

The Aesthetics and Histrionics of Kathakali: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the unique confluence of aesthetic appeal and performing skills of Kathakali; as elite and prestigious form of theatre from Kerala. Through an inept analysis of its historic, thematic, and cultural contents, the paper examines how satire, love, and other basis human emotions are evoked. Renowned for its elaborate costumes, dynamic dense, captivating music and powerful story telling. Kathakali serves as a living repository of reframed as well as cultural heritage. The paper also delves in to the performative elements such as music, dance, gestures, choreography, use of instruments, that contribute to its aesthetic appeal. Through this examine the paper underscores Kathakali's role in maintaining the aesthetic appeal and its capacity of fostering a deeper understanding of historical and mythological consciousness of current cultural scenario.

Key words: Aesthetics, Culture, Histrionics, Myth, Legend, Heritage and Symphony.

INTRODUCTION

KottarakaraThampuram, the Raja of Kottarakara (once a province of Kerala), a great admirer and promoter of traditional art forms, invited the Zamorin to present Krishnattom ni Kottarakkara. The Zamorin refused, saying that Krishnattom was not for the unsophisticated audience of southern Kerala. In response, KottarakaraThampuram composed several plays and created Ramanattom (Raman; attom(enactment)), also performed on eight consecutive nights. At first, Ramanattom enacted stories from Ramayana and other epics, but as it evolved into Kathakali, it began to encompass many stories.

Kathakali shared similarities with both Ramanattom and Krishnanattom but incorporated several outside elements from the folk and martial arts of Kerala which contributed to its popularity. The increasing use of the local language, Malayalam (as a mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam, called Manipravaalam) made it more popular among the masses, who could not understand the ancient Sanskrit language. In time, masks were discarded in

favour of more elaborate facial make-up. Around the seventeenth century, acting became separated from singing, leaving the actors free to focus and excel in choreography and dramatic expression and the vocal artists focused on delivering their lines.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Prince Kotayam wrote four plays based on The Mahabharata, liberating Kathakali from adherence to any particular Hindu epic and distinguishing it from Ramanatom. The art of Kathakali make-up has profound undertones of feeling and mood associated with it. Emotions expressed in the face became central to performances, and he introduced a white frame around the face, and red features on a green background, to emphasize movements of the facial features. In the eighteenth century, Kapplingattu Nampoothiri introduced several innovations that shaped Kathakali as it is performed today. He then improved the percussion accompaniment and standardized the use of alarca, the inarticulate cries made by demons and animals. He further borrowed mudras from Koodiyattam and harmonized their use with body movements. He clarified and defined the five types of character and strengthened the use of three-dimensional makeup. He also introduced the kathi (knife) character type, which combined noble features with evil qualities.

The makeover of human actors into the facade and persona of gods, titans and demons of the netherworld is inimitable making Aharya Abhinaya (enactment of stories clad in the assumed get-up of the mythological characters) the basis of Kathakali. Kathakali was traditionally performed during religious festivals. Several Hindu ethnic groups participated in the performance of Kathakali. In its early days, the Nair community dominated because they were often well-versed in the martial art form, Kalaripayattu, which is used in Kathakali training and, in a mild form, on the stage. Kathakali, as it is performed today, is just more than four centuries old.

KATHAKALI PLAYS

According to tradition, there are 101 classical Kathakali stories, though less than a third of these are commonly staged at present. Almost all of them were initially composed to last a whole night. Nowadays, there is increasing popularity of concise, or opener select, versions of stories so that the performance lasts not more than three to four hours from the evening. Thus, many stories find stage presentation in parts rather than totality. The 3 selections are based on criteria like chorographical beauty, thematic relevance/popularity or melodramatic elements.

