

**ACTOR TRAINING IN CULTURAL CONTEXT:  
BASED ON SRI LANKAN TAMIL THEATRE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of  
the award of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**In**

**THEATRE ARTS**

**By**

**K. RATHITHARAN**



**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND COMMUNICATION  
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD  
HYDERABAD-500046  
TELANGANA STATE  
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## DECLARATION

I, K. RATHITHARAN, hereby declare that this thesis entitled, “**ACTOR TRAINING IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: BASED ON SRI LANKAN TAMIL THEATRE**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of PROF. B. ANANTHAKRISHNAN is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**ACTOR TRAINING IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: BASED ON SRI LANKAN TAMIL THEATRE**”, submitted by K. RATHITHARAN bearing Regd. No. 12SNPT04 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in THEATRE ARTS is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance which is a plagiarism free thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Prof. B. Ananthakrishnan  
Supervisor

Head  
Department of Theatre Arts  
School of Arts and Communication  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad

Dean  
School of Arts and Communication  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad

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## **ABBREVIATION**

**ATM – Active Theatre Movement**

**CPA – Centre for Performing Arts**

**FGD – Focus Group Discussion**

**NGO – Non-Government Organization**

**TAG – Theatre Action Group**

**SDT – School of Drama and Theatre**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and the Research Context

The relationship between human civilization and the art has been uncertain since its inception immemorially. According to pre-historic archeological evidences, early humans had begun to generate art in the form of cave paintings, in the form of engravings and also on their culturally modified artifacts consisting of bones and also rock paintings, dating about tens of thousands of years back, perhaps it emerged the pre-historic times of Upper Paleolithic stone tool Period spanning around 45,000 to 35,000 years ago<sup>1</sup>. The pre-historic human as stated above had been nomadic in habit, subsisting on hunting and gathering, yet found leisure to express his worldview in the form of cave and rock painting within the environment inhabited or temporarily settled. In the Indian context, historically dance has been ascribed to be dated as existing much before the evolution of painting or sculpture. Dance has been considered as the stepping stone into the enlightened era of painting or sculpture (Varadpande 05). Mythologically, during the successive evolution of vedas, it has been stated that Indian God or Male Diety Brahma who priorly created the 4 vedas namely *Rig Veda* representing text, *Sama Veda* representing music, *Yajur Veda* representing acting, *Atharva Veda* representing aesthetic sentiments subsequently has devised a fifth veda namely the *Natya Veda*. The *Natya Veda* in essence is designed to grab the attention, facilitating entertainment and also fulfilling the audible and visual aspects of artistic performance. Mythologically, it is believed that Brahma ‘said’ : “The drama as I have devised is mimicry of the actions and the conduct of people,

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<sup>1</sup> For more information visit <http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/dramatherapy.pdf>

rich in various emotions and depicting various situations”(Varadpande 01). According to Chattopadhyay (04), theatre in ancient India was an important medium of communication. There were several dramatists in ancient India like Kalidasa and Bhasa who wrote many dramas.

As stated above, the drama has been mythologically intended to serve as a meeting place of all sciences and arts and will also be a giver of wealth, fame, good counsel, and knowledge of one’s duty in order to reflect one’s action from his past towards his future development. *Natyasastra* is regarded as the fifth *veda* introducing three major divisions of drama, Nritta (pure dance), Nritya, (expressional dance) and Natya (drama), which believed to be synthesized based on Natyaweda. (Kothari & Pasricha 117, Chattopadhyay 04). Aristotle suggested that imitation (mimesis) is inherent with humans (Garrels 02), Aristotle presumed that the theatre probably came from a hymn sung or chanted before religious rituals<sup>2</sup>. Drama is the ancient art form and ritual. It is also connected to modes of social organization, to various practices by which ancient people tried to ensure their continued survival. (Shepherd and Wallis 60).

Theatre, in the Western context, has evolved through a path from 5th Century B.C., the ancient Greek theatre to the modern form of it passing through various key junctures and turning points. These include both the political changes over the period such as Roman theatre, medieval theatre, Elizabethan periods, Spanish Theatre, French theatre, 19th century melodrama etc. and certain ideological trends such as Neoclassicism in Italy and France, Romanticism, Realism etc. In addition to Leach academic reviews such as Farley P Richmond entitled “Indian Theatre: Traditions of

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<sup>2</sup>See <http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/spd130et/ancientgreek.htm> for more details

Performance” (1993) proves there is a vast theatre culture beyond the West, India, China, Indonesia, all over Africa and among all.

The pre-history of Sri Lanka dates back over a hundred thousand years and perhaps according to some sources, goes back to 500,000 years. The era extends over the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and early Iron ages, exemplified by recently discovered human settlements in Pahiyangala, Batadombalena, Belilena etc. (Deraniyagala: 1996). Famous Indian epic Ramayana says about Sri Lanka (Keshavadas: 1988), and according to the Mahavamsa, the main chronicle, Yakkas and Nagas are the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka. In addition, Sri Lankan history is often seen as divided into some prominent eras such as pre-Anuradhapura period, Anuradhapura period, Polonnaruwa and other transitional temporary eras in between, and later Kandyan era that with British Sri Lanka. Simultaneously, according to the history there had been an independent parallel kingdom in Jaffna (Mendis 113). Today, Sri Lanka is a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. Sinhala and Tamil are its predominating indigenous languages, and English, the second most common language. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are the major religions practiced in the country. (Shanmuglingam 63). Sri Lankan Tamils are broadly categorized as Jaffna Tamils, Batticola Tamils, and up-country Tamils. Certain linguistic and cultural differences are found among them ( Ohno and Sanmugadas 184).

In a general overview of Sri Lankan history, the culture has been impacted by various incidents, despite believing even without concrete evidences, the invasion of Rama, such as the arrival of Buddha and later Buddhist missionaries the invasion by South Indian kings, and since the early 16th century ruling by Portuguese, followed by Dutch and English. These could be considered as major turning points of Sri Lanka

that made significant impact on the contemporary cultural identities. For instance, it is said that the craftsmen belonging to 18 castes landed in Sri Lanka with reverend Arahath Sangamithra who brought the sacred Bo tree to Sri Lanka. In view of this situation, following the welcomed or uninvited political, religious or cultural interactions, Sri Lankan mainstream culture, subcultures and traditions continued to change. Yet, the identities of Sri Lankan culture remain unique.

