

About Kathakali

Kathakali is a form of traditional dance drama originated in Kerala, the southern state of India. The magnificence of Kathakali vests in the fact that it features an incomparable synchronisation of various disciplines of arts such as literature, music, rhythm, dance, drama, drawing, sculpture and hand crafts and therefore is a visual, audio and intellectual combination of art forms. The inspiration of Kathakali is the earlier forms of dance drama such as Koodiyattam, Ashtapadiyattom, Krishnattam and Ramanattom and was performed in palaces and temples and at religious festivals. The stories for the play are mostly taken from Hindu epics and puranas, but of late, stories are adapted from Bible, western and other world classics as well. In Kathakali, the characters do not speak and the dialogue presentation is done predominantly by music. The music is basically set to the ragas of Carnatic music. Maintaining the basic structure of Raga, the musicians have liberty to traverse through their talent and knowledge in the raga, keeping aside the rigidity of the rules of pure classical music. This system is called "Sopanasangeetham" style. There are always two singers; one who leads and the other who follows.

The Kathakali is more known for its rich and colourful dress and make up. The Vesham or make-up is of five types - Pacha, Kathi, Thadi, Kari and Minukku; and each of them portrays different qualities/moods of the character. The facials are done by natural colours and not by any body paints. Chutti, gives an essential border to the face. The face colouring is done by the artist himself. There are over 50 items to be adorned on the body before a character appears on stage and the total make up takes 3 to 4 hours.



A traditional Kathakali performance usually lasts all night, but modern performances are often shortened to two to four hours. The drummers and musicians stand on the side and back of the stage respectively, and actors do the performance in the front. The curtain is a colourful piece of cloth and is held by two assistants whenever necessary. The front of the stage is imminently adorned by a wick lamp. The lamp represents Lord Ganesha, Devi Saraswati and the Gurus. According to belief, the performance which artists do is first watched by Ganesha, Saraswati and their Gurus and no performance is ever the ultimate before them.



About the play, Duryodhanavadham

The item to be performed on the cultural evening will be an extract from the famous play, Duryodhanavadham. Duryodhanavadham, is a very famous Aattakatha (script), written based on the greatest Indian epic, Mahabharatha. The plot for the play is the sequence of events that lead to the Kurukshethra war and the ultimate victory of the Pandavas over the Kauravas.

Story line:

Krishna is about to start to Duryodhana's palace, to have a mediation on behalf of the Pandavas. Draupadi stops Krishna and reminds him of the insult she had faced from Dussasana on the day of the play of dice. She shows Krishna her untied tresses, which she vowed not to tie up until it is soaked with the blood of evil minded Dussasana. Krishna consoles her telling that a war becomes inevitable and all her sorrows would be wiped off after that. He then proceeds to Duryodhana's palace.

Duryodhana, after getting to know that Krishna is coming as the envoy of Pandavas, orders to all the members in his court not to stand up or show any respect when Krishna enters to the palace. In spite of his threat of levying huge fines, all the royals in the court rise and greet Krishna respectfully. Krishna first meets Dhritharashtra, father of Kauravas and conveys the purpose of his visit. Dhritharashtra, in turn advises his son Duryodhana to listen to the righteous words of Krishna.

In the treaty talk that ensues, Duryodhana who had rejected Dhritharashtra's counsel, does not agree with any of the proposals laid by Krishna and affirmed that he will not give even a needlepoint of land to Pandavas. Having humiliated with the remarks made by Krishna on his lineage, Duryodhana orders to tie Krishna in ropes. The lord takes his divine, universal form (Vishwa rupa) and makes Duryodhana and Dussasana swoon. Mumukshu, a pious Brahmin enters, praises Lord Krishna and warns Duryodhana about the consequences of not obeying the words of Krishna.

The war begins. On the last day of the war, Bhima thinking of the insult his wife received in the Kaurava court, turns into a ferocious, terrifying form, Roudra Bhima, searches for Dussasana in the battle field. A



deadly war happens between the duos and eventually, Bhima defeats Dussasana and pulls out the gut. Bhima, who is in a trance, meets Draupadi and ties her tresses with his blood-soaked hands.

Vengeance is complete, and a guilt-stricken Bhima approaches Krishna lamenting that he killed all his relatives. Krishna consoles him that what he did was his dharma and pacifies him.