

**The Fading History of Unnayi Warriar – Unnayi Warriar**

**Smaraka Kalanilayam**

**Project submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment**

**for the award of the degree**

**of**

**Bachelor of Arts in English and History**

**by**

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**March 2021**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Visal**, hereby declare that this project entitled **The Fading History of Unnayi Warriar - Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History**, is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Place: Irinjalakuda

April 16 2021

# **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this project entitled **The Fading History of Unnayi Warriar - Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam**, a record of research work carried out by **Mr. Visal** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English and History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

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## **Acknowledgement**

I owe my gratitude to God for his endless blessings and intervention in helping me complete my project without any hassles and on time. I am indebted to my supervising teacher Sagive Varghese and Coordinator Dr. George Alex, Department of English & History (Double Main), Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, for guiding me throughout the project and for the countless hours and efforts he put in to help complete the project. I thank him for his timely help and generous encouragement. I am eternally grateful to Rev Fr. Jolly Andrews CMI, the Principal, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda for the congenial atmosphere of research he has always tried to foster in the campus throughout my studies.

I owe my thanks to my parents, my teachers, my friends and all those who have helped me indirectly and indirectly, in the successful completion of the project work.

**Visal**

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## INTRODUCTION

The culture and heritage of Kerala is one that everyone must experience. The culture of Kerala is a combination of both Indian and Dravidian culture. This culture is being influenced by the neighboring states as well now. One of the main features of Kerala is its performing arts like *Kathakali*, *Mohiniyattam* and Martial Art of *Kalaripayattu*. As for the heritage of Kerala, it can be said that this heritage holds a special and important place in the Indian history. Providing a national integrity is the Kerala Heritage. This culture and heritage of Kerala is reflected in its various art forms, martial arts, dresses, the people and cuisine.

Performing arts occupy a distinct place in Kerala's heritage. The various art forms are intertwined with the culture of the land and are blended with the lives of the people; the art forms were born out of the rich culture of Kerala. A modest attempt is made to introduce the varied performing arts of Kerala, ranging from the unique *Koodiyattam*, the Kerala version of the Sanskrit dance – drama to *Kathakali*, *Kerala Natanam* and other classical art forms. *Kalamezhuthu*, *Sarpam thullal*, *Theyyam* are still preserved without losing their essential essence and charm. *Velakali* calls to mind the interest in warfare of ancient Kerala. Together with the art forms of the tribal's, all the classical and ritual art forms provide the art buff both aural and visual delight. Graceful and exquisite dance forms like *Kathakali*, *Mohiniyattam*, *Theyyam*, *Kol Kali*, *Oppana* and *Margam kali* are well appreciated and enjoyed by everyone.

The artistic field of Kerala comprises ancient classical art, folk art as well as modern artistic forms like the cinema. The arts of Kerala can be divided generally into audio - visual arts, and also into classical art forms and folk art forms. Visual arts

include stage art, sculpture, painting and cinema, which comprise both classical and folk forms. Music and instrumental music belong to audio arts. The musical culture of Kerala includes folk music (folk songs, ritual songs, *Thiruvathira* songs, *Vanchipattu*) and classical music comprising Carnatic music, *Kathakali* music and *Sopana* music. The traditional musical instruments of Kerala include among others *Panchavadyam*, *Chendamelam*, and *Thayambaka*. Kerala art forms are something special that helps you to understand the vibrant cultural heritage of the state on a deeper level. Tourists appreciate the high spirit of these art forms as well as the remarkable hard work and dedication of the performers that have inspired many of them to visit Kerala and learn its traditional art forms.

Even though Kerala have this much vast, deep culture and heritage, the people of Kerala are not in it's track. Once upon a time people really enjoyed the traditional arts. They respected the culture. They were proud of becoming a part of an amazing culture. They followed the arts and maintained the quality of their culture. As they experienced one of the most qualified culture of the world, they lived in peace, in an understanding. But somehow, people of India/Kerala started to think that the Western culture is superior to Indian. They started to adapt and mix the cultures. May be it is because they experienced the best from their childhood itself and wanted to try another one. But they misunderstood that their culture is not a modern one. So for being a modern human being they started practicing western culture and avoiding the Indian culture. Thus the impact on the culture became so harsh. They slowly changed and majority of people completely avoided their culture. The same culture and practices which their ancestors kept and practiced and even worshipped was considered as old fashioned and given least priority. They slowly avoided arts and thus the valuable traditional art forms became some art forms which practiced only

during festivals in temples and churches and in a few stages only. But at the same time when the people of India / Kerala started to hesitate to follow their own culture, the foreigners founded the South Indian culture more attractive than that of Western and they realized the greatness of the Indian/Kerala culture. Thus the Europeans started to visit India for experiencing the sweetness of the culture. Gradually the people realized that the Europeans are interested in their traditional cultures and art forms so they started to treat it commercial. They started to study and perform art forms in front of foreigners so that they will be credited.