Kathakali is a classical art form, but it can be appreciated also by novices—all contributed by the elegant looks of its character, its abstract movement and its synchronization with the musical notes and rhythmic beats. And, in any case, the folk elements too continue to exist. For better appreciation, perhaps, it is still good to have an idea of the story being enacted. Some of the popular stories enacted are Nalacharitham (a story from the Mahabharata), Duryodhana Vadham (focusing on the Mahabharata war after profiling the buildup to it), Kalyana sougandhikam, (the story of Bhima going to get flowers for his wife Panchali), Keechaka vadham (another story of Bhima and Panchali, but this time during their stint in disguise), Kiratham (Arjuna and Lord Shiva's fight, from the Mahabharata), Kamashapatham (another story from the Mahabharata), Nizhalkuthu and Bhadrakali vijayam authored by Pannisseri Nanu Pillai. A few other frequently staged stories are Kuchelavrittam, Santanagopalam, Balivijayam, Daksha yagam, Rugmini swayamvaram, Kalakeya vadham, Kirmeera vadham, Bakavadham, Poothanamoksham, Subhadraharanam, Balivadham, Rugmangada charitam, Ravanolbhavam, Narakasura vadham, Uttara swayamvaram, Harishchandracharitam, KachaDevayani and Kamsavadham.

Recently, as part of attempts to further popularize the art, stories from other cultures and mythologies, such as those of Mary Magdalene from the Bible, Homer's Iliad, and William Shakespeare's King Lear and Julius Caesar besides Goethe's Faust have been adapted into Kathakali scripts and on to its stage.

THE MUSIC

The language of the songs used for Kathakali is Manipravalam. Though most of the songs are set in ragas based on the micro tone heavy Carnatic music, there is a distinct style of plain note rendition, which is known as the Sopanam style. This typical Kerala style of rendition takes its roots from the temple songs, which used to be sung (continues even now at several temples), at the time when Kathakali was popular. As with the acting style, Kathakali music also has singers from the northern and southern schools. The northern style has largely been groomed by Kerala Kalamandalam in the 20th century. Kalamandalam Neelakantan Nambisan, the overarching Kathakali musician of those times, was a product of the institute.

PERFORMANCE

Traditionally, a Kathakali performance is usually conducted at night and ends in the early morning. Nowadays it isn't difficult to see performances as short as three hours

or fewer. Kathakali is usually performed in front of the huge Kalivilakku (kali meaning dance; vilakku meaning lamp) with its thick wick sunk till the neck in coconut oil. Traditionally, this lamp used to provide some light when the plays used to be performed inside temples, palaces abode houses of nobles and aristocrats. Enactment of a play by actors takes place to the accompaniment of music (Geetha) and instruments (vadya). The percussion language of hand symbols is equivalent to speech.

There are 24 basic mudras permutations and combination of which would add up to a chunk of the hand gestures in vogue today. Each can again can be classified into 'Samaana mudras (one mudra symbolising two entities) or 'Misra mudras' (both hands are used to show these mudras). The mudras are a form of sign language used to tell the story. The main facial expressions of a Kathakali artist are the 'navarasams' (Navarasas in anglicised form) (literal translation: Nine tastes or essences, but more loosely translated as nine feelings or expressions) which are 'Sringaram'(amour), H'asyam (ridicule or humour), 'Bhayanakam' (fear), 'Karunam' (pathos), 'Roudram' (anger/wrath), 'Veeram' (valour), 'Beebhatsam' (disgust), 'Adbhutam' (wonder, amazement), 'Shantam' (tranquillity, peace). The link at the end of the page gives more details on Navarasas.

MAKEUP/CHUTTI

One of the most interesting aspects of Kathakali is its elaborate and resplendent makeup code. For the artists, when they essay gods, legendary kings, asuras and rakshasas, the makeup and costumes become the only way to truly represent these superhuman figures in all their splendour and glory. It is done not only with great skill and care but almost as a ritual, so that through this prolonged process, which begins several hours before the performance, the actor will grow into the symbolic character he is to portray through a gradual involvement. The makeup is directly applied to the face and it does not obstruct the full expression of the face and eyes. All the colours used in the make-up are obtained from natural substances and herbs. The Chutti plays a crucial role in differentiating the characters and their personality.

