

BRIDGING TRADITIONS: A STUDY OF CULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VEDDA DANCE AND SABARAGAMUWA DANCE

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Cite: Kumarasiri, Lakni Prasanjali (2025). Bridging Traditions: A Study of Cultural Connections Between Vedda Dance and Sabaragamuwa Dance. *Különleges Bánásmód Interdiszciplináris folyóirat [Special Treatment Interdisciplinary Journal]*. 11(SI), 99-108. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18458/KB.2025.SI.99>



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EP / EE: Ethics Permission / Etikai engedély: KB/2025SI/0007

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Abstract

The research was conducted to explore how the connection between the Sabaragamuwa region and the Vedda, as identified through a literature review, is reflected in the Vedda Dance and the Sabaragamuwa Dance. Data was collected mainly through studying relevant literature, interviews, and field visits. Consequently, the data analysis of the research revealed that the diffusionism that occurred between Sri Lankan indigenous culture and Sabaragamuwa province was the root cause for the identified correlation between Vedda dance and Sabaragamuwa Dance. Moreover, the diffusionism of the two cultures highlighted the shared cultural influences and the interconnectedness of the two.

Keywords: Correlation, Rituals, Beliefs, diffusionism, Sabaragamuwa dance, Vedda dance

Discipline: Cultural Anthropology

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Absztrakt**A HAGYOMÁNYOK ÁTHIDALÁSA: A VEDDA TÁNC ÉS A SABARAGAMUWA TÁNC KÖZÖTTI KULTURÁLIS KAPCSOLATOK TANULMÁNYOZÁSA**

A kutatást annak feltárására végezték, hogy a Sabaragamuwa régió és a Vedda népcsoport között az irodalmi áttekintés során azonosított kapcsolat miként tükröződik a vedda táncban és a sabaragamuwa táncban. Az adatgyűjtés elsősorban releváns szakirodalom tanulmányozásával, interjúkkal és tereplátogatásokkal történt. Az adatelemzés eredményei azt mutatták, hogy a Srí Lanka-i őslakos kultúra és a Sabaragamuwa tartomány közötti diffúzió volt a vedda tánc és a sabaragamuwa tánc közötti kapcsolat oka. Ezen túlmenően, a két kultúra közötti diffúzió rávilágított a közös kulturális hatásokra és a két hagyomány összekapcsoltságára.

Kulcsszavak: kapcsolat, rituálék, hiedelmek, diffúzió, Sabaragamuwa tánc, Vedda tánc

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

The Vedda

The Vedda community, Sri Lankan indigenous people, use various rituals to express their cultural identity. Among these, the Vedda dance is considered a significant ritual form that reflects the essence of the Vedda community. Moreover, the Vedda dance, as a ritual, serves as a medium to preserve the unique traditions, beliefs, and identity of the Vedda community. This cultural practice highlights the connection between their spiritual beliefs and their everyday life. The research, employing Cultural Anthropology, provides an insight into the Vedda dance's role in maintaining cultural heritage and reveals how such rituals can contribute to the continuity of traditions in the Vedda community. The Vedda people have a traditional way of life that is connected with hunting, gathering, and fishing. They live in remote areas, away from the main population and historically they have survived by using the resources found in the forests. Their culture is deeply connected to nature, and their spiritual beliefs and rituals reflect the mentioned relationship.

The study is set in the areas of Dambana, bordering to Maduru Oya conservation from North and West and, Hennanigala, bordering to

Marduru Oya conservation from the East. However, though the Vedda people have their own language and customs, which distinguish them from the broader Sri Lankan society, currently it is well evident that such are gradually changing with the influence of modern external society in their lives. But, it is noteworthy that, despite the mentioned external influences, the Vedda people in Dambana and Hennanigala still strive to maintain many of their traditional practices, especially in more isolated communities. Thus, the research cohort of this study was selected on the hypothesis that there are still some indigenous people in both Dambana and Hennanigala, who strive to pass their cultural and traditional values to the future generations, especially the dancing traditions.