Due to ethnic and religious composition (having approximately 75% of Sinhalese and 71% of Buddhists according to the census 2011), in Sri Lanka, Sinhala culture remains the predominating identity in many areas. Drama and theatre in above mentioned Sinhala cultural identity has long history arguably evolved from the rituals of folk religions and some of the Buddhist teachings. Hindu gods are often mentioned in these rituals or events like traditional devil dancing. As a result of colonial influence over four hundred years, Sri Lankan theater largely changed and absorbed many aspects of Western traditions (Obeyesekere 116). However, it is to be noted that both Sinhala and Tamil drama and theatre traditions evolved in different degrees. At the same time these two streams have had mutual exchanges, for instance Sarathchandra had extracted the form of *Nadagama* from Tamil tradition, similarly Sarathchandra's work made significant influence on modern traditional Tamil theatre, especially in reformation of existing work (Department of Aesthetic Education 158). Similarly the aspects of dance, *koothu*, dialogue oriented plays and other forms of artistic work of Tamil Nadu have influenced Sri Lankan Tamil art form (Thani Nayakam 2). Sinhala Traditional Theatre found to be rite – dramas like *Thovil*, *Ratayaguma*, *Kokhomba*, *Kankariya*, also with some performances that are detached from the rites of *kolam* and *sokkary* and *Nadagama*. Such elements of Sinhala traditional theatre spread across the country. Sinhala traditional theatre has been

largely used in developing modern Sinhala theatre, as a result of excellent contributions of scholars such as Professor Ediriweera Sarathchandra (Saminathan and Neriya 42), and others like DhammaJagoda. As the Modern Sinhala Drama presentation was wide spread, they gave the momentum or the encouragement to emerging artists.

“It is time that someone should do a detailed study on the theatre history of Tamils of Sri Lanka” (Shanmugalingam 63). It sounds that there is not much evidence to know or study about the history of Tamil theatre. Even if some material is available, it has not been used to establish the history formally. This situation has prompted scholars to use various anthropological sources, religious festivals, rites and rituals to synthesize. According to the history, the traditional theatre can be classified into three divisions, ritual theatre, traditional performance, and “*Koothu*”.<sup>3</sup>

The changes took place in the country due to foreign occupation since 1505 and the English Education produced adverse impact on traditional theatre. The English educated section of the masses produced plays in English in colleges. Later translated, adapted and original plays ‘in Western mode’ were introduced to the Sri Lankan theatre. The above fact was cited in the article titled “Drama and Theatre Arts among the Tamils of Sri Lanka” written by Shanmugalingam<sup>4</sup>. The influence of forcing invasions resulted in three key areas; *Parsi* tradition, “*Koothu*”, and introduction of dialogue type drama. To elaborate on this, *Parsi* tradition stemmed from the British influence (Gupt 24) and a new form of *Koothu* named Catholic *Koothu* also emerged due to the above influence (Mounaguru 181). Dialogue oriented dramas developed

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<sup>3</sup> *Koothu* is as a name of folk drama forms, in Tamil Nadu It is called as *Therukoothu* and similarly in Sri Lanka *Vadamodi* and *Then modi Kooththu*

<sup>4</sup> See <https://activetheatremovement.wordpress.com/2012/03/29/drama-and-theatre-arts-among-the-tamils-of-sri-lanka/> for more details

through the adaptations of English plays (Dewi 08). Sokkalingam in his famous book “*Ezhaththuelkkiyavalarchi*’ (*The growth of Sri Lankan Tamil Dramatic Literature*), chronologically classifies Sri Lankan dramas, within the period of 1950-1960, then between 1960 and 1970, 1970-1980 and the after 1980s. He acknowledged that the dramas after 1980s were found vented with nationalist feeling as their prime theme. The war had started by this time. Deaths and losses were frequent events of those days. Then setting of the country produced a conducive situation for stage performance.

In the meantime, new theatrical arrivals such as street drama, revolutionary theatre, theatre work in displacement period, applied theatre and therapeutic theatre that gave priority to then needs were produced in order to suit the situation that prevailed during the conflict. The present Tamil Dramas have many bases, of which most important is, giving prominence to social problems. This fact was cited in the study titled “The Dynamics of People Theatre for Social Change: A study of selected cultural movements in Sri Lanka done by Dewi<sup>5</sup>. These include the never ending problems of the society such as caste system (Rasanen 68), dowry, poverty, and social problems which arose due to the war (Somasundarm and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 160). For example, common themes are centered in and around migration and related problems thereafter; loss of family members and subsequent problems; loss of houses, properties, land etc. mental depression and trauma caused by war and displacement; problems due to economic constraints, missing persons; suicides; addiction to drugs and other forms of social violence. All these issues were mentioned in the study made by Somasundaram and Sivayokan titled “Rebuilding Community Resilience in a post war context: developing insight and recommendations”. In terms of time, the work

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<sup>5</sup>See <http://www.asianscholarship.org/asf/ejournal/articles/Dewi.pdf> for more details

based on above mentioned themes can be further divided into three major eras, first; war time under the control of security forces, second; war time without the control of security forces, and the third post war period (Shanmugalingam, *Introduction to* 64).

The national ethnic problem struggle and its consequences were the main theme of war time theatre (Sivathamby, *Arts: Theatre As* 02). At that time there were a lot of symbolic dramas on the stage. The main reason for that was to elude political aspects. The restrictions imposed by the tense situation of wartime compelled dramatists to stage only the dramas based on literary works and drama on translation or old dramas. The above fact was based on the observations made during the war. This situation prevailed long even after the war ended. Even though the present day political changes give importance to freedom of speech, there is an opportunity for the emergence of new dramas. Jaffna University played a significant role in creating modern theatres, highlighting the above social issues.

Despite the fact that world's entertainment industry has been digitalized to a greater extent, academic interests about live theatre is flourishing, examining historical accounts, interpreting basics of modern theatre, to raising some contemporary ideas, problems, concerns (Leach ix). Theatre used to be, and even today is a literary art and a key form of entertainment. Besides, it is sometimes considered as an instrument of education, and also a "weapon" of social and political transformation.

