MahasamanDevale, Rathnapura* also refer to all night dancing in the drumming hall stating that it should only begin after the procession (*perehera*) at nine in the night and go on till dawn.

Ceremonial Dancers and caste

In Medieval society dancers belonged to the *Olicaste* and they performed ceremonial dances in the processions. The word *Oli* has been derived from *Chola* South Indian Dravidian term. During the period of King Buwanekabahu VII (1521- 1551 AD) he issued a Sannas, a grant, to the *raweWarnakulasooriyaPatabendiMuhandiramIlenaidewhich* mentioned *Oliya* was one of the caste personsthat the King allowed him to keep. The grant was issued on behalf of the brave act he performed and mentioned also some of the certain people belonging to several castes which accompanied him and allowed to be there. They weresilversmith, *Parawara* or fishermen, *Porakaraya*, Barber, Washer, *Hunnia*, Tom Tom beater, *Oliya* and the bearer of the flag with a mark of a shark.

Dancing in honor of gods was considered an act of worship and several religious dance performances were held at many Hindu temples in the Kotte kingdom. The *BahirawaKovil* at Sitawaka was repaired by King Rajasingha after the ravages of the Portuguese. In outer court of the *Kovil* there were dancing women who danced to the rhythm of Tamil music. They performed oriental dances. The *magulvitiya* was devoted to the recreations of the people, and consisted of music and dancing halls.

Dance and *Sandesa* poetry

The Kotte period dance has been identified as a well-known form of art of period performing art. There were two categories of female dancers which can be identified by the descriptions of the *sandesa* poetry. There were dancers who performed at the King's court and dancers who performed at Hindu shrines. The *Gira* (Parrot), *Hamsa* (Swan), *Kovil* (Cuckoo), *Paravi* (Pigeon), and *Selalihinisandesa* poems of the Kotte period have fascinating descriptions of the dresses and adornments of both categories. Among these the *Kokila* (Kovul) and *Hamsa sandesas* give an interesting account of dance performers at court and *Paravi, Selalihinisandesa* give an idea about the dresses and adornments of temple dancers. These poems have interesting glimpses of jewelry and the dress worn. The frills, folds, materials used in dance costumes, can be identified in these poems.

Dance during the Kandyan Era(1469 AD -1815 AD)

The medieval traditional structure ensured the preservation of heritage and the skills through well-established institutions such as the caste system and *Rajakariya* (Feudal land tenure) with the growth of the feudal system, the *Nilames* (aristocrats) had their own dancers attached to their

walawuw and gave the native dance a great impetus towards development.

During the Kingdom of Kandy the King Narendrasimhe (1707-1739 AD) gave much patronage to performing art. South Indian Nayakkara influences exerted considerable cultural influences for performing art. Royal dancing unit was known as *NetumIllungama* constitute only of women according to the South Indian tradition. *Kavikaramaduwa* or the royal institute of poets is attributing to him. The largest numbers of panegyrics have been composed in praise the King. During his reign the singers were known as *kavikara*. Five dancing and music categories at the Kandyan Court are mentioned as *kavikaraMaduwa*. *Vasalaillangama, natumilangama, thamberupurampettukaradivision, sinharakkara division, kavikaramaduwais* consisted of thirteen people and served *karnataka* musicians. *Prasashthi, hatankavyavirahagee, vannam, savdam, agam, sinduarevarious* singing performances. Besides *vasalaillangama* was the only unit where acrobatic, worriers and magicians were served. *Natumilangama* was only for dancing of women. *Thamberupurampettukara* division was for drums and wind instruments, Western instruments involved were thomberu (thrombone) and *purampettu* (trumpet). *sinharakkara* division was for drums, *dawla, thammattama, horana*. Today Kandyan dancing tradition includes (kohomba demon- kohombakankariya) used *gatabera* and *Vesnatum* (Kandyan Dancing). Law country dancing is famous for *Devolyaga* used yak bera. *Sabaragamu* dancing is based on *mahasamandevala* (dig-ge – natum).



Figure 72
dancer during Vijayanagar



Figure 73
Deva Dasis Soth India period

Three main institutions were attached to the King's court

1. VahalaIlangama,
2. NatunIlamgama,
3. Piccamallamgama

The royal dance unit *NetumIlangama* consisted only of women according to the *Malabar* tradition. The service to the temple was known as *KaviSalaKaranda* and the dancers who performed the ritual belonged to *KavikaraMaduwa*.



Figure 74



Figure 75

Temple paintings at Dambulla cave temple – Dambulla



Figure 76



Figure 77

Wood carvings at *Panavitiya* way side inn (Kandyan era)



Figure 79



Figure 81



Figure 80
Ridi Viharaya-Kurunegala



Figure 82
Gangaramaya Temple - Kandy Ivory comb- National museum,
Colombo



Figure 83
Dancers at Kulugammana Temple



Figure 84
Javanese dancers

Chapter 4

Classical dances of Sri Lanka

The classical dance of Sri Lanka can be divided into three styles. They are the Kandyan dance of the Hill Country, known as *Uda Rata Natum*; (hill country dance) the low country dance of the southern plains, known as *Pahatha Rata Natum*; (dance in South area) and the *Sabaragamuwa* (dance in middle area of the country) dance. The three styles of dancing differed according to the dance movements, gestures, costumes and instruments (drum- *bera*) which accompanied each style. Besides the low country dance seems different because the dancers used wooden masks to represent certain different characters to perform the ritual. The origin of the dancing style was based on its ritualistic nature. Interesting legends belong to each dance styles portraying tradition and cultural practices of Sri Lanka. The attributes, values, norms and ideology of the nation were clearly conveyed through these classical forms of dance.

Development of Classical Dance Tradition

The distinctive tradition of Sinhala dancing is discernible from the early 5th Century B.C. The dance ritual known as *Khomba Kankariyas* emerged during the rule of King Panduvasdeva who succeeded King Vijaya. The story tells

us of the interventions of gods to cure King Panduvasdeva, a King seriously ill with affliction called *Dividoso*. The ritual performed on this occasion later became known as *KhombaKankariya* (ritual).

The core element of the present ritual is a re-enactment of that archetypal performance which is an aesthetic experience involving music, dance, song and mime. Identifying three distinct dancing forms according to geographical entities signifying unique features in each dance tradition according to hand and foot formations, musical instruments and style of play, singing style and the costumes.

Kandyan Dancing (*Udarata dance*, using *Getaberaya*)

Low country Dancing (*Patharatadance*, using *Yakberaya*)

Mid country Dancing (*Sabaragamudancing* using *Davulberaya*)

The three styles have certain aesthetic principles and a mythological-historical unity is common to the three dance styles. However the differences between the three traditions are immediately apparent from the techniques of the dances and the beat of the drums.