Since the current society and culture of Sri Lankan indigenous people are directly involved with national and international tourism and have been commodified, the key values of Vedda dance cannot be either seen or studied currently. Unfortunately, this causes a lack of reliable information for a scholarly study on Vedda dance, especially in all the prevailing Vedda communities in the country. However, despite the identification of “Kiri Koraha Dance” (an Indigenous ritualistic

dance) as the Vedda dance, it was revealed in a conversation with the Wanniyalaeththa, Dambana (the leader of the current Vedda Community) that the Sri Lankan indigenous people own a great dancing tradition, which is old more than 37,000 years. Hence, such dancing traditions still prevailed, evolving with the contemporary changes in their cultural and social aspects.

The research aims to identify the correlation between the Vedda community and Sabaragamuwa province by comparing the social and cultural aspects of Vedda dance with the Sabaragamu Dance tradition, through a study conducted in several stages. And, the collected data of the study was analyzed through the application of contextual comparative analysis. Since the non-availability of secondary resources about the Vedda dance, this study has employed a part of the research by Seligmann, conducted 111 years ago on the Vedda Pooja dance as a secondary resource. In the research, a comparative study was conducted to examine the Vedda dance as it has been observed by Seligmann and the contemporary Vedda dance. Subsequently, a comparative study was conducted on both Vedda dance and Sabaragamu dance based on both primary and secondary resources. As the methods of data collection, observations were used by the researcher to gather data on the Vedda dance, and the Sabaragamu dance was studied by analyzing literature, interviews, and videos.

The study was conducted in four phases, which in the first, a thorough literature review was conducted to gather information on the Vedda people and their life, rituals, behavioral patterns, and their beliefs. As well, The Vedda dance and its evolution were also studied in the first phase of the study with a special reference to the Sabaragamu Dance.

In the second phase of the study, collected literature was analyzed and significant data was collected through field visits and observations to Dambana and Hennanigala, the two villages

selected for the research. Such data collection methods were specifically preferred for the study to lessen the peculiar feelings of the research cohort for the study and mainly to have genuine data on the traditions and rituals of the indigenous people.

In the third phase of the study, interviews were conducted to gather information. The interviews for the research were set in two stages, an interview with Wanniyalaeththan (current leader of Sri Lankan indigenous people) and a few other old indigenous people and young indigenous people from the community. The second stage of the interviews was conducted with the experts of the Sabaragamu Dancing tradition and the researchers of the field.

In the fourth phase of the study, both the Vedda dance and the Sabaragamu dance tradition were comparatively studied and analyzed to study the social and cultural aspects of Vedda dance to highlight the findings of the study.

Information received through analyzing literature paved the path for the study to examine the co-relationship and cultural diffusion between the Sabaragamu dance tradition and Vedda dance, based on the facts found on the relationship between the Vedda community and Sabaragamuwa province.

When studying literature, it is found that there are many assumptions on the origin of the term "Sabaragamuwa". Some argue that the name originated as the area was well known for the density of trees called "sabara" while some highlighted that the name originated as a result of commonly found gem called "Sappheiros" in the area. Also, some assume that the name was originated as a species of fish named "Sabara" inhabited in the particular area. Furthermore, another assumption suggests that the name was based on the name of traders called "Saraba", who used to trade gem in the particular province. However, the literature also suggests that the word "Sabara" was also used to refer to Vedda people.

Consequently, as stated by Medhananda (2003, pg 03) the name “Sabaragamuwa” may suggest the meaning that of the area inhabited by Vadda people.

