

**IMMIGRATED NATIONAL IDENTITY:  
KARAVA AND SINHALESE MASK DRAMA  
(KOLAM)**

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***Abstract***

*M.D Raghavan, who made a study of native races and castes expresses that the mask drama, a kind of folk drama existed and in fact still existing to some extent in west and south coast of maritime regions in Sri Lanka is related with the Karava caste which is one of the major migratory castes of the island. The objective of this study is to launch a deep investigation into the observation he made with special reference to the Tukkavadu Kolamancestry of Maha Ambalangoda which belongs to Karava caste. The study revealed the following important points. The commencement of mask drama in Sri Lanka is associated with the Karava caste army brought from Kanchi puram, Kilakkare, Kaveri Pattanam when Puttalam was seized by Mukkaras, a group of invaders in the reign of king Parakramabahu-vi of Kotte. Those peoples were the believers of the Goddess Kali at that time even the local people had already been performing variety of dancing by way of offering to demons and deities. It seems probable that the Kolam nataka came to being as a result of blending of Kolamthullal dance performed by Keralas on behalf of the Goddess Kali with the kind of dancing already existed in the island. Adoption as an entertainment of early practice performed for Kali in the colonial politico-economic context could be examined later.*

*Carpentry was the duty assigned to Karava caste in the feudal system. Thus they were inborn artists in carving masks. The most significant fact came to light out of this investigation done into the history of Tukkawadu ancestry of Maha Ambalangoda which attracted the attention of a large number of those who studied the mask is this it was the ritual dancers or gurunnanses -devil dancers- of Thunduwa and Suddagoda, two villages of Berava (tom-tom beaters) caste in Bentota, who contributed singing, playing, words and verse to the mask drama. Though at the begging people belonging to different castes performed just the particular duty entrusted to him in time to come they took part in many other trades without distinction. Accordingly those who belonged to Karava caste took part in singing and playing where as that of Berava practiced carving masks. On the basis of the above inquiries the following findings were reached. Namely the origin of mask drama cannot be traced by means of one particular caste. It is an admixture of multi-ethnic and multi-religious cultural elements. While changing its form in accordance with time and tide mask drama under went influence of various cultures in its mode from exorcism to delight full and incidental art. Even in case of Tukkavadu ancestry which is the subject of this study a singular contribution has been made by both the castes Karava and Berava to the continuity of the mask drama. Although it is invariably associated with the migration of Karava caste the mask drama cannot be branded exclusively as a heritage of their own. It can be observed that following the national independence without resorting to cast issues there is a tendency towards continuity of performing art such as mask drama as one of the national symbolism. This approach diminished caste identities further.*

## Introduction

Mask drama or *Kôlam* (mockery) is a kind of folk-drama solely native to maritime regions of south and west lowland (see Map 1) of Sri Lanka. Performance done wearing a mask, playing the low-country drum and the trumpet, performance of all men's and women's parts exclusively by men, inclusion of a long-pre performance and a group of common characters, <sup>1</sup> and performance of one or two episodes following the pre performance <sup>2</sup>etc. are the identical features of the mask drama.

Map 1: Low country and Up country in Ceylone



*M. D. Raghavan* who made a study of ethnic groups of Sri Lanka also investigated into arts and crafts associated with its various ethnic types. Among the special issues that attracted his attention are the relations between *Sokari* drama and *kinnara* (mat weavers) tribe<sup>3</sup> (1951:237- 248) and that of mask drama and the *Karava* caste (1961). *Ambalangoda* was the place most popular for mask drama in the decade 1960. Among

the people of *Karava* caste in *Ambalangoda* there had already prevailed characteristic features of a tradition of mask drama dating back to some centuries at the time when *Raghavan* carried out his study. The study tries to examine most thoroughly the issue pointed out by *Raghavan*, i.e. the relations between *Karava* caste of *Ambalangoda* and the mask drama on the one hand and to identify the caste background with special reference to mask drama of *Ambalangoda* on the other. Accordingly the object of this study is to try to solve the two basic problems, i.e. first how mask drama came to be connected with the *Karava* caste And second whether it is an art related exclusively to that particular caste as *Raghavan* surmises ?

