



The Connection Between Face Painting In Kathakali And Traditional Painting

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Abstract

Kathakali is a noble, majestic and more aesthetic creation compared to other performing artforms. Kathakali, the unique art of Kerala, does not have a heritage like Koodiyattam. There is no form of rituals involved in kathakali. Kathakali, which took its origin independently outside the temple walls, has grown faster than Koodiyattam. As kathakali took its form through various hands, there are creative contributions from each person who has handled it. Music, Instrument and sculpture has been incorporated harmoniously in the formation of this traditionally and historically rich artform. Kottarakkara Thampuran, who was Fascinated by Krishnanattam, requested Manavedan Thampuran to send Krishnanattam to the South. As Manavedan Thampuran sarcastically rejected this request, Kottarakkara Thampuran created Ramanattam based on the Ramayana and over time, with the involvement of other epics, it transformed into the current form, Kathakali. This is the history behind Kathakali. Still the artform is maintaining its grandeur through noble stages. Poetries and theatrical plays are also being portrayed through this artform. The facial makeup (face painting) of each character in Kathakali is a lot related to the traditional painting practices of Kerala. The colour combinations used in Kalamezhuthu and the colouring materials used in mural painting are related to the face painting in Kathakali. Although basic texts such as the Natya Shastra have already mentioned different colours for each rasa (facial expression), they haven't mentioned the materials used to prepare those colours. Therefore, artforms like Kathakali, Koodiyattam and other ritual arts have used books related to painting and sculpture, such as the Vishnu Dharmothara Purana, to find out the materials for making colours. Bharata Muni who wrote the Natya Shastra has divided acting into four. Among the four types of acting (Chaturvidhabhinaya), Angikam, Vachikam, Sattwikam and Aharyam, the section Aharyam discusses Angarachana, i.e. facial painting methods. Although artforms like Kathakali does not incorporate all the aspects mentioned in Natya Shastra, it has adopted many of the things mentioned in the 23rd chapter called Aharya Abhinayam related to the decorative methods of

Kathakali. Angarachana refers to the transformation of the face and body using different colour combinations. Which colours should be used as natural colours, compound colours or tools for this has been clearly mentioned in Natya Shastra. But the source of these colours is not discussed. Therefore, the colour-making materials have been prepared as inspired from the painting methods, ritual and traditional artforms that existed until then. Naturally obtained colours are being mostly used for face painting of the artforms of Kerala. This paper examines how the face painting is related to the traditional painting practices.

Keywords: Painting, Colours, Kathakali, Face painting, Artforms

Introduction

Aharyam means artificial decorative methods. Be it in theatre plays or dance, the artist should have appropriate costumes and make up, which is referred to as aharyam. Bharata Muni's Natya Sastra is considered the basic textbook of Natyam, the text which contains 36 chapters covering all the aspects of Natyam. The Aharya abhinaya is being discussed in the 23rd chapter of the book.

Angarachana, Alankaram, Pustham and Sajeevam are the four components of Aharyam. Among these, Angarachana is the method of bringing transformation of face and body using different colours (make up), Alankaram is the decoration using jewels and costumes, Pustham refers to properties and Sajeevam is the use of live objects during performance. Artforms like Kathakali does not use live objects on stage.

This paper is to clarify the connection between angarachana practices in Kathakali and painting. The topics are discussed under three chapters. First chapter includes the history and growth of painting practices. The relation between Kathakali and painting as well as the colours used in them is discussed in second chapter. The third chapter explains about the colour combinations and colour making methods.

Review of Literature

The Aharyam of kathakali, featuring bright colours and strong contrasts are emphasized across different literary sources. The 23rd chapter of Bharata Muni's Natya Sastra and Chapters 40 and 27 of Vishnu Dharmothara Puranam is dedicated to the intricate details of Aharya Abhinaya. Modern books like Sri P.M Ram Mohan's Nephthyam and his publications like Aniyarayude adiverukal (The roots of green room) specifically elaborates the godly transformation of humans into characters and his paper Aharyavum Chithra Soothravum ayulla bandham (The relation between Aharyam and Chithra Sutram) also gives insights into the connection between kathakali make up and painting. The historical and methodological aspects of painting is elaborated in Chithrakala Charithravum Reethikalum by Shri Vijayakumar Menon. Dr Radhakrishnan's Kalamezhuthile Chithradarshanam also serves as a treasurable source of information about the painting methods in Kalamezhuth.

