

# ***Vannama*: A Classical Dance Form and its Musical Structure**

Almut Jayaweera

## **Abstract**

This article examines an example of a classical dance form called *vannama*, with particular focus on its musical structure. Through this example, the richness of the Sinhalese percussion music is also examined. The Sinhalese culture in Sri Lanka has developed a rich, locally diverse and highly developed drumming tradition, which we can trace to the fifth century B.C. Drums are the main instruments played in traditional healing rituals and Buddhist ceremonies, as well as in performances on the modern dance stages today. Here drumming is mostly connected to dance; it transmits powerful energy to the dancers, and unfolds in precise and differentiated rhythmical structures, which the dancers translate into steps and movements. Through the centuries, drums were played only by men, and the dance masters (*gurunanseje*), who pass the ability and knowledge of dance and drumming to the next generation, have also been male. But in recent decades, more and more female dancers have taken to the public stage, and also more women (considerably more than men) have studied dance and drumming in order to become dance teachers for public and private schools. To do that, of course, they must at least learn to musically accompany their own dance classes, and for that reason there is an increasing number of women who are drumming. All, including students from foreign countries—as the author has been for five years—must study and rehearse the canonical repertory, of which the *vannamas* are an important part.

Throughout Sri Lanka, the so-called “eighteen classical *vannamas*” are the most favored dance pieces of the Kandyan dance style. In the course of time they have developed a specific and clear musical structure, employing elements of older dances derived mainly from the healing ritual Kohomba Kankariya,<sup>1</sup> with these elements placed into new and shorter frames. Unlike the main Kohomba Kankariya dances, such as *Jakānume*, *Asne* and *Avāndume*, which have a duration of one and a half to two hours, the *vannamas* are much shorter, with a duration of only five to seven minutes.

To date, the emergence and development of the musical structure of the Kohomba Kankariya dances, as well as the *vannamas*, have not been clearly explored. Prior investigations in the field of Sri Lankan dances mainly address anthropological, socio-cultural and religious aspects.

In the following examinations, I primarily draw on my own practical studies in dance and drumming under R.W.G. Suramba Gurunanseje.<sup>2</sup> In 1981, I first joined his dance school, Madyama Lanka Nrutya Mandalaya (also known as Amunugama Dancing School), in the hill country of Kandy. Later, from 1983 to 1987, I followed a four-year program at the University of Kelaniya, Institute of Aesthetic Studies, Faculty of Dancing. This program is designed as a vocational education for dancers and dance teachers,<sup>3</sup> as dance is a general subject in Sri Lankan governmental schools, and leads to a Bachelor of Arts degree. Further studies for obtaining a Master of Arts degree are provided. Of all the lectures of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies during that period, most of my information comes from R.W.G. Waidyawathie Rajapakse, daughter of R.W.G. Suramba Gurunanseje, and Piyasare Shilpadipathie, who comes from a traditional dance family of Polgahavela. I was also fortunate to attend several Kohomba Kankariya performances: in 1981 in Katugastota and Galagedere with Tiththapajjalaje Gurunanseje, in 1984 in Kurunegala, in 1985 in Weude, and in 1986 in Ambalangoda: all with Mahakehelwele Gurunanseje; and also in 1986 in Vallalaviththe with Wimal Ahugoda as the leading dancing priest (*yakdessu*).

It is my intention to give the reader an overview of the particular musical structure of the *vannamas*, and therewith also to convey a sense of the rhythmic

subtlety which Sinhalese percussion music can show. Before exploring the details of the *vannama* structure, I offer a historical introduction.

### Historical Background

*Vannamas* were created around the time of the Kandyan King Narendrasingha (1707-1737). He was married to a South Indian princess (Nayakkar)—which was the custom for many Sinhalese kings—and he invited musicians and dancers from South India representing the South Indian court dance tradition (Nürnberg 1998: 114). According to Seneviratna (1984: 42) it is said that, in cooperation with a Buddhist monk of the Malwatu Vihare in Kandy, one of those musicians, Ganithalankare, composed the songs (*kavi*) for the eighteen *vannamas*.

