

Traditional Martial Arts In South India

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ABSTRACT

*Martial arts were an outcome of the folk art and their traditions are associated with the society's religious and social activities. Martial Arts stand testimony to the analysis of the martial qualities of the people of a specific region. Martial arts are codified systems and traditions of combat practices, which are practiced for a variety of reasons: self-defense, competition, physical health and fitness, entertainment, as well as mental and spiritual development. 'Martial Arts', as the name suggests, are popular art forms that give training in different kinds and dimensions of fighting or fighting with a spear or a sword, physical combat, resisting cavalry attack, single combat or combat with many. As such, the martial arts apart from being sources of popular entertainment also provide training in skills required by professionals, including soldiers. India has an ancient tradition in diverse martial arts. Nearly every part of India has evolved one or the other form of a popular martial art. The traditional martial arts which train armed combat often encompass a wide spectrum of melee weapons, including bladed weapons and pole arms. Such traditions include Silambam and Kalaripayat especially those of the German Renaissance. Kalarippayattu is the traditional martial art taught from the place called Kalari. Since Kalari indicates a stage, weapon, training ground, forest, fallow land, battle field, etc., one can understand the value of Kalri, the martial art practice. **Silambam is a traditional stick martial art of South India and has a rich culture of many thousands years, at least inherited since the Dravidian empires. The modern Tamil culture and people still have highly valuable gems to share, amongst them is Silambam. During this process of learning the***

student will be taught about the physical fitness, the will power and personality development. The specialty of the Silambam, behavior will also be taught. The martial arts training aims to result in several benefits to the trainees, such as their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

Key words**Origin, Traditional Martial Arts, Martial Arts Training, Kalaripayattu,****Silambam:****Introduction:**

Martial arts are codified systems and traditions of combat practices, which are practiced for a variety of reasons: self-defense, competition, physical health and fitness, entertainment, as well as mental and spiritual development. The martial arts are aimed at entertaining the people during the vacation and rests to bring out joy and happiness in their mind, and at worshipping the village deities. Martial arts also known as traditional arts, and are artistic expressions that have been executed by some native people after acquiring some practice. From the historical point of view, most of the martial arts are indigenous to the locality from which they took their origin so that they can express the culture and traditions of the particular localities very well.

Origin:

‘Martial Arts’, as the name suggests, are popular art forms that give training in different kinds and dimensions of fighting or fighting with a spear or a sword, physical combat, resisting cavalry attack, single combat or combat with many, etc. As such, the martial arts apart from being sources of popular entertainment also provide training in skills required by professionals, including soldiers. India has an ancient tradition in diverse martial arts. Nearly every part of India has evolved one or the other form of a popular martial art. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the martial arts practices appear under different names and

emphasize different aspects according to geographical, political, and linguistic considerations. They find a place in contemporary society by addressing performative, fitness, and nation-alistic and socio-political purposes. There are traditional medical systems, Siddha and Ayur-veda, associated with these martial arts: many martial arts practitioners are medical practitioners as well. Although the term martial art has become heavily associated with the fighting arts of eastern Asia, it was originally used in regard to the combat systems of Europe as early as the 1550s. An English fencing manual of 1639 used the term in reference specifically to the "Science and Art" of swordplay. The term is ultimately derived from Latin, and means "Arts of Mars," where Mars is the Roman god of war. Unarmed martial arts can be broadly grouped into focusing on strikes, those focusing on grappling and those that cover both fields, often described as hybrid martial arts.

Traditional Martial Arts:

Those traditional martial arts which train armed combat often encompass a wide spectrum of melee weapons, including bladed weapons and pole arms. Such traditions include Silambam and Kalaripayat especially those of the German Renaissance. Many martial arts also feature weapons as part of their curriculum. Sometimes, training with one specific weapon will be considered a style of martial arts in its own right, which is especially the case in Japanese martial arts with disciplines such as sword, staff, and archery. Similarly, modern Western martial arts and sports include modern fencing, stick-fighting systems like can needle combat or single stick, and modern competitive archery. Many martial arts, especially those from Asia, also teach side disciplines which pertain to medicinal practices. This is particularly prevalent in traditional Indian martial arts which may teach bone-setting, and other aspects of traditional Indian medicine. The Martial arts can also be linked with religion and spirituality. Numerous systems are reputed to have been founded, disseminated, or practiced by monks or nuns. Martial styles, when concerning non-physical qualities of the

combat, are often strongly influenced by Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. The traditional martial arts place emphasis on the development of the practitioner's spiritual and philosophical development. Some martial arts in various cultures can be performed in dance-like settings for various reasons, such as for evoking ferocity in preparation for battle or showing off skill in a more stylized manner. Many such martial arts incorporate music, especially strong percussive rhythms. While these arts are based on historical traditions of folklore, they are not "historical" in the sense that they reconstruct or preserve a historical system from a specific era. They are rather contemporary regional sports that coexist with the modern forms of martial arts sports as they have developed since the 19th century. Testing or evaluation is important to martial art practitioners of many disciplines who wish to determine their progression or own level of skill in specific contexts. Students within individual martial art systems often undergo periodic testing and grading by their own teacher in order to advance to a higher level of recognized achievement, such as a different belt color or title. The type of testing used varies from system to system but may include forms or sparring. The martial arts are simple dances or musical performances executed by the people of rural India to express their joy in every possible occasion such as arrival of a pleasant season, birth of a child, puberty, wedding and religious festivals.