The three types of drums are- '*GetaBera*' (Kandyan dance) *Yak Bera* (Ruhunu dance) *Davula* (Sabaragamu dance). The *GetaBera* and *Yak Bera* are beaten with the hand, however *Davula* is played with a stick on one side and with one hand on the other side. *Yak Bera* and the *Davula* both have cylindrical bodies.



Figure 85
Geta Bera'



Figure 86
Yak Bera



Figure 87



Figure 88

Davula

Three drums styles are playing together

The origin of classical dance styles

The three dancing styles originated through different rituals. The rituals varied in each style. Kandyan dance or *Udarata* dance originated from the *Kohomba yak kankariya* which was offered to god *Kohomba*. The *Ruhunu* dance or low country dance originated from the *Devol Maduwa* (a ritual type) offered to deity *demons*. The *Sabaragamu* dance originated from *Gam Maduwa*, (a ritual type) which is performed to propitiate the goddess *Pattini*. The purpose was to obtain a good harvest or to ward off evil or to be rid of an infectious disease.

The origin of the Kandyan Dance

Among the earliest of these is obviously the ballad singing the *dividos* of king *Paduvasudeva* and the ritual ceremonials and dances, collectively called *Kohomba yak Kankariya*, held to cure the king of *Divi Dos* (evil due to the leopard) When *Kuveni* was banished by *Vijaya*, so that he may marry the princess from *Madura*, her rage was resorted to black magic and charms designed to kill *Vijaya*. She took the form of leopard and attempted to enter the bed chamber of the king. On his being foiled by counter charms she created a flaming tongue of crystal and entered where *Vijaya* lay. Soon after the king was ill and did not recover from the affliction that followed and passed away without any issue. The *Dividos* continued to perplex king *Paduvasudeva*. Who succeeded *Vijaya*. Divine intercession revealed that the only person well versed in the magical lore and practices that could cure the king of the spell of *Dividos* was the king *Male of Malabar*.

At this time in the country of Malabar were living three brothers born respectively of Kusa grass, the blue lotus and the mother's womb. The ceremonial rituals were soon set afoot. The site was identified as *Mahamegavana* (a very big garden) of Anuradhapura. Sixty five sheds were built there. Seven Brahmins were summoned of whom a selection was made of three, neither too tall nor too short, neither dark nor red but fair of skin. One of the Brahmins (a person who visited India) arrayed in the Kolam (ritualistic dance) costume of a leopard's head, another in the *kolam* of a deer's head another bearing a ceremonial drum and bedecked with hail of sixty four ornaments of the King Male.(Wijesekera, 1984)

It was originally performed by dancers who were identified as a separate caste under the Kandyan feudal system. They were aligned to the Temple of the Tooth and had a significant role to play in the *dalada perahera* (procession) held each year by the temple. *Ves* dance, the most popular, originated from an ancient purification ritual, the *Kohomba yakuma* or *Kohomba kankariya*. The dance was propitiatory, never secular, and performed only by males. The elaborate *ves* costume, particularly the headgear, is considered sacred and is believed to belong to the deity *Kohomba*. The dance waned in popularity as the support for the dancers from the Kandyan Kings ended during the British period. It has now been revived and adapted for the stage, and is Sri Lanka's primary cultural export.

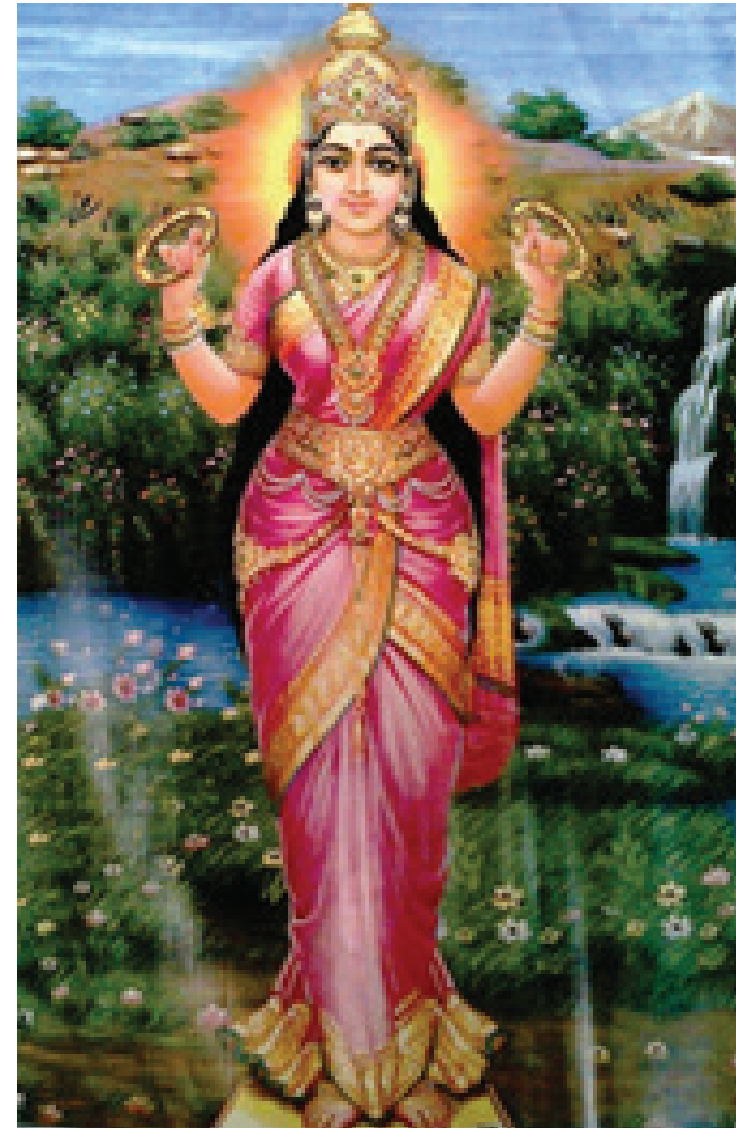


Figure 89
Goddess *Pattini*



Figure 90

Drummers performing acts in *Kohomba Yakkankariya*



Figure 91

Kohomba Yakkankariya



Figure 92

Gammadu shanthy karma (ritual)



Figure 93

**Figure 94**

Devol madu shanthy karma (dancers perform in ritual)

**Figure 95**

Devol madu shanthy karma (dancers wore masks and perform ritual)

Training

Training in the field of dance is given carefully in line with tradition. Initially the student is taught the bar exercises also known as *dandiyaharamba* (12 bar exercises) or *pa haramba*. The exercise is passed on from one guru *paramparawa* (generation) or teaching tradition to another. When the student gained adequate skill and proficiency in those basic exercises, they leave the bar and emerge into the open for the next course of exercises.