Universities across the world also played a vital role in promoting modern theatres to the level of academic study and training programs. Shepherd and Wallis (60) discuss how the models of drama, theatre and performance have also been deployed at different junctures by other disciplines, social science in particular. With the emergence of university departments to study theatre and drama has made research

and pedagogical paradigms. “The first department was established at Bristol, with two main aims. First, to study drama as a living projection of a text, and second to tackle social problems created by rapid development in the popular dramatic entertainment” (Shepherd and Wallis 07). The British had recommended that English be made a medium of instruction and since 1922 university colleges set up by London University had functioned in Sri Lanka. These university colleges were promoted as universities in 1942. Since 1933 English dramatic society had produced dramas. At that highly developed English theatre was in Colombo University. English plays were staged annually in the theatre. Mostly the plays produced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were staged here (Wimal and Niriella 40, 41). It is through this university that modern and modernized traditional plays emerged in Sri Lanka. This art of drama of the university served as an initial stepping stone of intellectual dramatic art (Wimal and Niriella 46). In 1976 many Tamils pursued the diploma course in drama and theatre conducted by Colombo University. Consequently this study programme brought the influence of world theatre to the Sri Lanka Tamil theatre. Hereafter theatre training emerged as a systematic discipline. In 1977 drama and theatre was introduced to the Advanced Level (Plus Two) at state schools as a subject. Later in 1986 drama and theatre was included first as a course in Jaffna University (Sivathampy, Forward iv, v). First the subject was offered as a general course of three years, but later introduced as a special course of four years. Since its inception, many students have passed out, specializing in the subject. Yet, it is observed that the present students tend to opt job oriented subjects. The greater challenge is that culture and its related aspects created barriers in providing theatre training. First of all it is very important to understand the umbrella term “culture” because it will enable us to understand the cultural barriers of the students better.



## Motivation

Anselm Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin in their book titled *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (1998) note that a person may come across a problem in his or her profession or workplace for which there is no known answer.. A research problem may emerge as a result of researcher's engagement with the theoretical literature; it may arise from personal and professional experience as well. Primarily this study gives special attention to the University of Jaffna as the researcher teaches Drama and Theatre Art students in the area such as acting, directing and play production in particular, at the same institution. It was observed that the issues and challenges that confronted the researcher are inevitably influenced by culture. It is also vital to understand the definition of culture to which the challenges which the researcher confronted are related. First the definition of culture is discussed below. It is very difficult to give a unified definition to the term 'culture' as it entails complex and evolving attributes. It is defined in various perspectives and the definitions collected until now are numerous and still much more definitions and opinions towards what is culture in the drastically changing world are necessary. In European linguistic point of view, the culture means largely civilization.(Jenks 09)In a sociological and anthropological point of view culture constitutes all the various aspects that are symbolic, learned, ideational aspects of human society (Jenks 08).Culture helps in the holistic appraisals in the way of life, their beliefs, rituals and customs, (Jenks 10). Culture invokes a state of intellectual and/or moral development in society beyond one's community as a human being (Jenks 11). In every culture based on the values, beliefs, norms, there are certain material and non-material aspects that are expressed as symbols and rituals of practice both instrumentally and ornamentally (Griswold 03). Attitudes play a very significant

role along with the various norms, beliefs and values and are not only shaped by one's own culture, but also through experiences which an individual undergoes in isolation whose impact remains indelibly and the response stimuli leads to respond variably to the diverse situations faced all through his socialization (Gill, and Adams 15,16). Kershaw points out that 'culture' are the medium which can unite a range of different groups and communities in a common project (36). In a medical point of view, the term culture is related to blood and is based on testing of a sample of tissue or fluid taken from the body that can be evaluated in the laboratory to detect and identify infections. Thus the word culture and the life led by an individual have led to diverse opinions and is variably defined in different domains by different persons .Furthermore, today the various dimensions of culture such as hybrid culture, multi-culture, inter-culture, sub-culture, popular culture, counter-culture etc are leveling the understanding of culture and towering the necessities of investigations towards new heights. Like every culture, understanding Tamil culture in terms of an average man's life, particularly in the context of the present day, though subjective to change, but still can be restricted as we encounter elements which cannot be isolated and defined, yet they are deep rooted in a society which has always been instinctively aware of its strengths and weaknesses( Ramakrishnan 04).Nevertheless, of all the definitions given above, the definitions given by Griswold and Gill and Adams are comprehensive and closely linked to the culture of the students involved in this study. The attributes such as values, beliefs, norms and attitudes serve as a scale in recognizing culture that causes obstacles in students' acting practice.

Tamil culture has existed in Sri Lanka since times immemorial. The geological, anthropological, historical, literary and linguistic evidences point to the coincidence of the demographic population with racial and cultural affinities along with the

inhabitants of South India. (Thani Nayagam 02). On par with the cultural elements and rituals, religions and festive celebrations, norms and beliefs, there are also stigmatic institutional elements such as dowry, caste, marriage system, regionalism and ostracism which are still on the rise and practice in Sri Lankan Tamils in variable extent and intensities, differing from place to place (Rasanen 68, Somasundaram and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 50).

In this context, the defined cultural attributes such as values, beliefs, norms and attitude influence people, including the students involved in the present research. Besides, apart from cultural aspects, it is important to note here that other factors also influenced the behavior and the performance of the students. The researcher has faced different issues in his effort to train actors for various theatre practices and play productions. The students, while practicing their rehearsals and training themselves as actors by attempting to enact a rehearsal based on their previous experiences as a cultural being, sustaining themselves in the human society around were usually unable to express to their fullest potential and the expressed performance was not satisfactory. The student was unable to bring out the bodily expressions and display meaningful involvement in order to connect with the practice, training, and performance. Behind these problems of expressing themselves the backdrop of cultural factors and aspects are obstructing the acting practice. The cultural factors impeding the acting practice are: the self-confidence of an individual that is lacking and is constantly creating doubts in the student's belief about his self-expression during their practice and also due to the pessimistic attitude that has been constantly filled with fear of practice in an acceptable scale of unanimous understanding. Female students preferred to display more verbal involvement than bodily expressions during practice, but lacked confidence in bodily expressing themselves as they are conscious

about their cultural strictures of the body which not only highlighted their existence as a girl, but also the stigma towards their human body levied by the actively involved practical process of socialization (Shilling 40). Even while performing as a team both the girl and boy maintained some cultural distance between each other due to their norms they have been engendered and socialized. The girl student performers were not ready to act in any character acceptably and were obstructed by their normative concern leaving early and reaching their anxious homes respectively. Even boys too disagreed to act certain characters such as dead body, caste wise characters which they reject straight away. Some kinds of training methods, namely western methods the students were sometimes confronting certain difficulties due to their cultural conditions. For example both the girls and boys felt inconvenient in performing certain exercises and games in agreement with each other. The students were not always willing to maintain scheduled routines in terms of punctuality and systematic practice in a flow of expressive understanding. Especially the first year students tended to feel difficulty in expressing themselves in practical classes due to being subjected to ragging traumatically. The strikes that happened in the universities tended to pose an absence in the practical classes attendants. The internal politics within the Academic Staff and their conflicts in agreeing with varied opinions distracted their attention in theatre practice. Thus, it is extremely important to identify the root causes of these issues and drawbacks in order to suggest sustainable solutions and apply remedies. The root causes connected to the cultural aspects are discussed in detail in analytical chapter.