Performing Martial Arts:

The performing martial arts are aimed at entertaining the people during the vacation and rests to bring out joy and happiness in their mind, and at worshipping the village deities and the small Gods and Goddesses who are believed to be the descendents of the trinity- for their sacrifice. Various forms and sparring are commonly used in martial art exhibitions and tournaments. Some competitions pit practitioners of different disciplines against each other using a common set of rules, these are referred to as mixed martial arts competitions. Rules for sparring vary between art and organization but can generally be divided into light-

contact, medium-contact, and full-contact variants, reflecting the amount of force that should be used on an opponent. In some styles the competitors score points based on the landing of a single technique or strike as judged by the referee, whereupon the referee will briefly stop the match, award a point then restart the match. Alternatively, sparring may continue with the point noted by the judges. Some critics of point sparring feel that this method of training teaches habits that result in lower combat effectiveness. Lighter-contact sparring may be used exclusively, for children or in other situations when heavy contact would be inappropriate medium-contact sparring is often used as training for full contact. In full-contact sparring, the aim of a competitive match is either to knock out the opponent or to force the opponent to submit. Where scoring takes place it may be a subsidiary measure, only used if no clear winner has been established by other means; in some competitions, there was no scoring, though most now use some form of judging as a backup.

Due to these factors, full-contact matches tend to be more aggressive in character, but rule sets may still mandate the use of protective equipment, or limit the techniques allowed. Martial arts have crossed over into sports when forms of sparring become competitive, becoming a sport in its own right that is disassociated from the original combative origin, such as with western fencing. Some martial artists compete in non-sparring competitions such as breaking or choreographed routines of techniques, such as modern variations of the martial arts which include dance-influenced competitions such as tricking. Martial traditions have been influenced by government to become more sport-like for political purposes; the central impetus for the attempt by the government in transforming the martial arts into the committee-regulated sport was suppressing what they saw as the potentially subversive aspects of martial training, especially under the traditional system of family lineages.

Martial Arts Training

The Martial arts training aims to result in several benefits to the trainees, such as their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. Through systematic practice in the martial arts a person's physical fitness may be boosted the strength, stamina, flexibility, movement and coordination as the whole body is exercised and the entire muscular system is activated. Beyond contributing to physical fitness, martial arts training also has benefits for mental health, contributing to self-esteem, self-control, emotional and spiritual well-being. For this reason, a number of martial arts schools have focused purely on therapeutic aspects, de-emphasizing the historical aspect of self-defense or combat completely. Some traditional martial concepts have seen new use within modern military training. Perhaps the most recent example of this is point shooting which relies on muscle memory to more effectively utilize a firearm in a variety of awkward situations, much the way would master movements with their sword. The propelling force to do the performing of martial arts originates from the desires, thoughts and actions lying behind the innate inclinations and tendencies of the performer, but their outstanding performance, as most performers think of, is the outcome of the individual's own caliber, knowledge and training, which are of course indispensable for the exposition of the feelings of the performers. While the classical arts are well-finished and self-conscious ones, the martial arts have no such finishing in the display as they have no stringent rules of finishing the approach of expression has been most often changing when the art is handed down from the Guru to the students because of basic differences in conventions and beliefs between them.

Even the expression of the same performer in the same context is changing from stage to stage since the feelings and attitudes are in no way at a standstill in humans and since the mood of artists has emerged out with clearly defined conventions, motifs and situations. To know of the achievements of our fore fathers, their success and failure, and their shares in the

enrichment of human culture is not only fascinating but also profitable. This is because the present social, political and cultural existence are the mould of these forces. It was on the basis of the cultural tradition a society gets its place in the history of the general culture of humanity. Naturally cultural contribution was the initiative comes from the leaders of the society. For the first time the Government of India included the folk performing arts in the Festival of India held in Germany in 1992 to project the multi-faceted cultural life of Indians to the Germans. This is a landmark in the history of folk performing martial arts in getting acceptance in front of international audiences. The martial arts are simple performances executed by the people of rural India to express their joy in every possible occasion such as arrival of a pleasant season, especially on the occasion of temple festivals. Martial arts are of course very simple with minimum of steps, but they burst with verve and vitality of performers. Men or women in specific costumes, that are characteristic to the dance, perform some folk dances exclusively while in some other performances men and women dance together to put their steps to music. Men in specific costumes, that are characteristic to the art, perform the martial arts exclusively while in some other performances men and women together to put their steps.

