

Sathanar'sPaniruKoothu

சாத்தனாருடையபன்னிருகூத்து

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Abstract:

The Dravidian civilization from the Southern India is one of the earliest civilizations of the world. The recent excavations in Keezhadi, Tamil Nadu shows promising evidence to establish dates of the Dravidian civilization to be even older than previously estimated. Tamizh(also referred to asTamil) was the primary language of the Dravidiansand has later branched into multiple different dialects.The ancient practices, culture,art and traditions of the Tamizh peoplehave been inferred by the Tamizhliterature works.

Thokappiam approximately dated 200BCE and Sangam literary works roughly dated 100BCE – 200CE are the oldest surviving Tamizh literature. In this literature, there is a great emphasis to the practice of dance, singing and musical instruments during Sangam Age(300BCE - 300CE).There are many references to *Koothu*¹, *Adal,Pattu*, *Viraliar*², *Porunar*³, *Pannar*⁴, *Koothar*, *Kuzhal*, *Parai,Thudi*, *Thanummai* etc. in these literatures which provides the evidence of practice of dance and music during Sangam Age.“*Koothu*” generally refers to any type of performance. “*Paadal*” refers to vocal music. Koothu and Paadalhas been seen to work hand-in-hand and has developed simultaneously in this period. In this article, we will analyze various types and classification of Koothubased on the ancient dance literature “Koothunool”.

“*Koothunool*”has been authored by SithalaiSathanar(dates unknown) is the oldest available Tamizh dance literature. The word “Koothunool” is a combination word that can be defined as “Koothu” (Dance) + “Nool” (book or literary work). The literature provides details on the techniques of koothuand the various aspects of Koothu(dance). This articleanalyzesthe development of twelve forms of “Koothu”from the relative*Tandavamsas* defined by SithalaiSathanar in his literature “Koothunool”.

Keywords:

Koothu, *Nirtham*, *Abinaya*, *Sudha Nirtham*, *Yappu*, *Attam*, *Sokkam*, *Paan*,*Tandavam*, *Attam*,*Karnam*, *Kalasangal*, *Lasyam*, *Talam*.

Introduction:

Koothunool is the oldest surviving Tamizh literature that is dedicated almost entirely to dance and dance forms. This was authored by SithalaiSathanar disciple of Sage Agasthiyar. There is mention of Kotthunooland SithalaiSathanar in Silapaddikaram as explained by Adiyarukunallar in his explanation. The ancient art of koothu has been explained in great extent in this literature. The literature has been organized into nine integral parts or segments that enable a structured and deep understanding of the koothu techniques.

The following is the overview of the nine segments of “Koothunool”

- 1) Suvainool – Explains the divinity of the art of koothu, vocal and drama.
- 2) Thogainool – Explains the 108 Tandavam techniques, resulting in various koothus
- 3) Varinool – Explains the solo and group folk dances, music, singing etc.

1 Koothu refers to Sangam dance

2 Viraliar refers to lady performers experts in dancing and singing

3 Porunar are entertainers

4 Pannar refers to vocalists

- 4) Kalainool – Explains the usage of hands, legs, face and other parts of the body in relation to koothu or attam. This is the largest section in Koothunool.
- 5) Karana nool – Explains 120 Karnas, mudaras, stanas, charis, 90 kalasangal(Angaharas), 9Tandavams, 6Lasyam
- 6) Talanool – Explains the different components of talam and various types of talams (time measure)
- 7) Isai nool - With available data arohonam and avarganam of 30 paans(ragam) used by Nayanmars in Tevaram are found in this section.
- 8) Avainool – Explains the Auditorium setup for performance including sound, light, screen, makeup, rooms, props etc.
- 9) Kan nool – Explains the benefits of art of dance

In the upcoming section, we will analyze the Tandavas and Koothu forms defined specifically in the **Thogainool** segment of the Koothunool.

Tandavam refers to the energetic rhythmic Koothu(dance) performed by Lord Shiva expressing various emotions. Tandavams has been enumerated differently by various authors in their literatures. Sathanar's Koothunool explains the following in Thogainool

Attam/Koothu

The term Attam/Koothu has long existed even before Sangam period. The performances originated as the depictions of events in life as the main element, developed in sync with music and rhythm as Koothu. The Koothu was performed as a folk form for general recreation then developed into entertainment art form. Later under the influence of the *Bhakthi period*⁵, koothu developed as a divine art form. Koothu was performed in public gatherings, royal courts, temples, auditoriums often patronized by the royalties and this tradition has continued over centuries till date. The concept of what started as a simple folk dance for recreation has developed with standardized and well-defined practices as classical art form.

Sathanar's definition of Tandavams and Koothus

Sathanar begins his literature by explaining "Om". The Om represents the spiritual sound that denotes the beginning, middle and the end.