## Methodology:

Data has been collected mainly from literary sources dealing with various spheres on *Kolam* drama. Eight interviews with important individuals and artists were conducted by adopting the Snow Ball Sampling Method. A Snow ball grows gradually through accumulation of snow around it. The number of persons whom I should interview also was determined in the similar way. Once a first group of persons were interviewed, it was they who suggested the next group who should be interviewed, like this the process went on. For this purpose two *Tale Phone* conversations were employed and in addition *World Wide Web* also was used.

## Discussion:

### Composition of the caste and the *Karava* in Sri Lanka following the *Kotte* ruling Period

There is a multitude of studies carried out on diversity of castes that existed and that still exists in the Sinhalese society. *Ryan* has summarized the classifications pertaining to

the subject made by Europeans (1993:65-72). Coomaraswamy's view of the Sinhalese caste system is as follows: *The Sinhalese since remote past were having intimate and uninterrupted ties with South Indians. As a result it is not the caste difference of Aryayans but that of Tamils which has come to exist among the Sinhalese* (1962:20). Various tribes that had migrated from South India of a later date were found living as diverse castes in the Sinhalese society (Ryan,1993:11). Ariyapala studying the *Medieval Sinhalese Society* gives a description of the composition of the caste in the contemporary army which is found in *Dambadeni-Asna*(epistle). In it 57 castes which differ from one another on the basis of their duty or profession are given. In his study two professionals called *Balibatuvo* and *Kâli natanno* (Kâli dancers) are also mentioned.

These two professionals can be taken as two subordinate groups who helped the army. Both these groups would have fulfilled religions needs. (1956:161-166) R.Pieris has done an authoritative theoretical study of establishment of the caste system in the Sinhalese society. He examines in detail the background of caste system taking into consideration the facts given in the *Niti Nighanduwa* and the *Jana-vansa*. (1964:181- 190) All these studies confirm that the history of *Karava* caste does not go beyond the *Kotte* Period. How the *Karava* caste having arrived here came to the fore among the lesser castes is described by R.Pieris in the following manner: "*Nawandanna caste (blacksmiths) was recognized as the dominant one among the lesser castes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Then following one and half a century Dave prepared a document according to which it was the Karava that occupied the prominent position among the lesser castes. However, as some people viewed that the Acâri Kulaya (the caste of blacksmiths) was the*

*dominant one among the lesser castes the notion that the Karava was prominent remained as a matter of opinion. In his description of their honorary titles and designations it is noteworthy that even a nominal reference not been made to the Karava caste by Knox. It was in Dutch areas lying outside the control of the king of Kandy (capital city of up country) that Karava people were living. "As they committed killing fish" the Karava caste people had been up to the latter part of Kandy Period, treated as a mean caste but were given recognition for it was they who supplied salt and dry fish to the sovereign. Those who fled from maritime regions and settled down in Kandyan areas were admitted to very important Madige or transport agency owing to the Dutch policy of obstructing the highway"* (1964:188).

Description of Coomaraswamy based on the *Sinhala* poem titled *the Jana Vansayaö* written by *kessallena Sinha* on castes and their Hierarchy following *Kotte* Period draws in excellent picture of the caste diversity prevailing at that time.

According to the *öJana Vansaö* caste procedure is as follows:

*Goviyo*(Handuruvo-knoxs öHondroosö-Wellâlayo)(cultivators)

*Pçsakâroyo* (Salâgomayö öHâliö viyanno) (chalias, cloth weavers)

*Kamburu* (Navandanno, Galladdo) (goldsmiths, stone workers )

*Waduvo* (Carpenters, blacksmiths etc.)

*Hannâli* (tailors)

*Radavu* (washers)

*Embättayô* (Karanävämîyô)(barbers)

*Sommarayô* (Ham wäda karannô)( leather workers)

*Durâvô* (Râmâdinnô)(toddy drawers)

*Kumbhakârayô* (Badahâlayô)(potters)

*Karâvô* (Mâlu allannô)(fishers and Carpenters )

*Väddô* (Dadayam Karannô)(hunters)

*Beravâyô* (Tûryavâdakayô, Redi viyannô, very often Nâkätîyô)(tom-tom beaters)

*Hakuruvô* (jaggery -makers)

*Hunnô* (lime burners)

*Pannayô* (grass cutters)

*Yamannô* (iron smelters)

*Väl waduvô*(basket -makers)

*Gahalayô* (lower labours)

*Paduvô*(Slave farmers, sedan carries)