*Vannama* is the Sinhalese version of the Sanskrit word *varnam*, which means description. Also, in the middle of a *bharata natyam* (classical dance form in Tamil Nadu/Southeast India) performance, there must be a main dance piece called *varnam*, with many describing elements rendered in the *nritya*<sup>4</sup> style of pantomimic dance. There are also eighteen *vannamas* found in the Karnatak music in Kerala (Seneviratna 1984: 42).

The *vannamas* at the Kandyan court were initially created for singing. But fortunately, they also matched the structures of rhythm and time measurement (*tith krimeje*) of the Sinhalese dances very well. So the leading dance masters of the Kandyan court took dance movements, drumbeats, and structural elements from older ritual dances—primarily the Kohomba Kankariya—and set them to the verses of *vannama* songs. So although there were evidently influences by Indian artists, the development of the cultural tradition at the Kandyan court at that time can be considered unique and genuine.

In the songs of the eighteen *vannamas* of the Kandyan court composed by Ganithalankare, scenes and stories of the Buddha's final and preceding lives, from Buddhist tales (*Jataka Katave*; Claus-Bachmann 2001) are taken, as well as stories about Hindu gods and their holy animals, who are often praised as vehicles for them. The eighteen classical *vannamas* are as follows: Gahake Vannama (Vannama of the Conch) Gajaga Vannama (Vannama of the Elephant), Turanga (the Horse), Uranga (the Reptile), Musaladi (the Hare), Ukusa (the Hawk), Vairodi (the Cat's Eye/Precious Stone), Hanuma (the Monkey), Mayura (the Peacock), Sāvula (the Cock), Sinharaja (the Lion), Naiyadi (the Snake), Kirala (the Lapwing), Iradi (the Soldier), Surapati (Lord of Gods), Ganapati (God Ganesha), Udare (Valour), Asadrusa (the Triple Gem and the incomparable knowledge of arts).

The first Sinhalese entertainment dances were influenced by Buddhist themes, as well as the Hindu court dance tradition, especially concerning the contents of the songtexts. But the dance movements and the rhythmic patterns of the drumbeats were essentially taken from the Kohomba Kankariya ritual. Although *vannama* means description, the dance movements themselves are—when related to the Indian model—*nritta*-movements (pure dance), as are the dances of the Kohomba Kankariya. So strictly speaking, “description” refers to the song, not to the dance.

Furthermore the songs of the *vannamas* also show expression of an emotional condition (*bhave*). Seneviratna orders the eighteen *vannamas* as follows (1984: 102 [appendix]):

type of emotion	Sinhala term	name of <i>vannam</i>
emotion of wonder	<i>adbhuta ras</i>	Gajaga, Sävuva, Gahaka, Vairodi, Mayura
emotion of pathos	<i>karuna rasa</i>	Naiyadi, Kirala, Ganapati, Hanuma
emotion of heroism	<i>vira rasa</i>	Iradi, Udare, Turanga, Uranga, Ukussa
emotion of Eros	<i>srngara rasa</i>	Surapati
emotion of comedy	<i>hasya rasa</i>	Singharaja
emotion of tranquility	<i>santa rasa</i>	Musaladi, Asadrusa

Table 1. Distribution of emotional expressions in *vannamas*.

Throughout the centuries, only members of the two low castes of dancers (*yakdesso*) and drummers (*berevadeyo*) offered their performance services to kings, temples and villages. But with the end of colonization in the twentieth century, a new generation of artists emerged. They were born high caste, grew up in Colombo, were educated with an orientation toward western civilization, and launched a renewal of the Sinhalese classical dance forms, performing them for a larger audience in large theater halls of the capital. Those new artists (first of all Chandra Lekha and Chitrasena should be mentioned; Nürnbergger 1998: 203) learned their art from the traditional drummers and dancers (*gurunanseje*) of the up-country villages, and also learned classical Indian dance forms at well-known institutions such as Shantiniketan or Kerala Kala Mandalam in India.

