CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

To train or not to train... that is not the question, then for a contemporary theatre actor the questions would be what to train, how to train and how much to train (the same applies for the other extreme who would want to think what not to train, how not to train and how much not to train). Some inherent questions arise in the training processes for contemporary theatre where eclecticism is rampant. Contemporary theatre actor is trained in Thai-boxing, Sufi dances, aerobics, yoga and meditation, magic, areal gymnastics, rasa boxes, snakes and larders, body weather practices, long distance running, transcendental group jumping, military discipline, cinematic dance, stick fight, cyborgic transformations, horse riding, naturopathy, swimming, trance music, agriculture, nonsensical poetry, cooking, clowning...the list aims to train the actors to imitate everything from those under the sun to the cancerous cyber viruses and soul searching intergalactic aliens. In this plethora of training modules and cross-cultural performance practices the actor’s body seems to be conceived as a super body, transcending the limits of self: physical, psychological and cultural. Prescriptions are varied from twenty days crash course on Grotowski to Ayurvedic massages. The primary concern and contradictions still remains: how do the knowledge systems evolving from a particular body culture gets appropriated into another in the apparent onslaught of mediatisation and globalization which claims to
wipe borders, genders, ethnicities and belief systems? Do the body and its re-appropriations fulfill the demands of another body culture? How do body cultures preserve itself in the context of theatre?

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Contradictory opinions exist regarding the issue of preservation of cultures and art forms. Should they be preserved like antique museum pieces or should they be modernised for global consumption? Do both these approaches preserve or prevent the transformation of art forms? On May 18th 2001 for the first time UNESCO proclaimed 19 of the world’s most remarkable examples of cultural expressions. Selected by an 18- member jury, the winning entries were chosen for their outstanding value as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible heritage of Humanity. This global proclamation emphasizes the importance of safeguarding this great but endangered heritage-cultural spaces and forms of popular artistic expression thereby preserving cultural diversity (Venugopalan, 2007). Of these nineteen, Kutiyattam and Noh theatre are two body cultural expressions with striking parallels in terms of its historical and artistic concerns. As (Richmond) (2001) mentions both Noh and Kutiyattam are historically significant to the cultures from which they spring. They are even considered “classical arts,” in today’s parlance. What do these two antique theatre forms, patronised to be preserved, inform a contemporary theatre actor whose form is either an absence of a unifying form or presence of a multiplicity of forms? The continuous presence of these two traditions through the ages make the research undertake a comparative study to understand the nuances behind the sustenance of these two forms without undergoing major transformations in its conventional
structure and practice methodologies. This phenomenon is fascinating because both these forms still seem/try to keep their identity intact despite the onslaught of mediatisation and globalization.

1.3 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Literature review has been initially conducted in two different streams related to the two distinct theatre forms Noh and Kutiyattam.

The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre\(^1\) edited by (Brandon & Banham, 1993) provides the picture of common characteristics of the performance traditions of Asian countries. While giving the general idea about the traditional performances and important performance genres it also gives emphasis on the contemporary theatre performance of each country. Information is provided relating to the historicity and practice of both Noh and Kutiyattam among other art forms of Asia.

The Guide to Noh by (O’Neill, 1990)\(^2\) is the book which gives general descriptions about Noh and its structure of performance. Further it gives a general awareness on the history, schools, performers, musicians, authors, plays, stage and the Noh theatre. The main body of the book provides the English summaries of most of the plays in the repertoires of Noh. The main aim of the book seems to help a non Japanese spectator to enjoy the performance and appreciate it same as Japanese.

Noh and Kyogen in the contemporary world\(^3\) is a collection of essays edited by (Brandon, 1997). The first part of the book is addressing the values that Noh and Kyogen hold for contemporary society both in Japan and other cultures. The second
part is giving detailed descriptions on the adaptations that happened over the centuries in the art of Noh and Kyogen. The third part of this book is dealing about the influence of Noh outside Japan especially in the western theatre from nineteenth century same as the influence of western theatre in Japanese cultural movements. It provides knowledge about the wide interaction between Noh and Kyogen and western theatre.