Now also majority of people treats arts commercially. They are not aware of the great history of each and every traditional art. The fact is that the arts are sustaining like this because of the interest of the foreigners in it. A very few people who still knows the importance of the cultural art forms treats it respectfully and sincerely. Majority of them were inherited. They works, studies and performs these arts and experiences the vibrant sweetness of the art.

The youngsters and the students are not strange with these art forms mainly because of the 'Arts Festival of Kerala'. 'Arts Festival of Kerala' is an annual event conducted by the state government of Kerala. Majority of the traditional art forms are included in the competitions. Thus from a small age itself, children experiences the culture and a chance to realize the greatness of the culture. They studies and performs it several times and so becomes familiar to the arts. But the problem is that only a less number of students continues the practice after the school/ college competition days.

"Barely less than 5 per cent of these students continue to practice the dance forms they had learnt during their school days. Most among the rest seek their futures in the conventionally sought-after trades of engineering and healthcare," says N.G.

Satheesan Neeleswaram, a *Kuchupuddi* and *Bharatanatyam* exponent, who pursues a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) at the Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts College, Tiruchirapalli.

The main reason for the sudden end of practicing the arts is the lack of support to arts by the society. So the students can't continue their studies. A small amount of people supports them and they realize the greatness of art. The fact that the people gives no more importance and discourage an extra ordinary culture and art forms which were treated respectfully by their ancestors is depressive.

Many institutions to promote our traditional art forms exist. They teach students arts and make them aware of the importance of the traditional arts. These institutions help to develop the culture and sustain the art forms. 'Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam' is such an institution. Unnayi Warriar was a poet, writer, scholar, dramatist who lived in Kerala, India during the later part of the 18th century. He is best known for his *Nalacharitham aattakatha* and is known to have made significant contributions to the art of *Kathakali*, the classical dance-drama form of Kerala. It is said that his place was Irinjalakuda. We have a memorial of Unnayi Warriar in Irinjalakuda near Koodalmanikyam Temple. It is named 'Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam'. Many arts such as *Kathakali*, *Kathakali Sangeetham*, *Chenda* and more are beautifully taught by talented teachers in the Kalanilayam.

The project is to analyse the importance of 'Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam', Unnayi Warriar and the art form *Kathakali*. The Introduction is followed by the first chapter which details the importance of *Kathakali* – the art form of Kerala and the second chapter – Unnayi Warriar. The third chapter - 'Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam' is followed by the conclusion.

# Chapter 1

## Art Forms of Kerala

Kerala is one of the most culturally rich states of India. Dance and art forms are integral parts of a region's culture. "God's own Country" Kerala boasts of its several forms of dances and arts. Some of the folk dances which are native to the state have gained popularity. In Kerala, the folk dances are accompanied by splendid costumes and ornaments perfectly adorning the performers. There are many art forms present in Kerala like *Koodiyattam*, *Ottam Thullal*, *Chakyar Koothu*, *Chavittu natakam*, *Duffmuttu*, *Margom kali*, *Oppana*, *Thiruvathirakali* and a lot more. There are a lot of ritual, folk and martial arts. But the main art forms of Kerala are *Kathakali* and *Mohiniyattam*.

### **Koodiyattam**

*Koodiyattam* is a form of sacred theater traditionally performed in Hindu temples in Kerala. *Koodiyattam* is performed in Sanskrit language and it is believed to be at least two thousand years old and it is considered as the oldest living theater tradition in the world. The word '*Koodiyattam*' is derived from the Sanskrit word *Kurd*, meaning to 'to play', and the theater form is believed to have been introduced into India by the Aryans. King Kulasekhara Varma Cheraman Perumal, who was a ruler in Kerala from 1090 to 1102, reformed *Koodiyattam* into its present form. His *Aattaprakaram* (Actor's Manual) is considered the most authoritative publication on *Koodiyattam*. *Koothambalam* ('temple theaters'), special theater halls for *Koothu* and *Koodiyattam* performances, were constructed on temple grounds according to the

specifications of Bharata Muni's Natyasastra and considered to be as sacred as the temple sanctum itself.

### **Ottam Thullal**

*Ottam Thullal* is a dance-drama performing art form of Kerala, founded by Kunchan Nambiar in the eighteenth century, as an alternative to the Chakyar koothu. He was one of the *Prachina Kavithrayam* (three famous Malayalam language poets). Kunchan Nambiar used it as a medium to protest against the prevalent socio-political structure and prejudices of the society in his time. It went on to become the most popular folk art presented in Kerala temples. *Ottam thullal* has its origins in the classical principles of *Natya Shastra* of Bharatha Muni, a treatise on art originating in the 2nd century B.C. *Thullal* literally means to jump or leap about in the Malayalam language. The distinguishing factor of *Ottam thullal* is the performer himself singing and playing the story, which is a tedious task. Another person will recite the same verses. The accompanying instruments for *Ottam thullal* are *Mrudangam* and *Idakkya*.