As a result of their Indian experiences, they added pantomimic movements to the *vannamas* similar to the *nruttya* movements of Indian dance forms. In contrast to the classical *vannamas*, the new, transformed *vannamas* are called *nirmanā* (creation) or *nava nirmanā* (new creation). Gajaga Vannama (Elephant), Ukussa Vannama (Hawk), Mayura Vannama (Peacock) are preferred for *nirmanā* creations. Also, the costumes for *nirmanā* or *nava nirmanā* creations of *vannamas* differ from the classical ones. They show features of these animals, such as feathers in the headdress, wings along the arms, or peacock's eyes on the blouse.



Figure 1. R.W.G. Waidyawathie Rajapakse (right) and Almut Jayaweera during a performance on a dance tour in Germany and Austria, in 1987.

The term “classical *vannamas*” refers specifically to the eighteen *vannamas* composed by Ganithalankare at the court of King Narendrasingha, as mentioned above. The classical *vannamas* are therefore also known as *Daha-ata Vannamas* (Eighteen *Vannamas*). But there are also other *vannamas* written by unknown artists, for example Samanelleja Vannama (Butterfly), Hansa Vannama (Swan), Bandula Vannama (Soldier) or Nritya Vannama (Dance). But these are not

considered classical, simply because they do not belong to the canonical classical set and were not written by Ganithalankare, although they evidence the same formal structure as the so-called classical ones. Kulatillake (1982) mentions that more than sixty *vannamas* have been discovered from various sources (appendix, p.1).

## Musical Structure of the *Vannamas*

### Singing:

A *vannama* song, called *kavi*, is always divided into four verses, each consisting of four lines. The lyrics for the Musaladi Vannama are as follows:

Sinhalese	English translation: <sup>5</sup>
1.Vane paththe, bije paththe sajenam dutath duvane, vitath janena, pitathpotha gasa panimina nātanadhi indevadhi vevulum.	1.He sleeps in the jungle area with fear curling the back he jumps and runs away even when you see and walk about. His pulses don't work even when sitting.
2.Nonevāththa, janunāththa, ethnin hirat avera girat pāmini kalat vasane, thānin duvane pāne adhi patradhi budimin.	2.He trembles continuously and doesn't move When the sun descends from the western mountain he stays on and runs away all of the sudden eating a tender leaf.
3.Sirigaththa sandunpaththa mudunen vitath ohuna, thunath sithina mahat samagijen duve pāne unudādhi vanevadhi lannam.	3.When the moon ascends and beautifies the world he feels so happy at heart and jumps hither and thither with others and rests in the jungle.
4.Me āththa madhisaththa kijenam gamanath jane vilsath gene isiputh devikala sathutina karadādhi musaladi vannam.	4.This is true of him. His walk and his style made him celestial by the lord of aesthetics. <sup>6</sup>  The above is the description of the hare.  The background of the text, although it is not directly evident, is a Buddhist folk tale ( <i>Jataka</i> tale), in which the Buddha lived in a previous life as a hare and showed deep compassion for others.

Table 2. Songtext of the *kavi*.

Before the first verse is sung, the melody is introduced by a *taaname*, which is the singing of a melody to nonsense syllables, such as *da*, *de*, *dha*, *na*, *ne*, *ta*, and *tam*. After singing a verse, the *taaname* is always repeated. The verses and the *taaname* are only sung as an accompaniment of a *matra* (see below); there is no singing accompanying the performance of the other elements of a *vannama*: the *kastiram*, *sirumaruve*, and *adauve*.

With very few exceptions, the tune is in a minor scale, and the pitch range is generally from the key note to the fifth note of the scale, although the key note can be embellished by the lower seventh note, and the fifth with the upper sixth. It is also noteworthy that near the final note of a phrase, the singer very rapidly alternates between the penultimate and the final pitch several times. Each family of instruction (*paramparave*) and singer has a special and unique style of elaboration of the voice at the end of a phrase.

The *taaname* (melody with nonsense syllables) of the Musaladi Vannama:

**Taanama of the Musaladi Vannama**

ta na - a - te ta - ne na - a - ne - e ta - nam tam de - e

ta na - te ta - ne na - a - ne - e ta - nam

ta - nat ta - ne - ne ta - ne - ne ta - ne - ne ta - a ne - ne ta - am

da - ne ta - ne - ne ta - ne - ne ta na - a - te ta - ne na - a - ne - e

ta - nam tam de - e ta na - a - te ta - ne na - a - ne - e

ta nam

Figure 2. Transcription of a *taaname*.