The main hindrance in the developmental process of the Sri Lankan Tamil Drama, however, was the issues related to Tamil culture. .. It should be taken into consideration that the research being done with the students of Jaffna University,

offering Drama and Theatre as a subject may provide solutions to the general problem encountered by Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. The problems in terms of practice, participation and rehearsal process of the male and female students constantly created obstacles due to their normative and culturally accepted patterns of living which are programmed structures in their mind and which inhibit their practical process. Though the data was collected mainly from the university and from the students, much of the information was collected from the meeting and conversation held with the artists, they are not attached to the university, but performing on the common stages of their own places. Thus the findings of this thesis will reach the society directly (since the students are mostly from villages), and hence, it is the reason for the selection of the title given to the present study, “Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre”. The beneficiaries of this research are the teachers and lecturers in school and university level; practitioners in private theatre groups, trainer in dance and coaches in sports.

The ‘present’ will play an important role in further refining and reorienting the approaches in nurturing the talent of the students and also honing their skills both in dimensions of outcome and involvement practically and also in addressing the obstacles that they face specifically due to their engendered and institutional conceptions of the body and bodily expressions as a male and female (man and woman). The students trained by the researcher were not only involved in theatrical body expressions, but also on par with that they were involved in dance, physical exercise, learning of theoretical knowledge which gave them a scope of possible thoughts on which they could practically capitalize in the rehearsal process. During this process of actor training the student was liable to learn and overcome certain kinds of cultural restrictions in a constructive manner. Especially the female students in practice expressed more inhibitions in participating and performing due to their

cultural restrictions, also their conduct as a woman, socializing in a society towards their body and certain biological processes, for example menstruation and also their related beliefs and valued customary superstitious fallacies which impede their practical process. Female students confront the barriers of acceptance through societal agencies of family, neighborhood both in terms of relations and their elderly peers in conducting themselves in public performances which today in the contemporary global world should be broadened and accepted as it can significantly help in both elevating and empowering women in the daily life routines and participations practically. Furthermore, the findings will be also helpful to design a refined curriculum appropriately and of benefits for studies on gender. Moreover, the cultural and anthropological activists can have insight into the issues and ideas emerging from this research

In addition to culture, the effects of the war too have had an impact on actor training. The war and the post war context influenced/ have influenced Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. It should be highlighted that there were new forms of drama that emerged or have emerged due to the war. Arguably, it could be an impact of the war on the mindset of artists. For instance, clear differences were noticed during the workshops. Sinhala actors tended to select themes such as love and affection in role plays etc, whereas in the workshops held in areas prominently inhabited by Tamils the effects of the war were frequently treated as the main theme.

### **Research Questions and Objectives of the Study**

When Drama and Theatre studies had been introduced in undergraduate study level, the oncoming of preliminary research interest towards the undergraduate level of

understanding and application has sprouted, but most of these researches did not reach and signify beyond the superficial levels. The research conducted so far especially in theatre lacks a lot of depth in analysis in order to serve as a model for further research. Furthermore, the post graduate researches have not started in the field of Drama and Theatre Arts at faculty of graduate studies at University of Jaffna. The researcher who investigates issues related to theatre inevitably ends up looking into social issues (Mounaguru, *Arankiyal* 145). Mounaguru who served at two universities located in different regions inhabited by Tamils did many researches on traditional theatres. Kaarai Sudarampillai, being a scholar, carried out several researches on *Issai Nadagam* (Parsi Theatre). Sithamparanathan researched social conflict, social changes and theatre. His researches were based on applied theatre. At that time Jeyaranjini made an investigation into how to promote theatre to the level professional and commercial theatre. Jeyashankar carried out a research on traditional theatre. An eminent scholar, Sivathamby, in his book “Ancient Drama in Tamil Society” investigated the dramas of ancient times produced in Tamil Nadu. He also wrote many articles on modern theatre. Besides, a dramatist, Shanmugalingam wrote on the history of Sri Lankan theatre and modern theatre. Navadharshani is currently doing a research on dramatic text. Shriganeshan has done many reviews of drama and written many criticisms on dramas.

The general and practice as research methodologies are together employed to collect and analyze data for the present study. The method “the practice as research” is a significant component of this research. This methodology which is given “a wide range of definitions” “engages specific aspects of theatre and performance as innovative process...” (Kershaw 64). The transmission of this method is always multi-modal (Kershaw 66). Therefore, this method enables a researcher to manipulate

various methods to collect data. Additionally, how the observation was made, the process of observation, and how data was collected have gained importance in this research. Further, the researcher simultaneously played several roles such as trainer, observer and teacher. For the reasons mentioned above, the methodology chapter is treated as a separate chapter here.

Now the significance of the present investigation is given a focus. The researches on the topic of acting and directing by means of using social, cultural aesthetic views have not been done so far. In addition, the research related to the field of acting, especially the actor training, remained untouched in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. In this context there was both a need to research acting and its related issues, and find out solutions for those issues. Further it is, therefore, significant to focus on indigenous training methods, thereby making a contribution to scholarly argument. This research deals with the following questions: What are the cultural restrictions on the performers of Tamil theatre in the Northern Sri Lanka?, what solutions can be arrived at when confronted with cultural issues related to practicum and performance?, and how are the foreign techniques modified during all theatrical work? .

The researcher's experience gained from participating in dramas in his childhood, offering drama as a subject during academic studies and taking part in dramas in during such studies, and teaching, training and producing during his career as a lecturer enabled him to identify the problems in the field of acting in Sri Lankan theatre. Especially, as a lecturer and a training staff of the students at the university the researcher encountered different challenges regarding training. I observed many times that the students failed to give good performance on the stage, even after a disciplined, intense training. The question as to why these students are unable to



perform well made me to look deep into certain matters. Consequently, it was understood that the culture was the main encumbrance in this matter.