Research Methodology

This study employs a multifaceted approach to collect, arrange, classify, compare and analyse data related to Aharya abhinaya in Kathakali as well as traditional painting. The research methodology is based on descriptive, historical, exploratory and comparative approaches. A descriptive approach is used to provide an in-depth examination of the concepts, principles and practices of Ahara Abhinaya in kathakali as well as the colour making and colour using practices in painting. Historical approach is to give insights into the evolution of painting from ancient times and of face painting in Kathakali. An exploratory approach is used to investigate contemporary practices and applications of Aharya abhinaya in kathakali. It is also used for detailing about the methos followed in different painting practices like kalamezhuth and mural painting. This involves conducting interviews with renowned artists of Kathakali, mural painting and kalamezhuth, observing performance and analysing texts and articles. A comparative approach is employed to analyse the use of different colours accordingly, the colour making materials and the colour making processes in painting and how similar it is in face painting of Kathakali. This also involved comparison of basics about the use of colours mentioned in ancient textbooks related to performing artforms and painting. Fieldwork is also an essential component of this research which provided valuable firsthand information. The data sources used in this study include books and articles related to Natya Sathram, Cithra Soothram, Visnu Dharmothra Puranam, Kathakali, Mural painting, Kalamezhuth, Internet sources, archival materials, and interviews with renowned Kathakali, Mural painting and Kalamezhuth experts. By employing these methodologies and data sources, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how Aharya abhinaya in Kathakali is related to traditional painting practices emphasizing history, evolution and contemporary practices.

Analysis and Discussion

Relation between face painting in Kathakali and traditional painting methods

There is an unavoidable connection between performing artforms of Kerala and traditional painting practices. Dance and music would have first developed during the social growth phase of ancient man. Ancient men would have used music as part of celebrations after igniting fire and cooking the meat they have procured through hunting. Later they would have added movements according to the rhythms and thus originated dance. This would have been the beginning of Art, that has increased the glory of social life of human beings.

It was only after the ancient men started living in caves, came the practice of paintings as a part of culture. The drawings of objects commonly seen in nature, silhouettes of animals and human beings using laterite stone and coal drawn on the walls of these caves marked the beginning of traditional painting practices. Ancient people lived in these caves around 20,000 years ago, as recorded by historians.

Influences of painting began to be visible in performing artforms as colours were added to drawings and as paintings became part of worship. The practice of worship developed in order as Prakrithyaradhana (nature wiorship), Eshwararadhana (God worship), Pretharadhana, Veeraradhana. The tantric paintings

with padmam (lotuses) marked the places of ritualistic worship. The rituals which once used lotuses (padmam) and wheels (chakram), later started using figures. The lotuses and wheels were representations only, while the figures showed the features of the worshiped deity. The natural sources like leaves were powdered and used for colours. Such paintings were called Dhooli chithrangal (paintings with powder). As these ritualistic practices involved beliefs of the strength of worshipping diety being invoked into the priest or other person and him performing as part of it, came the importance of Aharyam in rituals. This helped the performer in whom the diety was believed to be invoked. Later this practice of using costumes became more popular as people started dressing up like animals, birds or even other human beings.

Chumarchithram (mural painting) is another painting practice which influenced the performing artforms of Kerala. Mural painting and Kalamezhuth served as examples to the portrayal of many mythological characters. Koodiyattam, the Sanskrit drama, Krishnanattam, Kathakali and many such artforms have taken elements from mural painting for makeup and costumes. Ancient books like Natya Shastram mentions the colour combinations based on expressions,

but there are no mentions regarding the colour making materials. The Vishnu Dharmothara Puranam, specifically, the chapters Aharyaabhinayam rasavarnanam and rangavyathikaram which gives elaborate explanations about mural painting includes several hints regarding the Aharya aspect of traditional artforms of Kerala. The chapters 35 to 44 of this book which is solely dedicated to the art of painting is called Chithra Soothram. Sri K K Warriar, the famous mural painting artist have published Malayalam translation of this Chithrasoothram with the same name.

In this, 2 slokas (verses) says that there are many materials for making colours such as gold, silver, copper, silica (abhram), blue sapphire (indraneelam), vermilion (sindhooram), lead (eeyam), manayola, lime (chunnamb), Lac or lacquer (arak), dye/paint (chaayam), and indigo (neelam). Although these are the materials used to make colours for mural paintings, the same are used in our ancient stage arts as well. There are no much differences about basic colours in Natya Sastram and Chithra Soothram. Natya Sastram considers white, blue, yellow, and red as the 4 basic colours. The five basic colours according to Chithra Soothram are white, yellow, red, black, and blue. Natya Sastram does not mention black as the basic colour. Therefore, face painting is more closely related to the Chitra Soothram, i.e. the Vishnu Dharmothara Purana.