Parker (1984, pg 32) analyzing a fresco of an ancient temple that indicates demons with bows and arrows, has tried to highlight the fact that both Vadda and Yakka belong to the same tribe while Davy (1821) has mentioned of Vadda people as Savages. As he stated, Vadda people have inhabited in the lands of Sabaragamuwa and the coastal areas of the country, which are known as Vadda rata, Binthanna, MahaVadda Rata, and Uva. According to Seneviratne (1915, pg 10), it is stated that a monk named Wajraboghi has met some people who resided in jungles on his pilgrimage to Sri Pada.(Adam’s Peak) And, as Virchow stated, the Vadda people have inhabited the lands of Samanthakoota. (1886)

According to Baily (1863), the ancestors of the Vadda people perhaps were the Tamil people. To justify this opinion, he tries to compare the similarities of the term “Gona” used by the Sinhale to the word “Gawara” by the Vadda people to refer to the same animal. According to Daraniyagala (1963) an animal identified as “Gawara” has inhabited in Sabaragamuwa around 5000 years before and the area called “Gawaraeliya” is located between Nuwaraeliya and Sri Pada. A Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, written by D. Queyros (1603) describes the rituals of the Vedda people and their beliefs. In his writings, he mentions a dancing performance of an indigenous female at Saman Devalaya in Ratnapura. However, though there is very clear evidence of the dancing performance- Dig gei natuma performed by the female of Manikka Mahage ancestry, Queyro’s writings can be considered as the first written evidence of a dancing performance of female Vedda people in Sabaragamu Maha Saman Devalaya. Thus, it can be considered as one of the prominent evidences

of certifying the relationship between Sabaragamuwa and the Vadda community.

According to the skeletal examinations conducted by Prof. Kennedy (1971) from Cornale University - USA, of the Balangoda Man-homonics from Sri Lanka and Vadda people reveal a relationship of over 180000 between the two communities and even suggest that the Vadda community has been originated from the homonics of the country. Moreover, as Howkey (2002) indicated, the analysis of Balangoda Man in Sri Lanka reveals an older history than the people who lived in the Mesolithic age in India. On the contrary, she also indicated the differences of the incisor teeth of both the Vadda people and Balangoda Man, stating that the incisor teeth of the Vadda people are smaller than of the Balangoda Man, implying his adoptions and changes of food.

As claimed by Dissanaik (2003), the first Vadda community was inhabited in Sinharaja, and this also has been related to the origins of the names of villages such as “Vaddagala”- the rock where the Vadda people resided. However, according to Seligmann and Brohier (1969), the Vadda community has been originated from the Yakka tribe of the country, and studies of Daraniyagala (1940, 1943, 1945, 1953-6,1963,1973) reveal that the Sabara, pulinda, yakka, and naga communities can be identified as Vadda people. Moreover, his studies conducted in 1971,192,1992,2004, and 2007 reveal that the physical appearance of Balangoda Man is very similar to the Vadda people in the country. Especially, the features such as a sharp forehead, sketch, strong cheek, tooth, and short nose were identified as the physical features of Balangoda man and such can again be identified in the primitive communities in Asia. (1964, pg 63)

The study conducted by Dr. Aravinda Ravibandu Sumanaratne, Kuruppu Bandara, and Iasminu Livia Hornoiu on the human and physical features of schools of Sabaragamuwa Dance can be studied as a significant comparative study on the topic. In the

study, the measurements of the physical features of the practitioners of the Sabaragamuwa dance have been compared to the Balangoda man and the studies of the fossils. Accordingly, the analysis has identified a very clear relationship between the two. (2017)

Consequently, a significant relationship between the Vadda people and Sabaragamuwa Province is very clearly revealed through the studies of the literature mentioned.

Collected data through historical evidence, literature, interviews, and observations were logically analyzed, mainly dividing them into three such as

- i) Music Instrument
- ii) Dance Movements
- iii) Beliefs and Rituals

Music Instrument

In many dancing traditions in the world, a unique musical instrument is used to showcase their cultural and traditional identity. Subsequently, in the Sabaragamuwa dance, the Dawla (drum which is played with Kadippuwa, a wooden drumstick) can be identified as the main musical instrument used. Interestingly, many musical instruments in the world can be compared to the Dawla in Sabaragamuwa dance. According to Pieris (2012, p. 98), Dawla can be identified as one of the oldest musical instruments in Sri Lanka.