The next important matter observed was the war and the consequences caused by it; particularly, the training given to the students involving the expression by the students was unusual and did not suit to the situation as the emotions either differed or - over expressed. The reason was that the students were the most victimized groups in the war. They experienced the loss of beloved ones, relatives, missing, and displacement, a terrifying and fearful situation, there was no guarantee for life, law of emergency and the gun fights, scarcity of essential facilities, non-availability of electricity supply. Both the students and researcher belong to the same society and were affected at the same level. Nevertheless, as a university lecturer his situation was better because he had some sort of security.

Hence, when they were made to act in a drama or when they were put into debating on a subject, the feelings they had inside their minds were expressively poured out. Thus, the mode of training had to be changed. Hence, the research ventures to bring out these students' over feeling /extreme feeling in accordance to our cultural environment. The great fact found out on this subject was that there should be a therapeutic approach to make these students have a balanced mind set. Besides, various types of cultural problems were encountered during the training. They were gender issues related to physical contacts to each other, psychological issues, issues regarding social status, western approaches, and issues related to third world education system.

Generally, the matter of both men and women acting together is considered a cultural issue, which was considered to be avoided. In earlier days, the female roles too were played by men and not by women. Even in India, Japan and China also the practice

was the same (Arulchandran, *Forwarded by Shanmugalinkam* 05). Though this practice existed, women started to take up female roles themselves as time went by. But, in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre, the practice of men and women acting together is criticized, and it is considered a problematic issue lacking consensus. Even now, even though the women started to be on stages, it is still considered as compromising the cultural “values”. Moreover, in Tamil society, the women who took part in dramas in earlier days are still considered undisciplined or immoral people. In addition, limitations exist with free bodily movements, female artists are cautious about it in particular. It prevents successful representation of a character by an artist; despite they are talented to do that.

The status and respect given to the artists by the society has become a cultural reason for this. In earlier days, ‘*Koothu*’ performed in tents and the drama companies were looked down upon by the society (Chornalingam04). There is a saying in Tamil, “Playing ‘*Koothu*’ is an act, by good for nothing fellow”. Moreover, they were considered drunkards and addicts of drugs, and shameless people with debts. There is an opinion among people that lower caste people only resort to drama. It is to be noted that these opinions are still there even after the subject drama has been introduced into the curriculum of studies in schools and universities. Especially, there is a trend among students of other streams and sectors looking down upon the students offering Drama and Theatre. Even some parents do not want their children to learn Drama and Theatre. Likewise, in schools, the students who are not good in music and dancing are forced to offer the subject drama.

As far as the education system is concerned, it still carries the remnants of ‘Guru-Sishya’ system. This becomes a cause for cultural issue. The practice of trainers expecting too much of respect from students becomes an obstacle for the students to

express their motives freely. Additionally, the distance between the teacher and student cannot be fully neglected; it should be maintained to some extent. Since there is a norm that the teachers are superior to the students such cultural norm of “Guru Sishya’ system creates an obstacle in the training of acting. For example, in the book *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book for Students* Holliday, Hyde, and Kullman mention about Chinese students “... because of Confucianism (China) just as it was impolite for children to questions their parents, it was impolite for students to questions their teacher”.(10) It is important to have a system of education of students learning and moving independently on their own.

It may be observed that some of the cultural aspects have transformed into a deeply set psychological aspect. The girls keep away from practice when they have their menstrual periods. According to doctors it is no harm to participate in such activities during this period. But as this is a set psychological issue, it affects the practice of drama. Even now in villages and towns women do not attend auspicious events or enter Hindu Kovils. There is a need to eliminate this superstitious belief in order to make this practice more effective and efficient. Menstruation is held to be superstitious stigma as it is regarded as a pollution of the body and demands total abstain from cultural roles and other activities in both daily and festive ritual life. This abstain also extends to the practice of theatre and thus restrains the practice and consciously inhibits the participation in a performance both during rehearsal and acting training.

To make this worse, copying down the acting principles and training methods adapted by the West serves as a barrier or put the students in a difficult position to assimilate them. A nation’s individuality lies mainly on language, religion and culture. The need for adapting with the aspects of culture is a feature of the post-colonial period and

thus, there is an urgent need to change and adapt the western principles and practice to suit our culture when undergoing training.

Another important issue is that, people lack belief and exploration of their self. This affects the involvement and the outcome of practice; instead they are much worried about others so-called caring' opinion and sayings, which hinders their faith of trying and practicing to perform can be described as an inward cultural issue. This is the information that I got through discussion with the students during my process of research. Here the choice of disciplining oneself depends mainly on the saying and opinion of others, and also there is an inherent fear that others will disagree with them. In the process of my research it has been revealed that the main reason for this fear is the prevailing arranged marriage system for girls since there is a habit of inquiring about girls by bridegroom party. Once the proposal commences, the parents of the bride are afraid of the society. Thus everyone thinks that the character of the girl should be good and she should have a good name in the society. This too comes under psychological issue. Hence, the word 'others' has a great influence on the society, causing challenges for men and women to assemble for performing together on stages.

The whole issue could be seen through two key perspectives. First the influence of the western cultural imperialism since the time of colonialism, followed by western theatre forms, eventually submerged traditional Tamil drama and theatre. The Portuguese invaded Ceylon, during the early sixteenth century and introduced the Roman Catholic religion and began proselytizing the people with ruthless vigour. There were dramatic performances of Christian origin conducted in these areas as a propaganda medium (Perera 82) The Modern Indian Theatre had been initiated under the influence of British colonizer who regarded theatre as a mode of entertainment.

The English education favored the addition of more officers and also served as an impetus for solidifying the aspect of drama in the form of Western culture during the 1700s. (Chandradasan 47). The aspects of Indian theatre has influenced the changes happening in the Sri Lankan Theatre in particular the South Indian cultural aspects has played a major part in shaping and orienting the theatrical perspectives. Thani Nayagam points out the evidence in relation to the other subjects of inquiry geologically, anthropologically, historically, sociologically, linguistically and also in terms of literature speaking about people of Sri Lanka racially and culturally affinitive to the inhabitants of South India, India (02). The Tamils of South India had a direct influence over the Sri Lankan Theatre where certain plays were directly played by the south Indians in the theatre spaces of Sri Lanka. During the British Period, the influence of Victorian Theatre spread to all parts of India at the same time from South India Tamil Nadu it had come to Sri Lanka. In this process first came the Parsi Theatre forms which laid the foundation for Indian Theatre. Consecutively, the oncoming of Proscenium Theatre in Sri Lanka succeeded the Parsi. This Proscenium theatre entered Sri Lanka only after its development in India. Quoting Benegal's statement to justify it "Another imperishable Western influence on the Indian theatre has been the proscenium arch and painted scenery born of the Italian Renaissance" (09).