Different colours for 9 different facial expressions (rasas) are mentioned in the Vishnu Dharmothara Purana. The order is, natural colour for santham (peace), leafy green for sringaram (love), red for roudram (anger), white for hasyam (humor), black for bhayanakam (fear), gauravarnam (reddish yellow) for veeram (valour), yellow for athbhutham (wonder), gray for karunam (sorrow) and blue for beebhathsam (disgust). It is possible that the colour red came into the realm of visual arts based on painting. This may be the reason for pacha vesham in Kathakali being depicted in leafy green colours (syamam). The reason for the adoption of the green and red mixed face for Kathi vesham and red and black mixed face for chuvanna thadi veshams can be due to behaviour of characters depicted through such veshams.

As in painting, lines are very important in the face painting also. Although very thin lines and very thick lines are prohibited in paintings, they are found in abundance in the face painting. Lines that are intertwined and curved are not acceptable in the face makeup as in painting. While paintings give importance to the combination of colours, the face painting gives more importance to contrast. Although there are uses of combined colours, the use of hybrid colours is not seen in the face painting.

Methodologies and usage of colours in painting

There are three main different ways of using colours in painting. They are roolika lepanam, sashtra lepanam, and shalaaka lepanam. Roolika lepanam is the application of colour using a brush. The application of colour using knives or other tools is called sashtra lepanam. Shalaaka lepanam is the application of colour using thin metal rods. This method is used to draw very fine dots and lines. In the greenroom (aniyara), face painting is done through this method, but tender coconut leaf stick is used instead of metallic rods. The three-dimensionality seen in paintings is not necessary in face painting.

The six elements of painting, such as roopabhedam, pramanam, Bhavam, Lavanyayojanam, Sadrushyam, Varnikabhangam are all present in the painting. The variation of forms is called roopabhedam. In painting, Pramanam is thaala pramanam. In the face, the distance and size should be calculated in a way that is appropriate to the size of the facial features. Bhavam is the consideration of expression of the character while painting face. Considering beauty aspects is Lavanyayojanam. Even the angry characters should be portrayed aesthetically. The neatness of the face painting is something that cannot be avoided. Sadrishyam in painting is the idealistic depiction of the subject. The similarity involved in face painting with the original character is sadrushyam. The ways in which different colours are kept closer and still able to differentiate each one is Varnikabhangam.

There are two important aspects in costumes and painting. One is three-dimensionality and the second is movement. Among the length, width and breadth, the breadth should be indicated by drawing reflections of an object in the painting. Since the costume part is done in its original form, this three-dimensionality can always be achieved in stage artforms. The movement of the character is another aspect. Since the painting is a non-moving object, the objects or colours used in it do not shift from its position. Due to the movement of the characters, colours, clothes, and ornaments can change its position. The fact understood from such similarities and dissimilarities is that in many elements of Aharyam of the performing artforms, contributions from Natya Sasthram as well as from traditional painting practices have been taken.

Eye make-up has great importance in face painting. The Chitra Soothram mentions five shapes of eyes. These are the Chapakrutri, Mathsyodaram, Ulpalapatram, Padmapatram and Sankhakrutri. These shapes are prescribed according to the status of the characters in the mythological drawings. Although the status varies, in Kudiyaattam, Krishnanattam and Kathakali, the male faces have eyes in Sankhakruthi (shape of conch) and the female eyes have padmapatram (lotus leaf - like). The connections of Koodiyattam with painting and sculpture must have begun in the early days, as can be seen in Krishnanattam, Kathakali and

many other temple-based performing artforms. In this way, many scientific aspects about painting are related to the classical artforms of Kerala like Kathakali.

Colour making materials in Kathakali

The costume adopted in Kathakali is more related to sculpture. But the face painting is inclined towards painting, which is clear from the wide variety of colours used. Although Natya Sasthram details about the colours based on expression of characters, the materials for colour making is not mentioned. The five primary colors in painting are used in Kathakali face painting. These primary colours are used as composite colours, later three or more colours are mixed, and then used as hybrid colours in painting. But hybrid colours are not used in face painting. Many of the materials that are necessary to produce these colours are also used for making colours in face painting. The main materials for making colours of face painting are manayola (manashila), chayilyam, Neelam (indigo), rice, lime, burnt charcoal, etc.