Dawla is especially played in all the ritualistic dances linked to the Sabaragamuwa tradition, as well as in performing offerings at both temples and Devala for Lord Buddha and gods. Currently, we can notice the use of Dawla in contemporary music too.

This particular musical instrument is made of the trunks of neem, Milla, or Ehela trees at a selected auspicious time. Though the skin of a deer was used to cover the head drum in the past, the skin

of the buffalo is used now. (Kumarathunga, 2018, p.88) Similarly, Kadippuwa, which is used to play the drum is made of the sticks of the trees, either Atteria or Magul Karanda.

Sri Lankan Indigenous people also have a similar musical instrument to Dawla, which is named “Kande Ketu Yamake”. They prepare the shell of this particular drum using the trunks of the trees, Ehela, Burutha, etc and the kadippuwa is made of the wood of the Veera tree. Furthermore, either the monkey skin or deer skin is used to cover the drum head. Consequently, it is well evident that both in Sabaragamu tradition and in Vedda culture, using the skin of a deer to cover the head of the musical instruments, both Dawla and Kande Ketu Yamake was common.

As stated by Gnanasiri Pieris, 09 shell shapes of drums have been mainly identified. Accordingly, the simplest shell shape identified is the cylindrical shape. , Dawla, which can be identified as a very simple musical instrument is the only instrument used in both Sabaragamu province and by the Vedda people. Due to the simplicity of the shell shape of the Dawla, we can identify many similar musical instruments among the indigenous people all over the world. The use of Dawla in Vedda dance has been clarified by the writings of Seligmann, “Then he began to dance in the usual manner to the accompaniment of a drum played by a Vedda lad” (1911, pg. 215)

Contrastingly, according to Seligmann (1911) Vedda people of Bediyan Gal Gei and Sithala Wanniya (two places where Sri Lankan Vedda people resided) have mentioned a lack/unavailability of a musical instrument when performing their dance. However, Seligmann has again mentioned that of a Dawla used by the Vedda people who lived in Bandaraduwa. Accordingly, it implies a possible diffusionism between the people in Sabaragamuwa and the Vedda people, which ultimately led them to use either Dawla or a similar music instrument. Yet, as explained by

Kumarathunga (2018, pg. 91), though there is an organized and well-practiced way of making Dawla in Sabaragamuwa, as revealed in the interviews, Vedda people do not own such a practice. The Vedda people were very concerned about the articulation of the sound and they played the instrument on the rhythm of their feet.

As discussed through the information gathered through the interviews, literature, and observations, a possible relationship is well evident between the Dawla in the Sabaragamu dance and Kande Ketu Yamake in the Vedda dance, despite the mentioned differences. Thus, it proves the visual, structural, and sound articulation similarities comparatively.

Dance Movement

Dance movement causes the differences of all dance traditions in the world. Though all dance forms share foundational concepts known as elements of dance, dance movements differ according to the socio-cultural aspects that it is placed and involved with. Accordingly given below is the observations of Seligmann (1911, p. 08) on the Vedda dance and its movements.

We shall shortly quote their description of this dance and meanwhile content ourselves with summarizing the movements of the Vedda dances. Essentially, these appear to consist of steps taken alternately with each foot, each step being followed by a couple of pats on the ground delivered with the ball of the foot that is in advance, and after each such movement with right or left foot a half turn is made. The rhythm of the dance is kept by swaying the body gently from the waist, the hands (when not beating the body or holding an object) being allowed to swing freely; with each half turn forward the body is inclined forward and the head bent so that the hair falls over the face, and with each half turn backward the head is thrown backward. The dance always begins slowly and gently, the back foot still touching the ground

while that foot with which the step has been made performs the double pat, so that just at first it is little more than a shuffle, soon, however, the feet are raised more and more and longer paces are taken, the back foot no longer remains on the ground while the double pat is made and the swaying and bending of the body is greatly increased.