Most often, the makeup can be classified into five basic sets namely 'Pachcha', 'Kathi', 'Kari', 'Thaadi', and 'Minukku'. The differences between these sets lie in the predominant colours that are applied on the face. 'Pachcha' (meaning green) has green as the dominant colour and is used to portray noble male characters who are said to have a mixture of "Satvik' (pious) and 'Rajasik' (dark; Rajas = darkness) nature. 'Rajasik' characters have an evil streak ("tamasic'-

evil) al same they are antiheroes in the play (such as the demon king Ravana) and are portrayed with streaks of red in a green painted face. Excessively evil characters such as demons (totally "tamasic) have predominantly red makeup and a red beard. They are called Red Beard (Red Beard). "Tamasic' characters such as uncivilized hunters and woodsmen are represented with a predominantly black makeup base and a black beard and are called black beard (meaning black beard). Women and ascetics have lustrous, yellowish faces and this semi-realistic category forms the fifth class. In addition, there are 36 modifications of the five basic sets described above such as 'Vella Thadi' (white beard) is used to depict Hanuman (the Monkey God) and 'Pazhuppu', which is majorly used for Lord Shiva and Balabhadra.

RENOWNED SCHOOLS AND MASTERS

Kathakali artists need assiduous grooming for almost a decade, and most masters are products of accomplished institutions that give a minimum training course of half a dozen years. The leading Kathakali schools (some of them started during the pre-independent era of India) are Kerala Kalamandalam (located in Cheruthuruthy near Shoranur), PSV Natya Sangham (located in Kotakal near Kozhikode), Sadanam Kathakali and Classical Arts Academy (or Gandhi Seva Sadan located ni Perur near Otappalam ni Palakkad), Unnayi Varier Smaraka Kalanilayam (located ni Irinjalakuda south of Thrissur), Margi in Kannur Thiruvananthapuram, Muthappan Kaliyogam at Parassinikkadavu district and RLV school at Tripunithura of Kochi and Kalabharathi at Pakalkkuri near Kottarakkara in Kollam district. etc.. Kathakali is still hugely a male domain but, since the 1970s, females too have made entry into the art form on a recognizable scale. The central Kerala temple town of Tripunithura has, in fact, a ladies' troupe (with members belonging to several parts of the state) that performs Kathakali, by and large in Travancore.

STYLE AND TECHNIQUES OF KATHAKALI

Kathakali is a flamboyant dramatic performance in which they elucidate their emotions through its vivid and persuasive mudras, rhythmic movements, and pleasing choreography. The style of kathakali is referred to as 'Sampradayam' and the three major styles are 'Vettathu Sampradayam', 'Kalladikkodan Sampradyam' and 'Kaplingadu Sampradayam'. These leading Kathakali styles differ from each other in subtleties like choreographic profile, the position of hand gestures and stress on dance rather than drama and vice versa. Of late, these have narrowed down to the northern (Kalluvazhi) and southern (Thekkan) styles. It was largely

developed by the legendary artist Pattikkamthodi Ravunni Menon (1881-1949) and is implemented in Kerala Kalamandalam (though it has also a department that teaches the 37 southern style), Sadanam, RLV and Kottakkal. Margi has its training largely based on the Thekkan style, known for its stress on drama and realistic techniques. Kalanilayam, effectively, churns out students with a mix of both styles.

A VISUAL ART: CHARACTERS, ATTIRE AND MAKEUP

Characters in Kathakali are divided by emotional capacity and defined by corresponding makeup types. They are grouped first by a few broadly differentiated types: 'satvik'(heroic, pious, and virtuous), 'rajasik' (passionate, heroic but aggressive), and 'tamasik' (demonic, rude, evil). These broad character groups are then divided into seven types which share colours and styles of makeup: 'paccha/green, 'katti/knife, 'thadi'/bearded, 'kari'/black, 'minukku/shining, and 'theppu'/ special. Within each group, there are variations for different characters and situations, but the primary pattern, colour scheme, and headdress usually remain constant. In practice, there are also subtle adjustments of line weight and shape as the patterns are mapped onto the individual's facial features. Colours hold symbolic meaning, as do many of the features. This visual language informs the audience of each character's nature. The importance of makeup and costume is indicated in the level of transformation from performer to character; several sources report that once a performer is in makeup and costume, he is no longer addressed by his name.