● Manayola:

English name - REAL GAR

Chemical name - ARESENIC -DI-SULPHIDE

It is found in the form of rock in the Himalayan valleys. In Sanskrit, it has the names like manayola, gola, harithalam. It is yellow in colour. The substance called Haritharam in Malayalam, is yellow in color like Manayola and has a little sparkle. It is more intense than Manayola. If used instead of manayola, there are chances of burning of face.

● Chayilyam:

English name - CINNABAR

Chemical name: RED SULPHIDE OF MERCURY

This is also found in the form of rock. Sometimes it is seen on the surface of the earth. It has intense red colour. It should be used on face after mixing with lime or dried rice paste used for chutty. Otherwise, instead of the bright red color, it will be dark. In Sanskrit, there are many names like Hingulam, Hingulakam, Hingalakam. But today, red zinc oxide is used instead of chayilyam.

● Neelam:

English name - TRUE INDIGO

Botanical name – Indigoera tinctoria

In India, it is mostly found in Bengal. In Sanskrit, there are names like Neelam, Neelini, and Neelatutham. Thutha means amari. The name Neela Thutha comes from the fact that it is made from Neela Amari.

● Chenjilyam:-

English name - INDIAN DAMMER

Botanical name: Shorea robusta

It is not a colouring agent. It is mixed with other colours to increase adhesiveness. It is also good for adding shine to the colour. The words sarja rasam, raalam, sarvarasam, and bahurupam are the Sanskrit names. In Malayalam, it is called Chenjilyam or Nattukunthirukkam. It is the resin of Maruth tree.

● **Chunnamb:**

English name: LIME

Chemical name: CALCIUM CARBONATE

It is called kadini dravyam in Sanskrit. It is made by grinding limestone. If it is cleaned without any impurities, it is a clear white in colour.

● **Abhram:**

English name: MICA

Chemical name: SILICON

In Sanskrit, it is called Abhram and Abhrakam. It is found in most places in the form of rocks that can be taken as flakes. Abhram as flakes is often applied to the extended part of eye make-up, eyebrows, and lips. In the presence of the traditionally used lamp, it gives a good shine from a distance. Abhram is spread all over the face for minukk vesham (representing females or sages).

● **Mashi:**

Mashi is a black substance obtained from burning sesame oil. It is used in places requiring black colour.

● **Chuttiari:**

There are many factors to be taken into consideration when preparing chutti ari. The white coloured unakkalari (dried rice) or pachari (plain rice) should be washed and cleaned, and soaked in plain water for three hours. Then it should be ground using a cleaned stone without impurities like oil or turmeric stain and made into a paste which can be rolled into a ball like form. The rice should be divided into three parts, one part of which should be again ground with lime so that one fourth of the total amount of rice is lime. This lime should be free of grains. If prepared in this manner, the rice flour can be used in a controlled way according to the need of the chutti artist.

● **Mediums (Madhyamam)**

In mural painting, water with various kinds of adhesives is used as the medium. The adhesive material that is taken from the skin of animals and the resin of various trees can be used for this. The resin of trees such as Ilanji and Karuvalam are also important in this. If it is in the face painting, the media are ghee, coconut oil or water. If necessary, the adhesive added to colours is chenjilyam.

The colour mixing methods and materials of colors in mural paintings and kalamezhuth are to a certain extent related to nature. Similarly, this connection is undeniable in performing artforms. Thus, all the artforms of Kerala exist complimenting each other.

Conclusion

The influence of traditional painting practices is very evident in performing artforms of Kerala like Koodiyattam and Kathakali. It can be understood that these are related to each other in terms of colours and their preparation. Both made proper use of the colour-making materials available at that time. The materials used in these are mostly based on the topography of Kerala. Stones like Manayola and Chayilyam have been adopted from painting for performing artforms. Not only the colours, but also how these colours should be used and how their application methods are complementary to each other can be understood. That is, it can be seen that it is mostly from the books related to painting that the colours used for face painting and the materials used for their manufacture are discussed.

The way these natural materials change from their natural colour to another when combined with other colours, and the amount of each colour that should be used for this is explained. This method is followed in painting and face painting. Colours in painting are created by using natural colours as composite colours and by using composite colours as hybrid colours or sub-colours. The same is true for the colour mixing in face painting.

The emergence of art occurs from where man begins to make himself and the environment, he uses beautiful. For this, we have to rely on the aesthetic objects available around us. Painting is an art form that has existed since the beginning of ancient man. Although there has been evolution in painting practices with the passage of time, I have learned through this thesis that the face painting methods of art forms such as Koodiyattam and Kathakali are still followed by supporting all the elements of the painting practices that first emerged.

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