### **Chakyar Koothu**

*Koothu* is an art form in which the stories of Hindu mythology and epics are orally rendered primarily with the support of acting and hand gestures. In the olden days, it was confined to temple premises. Only the members of the *Chakyar* community performed this art form and hence the name *Chakyar Koothu*. This was performed in temple theatres called *Koothambalam*. The highlights of *Chakyar Koothu*, is satire, social criticism, humor and related stories or episodes presented during the performance. In the olden days of royalty, the *Chakyar* had the right to criticise even the King and his acts while performing.

## **Margamkali**

*Margamkali* is a ritual art form popular among certain sects of the Christian community of Kerala. Rhythmic movements and songs are the major attractions of the art. The participants wear traditional costumes and jewellery. The movements of this art form are very difficult and it needs rigorous training to master this art form. The songs are mostly devotional. Certain songs present the history of Christianity in Kerala. The word "*Margam*" means path or way or solution in Malayalam. In the religious context it refers to the path to attain salvation. The *Margamkali Pattu* is written in about 4000 lines in different meters. The theme of the song is the miracles performed by St. Thomas at Malankara. The songs are believed to have been written in the 17th century by Kallissery Itti Thoman Kathanar.

## **Mohiniyattam**

*Mohiniyattam* is one of the famous classical dances of India that developed and remained popular in the state of Kerala. *Mohini attam*, (Malayalam: "dance of the enchantress") also spelled *mohiniattam* or *mohiniyattam*, semiclassical dance form from the state of Kerala, southwestern India. The dance is performed by women in honour of the Hindu god Vishnu in his incarnation as the enchantress *Mohini*. According to Hindu mythology, Vishnu took the form of *Mohini* to distract the demon Bhasmasura while the gods took the elixir of immortality from churning of the celestial oceans and thus saved the universe from destruction. The myth of *Mohini* forms the core of any *mohini attam* performance.

## **Kathakali**

From Kerala comes that unique art form called *Kathakali*. Elements of *Kathakali* are discernible in the ancient ritual plays of Hindu temples and various dance forms that are believed to have been gradually developed in Kerala from as early as the 2nd century until the end of the 16th century. Many of its characteristics are very much older than its literature as they are a continuation of older traditions, but these did not crystallise until the 17th century when the Rajah of Kottarakkara, a small principality in central Travancore, wrote plays based on the Hindu epic Ramayana in Sanskrit mixed Malayalam which could be understood by ordinary people; hitherto the stories had been enacted in pure Sanskrit, which was known only to the learned few. The plays were performed by the Rajah's own group of actors not only in temples and courts but from village to village and house to house. The new art form (called '*Ramanattam*') soon became very popular all over the Malayalam speaking area. The feudal chieftains of Malabar (as the area was then called) began to compete with one another in their efforts to produce the best *Kathakali* troupes, and this competition contributed to the rapid development of the art in a very short period. Since then *Kathakali* has passed through many stages of improvement in make-up and costume, dance forms and acting techniques.

*Kathakali* is an aesthetic blend of literature, music, gesticulation, dance and musical instruments. The characteristic features of *Kathakali* are intricate facial make-up, distinctive headgear and costumes. It is the visual expression of a poetic composition and is a pantomime in which the performers neither speak nor sing, but interpret the emotions through the medium of gestures, hand poses and vibrant facial expressions. A unique feature of *Kathakali* is the exclusive use of percussion

instruments. The stories are usually derived from the epics and puranas. *Kathakali* is performed by men who in their youth have practiced intensive course of physical training and a long period of instruction in *abhinaya* (acting) and *nritta* (dancing). The performer performs the art silently, expresses the emotions and situations with symbols. Facial expressions and symbols with hands are the real performing method of the art. They are known as *Mudras*. *Mudras* are used instead of spoken words.

*Kathakali* characters represent the mythological beings of the three worlds – the upper world, middle worlds and nether worlds of *Devas* (gods), Humans and *Asuras* (demons). The characters are grouped under certain clearly defined types; they are not only individuals but also symbolic personalities. The striking make-up and costume are designed to transform the actors both mentally and physically into the types of characters they are to portray. With the exception of the female characters and the gentle ones like sages and holy men, all characters have their faces painted over in bright colors: basically green color for the heroes, gods and kings, red and black colors for those who are wicked and fierce, and various elaborate designs for the animal types.

The stage of *Kathakali* is simple. As performers express through mudras and expressions, no scenery is needed. At the front of the stage, which traditionally is an open space of ground or the forecourt of a Hindu temple, stands a large bell metal lamp from which two cotton wicks floating in coconut oil give out a mellow and exciting light. Apart from a table and one or two stools, the only item of equipment used is the *Tirassila*, a large rectangular cloth used as curtain of bright colors, which is held up by two stage hands before the performance starts and between scenes. Whenever powerful or evil characters appear for the first time, they stand behind the curtain and slowly bring it down as they look over the top of it, emitting weird

sounds. This is a traditional formality known as the *tiranokku* or curtain look, and is accompanied by an exciting atmosphere created by the musicians and drummers.