PACHA

The 'Pacha vesham' with its predominant green colour is used to depict noble male characters like kings and divine beings. These characters have a mix of 'satvic' (pious) and 'rajsik' (kingly) nature. The 'satvic' element facilitates immense possibility for the artiste to explicate his acting talents. Characters like Lord Krishna and Lord Rama are examples of 'pacha vesham'. Kathi 'Kathi' characters are arrogant and evil but have a streak of valour in them. Though their makeup is green, denoting that they are high-born, a red mark like an upturned moustache or knife is painted on the cheek to show that they are evil. They also have white knobs on the tips of their noses and on their foreheads, which add to their evil nature. Ravana, the demon king is a typical kathi character in Kathakali.

THADI

There are three distinct types in the class of 'that vesham' viz. 'chuvannathadi' (red beard as in the case of the character Bali, the king of monkeys), 'vellathadi' (white beard) and 'karuthathadi' (black beard). The red beards are vicious and excessively evil characters. Their faces are mainly painted black on the top half and red on the lower. The white beard represents a higher type of being and is seen mainly in the character of Hanuman, the monkey god. The black beards are the character types in which black predominates in makeup and costume. These are the primitive beings the wild hunters and forest dwellers.

KARI

'Kari vesham' is used for demonic characters, portraying the most gruesome figures on the Kathakali stage. Their faces are jet black with dotted red and white. markings on them.

MINUKKU

'Minukku vesham' symbolizes gentleness and high spiritual qualities (like saints), which are in sharp contrast to the preceding four classes. It is used to represent women and sages. Traditionally kathakali is a predominantly male performance, the female characters are also performed by men. This 'vesham' is used to represent gentleness and high spiritual standing and is characterized by yellow facial paint.

Kathakali character's costumes have the same basic silhouette and components. Most characters, both male and female, wear huge hemispherical layered skirts (usually white with border stripes), one or more layered jackets (most commonly red), and a series of ornate accessories. These include four items on each arm, bells and pads on the lower legs, a carved breastplate and a cascade of gold necklaces, and two or more waist ornaments of fabric, beads, and carved decorated wood. Further layers include between two and six lengths of pleated fabric at the neck and ornate contrasting side panels from the waist to the hem.

All performers have some form of headdress-relatively simple for 'minukku', but extravagantly ornamented and magnificent headgear for gods and demons. There are variations in colour, headgear, and some accessories for different characters and some types. In scale, the most demonic characters have the most volume, while human characters are closer to the realistic size of the dress. All costumes feature bright colours, and strong contrasts, which helps them be more visible in the traditionally limited

lighting of nighttime performances. Also, the exaggeration in the costume designs support dramatic storytelling, and the forms, colours, and accessories for each character are standard so that each presentation of the character is visually recognizable.

The similarity is clear to new audiences; it takes time and experience to learn the various subtle differences between characters. Kathakali aficionados delight in reviewing the subtleties of movement, expression, and personality of accomplished performers. Whether traditionally crafted or contemporary in construction, Kathakali costumes are incredibly effective in bringing attention to those attributes. From the basic similarities in shape, colour, and ornament of all costumes to the intricacies of makeup, headdresses, and details of specific characters, all visual choices are effective in supporting the performance. They bring attention to the actor's eyes and facial expressions; they emphasize movements of body, hands, and feet, and they reinforce the percussive sounds of the dance. It's a beautiful marriage of form and function.