*Mâlâkârayô* (lower florist, rangers)

*Kinnarayô* (mat weavers)

*Rodiyô* (ropes makers, leather tanners)

*Oliyô* (dancers)

*Indrajâlikayô* (magic showers )

*Candâlayô* (beef eaters, scavengers)  
(1962:20.21)

## Raghavan's study:

*ôKolam as an art has passed through several stages until it has evolved into the colorful folk play that it is today, in the hands, largely, of the Karava of Ambalan goda. A well-known exponent of the art here is J. W. Ariyapala Ambalangoda has a rich heritage of the art and men of all ages practice it here (1961:126p).*

“*Social Arts*” is how Raghavan calls the chapter VII his work titled *ôKarava* . Describing these facts in great detail he gives his account of *kolam* under subtopic *ôThe kolam, the art of Ambalangoda*(1961: 125-132). Information Raghavan has given suggests that *kolam* play is a cultural feature of the *Karava* . In addition to *kolam* he gives information even about *Nâdagam* (a kind of drama) which is also as an art belonging to the *Karava* . *Nâdagam* play is also an incidental art that developed in the hands of the *Karava*.

*ôRt. Rev. Dr. Edmond Peiris, OMI, Former Bishop of Chilaw, who carried out various researches in areas where catholic faith has been wide spread, says that the first Sinhala nâdagama was written by Mr. Mihindu Kulasooriya Gabriel Fernando of Chilaw. It is the Purâna Raja Tunkattuwa.*

*The year 1746 A. D. as the date of this play is given in a diary of a person of this caste. The same author has also written another work titled “Marigidâ Nâdagama” (Pieris, Edmond, 1958:10.14 was quoted by Kariyawasam, T,1979:12).*

*ôRaja Tun Kattuwaô (Three kings), all three cognomens Mihindukulasooriya, Varnakula sooriya, and Kurukulasooriya are treated as belonging to Karava caste. Thus both kolam (mask drama) and Nâdagama (stage play) the two kinds of incidental arts are understood to be associated with the Karava caste.*

### ***Kolam Tullâl and the local yak nütuma (devil dance)***

Referring to the Indian influence on *kolam* drama Raghavan puts forward the following view:

*“The Kolam is obviously a child of the cult of demons. That it comes in direct heritage from the demon Cult is what I am led to conclude from my observations of the traditional Cult of the Kolam Thullal of rural Malabar. Kolam Thullal literally means “dis guised dances” weird dances by the devil-dances of rural Malabar, in a ritual ceremony against evil influences. The dancers wear grotesque masks impersonating the spirits. The masks are crudely made of the broad leaf sheath of the Arecanut palm” (1961:125-126).*

This is the information M. H. Goonatilleke gives in respect of *kolam Thullal*: “*At present a kind of dance called kolam Thullal is found in Kerala in South India. This dance is described by M. D. Raghavan (1964: 129) and Râgini Devi (1966: 48) as follows:*

*“Mr. Raghavan says that kolam Thullal of Kerala is a “Vrutha châritra” (cult) which protect man from evil forces. Therefore it takes the form of defensive (yâtu karma) sorcery. Kolam tullal which commences in particular in mid-March is a dance performed in kovils which the Goddess Kâli guards. This dance goes on till mid June.*

*During this period the whole place fills with festivities. As Ragini Devi asserts actors who disguise themselves as spirits of the Goddess kâli perform dances imitative of them in order to drive away the harmful spirits.” (Goonatilleka, M. H. 1968:23-24).*

C. de S. Kulatilleke who examines into *kolam* (mask drama) and the *kali* faith expresses his opinion on *kolam Thullal*

drama and its migration to the west coast of Sri Lanka.