**Drumming and Dancing**

The structural elements in a *vannama* are similar to those of the dances of the healing ritual Kohomba Kankariya. They are called *matra*, *kastiram*, *sirumaruve*, *gamanmatra*, and *adauve*. In the dances of the Kohomba Kankariya, these elements are put together in a different and much more complicated way than in the *vannamas*. For example, in the dance *jakänume* of the Kohomba Kankariya, there is a long set of several completely different *matras*, which are also combined with other *kastirams*; whereas in a *vannama* there is only one, or—as in Musaladi Vannama—two *matras*, which always end with the same *kastiram*. Below, I define the above-listed elements and outline aspects of formal structure.

**Matra:**

A *matra* is the basic element: a basic drum pattern which also forms the basic dance step. The basic *matra* of a particular *vannama* is like a signature tune to the dancers and also to the audience, and it usually has the length of two bars; sometimes four. The basic *matra* is repeated several times—most commonly three times—up to the end of the first *kavi* verse. Later, setting the second, third and fourth *kavi* verse, the drummer plays variations of the first (which I call the “basic *matra*”). In these later verses he fills the original *matra* pattern with more and more components, with particles and beats in between the original beats. So, starting with the basic *matra*, the drummer passes through a process of three variation *matras* (*alankare matras*) building toward intense and extremely fast drumming. At this point, he unfolds all his skills and talents as an excellent drummer. In order to create a good, stimulating accompaniment, and also to provide enough percussive power for the dancers, two drummers usually perform. During the first *matra* both play in unison, but starting with the second *matra* they perform separate patterns with contrasting, complementary rhythms. In the first *matra* and its relatively simple drum pattern, every beat accompanies a particular dance movement. Later, when the more complex variations are performed, the one-to-one translation of drum beat to dance movement or dance step cannot be continued. The dancer now takes the drumming of the *alankarematras* as a basis for performing variation steps, advanced circles, turns, and jumps. But of course, as the variation *matras* also keep to two (or sometimes four) measures, the choreography of the corresponding dance *matras* also does not become too complicated, on the whole. *Alankare* or “variation” *matras* remain as short as their basic *matra*—mostly two, sometimes four measures—so they tend not to become too complicated. Longer and more differentiated rhythmic constructions are reserved for the later elements: *kastiram* and *adauve*.

**Kastiram:**

A *kastiram* finishes the ends of the first, second, third and fourth *matras*, and always at the same time the *kavi* verse is also ending. It can have a length of six to sixteen measures, and it is drummed and danced only one time, leading over to the next variation *matra*, or after the fourth one leading to the *sirumaruve*. *Kastirams* of a particular time pattern can show similarities to *kastirams* of the same timing in other dances or *vannamas*. Here the dancers perform *surillasteps* (*surilla* refers to a sequence of very quick steps danced only by the forefoot; this term is also used for a special high-speed drumming technique), quick circles, jumps, and poses.

The *kastirams* following the first and second *matras* are simpler; after the third and fourth *matras* the *kastirams* become more complex. Following the fourth *matra*, the longest *kastiram* is danced. Here the dancers even have the freedom to extend circling or jumping as long as they wish, while the drummers must watch them carefully to catch the changes of the movements and to accompany correctly. This part of a *vannama* often becomes an artistic highlight.



Figure 3. Almut Jayaweera and her students performing a typical leap at the beginning of an extended *kastiram*; Hamburg, Germany, in 1999.

### **Sirumaruve:**

A *sirumaruve* is a slow and short part of a *vannama*, making a break especially after the spectacular and exhausting fourth *kastiram*. It gives both dancer and drummer an opportunity to recover. The audience can also experience some relief, following a musical and dance period of tension.