David (Griffiths, 1998) The Training of Noh Actors and the Dove\textsuperscript{4} gives a historical and philosophical description based on the trainings and practices of Noh theatre with the help of his own illustrations. The book provides a general study on the brief historical background of Noh, the interrelations between music, rhythm and dance, the influence of costume, property and the stage and finally combining these elements in the preparation of the Noh actor. The play ‘The Dove’ written by the same author shows the influence of Noh and its practice outside Japan particularly in western countries.

The book named The ethos of Noh: Actors and Their Art\textsuperscript{5} written by (Rath, 2006) is gives a description on the transformation of memories in to the tradition. The Detailed investigation on the inspiration of the evolutions of the tradition in this book shows that how the myths and customs represent the ethos of Noh. Further it helps to find out the institutional development of Noh and its professional practices from the fourteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. It also gives a clear picture of the mysterious, strict and male-dominated practice of Noh theatre under the five major hereditary schools and the actors and their devotion towards the traditional acting practice.
Ze-ami and his theories of Noh drama⁶ is the book written by (Sekine, 1985) which gives a detailed description about the Noh and its development from pre historical time to the modern age. It also provides a clear picture about the Zeami’s Philosophical approach on the structure of various kinds of plays, training, acting and writing as the fundamental practice of a Noh actor. Further it deals with the public competitions and the concepts of audience and Hana as the conceptual aim of the Noh performance practice.

Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives⁷ is the book written by (Konparu, 2005) which gives both introduction and technical details about the Noh and its professional practices. This book gives the knowledge about the art of time and space in Noh and also the modular system that underlies in every Noh performance were he describes about the improvisational nature of Noh within the strict limits. Further this book describes about the direct interactions and relationship between each spectator and actor which consider as the one time experience. The Book give a general idea about principle and perspectives, characteristics, philosophical and aesthetic underpinning of Noh followed by the description on stage, elements and patterns, plots, performers, music, movement, mask, costumes and properties. Further it concludes with how the various parts work together to create the structure of the performance. Apart from the first work that offers the comprehensive explanation and analysis of the principle of Noh theatre it provides the traditional material with new and fresh perspectives.

The Book titled ‘On the art of the Noh drama: the major treatises of ⁸ (Zeami, 1984)⁸ is first systematic and annotated English translation of the major treaties on the art of the Noh theatre by Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443). This book, translated by J.
Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, describes about the every major aspects of the art of Noh in the time of Zeami. It gives the understanding about his theories, practical insights with philosophical insights and the art of the playwright to the reciprocal nature of the relationship between performer and audience. The first treatises Fushikaden focus more on understanding of the art of Noh and its practice by describing the method of training based on the age of an actor that start from his childhood to the stage of his career as a both as a performer and aesthetician. The second one Shikado give Zeami’s views on the fundamentals of an actor’s art and the various levels of his accomplishment. The third treaties Kakyo give information about the performance skills, audience response and the goals of Noh performance. Further it also describes the most impotent aesthetic concepts of Zeami named (Yugen) and (Myo). Forth one Yagaku Shudo Fuken is short treaties contain the metaphysical style from the Buddhist text, poetry, and Confucian Maxims that related to the art of Noh. The fifth one is Known as Kyui give the nine levels of the Noh performances. In the sixth one Shugyoku tokka Zeami gives answers on six questions which give a number of metaphysical concepts. The Seventh one named Sado or No-Sakusho is giving an understanding on the proper way of composing a Noh text. The eighth one Shudosho give the views of Zeami on the natural way of ensemble acting and the ninth one Sarugaku dangi is giving a wide range of understanding about the technical aspects and related matters to the music of Noh. In addition to the works translated in this book there are other five more treatises by Zeami which is not included in the present volume of this book.