Om originated from the "*damaru*"⁶, of dancing Lord Shiva as explained by Sathanar:

*"The sound of Om is the sound of dance,
Form of Om is the form of dance,
Emotion of Om is the emotions of dance"*

The three parts of Om are defined as Agaram, Ugaram, Magaram were

- 1) Agaram relates to agambhavam
- 2) Ugaram relates to rasa⁷
- 3) Magaram relates to music Paan⁸.

Agaram, Ugaram and Magaram combine to form Talam.

The koothu originated from Om are Attam-Agaram, Pattu-Ugaram and Abhinayam- Magaram.

- Attam is the Sudha(pure)Nirtham, pure body movements Attam refers to the body movements which is the bases for Natyam.
- Pattam is the Nirtham according to music
- Abhinayam is the Nirtham that expresses the meaning of the lyrics

According to Sathanar, Attam is the Sokkam Koothu when combined with Pattam the vocal music resultant combines with lyrics produces the Abhinaya Koothu.

⁵Bhakthi period refers to period when different worship methods was adopted for salvation

⁶Damaru small two headed drum in shape of hourglass

⁷Rasa refers to essences

⁸Paan refers to raga in sangatamilisai

So according to above Koothu can be broadly classified into three forms

- **Sokkamkoothu** is based on stomping of the feet according to the talam or rhythm.
- **Pattukoothu** is based on the Pann or ragam
- **Abhinayamkoothu** is based on expressive words in the lyrics (Sahityam) of the song

The Koothu can further be grouped as six types

- 1) Thaneemai(தனிமை)Koothu – performed as solo
- 2) Thounaimai (துணைமை)Koothu–performed with a companion
- 3) Eenaimai (இணைமை)Koothu – performing combining with own group of people
- 4) Panmai (பன்மை)Koothu – performing with different groups of people
- 5) Kathai Kali (கதைகளி)koothu – performing the story
- 6) KaapiaKoothu(காப்பிய)– performing the epics

Tandavam:

Sathanarenumerates the 108 Tandavam performed by Lord Shiva is as follows

- Danced solo by Lord Shiva is 48
- Danced with the companion Goddess Shakthi is 36
- Danced with Tirumalis 9
- Danced with Muruganis 3
- Danced by the Lord Shiva for the other supreme being is 12

Among the 108 Tandavas performed by Lord Shiva twelve being considered exceptional which is also highlighted and in accordance with other literatures too. However, there are variations in the description of the Tandavam performed by Lord Shiva in different literatures. Each Tandavam is a collaboration of various karanams(hand and feet positions) exhibiting characteristics of joy, peace, anger, courage, destructive, protect, love in a rhythmic and energetic performance.

All twelve Tandavams in the Thogainool of Koothunool visualizes Lord Shiva in *Ardhanadhiswara*⁹ form unified as one with Siva on the right side and Shakthi on the left with multiple hands to perform the Tandavams. Each Tandavam is a combination of multiple poses flowing from one to another with patterned movements. The *Tandavams*¹⁰ listed in Koothunool with the equivalent Tandavams mentioned in other literatures are provided below.

Tandavam as per Koothunool - Equivalent / References in other literature

- Alliyam அல்லியம் Tandavam - Anandha Tandavam
- Elliyam எல்லியம் Tandavam - Sandhya Tandavam
- Palliyam பல்லியம் Tandavam - Sudha Tandavam
- Ullam உள்ளம் Tandavam - Sringara Tandavam
- Nuthalvizhi நுதல்விழி Tandavam- Tripura Tandavam
- Nuthalkaal நுதல்கால் Tandavam- Urdhava Tandavam
- Nokam நோக்கம் Tandavam - Muni Tandavam
- NuNukam நுணுக்கம் Tandavam - Samhara Tandavam
- Kaalvari - கால்வரி Tandavam - Pralaya Tandavam

- Peivari - பேய்வரிTandavam - BoothaTandavam
- Kalitruvari களிற்று வரிTandavam - PitharaTandavam
- Nacham நச்சம்Tandavam - UjjangaTandavam

⁹Ardhanathiswarameansthe form of half male and half female divided equally in a body
¹⁰ Tandavam denotes the energetic dance performed by Lord

Koothus:As mentioned in ThogainooltwelveTandavamsled to the development of Paniru (twelve)koothus. Below are the koothus developed from the relative Tandavams