Kastiram (Kaathiram in Tamil) (basic dance step)

Seerumanam (low movement of a dance, making a break after a *Kastiram*)

Vannam (main dance piece)

**Figure 96**

Dandiyaharamba or Pa haramba. (bar exercises)

Five distinctive types of Kandyan dancing

- Ves dance
- Neiyandi dance
- Udekki dance
- Pantheru dance
- Vannam



Figure 97
Neiyandidance



Figure 98
Udekki dance



Figure 99
Pantheru dance group



Figure 100 *Ves dance*

The vannams (Main dance form)

Thevannam (or warnam) was a kind of recitation and were inspired by nature, history, legend, folk religion, folk art, and sacred lore, and each is composed and interpreted in a certain mood (*rasaya*) or expression of sentiment. The word *vannam* comes from the Sinhala word *varnana* ('descriptive praise'). Traditionally a dancer would have to learn to perform all of these *vannam* before they would be awarded the *ves* costume. The most well-known among these are the *hanuma vannama* (monkey), *Theukusa vannama* (eagle) and the *gajaga vannama* (elephant). Ancient Sinhala texts refer to a considerable number of *vannam* that were only sung; later they were adapted to solo dances, each expressing a dominant idea. History reveals that the Kandyan King Sri Weeraparakrama Narendrasinghe (1707-1739 AD) gave considerable encouragement to dance and music. In the *kavikara maduwa* (a decorated dance arena) there were song and poetry contests. The eighteen classical *vannams* are,

Vannam	Animal/ bird
Gajaga	elephant
Thuranga	horse
Mayura	peacock
Gahaka	conch shell
Uraga	crawling animals
Mussaladi	hare
Ukkussa	eagle"
Vyrodi	eagle
Hanuma	monkey
Savula	rooster
Sinharaja	lion king
Naaga	cobra
Kirala	red-wattled lapwing
Eeradi	arrow
Surapathi	goddess Surapathi
Ganapathi	god Ganapathi
Uduhara	pomp and majesty of the king
Assadhrua	extolling the merit of the Buddha

Table 3 *Types of main dance*

Dance in Southern Sri Lanka

There are three types of dance styles found in southern part of Sri Lanka.

Devil dance – ritual known as devolmadu

Kolam dance

Sanni dance

Devil dance

Devil dance in Sri Lanka is a well-known form of dance and has a provision that looks at dance in relation to other aspects and spheres of a society, such as dance being an integral part of ritual-making activities. It is then closely related to the religious beliefs of the culture. The ritual dance has a functional role in providing the people with an avenue to channel and direct their expressions of emotions such as hope, frustration and distress to a higher deity or being. Hence, through understanding the dance-sphere of a ritual or ceremony of a particular culture, a deeper and fuller understanding of the concept and workings of that ritual or ceremony can be gained. This will ultimately help in understanding a society from a non-ethnocentric point of view.

The "*Devil Dances*" are an attempt to respond to the common belief that certain ailments are caused by unseen hands and that they should be chased away for the patient to get cured. If an individual or a family is not doing well, the village-folk believe that it's because that person or the family is being harassed by unseen hands. The villagers believe the unseen hand as devils or demons. According to their system of beliefs, the devils identified as those most affecting humans are *Ririyaka* known as a blood thirsty demon, a most dreadful and powerful demon. Many diseases are attributed to him; *Huniyanyaka* - comes in a number of guises inflicting a variety of fearsome diseases and his malevolent effect on human beings are called *huniyandosa*. *Huniyankapumaisa* ritual and a mechanism to drive away malefic effects from human life, this ritual is accompanied by *vadigapatuna* a special form of dance which recreates the arrival of *Wadigas* to Sri Lanka. Researchers have found that elements of drama in *Wadiga Patuna* which a scripted dialogue handed down by

tradition are aptly interspersed with relevant spontaneous talk. *Mahasohona* is a most dreadful devil who causes fear and death of human beings. They were believed to be commonly found in lonely places like graveyards and places of cremation in villages.

Garayaka (consisting of 12 *garayakun*) is a good spirit, which were felicitated with dance and gifts, when a house should be cleansed of disease. *Gara yakuma* is a ritual that invokes '*Garayaka*' the demon of sanitation and '*Giridavi*' the consort of '*Garayaka*'. *KaluKumaraya* or black prince is a mixture of stalker, seducer, and murderer, albeit a dark and handsome one. According to stories, he spends his days lurking in the shadows, emerging only to prey upon young girls and lone women. He craves for dark women as he too is dark in colour. *Riri Yaka* or 'Blood Demon' is a popular local demon with an eternal thirst for blood; a sort of native vampire, but a hundred times more terrifying. One of Sri Lanka's most spine-chilling demon entities, the *Riri Yaka* is believed to originate from Northern India, where he was born to human parents. However, as he grew up, he began to develop loathsome habits so blood-thirsty and revolting that people began to suspect he was a demon.

Rata yakaca causes many afflictions in women and children. *Rata Yaka* caused barrenness, sterility and abortion in women. *Riddi Yagaya* or *Rata Yakuma*, a major exorcism ritual which performed to cure women who suffer from barrenness, is very popular among Sri Lanka. Ritual priests (*kattadiya*) explain this as an effective way to prevent miscarriages, premature births, still births and to avoid dangers at the time of delivering the infants, in addition to curing barrenness. In Sri Lanka as in some African countries, the social status of women is measured through their ability to conceive



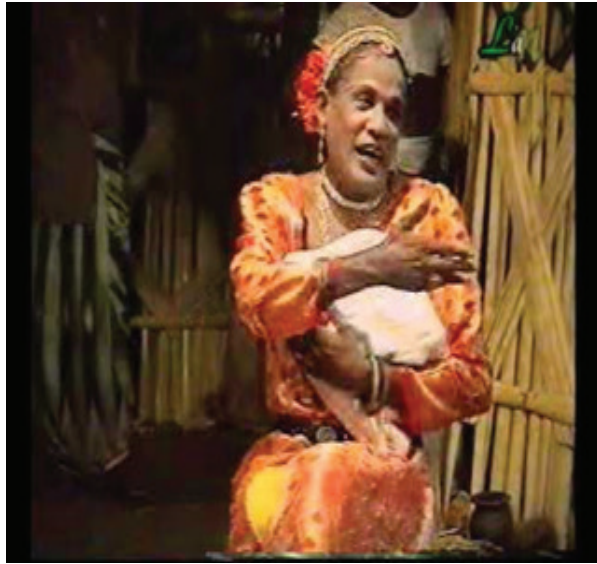
Figure 119

and bear children. *Riddi Queen* (seven barren queens) is a symbolic female character who performs as a barren woman. A simple methodology used by ritual priests in *Riddi Yagaya* is providing a psychological security to cope with her deep seated anxieties by projecting them to a preexisting cultural belief system. In other words she anxiously watches how barren queens were rid of their barrenness through by making an offering to the Buddha *Dipankara*. The *Riddi Yagaya* is organized around the story of barren queens, but offerings are made to the Demons who are supposed to be responsible for making women barren. The dramatic method employed here is improvisation and imitation through the story line. The sufferer is a part of the audience and is mesmerized by the poetry of the chants and the artistry of the dance and mime.