*“It was by “Vedar women” who wore masks that the “Kolam Thullal” dance was performed in Kerala so as to make harvest rich. Masks have been worn in order to disguise themselves as the Goddess Kâli. Dance performance by women in faiths in India is invariably a custom associated with sacrificial ceremonies aimed at fertilizing harvest” (1968:28).*

*“Soldiers Parakramabahu VI of Kotte got down from Kerala settled down in lowland regions in Sri Lanka. It is probable that the Kâli temples erected in maritime regions were meant for these soldiers. Kolam Thullal dance performed in Kerala in order to get good harvest may have been performed even here (in these kovils)” (ibid:29).*

The Venerable *Weligama Sumangala Thera* by using an old palm leaf manuscript as a source makes the following analysis pertaining to (i) soldiers got down from Kerala at the time of *Parakramabahu vi*, (ii) the places where they settled down and (iii) the origin of the *Karava* in Sri Lanka: “*An army force called Mukkura came and seized Puttalam in the reign of Sri Parakramabâhu of kotte. Then the king Parâkramabâhu wrote to the three countries, kâncipura-kâvçri-Pattanama-kilakkarç and got down troops comparing 7740 men and defeated the Mukkura force and captured the fort (Puttalam). The names of those who lead the troops are also known, namely, Vaccanâttu Dçvarîr, Kurukulanâttu Dçvarîr, Mânikka Talavçn, Adi Arasa Adappa Unnâhç, Varnasooriya Adappa Unnâhç, kurukula sooriya, Mudiyançç, Arsakula sooriya Mudiyanse, Arasanila Itta Mudiyanse and 18 Arachchies. This book says that the officer called Mânikktlavçn was slain by Mukkarus in the battle. Even Simon Casie Chitty Unnâhe records that Mânikka Thalavçn was*

slain by Mukkarus. It seems that the king rejoicing at the victory of those who defeated Mukkarus bestowed upon them the lands called Mādinnōruwa, Ānaolandāwa, Munṅṅsarama, Kammala, Thambarāwila, Hunupitiyā Vīdiya, Periyāmulle Vīdiya, kammalavīdiya, Kolompiti Maha Vīdiya, Vāllēvīdiya, kurana Vīdiya and Mīgomuwa by way of copper sannasa (grant written on copper plates), and Rāvana kodiya (Rāvana flag), Ira Sanda kodiya (Flag of the sun and the Moon) and Makarā kodiya (Flag of Capricorn) also were conferred on them. (Sri Sumangala therunnanse, Weligama, 1876:60).

Simon Casie Chittywho made an analysis of Tamil caste system says The different tribes of fishers and boatmen and which are commonly called kurukulan: that is the progeny of the planet kuru, or Jupiter and furnishes groups of some eight castes(1834:223). It is evident from the above reference that even in the Tamil caste system Kuru Kulaya (karāva vansaya)- the Karāva caste- is associated with fishery. He has given further information about the Karāva under the caption. *ōThe mookawas of Ceylonō* (1834:276).

The Karava thus arrived in here has become the major group engaged in fishery of Sri Lanka by *kotte* period. *Ambalangoda*, one of the maintenance villages of king *Wimala dharmasooriya* has become one of their residences because it is rich in salt water fish. These *keralas* believed in the Goddess *Kali*. It is said that there were old *kali kovils* even in *Ambalangoda*. (Kulatilleke, C. de S. 1968:29). This is how the *Parevi Sandesa* (The Dove's Message Poem) refers to the *kali kovil* situated in *Bentota*.

Ran tāti ayuru nāgu pin piyovuru upu - la  
Man pāti karana anganan ranga dena ipi - la  
unsāti balā siti salelun no pā ä - la  
Bentota netera sātapeva kālī kovi - la  
(Wijesooriya,S,2004: verse 70,)

(Like gold plates with bright breast ascending while watching women dance like floating their lovers watch them. Cross over the ford Bentota and sleep in the Hindu Temple Called Kali Kovila).

An agreeable account in respect of this very *Kali* temple is given even by *Arthur Jayawardane* (1884:434-439). It is evident from the above verse that there had been a dance by women similar to *Dig-ge Nartanaya*(naked bust dance of women) in these *Kali* temples. According to Callaway's copy of *Kolam* there seems to have been a kind of dance performed by women called the *Pancha Nārī Ghata* (five woman pot) even in *kolam* drama at the beginning (Verses 42 to 49 and Pages 45-46). The *Dig-ge Nartanaya* is a custom which belonged to worshippers of local demons (Kumara, Wasantha, 1990:46-48). As *Pertold* points out at his date (1930) the very dance was performed by five males disguised themselves as women (1973:80). Both *Kolam Thullal* dance and *Dig-ge* dance of the demon tribe of *Kerala* were performed by women. *Kali* temples of Sri Lanka are associated with these soldiers who came from *Kerala*. Even prior to *Kotte* period the faith of *kali* had been in *Sir Lanka*.<sup>4</sup> It was with the arrival of *Keralas* that the faith of *kali* became widespread. It is due to this very reason that *Kali* temples are widely distributed in west coast or regions near it is the lowland of Sri Lanka.