The music arrangement of *Kathakali* is have great importance. There will be two drummers in the back of the stage. One plays the *chenda*, a cylindrical drum held vertically and for the most part played with sticks, the other plays the *maddalam*, held horizontally and played with the hands. The left end is played with the palm and the right end with the fingers, each of which has a finger stall made of rice and lime applied to a strip of cloth. The drummers accompany the action, supply the rhythm and emphasise the mudras and dance steps of the actors. The orchestra is completed with two singers who stand on the right of the stage. The singers tell the story of the play, verse by verse, in Sanskritized Malayalam which the actors interpret word for word through their mudras and facial expressions, after which there is a period of pure dance called *kalasam* which means the end, when part of the first verse is repeated in a more expressive way. Nine aesthetic emotions are used by the actors - love, valor, pathos, wonder, derision, fear, disgust, fury and tranquility. The *mudras* supply them with a complete language of gestures which enables them not only to interpret the lines of the story, but also to communicate with each other on matters relevant to the occasion. In Kerala, most members of the audience of the older generation can follow the sign language of the mudras, but their number is dying out and very few of the younger generation have the same fanatical interest in *Kathakali*. Not a word is spoken by the actors, though the evil and animal characters emit weird sounds from time to time to emphasis their self-importance.

The audiences of Kerala know the stories of the plays because they are mainly epics or more accurately, parts of epics and are familiar with the make-up and costume. Their interest is in the interpretation of a role by a particular actor who they

probably know well, and they watch his performance most critically for hours on end. When *Kathakali* is seen by Western audiences, however, the main interest is in the marvelous make-up and the overall spectacle of the performance, and less attention is paid to any individual actor. In the 17th and 18th centuries, *Kathakali* performances were given by troupes who worked under the patronage of feudal rajahs and Namboodiris. Now things are very different as most of the performances are given by individual actors and musicians past students of training schools and others conversant with the art-who may never have acted together before.

Today there are a number of *Kathakali* training schools in India. In 1930, Vallathol Narayana Menon founded Kerala *Kalamandalam*, which is the most prominent *Kathakali* training school in Kerala. It was found to save *Kathakali* from extinction as *Kathakali* was dying at that period. The Kalamandalam, which is now a Government institution, turns out five or six trained actors and two or three trained drummers and singers every year, after they have undergone a rigorous course which starts at the age of thirteen and goes on for six years. At the end of each year of training, the students must pass a proficiency test. Only after passing the test, he or she will be allowed to study more intensive training of the next year. Once an actor or musician has completed his course, he receives a Diploma and is entitled to add the word 'Kalamandalam' before his name, as an honour which is much sought after by *Kathakali* artists. The physical training which a *Kathakali* student has to undergo is very strenuous. A daily session of eye exercises and gymnastics from morning 3 to 7 which ends up with gingelly oil massage. The process creates the required fitness and flexibility of body that is demanded by the incredibly exacting tradition of the *Kathakali* stage. In every twelve months the student gets a holiday for only two months- April and May, when the weather is at its hottest.

## Chapter 2

### Unnayi Warriar

There were a number of famous poets and artists in Kerala. They played a major role in developing the culture and heritage of the society. Unnayi Warriar was one of the eminent personality in the field of art and literature. Unnayi Warriar was a popular figure in the great classic trio in Malayalam literature. Thunjath Ezhuthachan and Kunjan Nambiar was the other two. Arts and literature have a major role in the cultural tradition of a place. Having a look at the *Kathakali* tradition of Irinjalakuda, we can see significant contributions of Unnayi Warriar. '*Nalacharitham Attakatha*' is the major contribution of Unnayi Warriar.

Unnayi Warriar was born in 1674, which is the general view, but clear proof is not available. There are many conflicts based on his birth details. Scholars and many literary artists have different opinions. Unnayi Warriar was born in AkathotWarriar, situated near Koodalmanikyam temple, Irinjalakuda. Unnayi was his poet name and his original name was Raman. His father was a Namboodiri and a great scholar whose name is not recorded. His mother belonged to the Warriar. Unnayi was a great sanskrit scholar. Unnayi had his primary education at Thrissur. He studied *Pancha Mahakavyas* and *Natakathrayam* and studied many texts. He had a Namboodiri teacher who taught him aesthetics and *Kavya Nataka*. He was an eminent person in Music and literature. After his education, Unnayi Warriar became a courtier of the King of Cochin, Kerala Varma and later in the court of King Marthandavarma of Travancore. Warriar composed many hymns, in the form of quatrains, and many *Keerthans* when he lived in Thrissur. On the suggestion of Changaran Kotha Kartha, Unnayi wrote *Girija Kalyanam*. As a beautiful creation of completeness and emotions,