- 1) Alliyamஅல்லியம்Tandavam - Adavukoothu
- 2) Elliyamஎல்லியம்Tandavam - Isai koothu
- 3) Palliyamபல்லியம்Tandavam – Abhinaya koothu
- 4) Ullamஉள்ளம்Tandavam – Sarigaikoothu
- 5) Nuthalvizhiநுதல்விழிTandavam – Peranikoothu
- 6) Nuthal kaalநுதல்கால்Tandavam – Oviyakoothu
- 7) Nokamநோக்கம்Tandavam – Layakoothu
- 8) NuNukamநுணுக்கம்Tandavam – Paravaikoothu
- 9) Kaal vari - கால்வரிTandavam – Chalayakoothu
- 10) Pei vari - பேய்வரிTandavam – Pattamkoothu
- 11) Kalitruvari களிற்றுவரிTandavam – Arasakoothu
- 12) Nachamநச்சம்Tandavam – Pithamkoothu

Details of koothus developed from the Tandavams:

The various koothuwere derived from the twelve Tandavamstechniques performed by Lord Shiva. Below are the பன்னிருகூத்து (twelve koothus) described in Koothunool with reference to the verses.

1. Adavukoothu

அடவுஆதிதட்டஉடல்இடைக்கைகால்

அடிக்கடிஅலைந்துமிடுக்குஇடல்அடவு

Description: Stomping the feet, moving the torso, waist, hands and legs along with the rhythm (talam) Adavukoothu. The Adavukoothuis said to be originated from AlliyamTandavam.

2. Isai koothu

ஏழ்இசைபம்மஇழும்இசைபொம்ம

யாழ்இசைகும்மஅடவுஇசைவிம்ம

..... இசைக்குஇசைஇருக்கால்இருக்கைஓர்உடல்

இணைத்துஇணைத்துஇயற்றல்இசைவழிக்கூத்தே

Description: The seven swarassariga ma pa da ni sung in accordance with the sruthiwhile various musical instruments *yazh*¹¹, *kuzhal*¹², along with *adavu*¹³recital the dancer moving hands, legs and the body in coordination to the music generated is Isai koothu. Isai koothu has originated from ElliyamTandavam

3. Abhinaya koothu

¹¹ Yazh is Harp

¹²Kuzhal is flute

¹³ Adavu in dance refers to basic body movement in accordance to rhythm

சொல்பொருள்எல்லாம்கைமெய்துலக்கி
நிற்பதுபட்டுஅவிநயம்எனநிறுத்து

Description: Expressing the meaning of the Sahityam¹⁴ with hand gestures, body language releasing the emotions in a visual form is Abhinaya koothu said to be originated from Palliyamkoothu.

4. Sarigaikoothu

வெட்டினில்ஓட்டிஓட்டினில்வெட்டிக்
கட்டினில்விட்டு

..... சரிவுஉறச்செய்வதுசரிகைஎன்ப

Description: This is performed by a couple with coordinated eye, neck, waist hip moving away and coming in contact. Collaborating and sliding up and down simultaneously according to music and rhythm is Sarigaikoothu. The SarigaiKoothu is said to be originated from UllamTandavam.

5. Peranikoothu

வெண்மணல்தாவிச்செம்மணல்தீவி

வெண்துகில்பாவிவிலங்குஇழைமேவி

..... மெய்குழைகுழைத்தேவெண்மணல்துழைத்தே

சித்திரம்தீட்டல்பேரணிச்சீரே

Description: Astage builtwith white sand topped with a layer of red clay and covered with white muslin cloth is setup. The performer comfortably stretches and moves the leg with the big toe pointed to the ground and others toes folded. As the leg moves to create a picturethe eyes and neckis moved gracefully. The hands beautifullylay hanging along the sides of the body while the body itself moves gently and gracefully.The big toe draws lines on the sand to create anartistic drawing this is referred as Peranikoothu which is said to be originated from NuthalVizhiTandavam.

6. Oviyakoothu

வட்டுஇடைத்தொய்யல்வட்டுஅணைஇட்டு

நட்டதாள் . நட்டநட்டிலேசுற்ற

..... தரையிலும்பின்புறத்திரையிலும்கால்கை

ஓவியம்தீட்டலேஓவியைத்கூத்தாம்

Description: Description/Translation: The colorful cups are kept in a circle.One leg is fixed to the center of the circle while the other leg spins around dipping the big toe in the cups and with a sudden stretch the circling leg goes up in the air and place a pottu (dot on the forehead) then bring the leg down to the floor and draw pictures in the circle. Followed by turning the waist around and drawing the pictures on a curved screen kept behind. This is Oviyakoothu said to be originated from Nuthal Kaal.