Kathakali, the classical dance of Kerala, tells the stories of heroes and demons in pantomime with resplendent makeup, vibrant costumes, magnificent headgear and a majestic appearance. The movements are vibrant and interesting. The drums were piercingly shrill rapid and staccato. This art form always deals with grand themes: battle, love, and religion. Good persons are green-faced, and evil is red. These wonderful masks are classified as 'Pacha', 'Kathi', 'Thodi', 'Kari' and 'Minukku'. Each mask is stylised to impact its characteristics. Kathakali is the visual presentation of mythological characters. The distinction in costumes and make-up categorizes the characters into different sorts. 'Pacha' (Green) is the make-up for 'satwik' or good persons and the colour green signifies refinement and virtue. "The Chutti" or facial border is minimised.

The major 'Pacha' characters in Kathakali are Nala and Paushkara (in Nalacharitham), Indra, the king of gods, Pandavas (in Mahabharata), Krishna (with a special headdress known as 'Mudi' with peacock tail) and the like. 'Kathi' (knife) is a more elaborate form for 'Rajasa' (kingly) characters dominated by evil desires, and villainous male characters. The knife-like mask is drawn in the middle of the face. There are two kinds of 'Kathi' characters. The main "Kathi" character with a heroine is made up of the 'Kaeumkathi' make-up style and the minor characters are of 'Nedumkathi' (elongated) style.

Ravana, Duryodhana, Keechaka, and Narekasura are 'Kueumkathi' veshas'(characters) and Kirmera, Akamba, Kumbhakarna, Khadolkacha, Mareecha (with a black beard) are

important 'Nedumkathi veshams'. Thadi' (Beard) characters are of both good and evil types and are known for their beards. They wear 'Vella Thadi' (Whitebeard). 'Chuvanna Thadi' (Red Beard) and Karutha Thadi (Black Beard). 'Vella Thadi' veshams are good characters. They are also known as 'Vattamudi' (Round crown). Hanuman, Nandikeswara, Vivida are 'Vellathadi', but with different crowns and costumes. Evil characters wear red and black beards. Dussasana, Kalakeya, Baka, Sardula, and Veerabhadra are 'Chuvanna Thadi' characters and Kali in Nalacharitha is 'Karuthathadi'. Bali and Sugreeva (two monkey brothers) are 'Chuvanna Thadi' veshams with little differences in 'Theppu' (facial drawing) and in 'chutti', except all other costumes are same as that of 'Chuvannathadi'. 'Kari' (blacks) veshams are cruel and uncivilised characters.

They are commonly inhabitants of forests. 'Kirathas' (hunters) and 'Rakshasis' (monsters) fall into this category. 'Kirathas' or 'Kattalas' in Kiratham, Nalacharitham, Kacha Devayani is Aan Kari (Male) and Simhika, Poothana, Hidumbi, Thadaka, Nakrathundi, Thrijada are Penn-Kari (Female). The facial make-up including 'chutti' is different for male and female 'Kari' characters. Female 'Kari' characters have more demoniac make-up. The next category is the 'Minukku' (smooth). The smooth light buff makeup is for women characters, goddesses and hermits. 'Rishis', 'Brahmins' and minor characters are also made up in the 'Minukku' style. They have no chutti or facial border. Usually, males are playing the roles of women. So, they wear artificial breasts known as 'mulakottaram' and 'chamaram' (big hairs).

Women characters wear at times crowns to present the role of goddesses like Saraswathi, Mahalakshmi, Bhoomi Devi and queens like Thadaka in Thadakavadham. The major 'minukku' characters are Damayanthi in Nalacharitham, Devayani, Lalithas in Poothana Moksham, Kharavadham, Narada, Vasishta, Brahmin in Santhanagopalam, Sudeva, Valala, Dootha and the like. Apart from this mainstream classification, there is another class of Kathakali characters. They are commonly known as 'Pazhukka' or 'Pazhuppu' (which means yellow). A reddish-yellow colour is dominant in this make-up style.