Gara yaka *Gara yakain* British collection at Berlin museum

Figure 120



Riddi yagaya- Riddi Queen
Figure 121



Ririyaka
Figure 122



Figure 123
Mahasohona

Popular terms used in rituals (*Tovil*)

- Kattadiya- exorcist priest
- Edura- Shaman healer
- Authuraya- patient
- Ana Vina – exorcism
- Dosa - malevolent effects
- Navagraha deiyo- planetary gods
- Apala – malefic
- Sanni- disease
- Kolam- masquerade or disguise
- Suniyam- sorcery
- Shanthikarma- ritual
- Yakuma- demon ritual
- Tovil- exorcism ritual
- Pali- different events
- Yakku- demons
- Bali- ritual
- Kankariya- religious item
- Bhuta- unseen power
- Bali Adura- priest officiating with planetary deities
- Kariyakarawana rala - narrator
- Vesamuni- King of the demons
- Ambum kavi- carving verses
- Dola Duka – craving and desire in pregnancy

The story of the origin of Kolam

The first *Kolam* drama was staged during the pregnancy of the Queen of *King Mahasammathain* having of had an irresistible craving to see a performance of a masked dance. To please her, the King had brought in actors from various countries. The Queen had been highly pleased to see the *Kolam* drama which had been performed by these actors wearing masks. According to legend, *God Shakra* had ordered *God Vishva Karma* to make the masks from sandalwood (sandun). After he had finished making the masks, he had written a book explaining how to stage a *kolam* drama, and had left them all in the King's garden. The gardener, who came across these things, had informed the King about them. The King had then ordered all his men to perform the *Kolam* according to the instructions provided in the discovered explanatory text. After seeing this drama, the Queen had been pleased, and *Kolam* dramas had been included in the list of traditional dramas from then on. It is assumed that the mask dance did the job, and that she suffered no more *dola duka*, and that the infant born was a healthy one.

Kolam Dance

Kolam is a genre of dance drama in which the performers wear masks depicting animals, different human characters which signify different social strata including Kings, high officials in society, commoners in villages, people who served state police and gods. Mirissa, Ambalangoda and Bentara are the most popular areas located in the south of Sri Lanka where *Kolam* dance was practiced since ancient times. A *Kolam* performance is full of absurd exaggeration and comic dialogue. Ordinary people recognize themselves in the situations and characters in the performance. Besides *Kolam* refers to disguise and mimicry. The actors wear masks

and costumes and perform with mime, dance and dialogue. The objective of performing *Kolam* is to provide amusement and social satire rather than ritual. The Sinhala word *Kolam* is commonly used in the day-to-day parlance throughout Sri Lanka connoting some comical, crazy or unusual behaviour which provides endless entertainment through fun and humour. The *Kolam* dance performance is comprised of numerous episodes and diverse characters who perform their roles representing the traditional rural setting of Sri Lanka in addition to their sufferings under the colonial administration. There are many popular episodes performed on stage such as *arachchi, kolama* (village headman and his clerk *Dukkiniya*) *anabera kolama* (drunk drummer known as *Pannikkale* and his aged old wife *Nonchi akka*) *Hewa kolama* (Lasquarine soldiers), *Badadaru kolama* (pregnant mother), *Pedi kolama* (old washer man *Jasaya* and his young wife *Lenchina*), *Sinha kolama* (lion), *raja kolama* (King and Queen) *Raksha kolama* (dance of the devils such as *Gurulu raksha kolama*, *Naga raksha kolama*).

The *Kolam* Dance comprises twentyfour *raksha* dance performances. Dancers perform their dances wearing a series of masks depicting the pantheon of *rakshas*. The ghastly appearance of these *Rakshas* and their dancing add fear and terror to the *Kolam* dance performance. *Suramba Valliya* and *Somiguna Kolama*, *Maname Kathawa* (*Danuddara jataka* story of prince *Maname*, Princess and the *Vedda* king) *Sanda Kindurukathawa*, *game katahawa*, *Gotimbarakathawa* and *Gara Yaka Kolama*. These characters reveal a form that mixed myth (the royal patron who is given the *Kolam* dance by the gods to satisfy the Queen's pregnancy urges) and social satire (the foolish soldiers, the drunken drummers, and their beaten wives)

The objective of performing a *Maname* story in the *Kolam* dance was to offer a didactic and a moral lesson through a Buddhist *Jataka* (stories of the pre-birth of Lord Buddha) to educate the common villagers. All the episodes of *Kolam* dance were performed to the tune of the beatings of drums and the recitations of verses. The intermittent dialogue between the narrator and the characters of the episodes of *Kolam* dance comprised humorous expressions and punning on words.

Popular characters of Kolam dance and their attributes

1. The village headman (*Arachchi*) - arrogant and vain
2. Chief of the district (*Mudali*)
3. Mudali's servant (*Henchappu*)
4. The tom-tom-beater (*Anaberakaru*) - poor and oppressed
5. The Muslim (*Hettiya*) - the greedy moneylender, the village butcher
6. The old married couple (*Nonchi/Dukkniya*) - afraid of demons and wild animals
7. The returned Lasquarine soldiers (*Police*) -
8. The young beauty and an impotent old man (*Lenchina and Jasaya*)
9. The narrator (*Sabe Vidane / Kariyakarawana Rala*)
10. The King's guards (*Hewayo*)
11. King and Queen



Figure 124



Nonchi and JasayaMahasammatha

Figure 125



King and Queen

Figure 126



Figure 127

Kolam characters

http://www.masksariyapalasl.com/about_masks.htm



Figure 128

Anabaera Kolama

http://thescf.org.au/?attachment_id=874



Figure 129

Suramba valliya

<http://fernandopriyanga.blogspot.com.au/2010/09/vesmuhunu-devil-masks-of-sri-lanka.html>