Kalaripayattu:

Kalaripayattu is the traditional Martial art taught from the place called Kalari. Since Kalari indicates a stage, weapon, training ground, forest, fallow land, battle field, etc., one can understand the value of Kalari, the Martial art practice. The word Kalari means "threshing floor" or "battlefield" in Tamil and Malayalam. Kalaripayattu or "Payattu" is an Indian martial art from the ancient south Travancore. Those who were trained in the Kalari were devoted to the army at times of war. Kalaripayattu, the deadly art of self defence, taught by Guru from 11th or 12th century onwards was familiar in Central and Southern Kerala and the adjacent Kanyakumari district of today was the legacy of the Nayars. The Kalaripayattu

system was a localised tradition, all the soldiers of Nayar families got training in their own Kalaris. The Kalari includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods. The Kalaris were the military gymnasiums where the youth were given training in the use of weapons or arms in different forms with specific techniques. The Nayars got trained in Kalaripayattu and developed the tradition of gaining training in their local Kalaris. In such Kalaris, the nephew of the household too would participate. Such facts indicate the cultural aspects associated with this Martial art. Kalaripayattu, being a Military training, become part and parcel of the cultural life of the people and influenced the indigenous dance and drama forms such as Kathakali, Theyam, Chevittunatakam and Velakkali. Regional variants are classified according to geographical position in Kerala; these are the Northern style from Malabar region in north Kerala, the Central style from inner Kerala and the southern style from Travancore region of south Kerala. In the Military system of Travancore, the Nayars, known for their discipline were occupying a prominent place. Kalaripayattu, like stick fencing and Varmam, occupies a unique place among the people of the Kanyakumari district even today. The art of Varmam is still preserved and protected in Kanyakumari district. The training for Kalaripayattu, a martial art is traditionally done inside the Kalari. Also the past village schools of Kerala, run by the traditional astrologers families were known by the name Kalari or EzhuthuKalari. There are two varieties in Kalari, namely Thekkankalari and Vadakkankalari. While the former is the later addition among the war tactics of the Tamils, the latter Vadakkankalari uses the war techniques employed by the Tamil rulers of the Sangam age, for both trainings are essential. Some of the flexibility training methods in northern Kalaripayattu are applied in Kerala dance forms and Kathakali dancers who knew martial arts were believed to be markedly better than the other performers.

Silambam:

Silambam is the Art of self-defence and it is pioneer in arts of tradition of Tamilnadu. It is practiced from the Sangam age and proved that more Tamil words of Sangam period are being used in Silambam. Silambam is a traditional martial art of Tamilnadu which comprises swirling, rotating and making swirling attacks and defending oneself by swirling. Besides these Silambam has many other unique facets. Adiyarkkunallar, who gave a commentary to *Silappathikaram* in the 16th century, had cited a poetic verse to denote that there were many folk performing arts in Tamilagam in his time as far as he had known from some Tamil literatures which are not available today. The state of Tamil Nadu is considered to be the cradle of modern and scientific staff fencing, popularly known in Tamil as Silambam. The Pandya kings ruling in Tamil Nadu promoted Silambam fencing, as did their Chola and Chera counterparts. It is a weapon-based Indian martial art but also traditionally practised by the Tamil community of Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Silambam is a traditional stickmartial art of South India and has a rich culture of many thousands years, at least inherited since the Dravidian empires. The modern Tamil culture and people still have highly valuable gems to share, amongst them is Silambam. During this process of learning the student will be taught about the physical fitness, the will power and personality development. The specialty of the Silambam, behavior will also be taught. It is the duty of the student to inculcate the techniques of Silambam Art. In respect to inculcate the techniques he should practice the same. After all this practices the master will teach how to use the weapons of Silambam. Even the student will be taught how to defense without any weapon when he is attacked by weapons. Silambam, being an indigenous exercise, is a lingering form of self defence activity adopted by the people of Tamilnadu. In the Indian physical culture staff-play finds a place and that too testifies to the adoption of Silambam Art in India. Above all the Asans are expected to be always brisk, honest and humanistic. As they are leading the entire show

behind the scene, they will always be vigilant and will always be prepared to avoid any unpleasant occurrences.

Conclusion:

India is a rich nation which embodies with various kinds of Arts. The ancient glories were full of meaning and interest to the people of the present generation, especially to those who are sympathetically inclined towards past institutions. Naturally cultural contribution was the initiative comes from the leaders of the society. Martial arts were an outcome of the folk art and their traditions are associates with the society's religious and social activities. The Tamils were much fascinated by martial arts and games. Many martial art practices in different parts of India are in vogue. In the same way the play with the staff is available in different countries such as India, Srilanka, China, Japan, Thailand, etc. along with its existence in western countries such as England, France and Germany. Martial Arts stand testimony to the analysis of the martial qualities of the people of a specific region. It is revealed that the martial art practices have been undertaken by the people in a traditional and hereditary way. They have transcended from age to age. Martial arts have occupied a great position in the culture of the people of South India, especially in their cultural carnivals and religious rituals meant for sacrificing small deities in villages.

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