Zeaı and The Noh Theatre In the world is a collection of essays edited by (Ortolani & Leiter, 1998) which organised under five parts as Zeami’s Theories and
Aesthetics, Zeami and Drama, Zeami and Acting, Zeami and the world and Zeami Discussed. The book deals with the aesthetic concepts of Zeami which is known as *hana* the flower and *Yugen* the grace. It also gives an understanding on Zeami as a theorist in the contemporary world and also the value of his theatrical concepts in present age. Further it discus about the imageries of Zeami’s plays which resembles the outcast status of the Noh actors in the time of Zeami. This book also provides the detailed description on the connection between Zeami and the Zen Buddhist ideologies and its resemblances in his writings. Further it gives understanding about acting concepts of Zeami and its relevance in the contemporary actor training in the world. Overall the book tries to place Noh and its practice in an international frame work.

Abhinethri\textsuperscript{10} is the book in Malayalam by Usha (Nangiar, 2003) that provides brief and general understanding about the practices of Sanskrit theatre in India with main focus on Kuthu and Kutiyattam practices in Kerala. Further she is underlining the important representation of female actors in Kutiyattam and also the significant role of Mizhavu in the performance practice. The book also gives an understanding about importance of Attaprakaram and Kramadeepika in Kutiyattam with examples with a detailed study about some of the important characters. To some extent the book also discusses about the training system of an actor in traditional Kutiyattam schools (Gurukulam) with an example of Ammanur kalari.

(Venugopalan, 2007) Kutiyattam Register\textsuperscript{11} is a study that contributes more information about Kutiyattam and the related art forms in Kerala. It also discusses about the other external elements of Kutiyattam performance practice like, makeup, music, costumes and Koothambalam in detail. After giving a foundation on the
Sanskrit dramas in Kutiyattam, this book provides information about the practicing artist, scholars, institutions and families of Kutiyattam with a pictorial documentation of performance practise.

(Rajagopalan & Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute., 2000) book named Kutiyattam: Preliminaries and Performance is the study of Kutiyattam actors’ performance practice based on the Attaprakaram and Kramadeepika which has published and unpublished versions. The book is a valuable collection of the literary and presentational aspect of Kutiyattam which was scattered matters before. It gives the detailed description on the consecration and preparation of constructing the Koothambalam and also examining the Purvaranga in Kutiyattam in relation with Purvaranga mentioned in the Natyasastra. Thus the first two chapters of the book deal with the preliminaries of Kutiyattam. Further it gives the detailed narrative on the performance of Kutiyattam with an example of the ‘Thorana Yuddam’ which is one of the plays by the famous pre-Kalidasa playwright Bhasa. The uniqueness of this study is the harmony of literary angle and the theatrical angle in Kutiyattam.

Women’s Role in Kutiyattam by (Rajagopalan, Janaki, & Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute., 1997) is a comprehensive study on the aspect of the role of women in Kutiyattam and the related Nangyar Kuthu. The book gives a deep narration on scholarly treatise that the Kutiyattam artists follow. The book discusses the different attitudes to the position of women in life and art in ancient India and then quite methodically moves on the social setting in Kerala with its matrilineal orientation to understand the overall situation behind the Kutiyattam theatre. More than half of the book is concerned with Nangyar Kuthu, where the stage is exclusively dominated by the single woman performer. Rajagopalan has giving a scene by scene
account of the entire ‘Sri Krishnacaritam’ the story of Krishna told in a series of verses to be rendered solo by the actress. The book gives a lot of information, and it creates in the reader a desire to see Kutiyattam and prepares him to understand and appreciate the niceties of the performance.

Natyakalpadrumam: A Theatrical Study on Kutiyattam\textsuperscript{14} written in Malayalam by Mani Madhava (Chakyar, 1996) is a significant study about the entire area of Kutiyattam performance and practice. The book provides a wide knowledge on the methods of Kutiyattam acting, external elements like music, costume, emotional identifications, therefore help one to realize the depth of Kutiyattam.