After 1940's, some of the Sri Lankan inhabitants travelled to the West to learn the aspects of Theatre and came back here to lay the foundations of Modern Theatre. The Western Theatre has been mostly described as having over-shadowed the Indian Theatre and disturbed the progressive process of development. It is being pointed out that the Western Models have been more based on realism rather broadening organically out of the actual practices of the different forms of Indian Performance.

(Ananthakrishnan 291). After The National School of Drama theatrical spreading in India, after the year of 1990 in Sri Lanka, the interested crowd of theatre began to take training in India, particularly University level in which the focus has been on Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh. The Western Theatre also addressed certain positive issues which are to be taken into consideration. Due to the onset of Western Theatre the imbalance and focus on indigenous theatrical forms have been pushed off to the back track.

Actor training method is to be culturally incorporated into practice and performance. The method is accomplished in the way of traditional mode and transformed techniques, depending on the cultural existence. And a third approach of training is also needed for the present situation.

This study aimed to understand the nature of actor training in a specific cultural context, focusing on Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. The main objective of this research was to analyze the process of actor training and its outcomes in connection with the culture in which it was practiced. The actor training is formally practiced in schools and universities in Sri Lanka. The work carried out was mainly based on the training practices for actors implemented at University of Jaffna. But it is to be noted that this research did not attempt to comprehensively find out the history of actor training, but concentrated on the following objectives. Since this research field is concerned with theatre practice, the methodology of this research is explained in a separate chapter which includes both qualitative and performative approaches with the study of practice as research. This research attempted to establish the following.

1. To identify the cultural restrictions on the performers of Tamil theatre in the Northern Sri Lanka

2. To find the solutions when confronted with cultural issues related to practice/training and performance
3. To investigate the effectiveness of the modified foreign techniques

Actor training in different periods has been related to body, voice and mind which are the fundamental components of expressive acting practice. The physical training of the body includes movement, action, gesture, posture, and voice variably in terms of volume, pitch, tone, pronunciation, intonation etc. and to be coordinated in alignment with the mind in terms of dynamic entities such as emotion, imagination and psychology. Even each one has its own sections which are interdependent of one another. Different practitioners encountered different challenges and main focus.

Stanislavski in his book “An Actor Prepares” brings out his experiences, including significant challenges he went through, during actor training and productions. He points out setbacks and defects of actor training done by his predecessors. Before him, acting meant imitating the old actors. Similarly, training bore the characteristics of imitation (Benedetti xix). “Stanislavski also recognized that different countries and different cultures would need to adapt the ‘system’ to their own requirements” (Benedetti xiv). He submitted his ideas on how an actor should be and how he should tackle challenges in the form of a conversation. One of the methods of him called emotional memory was rejected or avoided by him and later on Michal Chekhov had breakdown to use emotional memory (Walsh 33, Chamberlain 81). Moreover, having found some faults in the process of Stanislavski’s actor training, Meyerhold puts forward Bio-mechanism which was a system for actor training (Gordon 85, Leach 39). Bertolt Brecht provided training for actors in order to enable them to act objectively through actor training process, however it was found that the outcome of the performance of those actors was not in line with training provided to

them (Willett 173). And also he demanded from actors on epic acting, which should be in a certain degree of detachment in the emotional expression. The actor's acting is based on the reporting of the event and no emotional tricks were allowed (Willett 144,155). But the reporting, detachment and avoided emotional tricks are basically very difficult task to train the actor. Jacques Copeau mentioned in his actor training method that the neutrality is a fundamental aspect of the actor being as silence and calm that is the first point the actor must learn (Rudin 70). Krasner cites the definition of Strasberg's training that is that an actor feels at time like crying but he can't cry, this situation has been created against the expression of emotion. He tried in practice the problem of unleashing the expression of the actors (Krasner 134). Another significant contribution to actor training was made by Peter Brook. He regards the term "preparation" as the more appropriate word for actor training. Brook's concept of training is quite important. Actors "are invited to work beyond or beneath encultured theatrical conventions, whether it be the 'the psychological truths' of Western naturalism or the codified gestures of Asian forms" (Marshall and Williams 178). Therefore, an actor should get rid of habit and the known through un-learning which is the process of forgetting and learning. Grotowski's work is also the most influential in actor training techniques. According to Grotowski the contribution of training is not alone limited to the enhancement of the actor's physical and receptive capacities, "but also has value as a discipline, an embodied commitment to constantly struggling to supersede the limits of one's abilities". He did not agree with the concept of training that aimed to enhance in the actor "a collection of skills or bag of tricks" (Wolford 198). Eugenio Barba deals with actor training in his book titled *Beyond the Floating Islands*. He views it as "a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests itself indissolubly through physical reactions". He



also stresses that it is not the exercise “...but the individual’s justification for his own work” (56). According to Augusto Boal the most important thing in acting training is that “how to give and take how to hold back and lead on, how to be creative”. Commenting on the mindset of actors, he claims that they must not have fear, which is common in professional actors. Here he has highlighted the fear in actors and the importance of overcoming the fear (Boal, Forum Theatre 276). Babbage commenting on Boal says that Boal is of the view that the actors do not necessarily need training because he claims that everyone can do theatre and methods. However, his theatre in some cases involves non actors, ordinary people who are supposed to spontaneously express themselves. But he stresses that performances are planned, presented and facilitated by the performers who need some training in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency (311). Ramanujan, an Indian theatre scholar and practitioner, states that neutral physical and vocal training is important for an actor. It is derived through Martial Arts (*Kallarippajitsi*) in our societies (6). Kanhailal, however, claims that actor training is not perceived as a preparation for a role, but ‘an integrated process’ aimed at bringing out performances (15). Prasanna puts forward two aspects to any skill training such as the tool and the operator of the tool. Just like in painting the painter operates the paint brush and in sculpture the sculptor operates the hammer and chisel to shape a sculpture. But unlikely in theatre the operator and the operated are just the same are trained under the self-operation of the actor to perform. This unique factor of performance arts where the actor trainer is both the operator and the operated of the own self, which on the whole does impact the training methodology and the orientation towards acting (224, 225). Chornalingam, a pioneer of Sri Lankan modern Tamil theatre, claims that setting up an institution for actor training is not necessary since training to each and every trainee is unique and differences arise when training