Demon Masks (*Raksha*)

Raksha masks are also used to perform *Raksha* dances in the *Kolam Maduwa*. According to legend, Sri Lanka was earlier ruled by a race called *Rakshasas* whose king was *Ravana* of the Ramayana. *Rakshasas* could assume various forms. Although we have twenty four forms of *Rakshasas* only a few are performed in *Kolam* dance. They are:

1. *Naga Raksha* (Cobra Mask)
2. *Maru Raksha* (Mask of the Demon of Death)
3. *Gurulu Raksha* (Mask of the Bird)
4. *Rathnakuta Raksha*
5. *Purnaka Raksha*



Figure 130

Naga Raksha



Figure 131
Gurulu Raksha



Figure 132
Maru raksha

Sanni Yakuma

Sanniyakuma also known as *Daha ata sanniya* is a traditional Sinhalese exorcism ritual. This ritual has a very long history in Sri Lanka and oral tradition, linking it with the ancient city of Vaishali in Bihar State in India, suggesting its great antiquity. The *Daha Ata Sanniya* dance was practiced as part of the blessing ceremony *Shanthi Karmaya* in the times of ancient kings in the southern and western parts of the country. This healing way related to the equilibrium of the body of man. If the mental or physical equilibrium of man gets upset by a trouble in the process of digestion of food, or wrong actions or wrong thoughts (psychologically), man is exposed to sickness. According to traditions sickness is brought to them by the demons. Ancient people personified these diseases in the form of demons. There are eighteen diseases attributed to eighteen demons *Sanni* in *Sanni Yakuma*. Villagers identified eighteen ailments as eighteen *sanni* and each *sanni* represented by a distinctive mask. According to folklore, the eighteen demons who are depicted in the *sanni Yakuma* originated during the time of the Buddha. It is a mix of traditional beliefs regarding spirits with Buddhism. The parade of the eighteen *sanni* demons is called *dahaatasanniyakum* and performed by the *dahaatapaliya*. The *Daha Ata Sanniya* dance is vibrant, vivacious and full of colour. But it was performed rarely in the past century as the logistics and cost of staging it are often prohibitive.

Role of Palis

Twelve masked dancers known as '*Palis*' arrive at the location as forerunners of the eighteen *Sanni* demons and arrange the place for the ritual. *Palis* assigned with different tasks come one after the other. *Pandam Paliya* carries burning torches, *Anguru Dummala Paliya* carries resin powder and charcoal, *Kadu Paliya* carries a sword, *Kalas Paliya* carries a

flower pot, *Salu Paliya* carries betel, *Dalumura Paliya* carries betel, *Tambili Paliya* carries a kingcoconut, *Muguru Paliya* carries a club, *Kukulu Paliya* carries a cock, *Athu Paliya* carries branches, *Dunu Paliya* carries a bow and arrow and *Kendi Paliya* carries holy water in a pot. Following are names of demons and ailments associated with demons.



Figure 133
Salu paliya



Figure 134
pandam paliya



Figure 135
Masks of Pali

<http://firstaidmedicine.tumblr.com/image/24487658585>

Demon

Amukku Sanniya
Abutha Sanniya
Butha Sanniya
Bihiri Sanniya
Deva Sanniya
Gedi Sanniya
Gini Jala Sanniya
Golu Sanniya
Gulma Sanniya
Jala Sanniya
Kana Sanniya
Kora Sanniya
Maru Sanniya
Naga Sanniya
Pissu Sanniya
Pith Sanniya
Slesma Sanniya
Vatha Sanniya

Associated ailment

Vomiting and stomach diseases
Non-spirit related insanity
Spirit related insanity
Deafness
Epidemic diseases
Boild and skin diseases
Malaria and other high fevers
Dumbness
Parasitic worms and stomach diseases
Cholera and chills
Blindness
Lameness and paralysis
Delirium and death
Bad dreams about snakes
Temporary insanity
Bilious diseases
Phlegm and epilepsy
Flatulence and rheumatism

GulmaBihiriGoluGedi**Figure 136****Figure 137**



Figure 138



Figure 139

Jalakora



Figure 140



Figure 141



Figure 142

(<https://www.facebook.com/pittriversmuseum/photos/>)

Kana sanniyaDeva sanniya



Figure 143

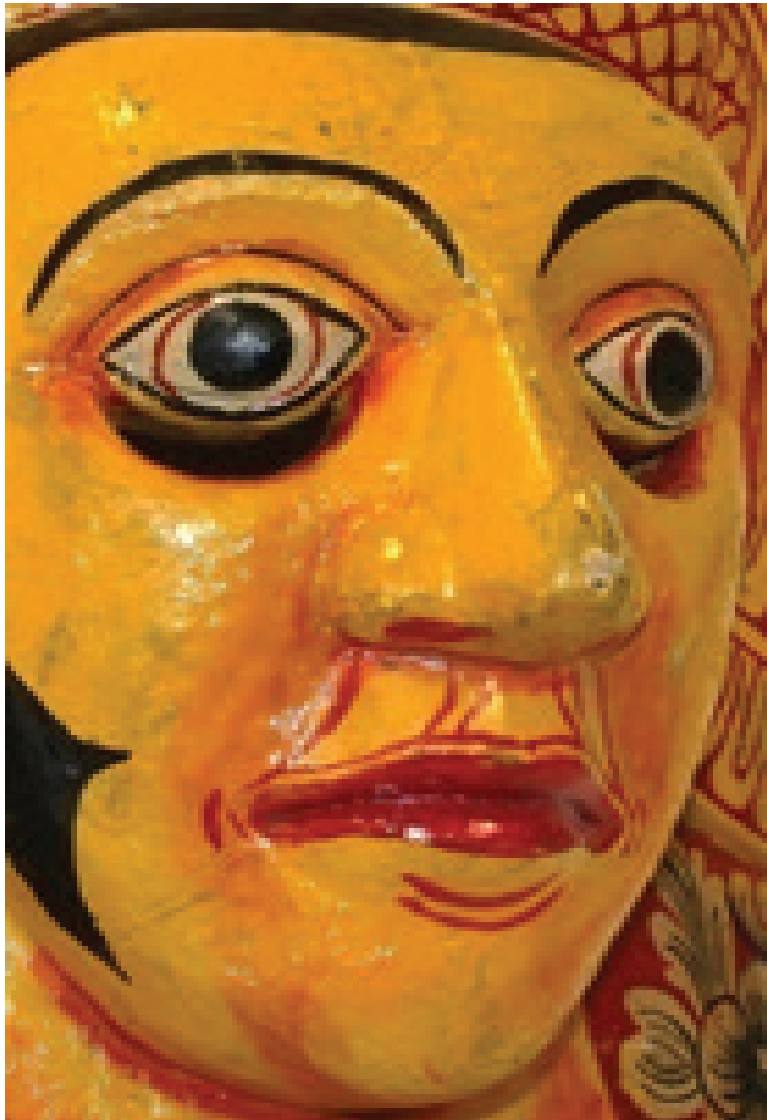


Figure 144

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/image/mask-sri-lanka-e19300>