Gods like Brahma, Parameswara, Agni (Fire), Soorya (Sun) and Balabhadra wear 'Pazhuppu' make-up. They have chutti like 'Pacha' vesham. These 'Pacha', 'Kathi', 'Thadi', 'Minnukku', 'Kari' and 'Pazhuppu' together form 'Natyadharmi' class of make-up. These are under certain rules and regulations implied by Natyasastra. Nothing can be changed according to the actor's or make-up man's (chuttikkaran-one who sets up chutti) will. There is another

system of make-up known as 'Lokadharmi' (general costumes). 'Natyadharmi vesham' presents exceptional characters or divinity characters. But the other class show worldly characters as it is. 'Hamsa' (Swan) in 'Nalacharitham', 'Aanakkaran' (mahout) ni 'Kamsa Vadham', 'Vridha' (Old lady) ni 'Banayudham', 'Bhadrakali' (in Red Dress) ni 'Dakshayagam', 'Aasari' (Carpenter) ni 'Bakavadham', 'Kurathi' (a lower caste village lady) ni 'Kurathi', 'Manthravadi' in 'Nizhalkuthu' and the like are 'Lokadharmi veshams'. Some characters enter the stage with certain arms in their hands. For example:

Arjuna enters with a bow and arrow, Bhima with a mace, Duryodhana with a sword, and Parasurama with an axe. 'Kathi' and 'Thadi' have white balls known as 'Chuttippor' on the tip of the nose and on the forehead. Instead of 'chuttippor', 'Kari' (male) veshams wear flower-like paperwork on the tip of the nose. These are fixed with a paste of rice and lime, called 'chuttiyari'. Fixing 'chutti' (chuttikuthal) is a great and time-consuming work. Only talented men can do this work. (301)

'Chuttikkaran' works for hours to create the facial makeup of the artist. Another important part of Kathakali costume is its 'Koppu' or ornaments. These 'Koppu' are wooden pieces shaped differently and plated with gold foils. The other accessories are 'Chilanka' or 'Kachamani', 'Thandapathippu', 'Uduthuketu' (added clothes), Shirt, 'Munthi', 'Kuppayam' (upper Clothes), 'Uthareeyam' and 'C' hamaram' (Hair). This grandeur and beauty of Kathakali make-up is an achievement of designs and craftsmanship. With the costume, the make-up transforms the actor from his human proportions to superhuman stature.

KATHAKALI SANGEETHAM (MUSIC)

The literature of Kathakali is known as 'Attakatha'. In rustic language, 'Kathakali actor is called Attakkaran', therefore 'Attakatha' means the story for playing Kathakali. They are written in verse. The verse form is of two types - 'Sloka' and 'pada.' 'Sloka' means a four-lined small poem which shows the time, place and manner of incidents which are presented in the coming scene. They are restricted by certain rhyme schemes and metric patterns. 'Padas' are dialogues of characters in poetic forms. They have no metric pattern and only some of them undergo rhyme scheme. 'Padas' are musical and expressive of the emotions of the character. 'Padas' have rhythm (thala) just as 'Chembada', 'chamba', 'Adantha', 'Tripuda' and 'panchari'. In earlier times 'Kathakalipattu' was not musical and it was sung in the 'Sopana' style (only one mode of singing).

Later many 'raga' forms of Carnatic music were applied and a new branch of kathakali music evolved. Carnatic ragas like 'thodi', 'Kalyani', 'Kamboji', 'Neelambari', 'Bhairavi', 'Madhyamavathi', 'Dwijavanthi', 'Kanada' are profusely used in kathakali music. The Kathakali lyrics will be sung by two singers.

The main vocalist is known as "Ponnani" and the second singer or the supporting singer is known as 'Sankidi. P' adas' are of three types-'Vilamba' (Slow), 'M' adhyama' (middle), 'Druta' (fast). Kathakali music is assisted by "Chenda' (drum), 'Maddalam', 'Idakka', 'Chengila' and 'ilathalam'. 'Chengila' is played by 'Ponnani' and 'Idathalam' by 'Sankidi". The female dialogues are not assisted by Chenda, instead "Idakka' is played while singing.