### **Gamanmatra:**

*Gamanak* in Sinhalese means a trip, walk or journey; and *gamanmatra* could be translated as “walking step.” So here we find a variation of the first *matra*, very softly played by drummers, perhaps even with many quick but gentle beats in between. The dancer walks about the whole dance space with bouncing steps. Apart from the same timing, there is, for the dancers, nothing in common with the first basic *matra*. While the *gamanmatra* is performed, the dancers can quickly change their formation on the stage, and they can also use the time to concentrate on the next and final highlight of a *vannama*: an *adauve*.

### **Adauve:**

The final part of a *vannama* is called *adauve*. It is also a highlight, but it differs from the *kastiram* in the following ways: First of all, less common, onomatopoeic syllables and drumbeats are used. The beats are composed in a very elaborate and differentiated way. Because of its specific and eloquent composition, each *adauve* is unique; whereas *kastirams* of different *vannamas* or even other dances can show many similarities. As a *kastiram* is very powerful, energetic and clearly structured, the *adauve* is finer, smarter, but more complex. Because the *kastiram* is so powerful, at least two drummers must accompany a dancer. But an *adauva* is smarter and therefore only accompanied by one drummer.



Figure 4. A drummer follows a dancer while drumming and at the same time dancing a basic step; pictured is Almut Jayaweera playing the *gaetabere*, the main drum instrument for the accompaniment of the up-country dance.

Before dancing an *adauve*, the dancer recites its onomatopoetic syllables toward the drummer or the audience. Then the drummer transforms these syllables into drumming, and in the final version the dancer and the drummer perform together.

### **Complete Structure:**

All in all, a classical *vannama* typically unfolds in the following structure:

1.	<i>matra</i> (basic <i>matra</i> ) 4x	<i>kastiram</i>
2.	<i>matra</i> (1. variation) 4x	<i>kastiram</i>
3.	<i>matra</i> (2. variation) 4x	<i>kastiram</i>
4.	<i>matra</i> (3. variation) 4x	extended <i>kastiram</i>
5.	<i>sirumaruve</i>	
6.	<i>gamanmatra</i>	
7.	<i>adauve</i> (3x)	

Tab. 3. The general structure of the *vannama*.

Here, I examine the Musaladi Vannama, for in this *vannama* we find an extended variation of the basic *vannama* structure. The timing in this *vannama* is essentially  $7/8$ . But all the *matras* and the last, extended *kastiram* also have a separate part: a separate *matra* with  $3/8$  timing in between. So after dancing and drumming the first *matra* in  $7/8$  four times, the dancers and drummers switch to a contrasting *matra* in  $3/8$  and—after 8 repetitions—return to the first *matra* in  $7/8$ . Here I call the basic *matra* in  $7/8$  *matra* A, and the basic *matra* in  $3/8$  in between *matra* B. The *vannama* shows three variations of both *matra* A and *matra* B, unfolding in the following structure:

	7/8	3/8	7/8	
1.	<i>matra</i> A (basic <i>matra</i> ) 4x	<i>matra</i> B (basic <i>matra</i> ) 8x	<i>matra</i> A (basic m.) 2x	<i>kastiram</i>
2.	<i>matra</i> A (1.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> B (1.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> A (1.var.) 2x	<i>kastiram</i>
3.	<i>matra</i> A (2.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> B (2.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> A (2.var.) 2x	<i>kastiram</i>
4.	<i>matra</i> A (3.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> B (3.variation) 4x	<i>matra</i> A (3.var.) 2x	extended <i>kastiram</i> (7/8; 3/8; 7/8)
5.	<i>sirumaruve</i>			
6.	<i>gamanmatra</i>			
7.	<i>adauve</i>			

Tab. 3. The structure of the Musaladi Vannama.

## Notation of the Musaladi Vannama:

### Concluding Comments:

Since the early eighteenth century, the *vannamas* have been handed down from one generation to the next. I believe it is important to examine and understand what keeps the tradition of the *vannamas* alive. Through my years of study in Sri Lanka, and also teaching Kandyan Dance in Germany now for twenty years, I have found that what keeps the tradition alive is primarily the fact that there is a balanced mixture of fixed elements with freedom to create classical *vannamas* again in new ways.