Amukku sanniya
Figure 145



Figure 146
vatha sanniya



Figure 147
bihiri sanniya



Figure 148
Ginijala sanniya



Figure 149
Mahakola Sanni yaka
http://blog.uvm.edu/religion/files/2014/11/Sri_Lanken_mask_10_14.jpg

At present preserved at university of Vermont

The carved wooden mask depicts *Maha Kola Sanni Yaka*, chief of the *sanni yakku*, a group of eighteen malevolent spirits who afflict humans by causing a variety of illnesses. These misfortunes are cured through elaborate night-long healing ceremonies in which ritual specialists embody the various spirits and subdue them through offerings and by dramatically representing their subservience to the power of the Buddha. Masks of this size were displayed during these ceremonies rather than being put on, though a smaller mask of *Maha Kola Sanniya* was likely worn in the course of the ceremony. This particular mask is quite rare, with only a few examples found in museum collections around the world. The eighteen spirits that are under *Maha Kola Sanniya's* control can be seen depicted on either side of his face.

Masks

Mask-carving is a long established tradition in the Ambalangoda area, in south-west Sri Lanka. The masks are carved according to specific measures and passed on through verses called *AmbumKavi* ('carving-verses'). Although some of the masks are quite large and complex in their structure, most of those traditionally used in the various dance ceremonies are considered threequarter masks. Strapped to the face, they extend from the middle of the forehead to just below the mouth. This type of lightweight construction makes it easier for the dancer to wear during the often spastic and exaggerated movements executed during a performance which could last up to twelve hours.

Three types of wood are listed as common to mask construction and could vary depending upon the region and the immediate availability of materials; *kaduru* (*Strychnox nux-vomica*) was prized for its durability, *eramadu* (*Erythrina indica*) and *rukattana* (*Alsonia scholaris*), the latter being

considered inferior and known for breaking easily. Divided into blocks, the mask is gradually shaped from the wood. Once the final form is created, the wood is polished using leaves from the *mota daliya boodadiya*, or *korosa* trees. Prior to painting, the polished wood is treated with a clay sealant, called *allidyu* that acts as a better bonding surface for the pigments to follow.

Although contemporary masks are often painted with commercial pigments, even some of the older masks when they have been repainted reflect this growing trend, traditional techniques involve the exclusive use of natural organic and mineral-based pigments. White was derived from *makulu* clay, green from the leaves of the *kikirindiya* plant, the *ranavara* tree, or the ma creeper, blue from the ripe fruit of *bovitiya*, and yellow from *hiriyal* (orpiment), or *yellow pepper*. Black was obtained from charred cotton, and red from cinnabar or a red clay called *gurru gal*. To protect these pigments the *edura* would then coat the mask with a lacquer sealant called *valicci* which was derived from a combination of resins from the *hal* and *dorana* trees with beeswax. Hair and beards were simulated through the use of various dyed fibers, elephant hairs, and monkey skins applied directly to the mask.

Seven groups of masks identified by Otaker Pertold

The royalty

Other human beings

Gods and the celestial beings and their relatives

Demons of the *gara* group

Demons of the *sanni* group

Other demons and devils

Animals, spirits of animals, ghosts

The process of Mask carving



Figure 150



Figure 151



Figure 152



Figure 153

http://www.masksariyalas.com/about_masks.htm

Sabaragamu dance

The *Sabaragamuwa* dance tradition is fundamentally a depiction of the rite of worship. The dances portray rituals intended for the pantheon of gods. The dances are distinguishable because they are sacrosanct performances to invoke blessings from the gods, so that the goodness that comes forth from them will overcome evil.

The origin of the dance

Prince Vijaya landed in Sri Lanka which it had been inhabited by people belonging to the tribes of *Yaksha* and *Nagha*. Prince Vijaya married Kuveni who belonged to the *Yakshas*. But, when Vijaya turned against his wife's people, they fled to the *Sabaragamuwa* jungles, known then as '*SaparapGrama*' (four villages) that had encompassed Ratnapura, Balangoda, Kalawana and Uva-Wellassa. Unlike the Up-country and Low-country dances, *Sabaragamuwa* dances were performed by members of the upper castes and male dominated, dancing in the *Kirimadu*, *Pahanmadu*, and *Gam-madu* rituals.



Figure 154



Figure 155

Thelme dance

Training

A two-way positioning of the hands is required in the *Sabaragamuwa* dance tradition. The palm of one hand is turned inward facing self and the other palm will be turned outward. This formation requires much skill that only comes with practice. The training is carried out in twelve stages called '*TheiWattam*'. Only an experienced tutor will possess the necessary skills to train others. Usually the training period requires 3-4 months.

Malpadaya Netuma

MalpadayaNetuma belongs to the *Sabaragamuwa* dance form. It is associated with the ritual known as *Gammaduwa* to propitiate the *Pattini* goddess in order

to obtain a good harvest, Immunity and relief from infectious diseases. The main drum used is the *Davula*



Figure 156



Figure 157



Figure 158
Sabaragamu dance costume



Figure 159



Figure 160



Figure 161
The cloth (Selaya) Red cloth Waste clothAthpota
(Pachcha wadama)