on acting to act a particular character is given to many actors. Therefore, “the lessons should be adapted to suit individual student’s natural inclination (Introduction III)”. An eminent artist of Sri Lankan Tamil theatre, Shanmugalingam, says that the actor should learn the skill to express rationally and emotionally; both are as necessary as a railway track running parallel to act the characters, for which both should come out abreast in an actor. Besides, he postulates that an actor should get into the emotion of the character and puts emphasis on three aspects which an actor must adapt to reduce nervousness; they are long term actor training, clarity of sensational thoughts and set goal. But the actor should develop the last two aspects autonomously (Shanmugalingam, *Nadagavazhakku* 59). Mounaguru, another Sri Lankan theatre artist, stresses that a good actor trainer makes trainers integrate all the talents and feats of men and use them for producing a drama. He/she imparts the knowledge step by step, considering the mind, skills, maturity and experiences of the actor trainers (27). Further Tarcisius handled traditional kooththu and employed stylized acting during training (Sivathamby et al. 200). Additionally, he made use of some of the techniques of the saints and indigenous medical practitioners in the northern part of Sri Lanka (Ponraj 4). Sithamparanathan, a Sri Lankan theatre artist and lecturer, states that an actor should enhance his own perception of the character through training because he/she performs the character through his/her mental perception (85).

A modern Sri Lankan theatre scholar and artist, Saumya Liyanage, states that

“Without having an actor-training pedagogy, actors in the Sri Lankan theatre industry have employed on-the-job apprenticeships as their informal actor learning system for fulfilling their acting needs. My acting career and apprenticeship has also been developed through on-the-job training as one of the prime sources of learning” (192).

In the light of above discussion, actor training has played a significant role worldwide. The changes that happened in the domain in the course of time were

unique and distinctive. Likewise in Sri Lankan modern Tamil theatre many artists got involved/ have got involved. Commonly in the training process The Physical body, vocal and psychological attitudes of training for the actor is inevitably and invariably initiated by one's own enculturated (native) and socialized cultural and environmental settings. Evan highlights that the body is not an object but a process which manipulates the social conception of the body. This process developed for a specific theatrical purpose (99)

These restrictions in cultural settings are observed particularly in Eastern countries like India and Sri Lanka. The cultural conditions levied by the enculturated atmosphere brings forth certain cultural prohibitions which gets manifested as inhibition during the practical process of actor training which forms the main essence of my research problem identifiably and this research tried to encounter or overcome the limitations. Schechner's statement about Grotowski's work clearly describes the restrictions- "Grotowski watches. He helps us remove blocks, things that prevent us from fully confronting and experiencing the actions at hand." (47) The quality, skill, knowledge and ability are manifested through the practical process of training persistently. Good all mentions that inner power, skill and techniques are acquired through training (08).

The students have been the subjects of this research who were of various cultural backgrounds were trained to act. The students practicing though have knowledge about the issues as an actor, but still they encounter barriers in expressing their ability as an outcome during their practice. In order to refine the researcher's understanding of actor training and have diverse views of its processes, resources of prominent theatre practitioners have been referred to and the obstacles encountered in their contributions in their redefining of practical actor training methods. The cultural

restrictions in acting practice influence the voice and speech, body and movement, emotion and imagination of the students pursuing their actor training. In the Literature Review, the body-mind and the emotions in different practitioners in different periods always tended to differ and adhere with different philosophical principles which did bring about changes in acting practice and actor training process. In the European and the Asian context, the acting and actor training were carried out differently and also varied in approach and orientation. The acting practices and the actor training and also their periodic evolution of changes historically will be accounted and examined. The next problem that will be stated as one of the research questions is about the Western influences on the Eastern countries in terms of theatre and practice especially in the Indian and Sri Lankan context.

### **Chapterization of the Thesis**

The first chapter deals with the introductory aspects of culture and actor training and also the background of the research context and the motivation which is being explored. The same chapter also explores the reason behind why this research has been conducted and also the beneficiaries of the outcomes of the research as well as the research questions and their relevant objectives. Second chapter reviews the main theoretical underpinnings of the research, and also tries to relate to how the body, mind and emotion involves in different philosophical and cultural context in acting practice and actor training. Third chapter explains the methodology with a conceptual overview and justification of methods that were applied, and different tools and techniques used for data collection and analysis. This research has been concentrated basing practice as research. The report contains a special chapter before the data

analysis, but an essential piece of work to approach the discussion and analysis, titled “An introduction to Sri Lankan Tamil theatre” has been included. The fourth chapter deals with the discussion and analysis regarding the issues of the cultural restrictions which were confronted during actor training process in the theatre students of University of Jaffna and also has considered some other private theatre groups and artists for analysis. The fifth chapter is conclusion. Finally bibliography and appendix have also been included. In the appendix, a special overview of Sri Lankan Modern Theatre which helps in lively reflecting the background of Sri Lankan Theatre, the data collection forms, students consent forms, and also drama script which served as the blue print for the play production conducted for the purpose of this research signifying the importance of practice as research and also in analytical chapter, the script dialogues have been referred.

## CHAPTER 2

### Historical Overview of Actor Training

Many researches and publications on actor training have been made. Various types and styles of acting are mentioned in them. Different approaches to actor training are adapted in order to bring out different styles. When each new approach emerges, it reveals flaws in the older methods. In acting or actor training, the trainers, despite the availability of new approaches, focus on body and mind; Emotion is related to the mind, and the challenges that emerged during actor training are associated with body and mind. This is given a focus in this chapter.

In this present research, when training is provided, giving importance to body and mind, many challenges arose due to the limits set by culture. The investigations into cultural restriction regarding actor training are very limited or not available to the researcher's knowledge. In some essays, however, the cultural restrictions are discussed in limited way. It is not a profoundly investigated phenomenon. Hence, this research would be a pioneer in this regard in the present context. This literature study attempted to examine how body and emotions in acting or actor training are perceived is explored. Research on these two attributes is not done in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre although a few researches on these are done in Jaffna University. Data on actor training was obtained through focus group discussion and interviews with a view of ascertaining how actor training was carried out in Sri Lankan theatre. Next acting and actor training from the time they originated in Greece is discussed.