*Nalacharitham* have an important position in the field of art and literature. As the author of *Nalacharitham*, Unnayi Warriar occupies a great position in the cultural history of Kerala. He composed the work in the presence of *Sangamesa*, the deity of Koodalmanikyam temple. *Nalacharitham* is a beautiful romantic story in *Kathakali* literature. Many scholars confirmed that Unnayi left Irinjalakuda at the age of thirty. He joined poet's assembly of Maharaja Karthika Thirunnal of Travancore in Thiruvananthapuram. Dozens of legends are popular in Kerala about the championship of Unnayi Warriar and Kunchan Nambiar. The speciality of Unnayi Warriar was observation and scholasticism and that of Kunchan Nambiar was wit and sarcasm.

The poetic genius of Unnayi Warriar is uninhabited and is entirely controlled by his own aesthetic judgement in all aspects of the arts like scenic visualization and expressing through words. He believed in 'word free' composed by a blessed soul to say it in his own words. In slower quick pace, depending upon an emotional situation, in suitable raga at traditional south Indian music and in an individual style of Kerala is *sopanam*. Warriar's music had a freshness.

Unnayi Warriar used the language Manipravalam (ancient Malayalam and Sanskrit mix ). He used many types of linguistic combinations but the main aim was sweetness, sonority and originality. The two important works of Unnayi Warriar are *Sreerama Panchasathy* and *Girija Kalyanam*. *Sreerama Panchasathy* is considered as the first work of Unnayi Warriar. This is an innovation to *Sreerama* whom the poet addresses as Lord Sangameswara. The context of the poem is Ramayana written in pure Sanskrit. It included 50 dasakas and 534 hymns in this poem are invaluable for its poetic, its structure, mono rhyme, rhetoric's and also its devotional elements. In the first *dasaka*, he praises Lord Sangameswara and he attributes and also prescribes the

duties and responsibilities of the devotees. The ten incarnation of God Maha Vishnu is beautifully described in the second *dasaka*. The summary of Ramayana war included from 3 to 48 *dasaka* gives an account of Rama's self immersal. The last stanza ends with the praising of the Lord Sangameswara. Valmiki described Ramayana in 24000 verses. But the entire Ramayana has been summarized by Unnayi Warriar in 534 verses.

*Girija kalyanam (Geetha Prabhandham)* is valuable contribution to Malayalam language and literature. It was written on the suggestion of Chankaran Kothu Kartha, a lord in Cochin kingdom. This poem was composed when Unnayi Warriar lived in Thrisivaperoor. Unnayi Warriar was influenced by *Shiva Purana* and *Kumara Sambhava* of Kalidasa. The theme of this work is a story of Lord Shiva and Parvathy. The first *kanda*, included the story of Sathy Devi, her death and rebirth of Parvathy. In the following *kandas*, the desire of Parvathy and her meditation for getting Lord Shiva as her husband is discussed. The last part given an account of the marriage between Lord Shiva and Parvathy. The poem concludes with the marriage of Shiva Parvathy in the presence of all Gods, Rishis, God's singer, dancer maids from heaven etc in the splendidly arranged Himalayan abode. The work is notable for its grand style.

Unnayi Warriar had a particular style of literary expression. He had a wealthy life experience, deep knowledge and extra ordinary sensibility, apart from other three works. He was also considered as the composer of *subadraharanam Kathakali*. He had composed many hymns in the form of quartrians and also of *keerthana* during his stay at Thrissur. Few of them have been preserved. Unnayi Warriar adopted new and independent style of poetic language. His contribution in the literature is very high.

## **Nalacharitham**

*Kathakali* literature is an unavoidable factor in the case of *Kathakali* tradition. In earlier period, works were composed of Sanskrit language. But later the writers switched to *Manipravalam* language. Writing in *Manipravalam* language, Unnayi Warriar made great contribution to the *Kathakali* literature. ‘*Nalacharitham*’, his masterpiece has a great place in the *Attakathasahithyam*. *Nalacharitha* earned him a permanent place in the *Attakathasahithyam*.

The story of Nalan and Damayanthi was depicted in chapters 52 – 79 in *Vanaparvam* of the epic, Mahabharatha. In Mahabharatha, the story was narrated to the *Pandavas* by the sage named *Brihadhaswan* during their stay in the forest. In 18th Century, Unnayi Warriar structured the contents of this story as *Nalacharitham Attakatha* to suit the art-form *Kathakali*, making it more dramatic and full of action. This version was so long so it had to be divided into four parts - First, Second, Third and Fourth Day – because each part is very long so it will take one full day to enact it. *Nalacharitham* is a considered the most romantic work of art constructed on the classical basement of *Kathakali*. Undoubtedly, *Nalacharitham* is an outstanding product of the *Manipravalam* style. It is also famous for verbal felicity and incomparable music quality.