On the one hand, a guru or dance teacher teaches much basic material, such as melodies, drum patterns (*matras*, *kastirams*, *adauves*) and dance movements which he or her has been taught himself or herself, and which has been handed down for centuries. As a result, gurus, teachers, dancers, and drummers “speak a common language.” It makes it possible, for example, for a dance instructor quickly to match drummers to his or her students at a dance show. It also makes it possible for the audience to identify a dance as a specific *vannama*, and follow along.

On the other hand, every *vannama* is in some ways a new production: the dance instructor can choose a new combination of steps and dance movements, he can create a new choreography for solo or group dancers, and the drummers can play new variations of the basic *matras* or fill the *kastirams* in very creative ways. So every *vannama* performance becomes a new production for the dance master; it is in part improvised by the drummers according to their skills; it is also a unique or individual choreography for the pupils; and it is yet another experience for the audience. So a performance of *vannamas* is not merely a repetition of former creations, but an ongoing, new, and lively process built on the foundation of a common language shared by all participants.

I studied Musaladi Vannama under R.W.G. Suramba Gurunanseje in 1982, and another choreography in 1986 at the University of Kelaniya under R.G.W. Waidyawathie Rajapakse. The following notation of the Musaladi Vannama shows the classical structure, the basic *matras*, *kastirams*, *sirumaruve*, *gamanmatra*, and *adauve*, as taught by both of my teachers. The second and third variation *matras* A and B are created with new fill-ins by me, as it is traditional to create new variations. At present, the drum and dance students of my school, Surasankha, in Hamburg, perform this composition and choreography of the Musaladi Vannama.

The basic *matras* A and B, the *kastirams*, the *sirumaruve*, the *gamanmatra*, and the *adauve* are played by two drummers in unison, whereas in the variation-*matras* the two drummers play two complementary patterns. The onomatopoeic syllables return the sound produced by a particular way of beating the *gätabere*.



2.matra B

gin gin ga gin gin ga gin gin ga gin ke-de - ta-ku  
gin kun-de-ga-te gin kun-de-ga-te gin kun-de-ga-te gin gat-te-de ga-te

3.matra A

kun kun-de ku-kun-de-kun gin te-de gat tat gin te-de gat tat don kun gin ga-te gin te-de gat tat gin te-de gat tat  
gin gin te kun gin te ga gin te rat gin gin te kun gin te ga gin te

kun kun-de ga-te ga-te kun gin ga-te kun gin ga-te  
gin gin te kun-de-te ga gin

3.matra B

gin gin ga gin gin ga gin gin ga gin ke-de - ta - ku  
te-de ga gin kun gin te-de ga gin kun gin te-de ga gin kun gin te-de ga gin thein gin

4.matra A

don gin te dod don gin te dod don gin ki - ti  
gen ge-ne ge-ne gen ta-ri-ki-te tat ta rat rat gen ta-ri-ki-te tat ta te-de-ke-de-ta-ke ta-kun-de-te ke-de-ta-ke

ta ke te don ta ku  
gin ta-ri-ki-te tat ta-ri-ki-te tat ta

**4.matra B**

gin gin ga  
gi kun kun-de ga-te

gin gin ga  
gi kun kun-de ga-te

gin gin ga  
gi kun kun-de ga-te

gin ke-de - ta - ku  
gi kun te-de-ke-de-ta-ku

**sirumaruve**

ta-kun-de ta-ku ta-ke  
ta-ke-te kun-de kun-de  
ta ga git ta-ke  
ta-ke-te kun-dan

ta-kun-de ta-ku ta-ke  
ta-ke-te ke-de-ta-ke ta-ri-ki-te  
dom ta ta-ke  
ta-ke-te ku-kun-dan

**gamanmatra**

don gin gin  
ta-ke - te don ta-ku

don kun gin ta-ri-ki-te tat ta  
gin ta-ri-ki-te gin ta-ri-ki-te tat ta

**adauve**

ta - kun ta-kun ta-ri-ki-te  
gi - kun gi kun ta-ri-ki-te

ta-kun-de ga gin  
gi-kun-de ga gin

ga gin  
ga gin ga gin

ga gin  
ga gin ga gin

ta - kun ta-kun ta-ri-ki-te  
ta-kun-de ga gin  
gi - kun gi-kun ta-ri-ki-te  
gi-kun-de ga gin

gen ta  
gen ta  
gen-te kun-de  
gen - te ta

Figure 5. Notation of the Musaladi Vannama.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Mahavamsa*, the great chronicle of Sinhalese history, and also oral tradition, the Kohomba Kankariya ritual is said to have been first performed in approximately 500 B.C.