7. Layakoothu

மெல்அடிஅணுங்கிமின்இடைமினுங்கி

புல்லுவபுணர்ந்துகுல்லுகைஅலரந்து

கோணினன்குழைந்துநாணினள்நகர்ந்து
வாள்நுதல்வளைந்துநீள்விழிநெளிந்து

14 Sahityam is lyrics of the song

யன்மையும்நிறைந்து
யங்கும்

Description: With feetwalking gentler than Anicham flowers, thin lightning waist glittering,moving the body slowly, curving and bending like a snail, long eyelash fluttering, waist and hip swaying from side to side, with her breasts moving gracefully according to the music.Her gait is like the beautiful dancing peacock, the swans rejoice seeing her move. This is described as the Layakoothu originated from NokamTandavam.

8. Paravaikoothu

கைஅலையக்கண்அலையக்கால்அலையைக்கடிமேல்
.....செய்அலைபற்பலமலையச்செய்வதுகாண்பறவை

Description: Hands, legs, eyeball, glance are wavy and the waist curving. The emotions and the resulting actions waver casting , shadows around. Clothes, shoulder ornaments displaced side to side, also the fingers and dancing feet move in a wavy formwhich creates a sea scenarioParavaikoothuwhich is said to have originated from NunukamTandavam.

9. Chalayakoothu

தாள்இணைதட்டித்தேள்எனக்கொட்டித்

.....வாள்அணைத்துஇட்டதுசாளவக்கூத்தே

Description: Stomping the foot and taking the foot like the Scorpio stinging behind and shoulders moving forward thighs moving faster up and down. hands moving in a warrior form bringing together and away, eyelids blinking with enthusiastic glance is Chalayakoothu. Chalaya itself means war.Chalayakoothu is said to have originated from Kaal Varikoothu.

10. Arasakoothu

ஒருபால்தண்டுவம்ஒருபால்தழைவே

.....கூத்தேஅரசக்கூத்துஎனக்கூறு

Description: One side of the body does the tandavam and the other side does the Lasyam movements. Stomping the right foot and gently moving the other foot. One hand moving and stretching while the other hand is bent and gentle. Both side of the body working simultaneously in this manner combines and form the Arasakoothu which is said to have originated from Kalitrukoothu.

11. Pattamkoothu

முன்னும்பின்னும்கோடுஉறமுன்னிக்

.....முன்பின்அன்னைமுரணியும்தெரிந்தும்
பட்டம்இட்டதுவேபட்டக்கூத்தாம்

Description: Moving and curving the waist in front and back with straight torso. Taking thehead behind and resting on the foot and bringing the leg forward and resting the head on the chin. Continuing this movement with Spreading and joining the hands rhythmically interspersed with slanting movements of the torso is Pattakoothu said to have originated from Pei Varikoothu.

12. Pithakoothu

அரவுஎனநெளிந்துதரைமிசை அளைந்து
கால்தலைக்குஏற்றித்தாளைக்கால்மாற்றி
.....மத்தஉன்மத்தமேபித்துஎனப்பேசு

Description: Crawling and curving like a serpent on the floor. Raising the legs behind bringing the head in the middle. Knee and elbows brought together with the shoulders. Contracting expanding spinning around in all directions is Pithakoothu. This is said to have originated from NachamTandavam

Conclusion

According to Sathanar, Koothu (Dancing) lead to singing (Swaras) which gave rise to Sahityam (lyrics) giving scope for Abhinaya Koothu resulting in Tandavams.

The twelve Tandavams techniques has contributed to the development of the relevant koothus. The twelve koothu techniques discussed is the origins for different dance evolved over centuries. Perani and Oviyunkoothu as described by Sathanar are very rarely performed today as it needs exceptional skills to be demonstrated. In conclusion different Karanams combined with rhythmic smooth transitions, manifesting the emotions is the Tandavam which led to the different forms of dance called Koothus. The twelve koothus integrated (kopathu) and performed by Lord Shiva and Goddess Shakthi unified as one is referred as Koppu by Sathanar. A quick glance on the tandavams and the relevant koothus explored in this article.

- 1) Alliyam அல்லியம் Tandavam - Adavukoothu
- 2) Elliyam எல்லியம் Tandavam - Isai koothu
- 3) Palliyam பல்லியம் Tandavam - Abhinaya koothu
- 4) Ullam உள்ளம் Tandavam - Sarigaikoothu
- 5) Nuthalvizhi நுதல்விழி Tandavam - Peranikoothu
- 6) Nuthal kaal நுதல்கால் Tandavam - Oviyakoothu
- 7) Nokam நோக்கம் Tandavam - Layakoothu
- 8) NuNukam நுணுக்கம் Tandavam - Paravaikoothu
- 9) Kaal vari - கால்வரி Tandavam - Salayakoothu
- 10) Pei vari - பேய்வரி Tandavam - Pattamkoothu
- 11) Kalitruvari களிற்றுவரி - Arasakoothu
- 12) Nacham நச்சம் - Pithamkoothu

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