However, unlike Vedda dance, Sabaragamu dance always implies a relationship with gravity through how the dance movements are posed through direct and parallel moves. Yet, the similarities between these two dance forms cannot be neglected since they can be studied as follows.

In Sabaragamu dance, Mandiya refers to the basic postures or foundational stances of Sabaragamuwa dance in which dancers assume semi-crouched positions, with knees slightly bent, emphasizing balance and flexibility and then the body remains upright but relaxed, with a poised demeanor that allows fluid transitions between movements. This particular stance forms the basis for other dynamic movements like jumps, footwork, and gestures. In Vedda dance movements, a similar stance can be observed and it is recognized as a primary stance of Sabaragamu Mandiya. Dwithwa Adi Pagima (Double Stamping Footwork is a specific footwork technique in Sabaragamu dance where the dancer emphasizes rhythm by stamping both feet in a patterned manner. As stated by Seligmann, a similar movement is observed in the Vedda dance as well. “these appear to consist of steps taken alternately with each foot, each step being followed by a couple of pats on the ground delivered with the ball of the foot that is in advance.” (Seligman 1911, pg.211).

Furthermore, in Sabaragamu dance, thahar refers to the intricate and rhythmic foot movements in Sabaragamuwa dance. Such foot movements also can be observed in the Vedda dance.

Jumps are the dynamic leaps that add a dramatic flair to the performance, which is frequently

performed in sabaragamu tradition and this also is observed in the Hakma ritual of Vedda dance. Subsequently, Hamaraya and Adawwa elements in Sabaragamu dance are also significant since Hamaraya refers to circular body movements, while Adawwa involves rotational movements or spins. In the Vedda dance, especially in the Mal Eliya dance that worships Badara Devi and Kola Maduwa dance, we can observe the two movements of Hamaraya and Adawwa.

Conversations, symbolic interactions between dancers or with the audience, conveyed through movement and expression, possessing (trance states), a spiritual element where the dancer enters a trance-like state, symbolizing possession by a deity or spirit, imitating, movements that mimic elements of nature, animals, or deities, often as part of a ritual or narrative, gini pegima (fire movement or fire play), a spectacular element of Sabaragamuwa dance where the dancer interacts with fire as part of the performance, dancing with around an offering are the other movements in Sabaragamuwa dance that aligns with Vedda dance. Since Sabaragamuwa dance is considered a multidimensional art form that combines physical skill, rhythmic precision, and spiritual depth, elements like mandiya, dwithwa adi pegima, thahar, jumps, hamaraya and dawwa, conversations, possession, imitation, and gini pagima conjoin to create a dynamic and meaningful performance by imbuing each movement with cultural and spiritual significance. This blend moreover makes the dance both an artistic and ritualistic experience. Consequently, the influence of such dance performances in Vedda dance also becomes inevitable. For example, the foundational stances (Mandiya) and footwork techniques (Dwithwa Adi Pagima) in both dance forms suggest a shared cultural heritage while the similarities in these movements imply that they may have been diffused from one culture to the other, possibly through prolonged interaction.

It is well evident since Hamaraya (circular body movements) and Adawwa (rotational movements) in Sabaragamu dance are also observed in Vedda dance, particularly in rituals like the Mal Eliya dance and Kola Maduwa dance. This further confirms the concept of cultural diffusion, suggesting that these movements may have been adopted and adapted by the Vedda people from the Sabaragamuwa dance tradition.

Beliefs and Rituals

The concepts of Yakka (spirits or demons) and Deva (deities or divine beings) are central to many traditional Sri Lankan dance forms, particularly in the Sabaragamuwa dance tradition and the indigenous Vedda dances. These concepts are deeply rooted in Sri Lanka's spiritual, ritualistic, and animistic traditions, reflecting the coexistence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and indigenous beliefs.