*Nalacharitham* is a highly dramatic love story. Nala, the son of the Veerasena in Nishadhapuram fell in love with Damayanthi, the daughter of Beema Raja. Damayanthi married him in her *swayamvaram* ceremony. In the game of *dice* (Chooth), he lost his kingdom. Then they experience a period of terrible life before their great reunion. Some minor changes are made in the story to perform in the stage. An important change is the introduction of sage Narada in the story. In

Mahabharatham version there is no mention of Narada and in *Nalacharitham*, Narada is given a decisive role as he appears in the opening, middle and end of the text, in a sense, Narada tells story of Nala-Damayathi. Thus the insertion of Narada in the role of a *suthradharan* imparts dramatic cohesion to the performance. Unnayi Warriar portrays beautifully Nalan's commendable self-control and his willingness for and any sacrifice. Warriar's style is simple and brief but his lines are poetic. More or less, he is at his poetic best when it comes to depicting the inner conflicts and thoughts of characters.

## Chapter 3

### Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam

Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam is a unique *Kathakali* institute established in the year 1995. It is situated next to Irinjalakuda Koodalmanikyam temple, to commemorate the glory of Unnayi Warriar, the famous author of *Nalacharitham Attakatha*. The Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam at Irinjalakuda in Thrissur District is one of the few leading institutes in Kerala, which has an illustrious tradition and reputation for imparting training in *Kathakali* as well as in performing it to the delight of many an audience.

The momentous areas of the popular institute stand on the same floor where the dwelling of the poet celebrity, Unnayi Warriar rested and his masterpiece *Nalacharitham* was composed, during the 18th century. The institute has excellent facilities for learning the intricacies of *Kathakali* with some of the reputed names in the field of *Kathakali* taking up the mantle of trainers.

At the Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam a student of *Kathakali* can undergo training in *Kathakali Vesham* (acting), which is of six-year duration ; *Kathakali Sangeetham* (music), which is also of six-year duration, with training in *Chenda* and *Madhalam* (percussion instruments) each of four-year duration and *Chutti & Koppupani* (make-up and costume), which is of three-year duration. A diploma certificate is issued after the successful completion of all these courses. Students can stay at the *Kalanilayam* hostel while undergoing training in *Kathakali*.

Many of the students in the institute were the recipients of Government of India cultural wing scholarship for *Kathakali*. Besides the regular course stream, students can also join for part-time courses. The *Kalanilayam* Theatre is one of the main attractions of art lovers in Kerala. Formed by the teachers and the students of the *Kathakali* School, the theatre today can perform more than 40 popular *Attakathas*. Guest artistes are also invited to perform. There are three types of performances according to the interests of audience. Full-night programmes, which would be an eight hour traditional style of *Kathakali* performance; club programmes, which are basically curtailed versions of full-length performances; and Demonstration, which is an attempt to create awareness of *Kathakali*, during which a specimen piece will be presented in the traditional style.

The institute was fortunate enough to have the masteroes like Pallipuram Gopalan Nair, Kalamandalam Karunakaran, Cherthala Kuttappakurup, Venganoor Ramkrishnan Nair, Kalamandalam Sankaranembrathiri, Srikalanilayam Gopalakrishanan etc

### **Kathakali Troupe**

Besides a *Kathakali* institute there is a *Kathakali* performing troupe that glorifies the great Malayalam poet Unnayi Warriar. The group includes 39 popular *Attakathas* whereas the popular *Kathakali* troupe in Kerala world perform only well knows stories.

### **Nalacharitham Attakatha**

The substance of the story of Nalan and Damayanthi is depicted In Mahabharatha in chapters 52 to 79 in *Vanaparvam* as told by sage *Brihadhaswan* to

*Dharmaputhra* to exemplify the unfortunate turn of events that might take place in the lives of great men and how such things bring them greater glory and prosperity. In 18th Century, Unnayi Warriar structured the contents of this story as *Nalacharitham Attakatha* to suit the art-form *Kathakali*, making it more dramatic and full of action. This version he made is so long that it had to be divided into four parts - First, Second, Third and Fourth Day- because each part needed a full night to enact the story. *Nalacharitham* is considered as the most romantic work of art constructed on the classical basement of *Kathakail*.

### **Other Kathakali Stories**

#### **Kuchela Vritham**

Story of *Kuchela* who is the childhood friend of *Sri Krishna*, going to visit him after a long time.

#### **Karna Sapatham**

The story of *Karna's* vow to *Duryrodhana* that he will abandon his mother and brothers and that either *Arjuna* or he will only survive the battle.

#### **Kalyana Sougandhikam**

*Kalyanasaugandhikam* is a Kathakali play written by *Kottayam Thampuran* in Malayalam. Based on the Mahabharatha, the play narrates an episode from their life in exile. Bheema goes in search of the flower named *Kalyanasaugandhikam* to please his wife Panchali, which leads him to cross paths with his brother Hanuman, the fabled monkey from the Ramayana.