<sup>2</sup> His full name is: Amunugama Rajapakse Waidyalankare Ganitagedere Ratnadipaty Suramba Gurananseje. Guru or Gurananseje, added to his name, is the Sinhalese term for master and teacher. Sinhalese students (*golejo*) show a deep respect (*gauruvak*) for their gurus. On the other hand, the gurus also take on many responsibilities for their students. In past centuries, a talented student stayed in the houses of his guru, receiving daily training, and grew up there almost as his own child.

<sup>3</sup> These studies include all three classical dance styles: Kandyan dance, accompanied by the *gātabere*; Sabaragamuwa dance, accompanied by the *davule*; and low-country dance, accompanied by the *jak-* or *ruhunubere*; and in addition a basic training in Indian *bharata natyam* and *katak* as well. A unique feature of the Sinhalese dance tradition in particular is that the students are trained in both dancing and drumming. Of course, students often show more talent in one of the disciplines, and after a good basic training in dancing and drumming they become an expert and exponent of dance or a drums. The advantages include:

-A teacher specializing more in dance can still accompany his own dance students on drums during his lessons;

-a teacher specializing more in drumming can still train his students in dancing and arrange choreographies for them;

-the dancer on stage or performing ritual dancing, as in the Kohomba Kankariya, is perfectly able to cooperate with his drummer.

<sup>4</sup>One of the oldest and most extensive theoretical treatises on dance, music, and drama in the world is believed to be the *Natyashastra*, ascribed to Bharata Muni of India, of approximately the second century B.C. (E. Rebling, 1982: 15). In the *Natyashastra*, dance is analyzed academically, and divided into three categories of forms:

1.) *Nritya* is often translated as pure dance; it means abstract dancing. The dancer enjoys a powerful life energy, and also transfers this to the audience.

2.) *Nritya* means pantomimic dance, or figuring dance, in which every movement designates a particular meaning or symbolic content.

3.) *Natya* stands for theatre in which dance, music, and speech are combined.

These categories—*nritya*, *nritya*, and *natya*—have been known by Sinhalese gurus as well, over many generations. The term *nritya* is *nrutya* in Sinhalese, and R.W.G. Suramba uses the term *nrutya* to name his school, which he founded in 1948: Madyama (middle) Lanka (Sri Lanka) Nrutya (figuring dance) Mandalaya (commission).

<sup>5</sup> Translation by Anuradha Seneviratna.

<sup>6</sup> Here Shiva is meant: in Sinhalese, *Ishvara*; in the text, *Isiputh*

## References

**Claus-Bachmann, Martina**

2001

“*Jataka* Narrations as Multimedial Reconstructive Embodiments of the Psychic System Buddha Shakyamuni.” *The world of music* 44(2): Body and Ritual in Buddhist Musical Culture. Paul D. Greene, Guest Editor, pp. 115-134.

**Kulatillake, Cyril de Silva**

1974/74

“‘Samudragosha’ Metre and the ‘Seepada Styles’ of Singing in Sri Lanka”. *Mitteilungen der deutschen Gesellschaft für Musik des Orients* 13:39-55.

1982

*Daha-ate Vannama*, a publication of the Music Research Unit, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation.

**Nürnbergger, Marianne**

1998

*Dance is the Language of the Gods: The Chitrasena School and the Traditional Roots of Sri Lankan Stage Dance*. Sri Lanka Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, no.5.

**Raghavan, M. D.**

1967

*Sinhala Nätum*, M.D.Gunasena & Co., Ltd.

**Sedaraman, G. E.**

1964

*Udarate Nätum Kalave*, M.D.Gunasena & Co., Ltd.

**Seneviratna, Anuradha**

1984

*Traditional Dance of Sri Lanka*. Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Publication No. 18, Colombo.