In Sri Lankan cosmology, Yakka are supernatural beings often associated with natural forces, ancestral spirits, or malevolent entities. Though the term "demon" is sometimes used, it does not always imply evil as Yakka can also act as protectors or neutral forces, and Deva is considered benevolent divine beings who protect humans and grant blessings. They are often associated with Buddhist and Hindu traditions, merging with local animistic beliefs.

The Sabaragamuwa dance tradition incorporates Yakka and Deva concepts through elaborate rituals and dramatic performances, often performed in ceremonial contexts like Gam Maduwa or Devol Maduwa. In sabaragamuwa dance, rituals often involve dances to appease the Yakka, particularly when they are believed to be the cause of illness, misfortune, or natural disasters. In the Sabaragamu dance tradition, the yakka concept is highlighted by worshipping Amarapathi Kiri Amma, Kalu Kurumbaya, Kalu Wedhi Dewathawa, Ussangoda Yakku, Bandara Yakku and etc. The Thovil ceremony is a prominent example where dances

invoke Yakka spirits for exorcism or healing. Considering the movements, dances portraying Yakka are dynamic and intense, with sharp, forceful movements symbolizing their powerful and unpredictable nature, and facial expressions are exaggerated, sometimes using masks to depict specific Yakka. Moreover, rhythms played on traditional drums like the Daula and Thammattama are fast-paced and energetic to evoke the presence of Yakka.

The Concept of Deva in Sabaragamuwa tradition involves dances invoking Deva performed as offerings of gratitude or to seek blessings and protection. As an example, the Pattini Maduwa is a ceremonial dance invoking the goddess Pattini for fertility and well-being. The movements and expressions of dance include the gestures and poses which are graceful and harmonious, with fluid transitions and symmetrical postures that reflect their benevolence and divinity. And the rhythm for Deva dances is softer and more melodic, accompanied by devotional chants or invocations.

On the contrary, Vedda, Sri Lanka's indigenous community, has a rich tradition of dance and ritual deeply intertwined with animistic beliefs. Their understanding of Yakka and Deva is unique and reflective of their symbiotic relationship with nature.

Veddahs perceive Yakka as ancestral spirits or natural forces rather than purely malevolent entities. They are seen as guardians of the forest and intermediaries between the human and spiritual worlds. Their rituals aim to honor Yakka, seeking their guidance or appeasing them to avoid harm. Veddah dances for Yakka are raw and primal, reflecting their connection to nature and the spirit world. The dance movements are repetitive, rhythmic, and grounded, often mimicking animals or natural phenomena to symbolize harmony with the spirits. Serath Amaththaya, Mawaragala Amaththaya, Kehelpothagala Amath-

thaya, Divis Kiri Ammala Aththo, Miris Ge Loka, Maldampahe Amaththaya, Le Path Amaththaya, Maha Loku Kiri Ammala Aththo, Gal Iri Nachchila Aththo, Kiri Path Nachchila Aththo, Hamba Kumari, Mal Wadam Rassaya, Gale Rassaya are some of the ancestral Yakka spirits worshipped by them. The Kiri Koraha ritual is a significant Veddah ceremony where Yakka spirits are invoked through dance and drumming and offerings like honey, meat, or fruits are made to the Yakka as part of these rituals. Comparatively, Deva is less central in Veddah cosmology but has been incorporated into their rituals through cultural interaction with Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

The pre-historic era, in which the Sabaragamuwa dance originated, is considered to be the most important and the first stage of the origin of the Sabaragamuwa dance. As it is stated, "Yaku Pideema" or worshipping the devils is considered to be the oldest healing ritual in the country. The ancestors considered conducting a "pooja" for dead relatives would bring them a positive impact on their lives. Particularly, the Yakka tribe assumed that such rituals would please the dead spirits of powerful tribesmen thus benefiting and protecting the people of the tribe those who are alive. This traditional ritual can be seen among the present Sri Lankan aborigines people and Sabaragamu traditional rituals. There are many customs related to these activities. However, by this time, several ancient faiths in the "Yakun Pideema" ritual of the Sabaragamu tradition could also be identified such as offering Pooja for "Mahakalu Kiri Amma", "Ambarapathy Kiri Amma", "Kalukumara" and "Mangara"... etc. and it is also believed that Sabaragamu dance was born through this rituals and sacrifices. (Kumarathunga, 2019, pg 03)