### **Rukmini Swayamvaram**

*Rukmini Swayamvaram* is the story of how *Rukmini* the daughter of king of the fact that her brother *Rukmi* wants her to marry *Sisupala*.

### **Nizhalkuthu**

The story of how *Duryodhana*, the *Kaurava* king persuades *Malayalam* to perform *Nizhalkuthu* and kill *pandavas*, *Malayathis* and how *Sri Krishna* saves the day by protecting both *pandavas* and *Manikantan Malayans* son.

### **Lavanasura Vadham**

*Lavanasura Vadham* is the story of *Kusa* and *Lava* capturing the *yaga aswa* of *Sri Rama's Ashwamedham*, *Hanuman* meeting them and their mother *Seetha Devi* in the forest.

### **Keechakavadham**

A *Kathakali* play by *Irayimman Thampi* in Malayalam. Based on the *Mahabharatha*, it narrates an episode from the thirteenth year of exile of the *Pandava* princes, during which they stay in disguise at the palace of the King of *Virata*. The Queen's brother, *Keechaka*, takes a liking to *Panchali*, who is working as the Queen's handmaiden, *Sairandhri*. *Panchali* tries to reject his advances but *Keechaka* presses on. This culminates in *Bheema*, in disguise as *Valala*, slaying *Keechaka*.

### **Kiratham**

*Kiratham* is the story of *Arjunas thapas* to *Siva* for obtaining the boon for *Pashupathasthra*.

### **Uttara Swayamvaram**

*Uttaraswayamvaram* is a *Kathakali* play by *Irayimman Thampi* in Malayalam. Based on the Mahabharata, it narrates an episode from the thirteenth year of exile of the *Pandava* princes, during which they stay in disguise at the palace of the King of *Virata*. The story narrates the attempt by *Thrigartha*, a vassal of the *Kauravas*, to abduct cows from *Virata's* kingdom. The *Pandavas* step in to foil the efforts of the *Kauravas*, and in the process, their true identity is revealed. The play culminates in the marriage of the Princess *Uttara* of *Virata* to *Abhimanyu*, son of *Arjuna*.

### **Dakshayagam**

This is the third play written by *Irayimman Thampi* (1783-1856). While his other two plays *Keechakavadham* and *Uttaraswayamvaram* are based on the Mahabharata, *Dakshayagam* is based on *Mahabhagavatham*. Based on the *Skanda Purana*, it narrates the story of *Daksha*, son of *Brahma*, and his daughter *Sathi*. *Sathi* marries *Shiva* and after the marriage, an animosity develops between *Daksha* and *Shiva*. *Shiva* creates two fierce warriors *Veerabhadra* and *Bhadrakali*, and orders to destroy the *yaga* and bring the head of *Daksha*. However, as an act of benevolence, *Shiva* brings *Daksha* back to life, albeit with a goat's head.

### **Rugmangada Charitham**

Story of king *Rugmangada* who is an ardent devotee of Lord *Vishnu*, his devotion being tested by *Mohini*.

### **Balivadham**

Story of *Sri Rama* killing *Bali*, the king of *Kishkindha*.

### **Bakavadham**

*Bakavadham* is a *Kathakali* play written by *Kottayam Thampuran* in Malayalam. Based on the Mahabharatha, the play narrates the events surrounding the escape of the *Pandavas* from the house of Lac which was built by the *Kauravas* as a trap.

### **Kalakeyavadham**

*Kalakeyavadham* is a *Kathakali* play written by *Kottayathu Thampuran*. Based on the Mahabharatha's *Aranya Parva*, the play describes the events surrounding the *Pandava* prince *Arjuna's* visit to his father *Indra's* abode, the heaven, after attaining the divine arrow (*Pasupatha Astram*) from *Lord Siva*.

### **Mahabharatha**

Describes the epic with special significance to *Hastinapura* palace events.

### **Prahladacharitham**

Incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* as *Narasimha* to kill the demon *Hiranyakshipu*.

### **Seetha Swayamvaram**

*Seethaswayamvaram* is a *Kathakali* authored by *Kottarakara Thampuran* in Malayalam. Based on the Ramayana, it narrates the events surrounding the marriage of *Rama* and *Seetha*, and their being accosted by the sage *Parasurama*.

### **Sri Rama Pattabhishekam**

Story of coronation of *Sri Rama* as the king of *Ayodhya*.

## **Famous Artists**

### **Kalamandalam Sivadas**

Kalamandalam Sivadas was born on 31 may 1967 in *Sankaramagalam*, Palakkad District. His father is late K.P. Radhakrishnan Nair and his mother is U.Devaki Amma .He passed S.S.L.C and joint Kerala Kalamandalam for Diploma in *Kathakali Vesham*, for 6 years and passed with first class. After that he joint post diploma of 2 years and passed with first class. He was awarded the central government scholarship to continue in Kerala Kalamandalam for 2 years. He has performed *Kathakali* all over India and in many foreign countries like France, Italy, Holind, spain, etc. Kalamandalam Sivadas is presently working in Kerala Kalamadalam as teacher on temporary basis.