In to the world of Kutiyattam with the Legendary Ammannur Madhava Chakyar\textsuperscript{15} is the book written by (Venu & Natanakairali (Organization), 2002), which provides a meticulous description about how the great masters and their disciples devoted to maintain the practice of the Kutiyattam from centuries. The book gives an understanding about the form, beauty, its survival through years of neglect and want of patronage and the achievements of great masters with a focus on the contribution by a great actor Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar. Further it mentions his disciplined and austere life style with his attitude and approach to the art form and its practice. In general the book gives the present state and future prospects of Kutiyattam by giving a review on the efforts made to preserve the Kutiyattam and rejuvenation of its tradition.

The journal Sankeet Natak Special Issue: Kutiyattam published by Sankeeth Natak Academy New Delhi gives a detailed description on the art of Kutiyattam with: The architecture, dramatic texts, training methods, Music, Makeup, The performing
families and different institutions teaching/performing the art which is on the verge of extinction.

(Paulose & International Centre for Kutiyattam (Tripunithura India), 2006) written a book named ‘Kutiyattam Theatre The Earliest Living Tradition’ Published by D.C. Books, Kerala with financial assistance of UNESCO/ Japan Funds-in-Trust. The director general of UNESCO Koichiro Matsura attest “The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization hereby proclaims Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre-India- a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” and KG Palouse almost convinces through his broad and detailed narratives. He in his concern of retaining the traditions which have been lots sets up high challenges for a Kutiyattam actor in terms of performances and training. future innovations in the field of Kutiyattam seem to look imbibing strength from three sources spectacles from indigenous tradition, subtle acting from the primitive Dravidian sources and narrative technique from the Puranic suta.

In relation to a comparison among these art forms Fraley P (Richmond)(2001) and Sudha (Gopalakrishnan, 1991)17 briefly refer to the similarities in terms of the aesthetics, history and performative practices.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

From the literature survey it is observed that no work has come out so far exclusively on the detailed comparative study of Noh and Kutiyattam in general and actors training in particular. The proposed research project is a comparative study of actors training practices in both of these classical performance traditions.
This study focuses on modes of actor training process in practice by these highly codified traditions from the insider’s point of view as well as with an observer’s critical perspective.

By comparing these two highly stylized and still practicing traditions will bring in the nuances of the Asian theatrical aesthetics which consider drama as a poetic imagery with the combination of music and dance to create the organic harmony of sentiments.

In future the project will lead in evolving certain actors training processes for the contemporary theatre practice. This will give more priority and emphasis upon the mental faculties to be developed for an actor in search of a language and will intern transcend the present formalistic concerns over body and voice of an actor.

1.5 AREA OF THE STUDY

The research has been conducted with focus on the dramatic text, performances, teaching and training for a professional actor in both Noh and Kutiyattam. The institutions studied were Tessenkai and Theatre Nohgaku in Japan, Chathakudam Mizavu Kalri, Nadana Kairali and Kerala Kala Mandalam in India. It also incorporates allied performances like Kyogen and Kuthu from the above mentioned countries. The study also focuses on the inter-relationships between performer and rhythm, space and visual, context and event pertained to the Noh and Kutiyattam.
1.6 METHODOLOGY

Methodology contains two types of methods that are employed in the collecting, analysis and interpretation of the data. Since the study give more focus on the actors training for the two classical performance traditions, it is imperative to understand the practice and process of both classical traditions and its development in the history of Asian Theatre. The observation method is employed for this reason. The books and documents on the performance history of both Noh and Kutiyattam are reviewed thoroughly in order to understand the sources of these traditions. Many preparations and performances have been witnessed in order to evaluate the elements and approaches that are employed in the performance practice and actor training of Noh and Kutiyattam. To study actor training technique participatory observations have been employed. Apart from that the frameworks of theatre contemporary training, production and consumption are employed to understand these art forms are practices in the present. Unstructured interviews are conducted with the master teachers, students, performers’, organizers as well as spectators. This methodology led to the analytical comparison of many facts that are practicing in the lifelong actor training process of both Noh and Kutiyattam.