CHOREOGRAPHY- LANGUAGE OF GESTURES

The great 'Rishi' Bharetha in his work Natyarsa comments that there are four types of 'Abhinaya' in a classical dance. They are 'Angika', 'Satwika', 'Aaharya' and 'Vachika'. The first three are present in kathakali and 'Vachika' (oral) is absent. The acting of kathakali includes two forms- they are called 'Cholliyattom' and 'Ilakiyattom'. 'Cholliyattom' is the visual presentation of the words in 'padas' before the audience using 'mudras'(hand gestures). There are twenty-four basic mudras and using these, the actors can create different meanings and images. Mudras, the alphabet of gesture language can create and impact a lot of basic human emotions.

There are twenty-four basic mudras in Hastalakshana Deepika (the book of hand gestures) like 'Pathaka', 'Mudrakhya', 'Kadakam', 'Mushti' and so on. They are also known as simple mudras (Asanyuta Murads). One can show it with a single hand. There are compound Mudras (Samyuta) which need both hands with the same basic Murda. These represent the sun, moon, king, gold, water, and bees. There are also complex (Misra) Mudras. They demand the use of both hands with different basic mudras. Mudras represent Queen, Siva, and Brahma, though beauty is complex Mudras Like world classes, there are also mudras showing form class and function class. The above-mentioned are form class. There are some mudras denoting Function class or grammatical words. They are known as 'Chillu Mudras', which are Mudras that represent the meaning of words like in, therefore, but, this, that, with, plural form and the like. In the essay "Alphabet of Gestures in Kathakali" Dr. N.V. Krishna observes:

The language of gestures employed in the classical dance of India is as complex as the language of speech sounds. Here the whole body performs the functions which in ordinary speech is performed by speech- mechanism. Though essentially a visible form of communication, it is extremely difficult to reduce a complex stream of movement. (303).

"Mudras' are not independent ni Kathakali. Mudra is mingled with facial expressions, popularly known as 'Rasas' give emotional colour to 'Mudras'. Without 'Rasas', 'Mudras' are incomplete. To express 'Rasa' the actor needs improvement of eyes, brows, and lips and it is not a whole-body movement. The nine 'Rasas' that impact various emotions together are known as 'navarasas'. Bharata defines the relationship between 'Mudra" and 'Rasa' are follows: "Yatho hasta statodrishti YathodrishtistatoManah Yathomanahstatobhavo Yathobhavahstato Rasa" Adance form according to Bharatha, has three parts caled Nrita, Nritya and Natiya. Mudra and Rasa together contribute to Nritya and Natya. Natya means dramatic aspect. Kathakali is adrama and ti si also apantomine. Nrita, movement of legs, hands, head and whole body, is the interesting side of Kathakali Nrita or movements in Kathakali are known as 'kalasam'.

At the end of every stanza or 'Padas' there is a kind of dance called 'Kalasam' where one can see the beauty of body movement in these 'Kakasam'. The movement of this dance requires common and a flexible body. This flexibility can be obtained only through constant practice and body massaging. In Kathakali itself, there are two kinds of 'chittas' (systems) - southern and northern. Kerala Kalamandalam follows these two types of "chitta'. The 'kaluvazhi chitta', a northern style is more complicated than the southern. In this style, one can face the elements of Kalarippayattu. Some movements of both are alike.

To minimise body, strain the artist is massaged with legs (Chavittithirumal) for three months every year. Dr. Kapaila Vatsayayan in an article entitled *Kathakaliyile Kaimudrakal* comments:

The internal aspects of movements, the system of flexions and tensions, contractions and releases and the micro-movements of different parts of the face and joints of the finger have been a matter of speculation, or the presence of the oral tradition, where techniques are passed on from master to pupil through direct experience. (309)

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