*Kolam Thullal* dance is performed in *Kerala* for fortune. It is performed *Kerala* by women. But those who came to Sri Lanka from *Kerala* were just men who were soldiers. It is not known whether women also came along with those soldiers. Thus when Sinhalese women were performing dances at *Kali* temples in Sri Lanka on the one hand their husbands who were *Kerala* men themselves would probably have performed *Kolam Thullal* dance which gave birth to the

*Kolam* dance. Although there Nartana (dance) such as Pancha Nârî Ghatta in the beginning even a report relating to a remnant of it comes only from the collection of masks that belongs to *Udupila KalâSangamaya* (Art society, Udupila) of *Mirissa* (Sarachandra, 1999:240). *Kolam* dance seems to have been first a mere dance which subsequently developed as a representation performed in accordance with singing. The whole vocabulary of the *Kolam* (mask drama) is taken from the devil dance. For instance, the rhythms played in the *Hevâ kôlama* (lascar) when the rotation takes place are just the same as that of played for the *Rîri yakâ* (Demon of blood) in the *Sanni yakuma* (Devil Dance of the Demon Sanni). The rhythm played for the *Gurula* (a mythical bird) in the *kolama* is just the same rhythm played for the poems of the God *Vishnu* occurring in the *yahan kavi* of the *Sanni yakuma* (Norbert, 63). The same played for rhythm the *Dunu Pâli* of *Sanniyakuma* are played for the *Sinha kolama*.

Rhythms played for the walking rhyme in the *Mudali kolama* are the same as that played for the *Giri Devi* in *Shanti karma*. (Ceremonial dance) (Pathmasiri, 57).

It was according to a copy of *kolam* found in *Talapitiya, Galle* prior to 1829 that *John Callaway* did his study. The playwright of *Talâpitiya* who was the object of Callaway's study was a man belonging to the *Berawa* caste (Tom- Tom beater's caste). Callaway's note in regard to it is as follows: "When engaged in this work accompanied by *Don Nicholas Perera*, the translator repeatedly visited the chief of the *Galle tong. tong. beaters* at *Tallapittea* for the purpose of sketching the masks alluded to in this poem... On inquiring after masks used in devil-workshop, he disclaimed all concern in such employments" (1829: x) as Callaway says this artist is the head of drummers. According to him (Callaway) he

has nothing to do with devil dancing. At this time, *kolam* may have been performed as a drama of entertainment. That is the reason why they had nothing to do with ceremonial dancing. Still there are people belonging to *berawa* caste in this locality and many of them have also changed their surnames. Still there is a famous member of the *Berawa* caste called *Hîn Aiyâ* engaged in exorcism and living in *Talapitiya*. Now the majority in this locality is Muslims. (*Ajith kumara, Village headman, Talapitiya*).

*Otaker Pertold* who studied *kolam* in 1930 says that there is dialogue even between characters of *kolam* (1973 : 66-67pp). It may be a modernization caused by *Nâdagama*. (A kind of stage play) *kolama* came to being as an admixture of various faiths of the *karâva* and the natives of *Kerala* arrived in *Sri Lanka*. Later it developed as a result of both influence of Portuguese, the Dutch and the English and of Catholic and social drama such as *nâdagama*. In consequence there can be seen a multi-cultural origin in it.

The form of the evolution of the *kolam* dance can be identified by a comparison of the copy of *Callaway* (1829) and the copy of *T. W. Gunadasa of Ambalangoda* (1950-60) with the book titled *Maname kolama* published by *Tissa kariyawasam* in 1986, i.e. the work which was based on *Maname kolam* dance performance led by Mr. *Thomas Edlin, kapu râla* (officiating priest of the *Devalaya*) organized by the *Rattanapitiya mortality welfare Society* on 26.01.1980 and by *Research and Publication Committee of Institute of Aesthetic Studies* on 17.06.1985. Information in respect of *kolam* dance as to how it was used as an exorcism cannot be gathered out of all these three copies (of publication). *Callaway* copy contains just dialogue of *Hewa kolam* only. All other characters do not converse. But according to the copies of both *Gunadasa* and *Tissa Kariyawasam* the *kolam* has developed as an

extremely incidental art. It contains but nominal ritualistic features. *Kolam* is an admixture of multi-cultural elements. It has been developed to the present state through mixing it with various cultural elements from time to time. Presence of animistic elements, the southern Indian influence and the influence of western Europeans culture also can be found in it. Therefore, *kolam* does not indicate identity of one ethnic group.