1.6.1 Source of the study

Major source of study comprise the literature survey of various books on the performance tradition of Noh and Kutiyattam, documents on its practice, records and interviews.
Various practice observed while receiving the training in both forms, audio and video documentation on the practice and performances of the Noh and Kutiyattam during the time of fieldwork.

1.7 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

For the clarity and viability of the thesis it has been divided into six chapters.

1. Introduction

2. Plotting the Heritage of Noh

   The chapter narrates the history and growth of Noh From the pre historical phases to the twenty-first century. This includes the repertoire, Structure and classification of the plays, stage and architecture, music ensemble, costume, mask and the properties. In short the chapter deals with history text and theatricalities of Noh. This includes The Historical Origin and Development, Development through Various Stages in History, Repertoire of Noh Plays, Classification of Noh Plays, The Stage of Noh Theatre, The Music of Noh Theatre, The Noh Costumes, and Noh Mask as the Essential Part of Acting. The chapter concludes with a realisation that the training is an essential part in the professional performance practice of Noh theatre actor.

3. Mapping the treasure of Kutiyattam

   The chapter encompasses the historical growth of Kutiyattam through the ages and its socio-cultural milieu. As the only existing relic of Sanskrit theatre Kutiyattam has its affinity with the Natyasastra and other textual traditions of
the early ages. Thus the chapter progress through this indebtedness of Kutiyattam to Natyasastro. It also portrays the various historical stages of its growth and changes like: Kulasekhera period, 12th and 13th century to the period of its regeneration in 20th century. Further the chapter deals with Repertoire of Kutiyattam, Kutiyattam performance Structure, coexistence of Kutiyattam and its allied art forms, Koothambalam and the scope of theatrical presentations, The Music Ensemble and The Modes of Acting in Kutiyattam. The chapter concludes by understanding that in order to fulfill the expectation of spectators the form itself demands an ongoing training module to become an actor in Kutiyattam

4. **Actors Training in Noh - ‘A journey Through the Bone, Flesh and Skin’**

The chapter includes a detailed study of the Actor training processes of Noh tradition. It start with the study on the performers and their roles in Noh followed by the curriculum of training in accordance with the age of trainee, different grades of actors in their training and performance practice, The fundamental modes of training, Importance of vocal and dance training with the mastery on three basic roles. Apart from discussing about the training on pre-written actors manual to getting in to the world of masks the chapter also deals with the important aesthetical concepts behind the technical learning of acting and its practices according to Noh performance traditions. This chapter concludes by ascertaining the basic philosophy of training laid by Zeami and stress upon the prominence given to the actors will and lifelong training.
5. Actor Training in Kutiyattam - ‘Formation and Transformation Through Characters’

The chapter start by discussing the traditional performance families and the role of performers concern to Kutiyattam and allied performance practices. It develops through discussing the different stages of a Kutiyattam actor training. Apart from dealing with the Fundamental Modes of Actor Training to the first performance the chapter also highlights the importance of Training in Charis, Methods of Various Attam, Training in Dramatic Sequences, Learning Ramayana Samkshepam, Grammar and Attaprakaram and finally the Aesthetic Concept of Rasa and Its Training. The chapter concludes by revealing the togetherness of all the elements in Kutiyattam; like the training and performances, an actor’s body and characters body, a written text and a performance, the music and the movement and finally the actor and the spectator.

6. Conclusion

The chapter comparatively analyses the resemblances and differences of both these traditions and arrive at certain stark characteristics features which construct both these traditions to attain its unique identity. The thesis reiterate the existing practice of Noh and Kutiyattam and the importance of lifelong practice as a basic principle for creating-the most successful and professional actor on stage.
Reference


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Notes