Figure 162



Figure 163

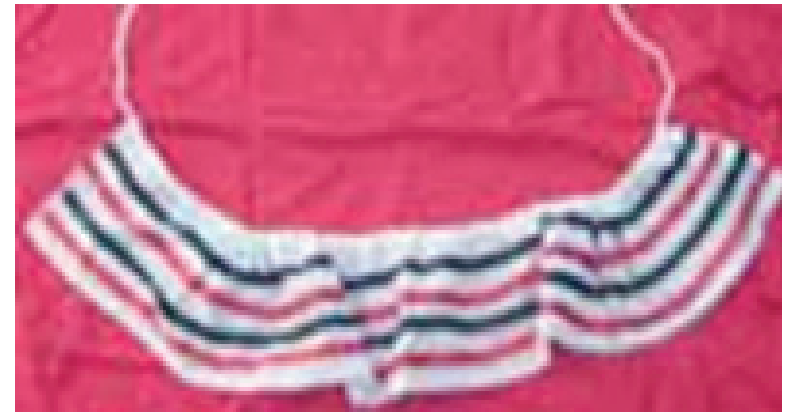


Figure 164
HattayaRalipatiya

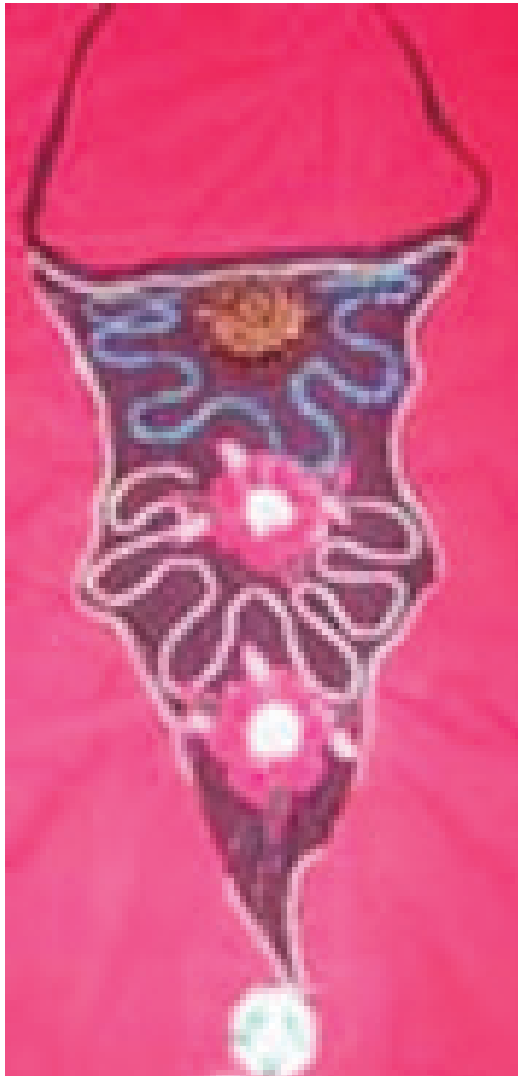


Figure 165
Waist band

Chapter 4

Costume for Dance

Costume and jewelry occupy a very important place in the Kandyan dance. The costume and the ornaments of the dancer are collectively called *Su- seta- abharana* (64 royal ornaments) a regalia of the mythical King *Malayadesa* (assumed a place located in India) of the legends of the *Kohombakankariya*. A *ves* dancer (dancer who adorned particular to the hill country dance type) symbolizes the sun god- the deity worshiped in the *kankariya*. (ritual) The master of the ceremony takes the guise ('*ves*') of the King. Hence the name *vesnetuma* is attributed to this form of dance. When the dance was not performed the costume was kept in the deistic shrine. (*Devale*)

Items of the Kandyan dance costume

1. *Jatava*- a reliquary shaped wooden piece decorated with lacquer worn over the head. It is also tied up with thick ribbon
2. *Jatarella*- a long piece of embroidered ribbon 45 inches in length trailing down from the top of the *jatava*
3. *Todupath*- Mango shaped ornaments which cover the ears.
4. *Painpatha*= An ornament made of silver in the shape of seven flames overtopping the *jatava*



Figure 101



Figure 102

Ves dancer King Buwanekabahu VII (1521-1551AD) of Kotte

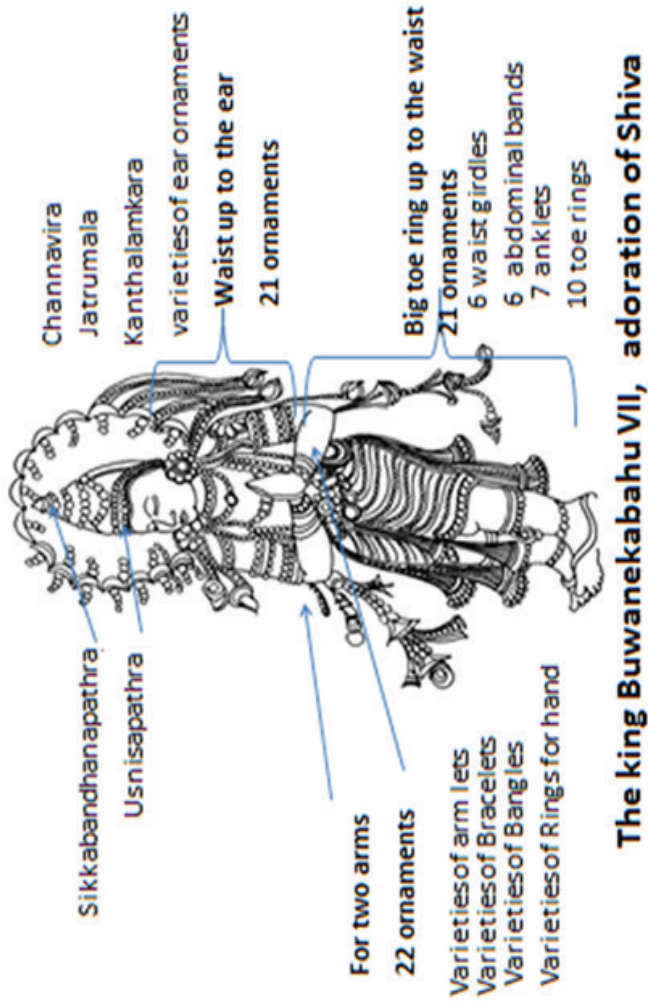


Figure 103

The King Buwanekabahu VII (1521-1551AD) of Kotte wearing 64 royal ornaments

5. Sikkabhandanaya- A semicircular silver tiara consisting of 13 petals, each carrying Bo leaves, and worn as a part of the headgear so as to give the idea of a sun shade.
6. Nettimalaya- A bow shaped forehead plate fringed with an array of Bo- leaves like the former.
7. Karapatiya- Ornament prepared out of strings of beads tied round the neck.
8. Avulhera- Ornaments adorning the chest. Sets of colourful strings of beads in the shape of two circles are taken for this.
9. Devramalaya- silver ornaments for the shoulders, known as urabahu.
10. Bandivalalu- 3 sets of bangles for the arm 6 on each
11. Kaimetta- wrist covers
12. Bubulupatiya – A richly decorated belt worn over the cloth.
13. Ina handaya- A glossy velvet piece of cloth extending down to the knees
14. Sangala- The costume of the ves dancer, 32 inches broad and 20 yards long.worn above the uludaya
15. Uludaya- Pleated white cloth three and a half yards long extending from the waist down to the ankle.
16. Devalla- Pleated white cloth 10 yards long and 32 inches wide, worn over the two sides of the waist
17. Yothpata- A red cloth of very thin texture folded several times , worn around the waist.
18. Rasupati- two pieces of leather with several sets of brass jingles worn around the calf (below the knee).
19. Silambu- Anklets