### **Kalamandalam Haridhasan**

Kalamandalam Haridasan was born on 1952. His father is K.R.Sankaran and mother is Madhaviamma. He has learned *Kathakali* from the age of nine, under Kudamaloor Karunakaran Nair and Kudamaloor Kunchupilla for 5 years. After that he jointed Kerala Kalamandalam in 1996 and passed diploma of 6 years and post diploma of 2 years under Vazhenkada Kunchu Nair, Kalamandalam Gopi, and Sadanam Krishnan Kutty. His primary education is up to SSLC. His expertise is in "*Sthree*" characters like Damayanthi, Panchali, Laliyha and Kunthi and "*Vellathadi*" characters. He has performed *Kathakali* all around India and in many countries like America, Hongkong etc. Apart from *Kathakali* he has also learnt painting under artist Mohan. K Nair.

## **Kalamandalam Sankaran Embranthiri**

Kalamandalam Sankaran Embranthiri was one of the most popular *Kathakali* musicians, credited with initiating a new wave in the rendition of songs for the classical dance-drama from Kerala in south India. Embranthiri wasn't a particularly promising singer during his student days, but soon after completing his training at Kalamandalam began getting noticed for his sweet, emotion-laden voice and clear diction. Just as he started finding stages in the southern Travancore region, he got employed—first in the Irinjalakuda-based Unnayi Varrier Smaraka Kalanilayam in 1965 and later, in 1970, at FACT *Kathakali* School near Kochi from where he eventually retired as a *Kathakali* music teacher.

## **Kalanilayam Unnikrishnan**

Kalanilayam Unnikrishnan was born on October 16, 1948. His father is Thakazhi Madhava kuruppu and mother is Radhamma. During his high school studies, he joined Unnayi Warrier Smaraka Kalanilayam in 1960. From 1980 working as permanent employee in Kalamandalam and was the Head of the Department and Vice principal.

## **Kalanilayam Gopalakrishnan**

Kalanilayam Gopalakrishnan was born on May 15, 1966. He has practiced under Kalamandalam Damodharan Nair, Kalamandalam Appu Marar, Kalamandalam Balaraman and Kalanilayam Kunchunni. He has received Pallippuram Gopalan Nair Memorial Award. He played *Chenda* in many stages all around India and in foreign countries like Japan, Germany, Denmark and Malaysia.

## Conclusion

Today, majority of people treats arts commercially. They are not aware of the great history of each and every traditional art. The fact is that the arts are sustaining like this because of the interest of the foreigners in it. A very few people who still knows the importance of the cultural art forms treats it respectfully and sincerely. They too are discouraged by the society. When foreigners find that our arts and culture are very precious, the one who owns them treats them as a method to make money.

This shows the importance of the music training schools. There are many art forms present in Kerala like *Koodiyattam*, *Ottam Thullal*, *Chakyar Koothu*, *Chavittu natakam*, *Duffmuttu*, *Margom kali*, *Oppana*, *Thiruvathirakali* and a lot more. There are a lot of ritual, folk and martial arts. But the main art forms of Kerala are *Kathakali* and *Mohiniyattam*. They teach students arts and make them aware of the importance of the traditional arts. These institutions help to develop the culture and sustain the art forms. Unnayi Warriar Smaraka Kalanilayam is such an institution. Unnayi Warriar was a poet, writer, scholar, dramatist who lived in Kerala, India during the later part of the 18th century. He is famous for his outstanding work, *Nalacharitham*. Undoubtedly, *Nalacharitham* is an outstanding product of the *Manipravalam* style. *Nalacharitham* is a highly dramatic love story. Unnayi Warriar portrays beautifully Nalan's commendable self control and his willingness for and any sacrifice. Warriar's style is simple and brief but his lines are pity. More or less, he is at his poetic best when it comes to depicting the inner conflicts and thought of characters.

Unnayi Warriar, was a great poet and contributed a lot in the form of *Nalacharitham*, the *Attakatha*. Later *Nalacharitha* earned him a permanent place in the *Attakathasahithyam*. The *Kathakali*, which is fading now was once the most rated art form of Kerala. It is pity that our people are not aware of Unnayi Warriar, *Attakatha*, or their lazy attitude towards arts and artists. Unnayi Warriar, one of the great poet in the trinity of Kunchan Nambiar, Thunchath Ezhuthachan, was once considered as the eminent person in the field of arts and literature. Now, his name is also fading as any other artists, who were once considered as great. His name and details are fading as the art forms, which plays a great role in maintaining the value of a precious culture.

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