To comprehend this fact more clearly let us study the evolution of *Tukkâvadu* pedigree of *kolam* dance. Then we can find out whether *kolam* is exclusively art belonging to the *Karava* or else it is an art associated with multi-cultural background.

### **Tukkâ Wadu lineage of master artists of Maha Ambalangoda**

Information pertaining to the contemporary artists who took part in *kolam* dance of *Ambalangoda* can be obtained out of studies done by *Sarachchandra* and *M. H. Gunatilleka* in the decade 1950-1960. There are two generations involved in *kolam* dance in *Ambalangoda*, i.e. *Tukkâ wadu* generation and *Juvan wadu* generation. *Tukkâ wadu* generation has been used as the basis of this study because it is with which a multitude of scholars have dealt since 1950. It is the leading generation which not only goes on preserving this wit but also the owners of the most popular *kolam* tradition. It is the



**Pic.1: T.W Gunadasa and his *Kolam* group.**  
Source: Facebook

*kolam* belong to this generation that *Sarachchandra* the foremost researcher of *kolam* has studied.

The following are the notes *Beryl De Zoete* makes about the *kolam* group of the *Tukka Wadu Gunadasa* having arrived in *Sri Lanka* in August 1948 and after seen his *kolam* dance and after meeting *Pelis Silva*, who was an octogenarian at that time. “*The dancers all belong to the family they are working at various contracts up-country. They are builders, masons, carpenters and mask makers. Then belong to the kuruwanse caste a warrior tribe of North India, who were fetched down as mercenaries presumably about two thousand years ago to support a Ceylonese king*” (1957: 191). The reference of two thousand years ago made above is an exaggeration. What is referred to above is the *Mukkara* fight.

*Râjakâriya* (duty) rendered by people of *Karava* caste to the state in kotte period was carpentry. They (carpenters) had talent for carving things in wood and wood craft (*Vimalananda, Tennakoon, 1963:274*). It was these carpenters who carved the most beautiful and colorful masks. But on the other hand it was the artists of the *Berawa* caste that contributed verse, singing rhymes, dance as well as play to the *kolam* to develop it as a drama.

It was the artists of the two *Berawa* caste villages *Suddâgoda* and *Tundûwa* in the region *Bentara* that contributed playing drums playing the trumpet dance and singing for the *kolam* drama to both *Juwan Wadu* family of *Hirewatte, Ambalangoda* and *Tukka Wadu* family of *Maha Ambalangoda*. (*Patmasiri 57 yrs*) Even in *Bentara* the same artists (of *Berava* caste) in collaboration with *Jindasa Jayasekara* took part in (*Nûrti* performances) plays accompanied by masks in 1960s. Though the one extremely attached to religion on the other hand they are not



eager for entertainment. Bentota Majority of residents of are of *Govigama* caste. So what took place here in the merging of groups of the *Berava* caste who possess both ability and ardency with regard to of course incidental arts which are also their heritage with the *Karava* caste groups of *Ambalangoda* who possess a similar appreciation of arts and also a very pleasant cultural background.

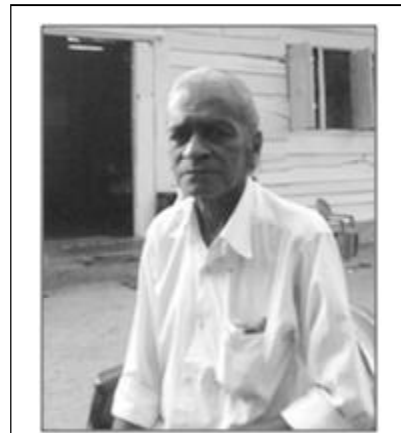
Merging of these two castes has been behind the development of *kolam* dance even since the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. What the following *table 01* shows is the parallel development the history of *kolam* drama of *Tukka Wadu* family of *Maha Ambalangoda* to that of the artists of the *Berava* caste of villages *Suddaged* and *Tunduwa* in *Bentota*.