However, it is noted that both cultures share a deep connection to the concepts of Yakka (spirits or demons) and Deva (deities). And the rituals and dances associated with these beliefs, such as the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa and the Kiri

Koraha ritual in Vedda culture, implies a combination of both indigenous and external religious practices. A blend of spiritual framework, resulted by cultural diffusion is indicated through worshipping Amarapathi Kiri Amma and Kalu Kurumbaya in Sabaragamuwa, and ancestral spirits like Serath Amaththaya and Maha Loku Kiri Ammala Aththo in Vedda culture.

Structural functionalism, which studies the role and function of cultural practices in a society examines how such practices impact social cohesion, identity, and continuity. Set in the theory, both Vedda dance and Sabaragamuwa dance explain how such cultural practices serve specific functions within their respective communities (Barnard, 2000 and Eriksen & Nielsen 2001).

Considering the social cohesion of Vedda dance and Sabaragamuwa dance, both can be identified as communal activities that involve the entire community. These dances bring people together, reinforcing social bonds, and maintaining a sense of collective identity. For example, the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa and the Kiri Koraha ritual in Vedda culture are not just individual performances but communal events that reinforce social ties. Moreover, these dances serve as the means of ritualistic functions since they serve specific functions within their societies. It is very obvious since the Thovil ceremony in Sabaragamuwa is often performed to appease spirits and heal illnesses, while the Kiri Koraha ritual in Vedda culture is a performance that honors ancestral spirits and seeks their guidance. Such rituals also address the psychological and social needs of the community, providing a sense of security and continuity. For example, the Pattini Maduwa in Sabaragamuwa, which is performed to allure the goddess Pattini for fertility and well-being, serves a similar function by addressing the community's spiritual and physical needs.

Significantly, the two traditions have used almost similar musical instruments as their main music

instrument in dancing. However, according to the interview conducted with Dr. Waidyawathi, the question regarding the beginning of diffusionism remains unanswered as it is ambiguous whether the culture passed either from Sabaragamuwa to Vadda people or from Vadda people to Sabaragamuwa. However, due to the simplicity of and the advancement of the instrument, I believe that diffusionism may have occurred from the Vadda community to Sabaragamuwa since the instrument used by the Vadda people is simpler. Especially, this may have occurred due to the cross-cultural marriages between the Vadda community and the people from Sabaragamuwa, which led the Sinhala people to use this specific musical instrument.

Importantly, the diffusion of dance and music knowledge from one generation to the next ensures the continuity of cultural traditions. As it is studied, in both the Vedda and Sabaragamuwa communities, elders pass down the knowledge of dance movements, musical instruments, and rituals to younger generations, resulting in these traditions remaining alive for years. For example, the use of specific instruments like Dawla and Kande Ketu Yamake, as well as the preservation of dance movements like Mandiya and Dwithwa Adi Pagima, indicates the continuity of cultural practices while reinforcing group identity and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The significant role of cultural diffusion in shaping both the Sabaragamu dance tradition and Vadda dance is well evident through the similarities in the musical instruments, dance movements, and ritualistic beliefs between the two cultures. Moreover, the diffusion of the two cultural traits may have occurred in many ways such as interaction, trade, cross-cultural marriage and etc, causing the adoption and blend of cultural traits of both.

Similarly, the Vedda and Sabaragamuwa dances serve important functions within their respective societies, resulting in social cohesion, addressing spiritual and psychological needs, and ensuring cultural continuity. Hence, these practices cannot be considered just as artistic expressions and they obviously are deeply embedded in the social and cultural backdrops of these communities which are very much crucial in the survival and identity of their respective cultures.

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