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A Comparative Study of Bharatanatyam and Kandyan Dance

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Abstract

Bharatanātyam, which reflects the culture of Tamils and the Kandyan dance, which reflects the culture of the Sinhalese are taken for a comparative study. Though the dances contain many specific characters only three of them such as limb movements, the background music Costumes, jewellery and the theatre are taken into consideration for this comparative study.

Bharatanātyam includes Nrta and Nrtya dance repertoires and Kandyan dance is entirely a nrta dance, hence in the comparison of limb movements only the Nrta part of Bharatanātyam is considered. Since Kandyan dance has been practiced by men from the ancient times and Bharatanātyam has been remaining as a dance for women from the time of its origin, it is obvious that the role played by limbs in the dance movements is based on gender. On the terms of 'Tāndava' and 'Lāsyā', Bharatanātyam is composed of graceful, gentle and tender movements, while Kandyan dance involves vigorous, bold and heroic acts of movements.

The role of background music is not only to enhance the beauty of the dance but also to strengthen the interaction between the artistes and the audience. The background music is tremendous in both dances. Mritangam and Natuvāngatālam (cymbal) are played in the Nrta repertoires of Bharatanātyam. Getabera and tālamapota are in Kandyan dance performance. Their Contribution is very important in both dances. Getabera drum is useful in rhythmic calculation to form a rhythm pattern in Kandyan dance. Since Bharatanātyam is composed of Nrta and Nrtya dance forms contribution of tāla laya instruments as well as Sāhitya instruments (violin, veena, flute, etc..) are considered to be important. However, Kandyan dance is a pure Nrta dance and the contribution of Sāhitya instruments is negligible.

The jewels and costumes of Kandyan dance and Bharatanātyam are composed of many significant features. Costumes and jewels of both dances reflect sacredness, cultural values and venerability. However, priority given to costumes in Kandyan dance is higher comparing to Bharatanātyam. Much priority is given to facial make-up in Bharatanātyam which express the rasabhāva. Since traditional Kandyan dance is a pure nrta dance form without any expressions of mood, facial make - up is not considered to be important. However, in stage performances women dancers considerably give importance to make-up. Bharatanātyam