**Pic.2 :C arving a Mask By norbet (Berava caste). Source : Facebook**

Even today very often there exists the relationship between these two castes whenever the *kolam* drama is performed. While *T. W. Harischandra* is having his own *kolam* dance group in *Maha Ambalangoda*. *Pathmasiri Weerasinghe* is having his own group in *Tunduwa*. *Pathmasiri* does not present a long *kolam* drama comprising stories and his *kolam* drama consists of a few important pre-acts and it is about &3 hour performance. Artist *kumudu kumara*

too performs *kolam* pre-acts only in tourist hotels.



**Pic.3 : Eralis in Suddagoda**

Although either caste has its own techniques belonged to it at the beginning subsequently both castes seemed to employ the same techniques without any distinction. For instance Norbert (63), an artist belonging to *Berava* caste and living in *Suddagoda*, *Bentota* beats the Tom-Tom on the one hand and on the hand has skill in carving masks. (See picture 2) Among the artist of the *Karava* in *Ambalangoda* these are groups who possess talent for singing and playing in addition to that of carving masks. Although each and every branch of an art was divided among the castes at the ancient time today such distinctions do not exist. Many casts seem to be engaged in trades not actually meant for them at the beginning. As *Norbert* says in the part only people belonging to *Oli* caste was allowed to make performance wearing the mask of the (Demon) *Garâyakâ*. But today many people of very many other castes make Pic.3:Eralis in Suddagoda

performance wearing the mask of the *Garâyakâ*.(Norbert 63) *D. S. Ponnumperuma* says that in 1950s groups of *Govigama* caste performed *kolam* drama. He asserts that in his childhood he saw kind of playful dance performance made inside a thatched hut put

up in the place called *Nilisgewatta*. He also says his father Mr. *D. J. Ponnampereuma* (of Govigama caste), Sinhala (Medium) school teacher died in November 1956 had had a mask of *Hewâ kolama*, *Lion masks*, two *Nâga râssa* masks and a tom-tom called *Yak bera*. He further says that his father could play the tom-tom and in addition he got tom-tom master *Amarasa* (of Berawa caste) to train his *D. S. Ponnampereuma*'s younger brother in dancing and playing the tom-tom. He says that a neighboring youth called *Bastian Lenora* who took a fancy to these arts and crafts having learnt it under master *Dçdduwç -Mendis Gurunnanse* later became an exorcist himself. (D. S. Ponnampereuma, 90) It is evident from this that each duty entrusted to a particular caste at the beginning in time to come lost its caste identity when even other castes also began to practice that very trade duty. It was the Campaign of 1956 launched to achieve pre-eminence in national and cultural symbols that liberated there folk arts from caste and class bondage and paved the way for the emergence of national identity from them.

### Conclusion:

It is not possible to trace the origin of *kolam* (mask drama) out of only one ethnic group. It is an admixture of multi-cultural multi religion elements. In its evolution from a form of exorcism to that of playful and performing art it underwent influence of various cultures, even in the case of *tukka wadu* ancestry which is the subject of this study a special contribution have been made to the progression of the *kolam* (mask drama) by both castes *Karava* and *Berava*. Although *kolam* is associated with the transmigration of the *Karava* it is not altogether correct to assume that it is not an art exclusively belonging to that particular caste. In the campaign launched since national and cultural symbols, a progression can be noticed of dramatic arts

such as mask drama without caste distinctions. Thus caste identities have been diminished further.

### Notes

In *kolama* there is a long pre-theatre. In this pre-theatre there are various human, animal and non human characters. Number of characters varies from copy to copy. In the copy of the British. Museum (or 4995) there are 51 characters including story characters. The number of characters in the copy of *Tukkâ Wadu Harischandra* of *Maha Ambalangoda* is 18. Number of characters in the copy AC 14 of Colombo Museum is 19 (Gunatilleke, M. H. 1968: 34-55). No of characters Callaway gives is only 7 (1829:9). A few common characters can be identified out of masks, i.e. Anabera kolama (crier), Nonchi Akkâ(crier's wife), Arachchi (a chief), Hewâ kolama, (lascar), Mudali kolama(mudali), Jasa alias Pçndi kolama (washer man), Polis kolama,(Police man) Raja hâ Bisawa,(King and queen) Nâga kanyâwa(a cobra vergin), Nâga Râssa(cobra demon), Gurulu Râssa(a mythical bird demon), Kava Rassa are major masks.