Aharya Abhinaya

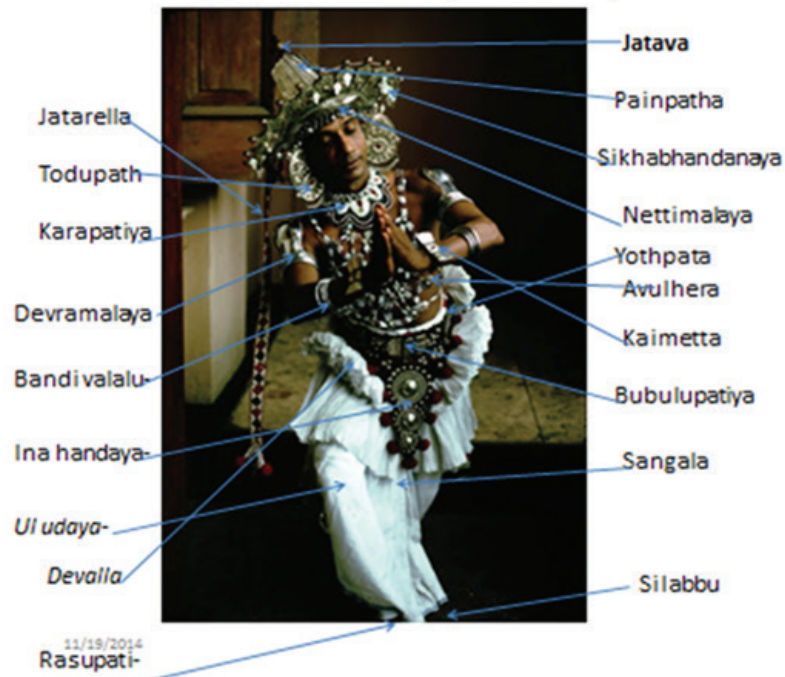


Figure 104



Figure 105

Wearing methodology of the Ves costume



Step 1
Figure 106



step 2
Figure 107



Step 3
Figure 108

Methodology of making flounces for both waist sides



Step 1
Figure 109



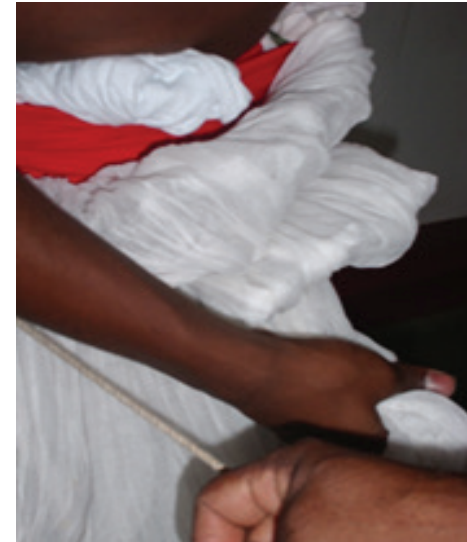
Step 2
Figure 110



Step 3
Figure 111



Step 4
Figure 112



Step 5
Figure 113



Step 6
Figure 114

Costume & Dance

Costume in dance reflects period culture and performance traditions. Costumes also reveal the distinct identity of the region which is reflected in the material, design, and the accessories. Costumes signified the movement being portrayed. Rhythmic movements penetrate to the costumes perpetuating and extending their expression.

Significance of the dance costumes

A costume worn in dance has in it the quality of rhythm. Even each type of attire has its own rhythm. However these rhythmic characteristics arise from the culture from which they originate. That rhythm is not a haphazard incident but evolve from body movement .These are described in *Shilpasastras* (technical manuals). Every costume comes alive when it is worn on the human body. Skillfully choreographed movements of the human body can be enhanced by the delicate wraps and draperies of transparent textiles. However textiles that are two dimensional , when worn on the bodies as costumes become three dimensional.

Rhythm is the essence of dance costumes and is also enhanced by accessories. Form, style, texture, proportion, shape, gravity, length, have been utilized successfully in these attires to emphasize rhythmic movements. Rhythm has also been facilitated by the sound of the accessories attached to the dance attire. Anklets and armllets are important accessories in this sense. Extended frills, long chords, layers of pleats, wads of pleats, detailed fringes, and decorated hem lines are also incorporated in the attire. Therefore the style of the dance costumes is not to be thought of as something independent of movement. Movement and garments are conceived as a single whole.



Extending frills
Figure 115



long codes
Figure 116



layers of pleats

Figure 117

Wad of pleats

Figure 118

Conclusion

The dance tradition of Sri Lanka appears to be quite clearly a distinctive particularization of patterns which developed and extend throughout the South Asian region. The individuality of this indigenous style has its historical origins in social and cultural dynamism. At the same time common pool of ideas and experience that exist in Sri Lankan culture has always been a rich source drawn upon time and time again. It is both the internal dynamism of dance and context that are reflected in the unity and diversity of tradition in Sri Lanka.

Today traditional production of art (dance, masks, music and instruments and other art forms) and its environment changed drastically with the social changes. Walter Benjamin sees the transformations of art as an effect of changes in the economic structure. Art is coming to resemble economic production, though at a delayed pace. The movement from contemplation to distraction is creating big changes in how people sense and perceive. Historically, works of art had an 'aura' – an appearance of magical or supernatural force arising from their uniqueness (similar to mana in the Bible). The aura includes a sensory experience of distance between the reader and the work of art. The aura has disappeared in the modern age because art has become reproducible. The aura is an effect of a work of art being uniquely present in time and space. It is connected to the idea of authenticity. A reproduced artwork is never fully present. If there is no original, it is never fully present anywhere. The aura is an effect of a work of art

being uniquely present in time and space. It connects to the idea of authenticity. Authenticity cannot be reproduced, and disappears when everything is reproduced. The loss of aura seems to have both positive and negative effects for Benjamin. He sees the aura, authenticity, and uniqueness of works of art as fundamentally connected to their insertion in a tradition. The reproduced work of art is completely detached from the sphere of tradition. It loses the continuity of its presentation and appreciation. The traditional work of art is experienced mainly through distanced contemplation. In present society, this became an a social stance. In contrast, modern cultural forms such as photographs, TV shows and film do not lend themselves to contemplation. They are imperative, challenging and agitating the viewer, putting up signposts.

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