These stories include Maname, Sandakinduru, Chatrapâni katava, Godimbara katava etc. (Goonatilleke, M. H. 1968: 193-254) in or 4995 there is a story called Gema katâwa.

See Raghvan's articles published in *Spolea Zeylanica: Bulletin of the National Museum of the Ceylon*.

See the story of *Kâli Yakkhinee Waththu(pali)* of Yamaka wagga wnnana in *Dhamma padattha katha*,

**Table : 01**

<b>Time</b>	<b>linage of master artists in Bentota</b>	<b>linage of master artists in Maha Ambalangoda</b>
beginning of 1800.A.D	<i>Sinda gurunnanse</i> Tom-Tom Beater: <i>Eliya Gurunnanse.</i>	T.W.Oinis Leading carpenter S.H.Odiris T.W.Pelis - Character of Mudali R.M.Dawith singo K.M Agiris Hami K.M.Marthenis T.W.Subaneris - Crier Thomis appo K.H.Sawneris S.Dewid-Kolam, Nonci S.H.Wiliam A.M.Jan Silva P.H.Mendiris M.H.Diyonis
1850-1950	D ni GurunnansePlying drams, Dingiri (Yanger brother of Guru Sinda) and Leineris.	T.W.Pelis - Character of Mudali T.W.Subaneris - Crier S.Dewid-Kolam, Nonci Thomis appo S.H.Wiliam M.H.Diyonis K.H.Sawneris A.M.Jan Silva P.H.Mendiris S.M.Samel Silva B.H.Elenis Silva K.M.Agiris Hami P.H.Thusuman T.W.Sirimal
1920-1977	Amarasa gurunnanse in Suddagoda.Nanda and Enda two Gurus.Plying drams:Thediris and Leineris.Traditional trumpet: E.Saraneris	T.W.Gunadasa: 1903-1977 T.W.Symon Silva W.Denipala G.G.Sugathadasa T.W.Sumanasiri E.Kulasena Chandrasoma Binduhewa T.W.Wijesiri K.M Elbert M.H.Somapala S.H.Kulasiri
From 1980 to Up-to - date.	Edin Gurunnanse Pathmasiri Weerasinghe Kumudu Kumar	T.W.Harischandra
<b>Source : De silva, Jinendra wansa, 2003 and Goonatileka,M.H, 1968</b>		

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Kolam copy contained in the work titled ðSinhala Jana Sammata Kâvyaö edited by W. Arthur Silva and Gunapala Malala sekara. This was published by Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch in 1935.

T. W. Gunadasaö (Maha Ambalangoda) copy now in the possession of Harischandra. This has been used by M. H. Goonatilleka (1968) and Sarachchandra (1952/1966) for their studies.

### Interviews

Interviews had on 06. 09. 2013 and 09. 02. 2014 with Mr. G. Premin, chairman of puppetry subcommittee of cultural ministry & Bali Master charmer, Watugedara, Ambalangoda.

Interview had with Mr. Prasanna Abeywardane (69) at his residence at Galbada, Induruwa on 08/02/2014. He worked as village headman of Bentota from 1960.one of the former chairman of all Ceylon Village headmanö Association.

Interviews had with Mr Pathamasiri Weera singhe (57) of Thunduwa, Haburugala, Son of Traditional Guru Adin,a contemporary Kolam artist on 06.11.2013 and 11.02.2014.

Harishchandra(60)of Thuduwamulla, Mahaambalangoda on 09.02.2014.

Interviews had with Mr. Nobert,Master Mask carver and tom-tom artist of Suddagoda,Bentota on 25.02.2014.

Interviews had with Mr.D.S.Ponnamperuma (90)of Suriyagoda,the most senior and the knowledgeable person living at Bentota at present on 24.02.2014.

Interviews had with Traditional Guru Eralis (chanter) of Suddagoda,Bentota on 23.02.2014.

Interviews had with Mrs.D.K.O.K Sriyalatha (58) Born in Kommala but now living at Galthuduwa on 12.03.2014.

### Telephone Interviews:

Interviews had over the phone with Mr.Kumudu kumara(38)Profesional Dancer and Tom-Tom- Beater of Arachchimulla, Bentota on 25.02.2014.

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