Regarding the development of acting and actor training in the historical overview, there have been different types of styles and approaches, principles and criticism emerging from ancient time to present day. In the Greek period the actor was an

orator, the voice was the main expressive acting tool as centered because there were a large number of audience approximately 14,000 and also they wore masks. The Greek actors wore masks which covered the face according to facial structure and was left uncovered at the areas of the eyes, nostrils and also mouth (oral) which functionally significant in enhancing the tone and also resonating the voice to spread and reach to the dispersed mass gathering. This event of oration signifies that voice training played a major role in the Greek Period. At the time, the actor was as a trainer himself and he pleaded his case, and because he enacted the speech which he himself composed (Fantham 369). From the tragedies of Thespis the theatrical singers are confirmed (Wilson 04). And also Peter Wilson highlights in his article "Sicilian Choruses" about trainer- there are various terms mentioned such as 'training-room' (especially for the training of choruses), 'trainer' or 'trainer/poet' and 'to train' (a chorus). (361). Aeschylus for example author-director trained the chorus, supervised each aspect of play production. At the time, the director was called *didaskalos*, the Greek word for "teacher," implies that the early directors functioned as a trainer, instructing their actors on staging their work (Brocket 24). The teacher who taught the students took up the role of a trainer. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, a famous actor named Polus emotionally expressed the cremation scene and the death of a beloved basing his script of portrayal from the play story representation and adaptation of Electra's sorrow of losing Orestes and weeping her loss over Orestes' bones by carrying an urn laden with the ashes of his dead son, and thus enacting the better of Electra filling the theatre with genuine weeping. (Holford-Strevens 502). This signifies that the Greek Theatre had not only made space for voice as expressive emotion, but also included and enhanced space for emotional expression as part of the mind in theatre expression. The emotion he used to the play *Electre* was genuine and

unfeigned. The acting of the Greek period trained and practiced not only voice but also emotion. The organized actor training commenced in the Roman world. Simultaneously, the techniques of the actor were emerging and the art of pantomime was certainly arduous and required several training (Hall 28). In medieval times, pageant master was the trainer or director. In Shakespeare theatre, many actors started their career at their young age, joining a company as an apprentice and be trained by one of the more senior actors. Actors got exercises to do sword fight, singing and dancing and also got memory power for rendering their dialogue. For the Renaissance period until the 19th century, the actor-manager was the main role for training and directing and it was a position of senior actor who took the control for the work, performing and managing.

*Natyasastra* entails the description of the actor training process. The manual of the Sanskrit tradition of performing arts is *Bharatha's Natyasastra* (200 BC) which is called as 'the science of performance' (Chandradasan 54). All the elements of performing arts such as dance, music, make-up, costumes, actor, acting, and audience, types of dramas, styles, language, dramatic structure and architecture are included in it. The actor training process mentioned in *Natyasastra* discusses about the classification of parts of the body into *Angas and Upaangas*. In order to enhance one's body language in performing *Natyasastra*, there are different kinds of exercises mentioned: facial muscles movement, exercise for eyes, gestures of limbs and hands, postures and emotional status as in *Rasas*. *Natyasastra* practice is still performed in *Kutiyattam* (Chandradasan 54). Acting history often shows that the directors as trainers created different theories and techniques.

The practice of acting can be classified into four acting styles. They are style of involvement, style of detachment, the style of self-expression (Konijin 36) and



finally the codified acting (Shechner, *Performance studies* 183). The style of involvement is mostly related to Stanislavski's system and Lee Strasberg's method. The style of involvement in the display of emotion on the performing space must be a real appearance. In Stanislavski process his approach is depicted as an explanation on how to use the subconscious through emotional memory. But 'how can the actor experience fresh emotions time and again, after frequent rehearsals and several performances?' (Konijn 38). This has been questioned in order to seek and search the actor training process refinement. In addition, emotion is associated with the mind, and culture is related to the mind because the minds of individuals constitute a society.

Lee Strasberg's works known as The American Method were based on the Stanislavski system. The actor performing on the stage has to kindle his emotions as per his imagination of events and the objects of the character played also in complementary with his out flux of automatic physiological responses which do help in capably creating a belief as an actor on stage, helping him in presenting a real experience.

Stanislavski system of acting is based on a constant training of an actor through his process of conscious realization of the self (Schechner, '*Performers and Spectators*' 84). The process of training as an actor systematically is psycho-physical i.e. interdependence of body and psychology feel and attitude individually (Merlin, *Konstantin* 58). The actor as a human being has been constantly involved with the emotional memories of his life experiences which are to be recalled and regarded as a catalyst (potential capabilities) necessary to sharpen and hone them skillfully just as he does with the other senses through exercises (Hodge 10). Emotional memories are the memories recalled to be experienced by an actor during his life time and which he

utilizes in the involvement of his acting process of fine tuning his inner self in order to consciously hone his psycho-physical bodily expression skillfully (Merlin, *Konstantin* 62). This process of actor's inner preparation aids oneself in the development of an unique inner creative state which is aiming to seek the super objective of the play based on the conscious inflow of lines of action sequenced as an influx of subconscious inspiration (Merlin, *Konstantin* 79). The actor must seek inspiration to exercise his practice to his best potential based on his own crucible of emotional memories in order to discover his creative self rather than merely and randomly borrowing it from others (Stanislawski 210). Stanislavski emphasized the point that there is no single correct way of exercising one's practice as a system being emphasized by a dogmatic teacher to be blindly listened and exercised as a 'parrot-fashion'. But in his last days he regarded the system as a handbook guide, but not as a philosophy for the moment. A system is conceptualized as a philosophy; it is no longer a system and is the oncoming of its end (Stanislavski, *An Actor's Works* 612).

Lee Strasburg emphasized Affective Memory as a style of involvement. An actor during his involvement in his process of acting is supposed to draw an analogy emotionally based on a situation experienced in the past which affects his performance in expressing his real self in front of the audience. But yet it is not so easy to bring out the real self in front of a stage of audience. Strasberg recognized the process of acting involvement by devising an exercise of private moment as a resolution to above problem. (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 179) Starsbeg emphasized that the purpose of Affective Memory is not to touch or feel or see something but is a form of hallucinating or hypnotizing one's vision with the goal of recalling in order to stimulate an appropriate mood to an appropriate situation (Gordon 144). Gordon mentioned that the affective memory or the emotional recall of

memory has been effective in unblocking certain creative barriers and served the actor in freely expressing his feelings. Strasburg claims that manipulating affective memory is like practicing Psychiatry without any license critically (145). (Augusto Boal presents evidence in the cases of actors affected due to the recalling of emotional memory 36).

Next we will consider the style of detachment proposed by Bertolt Brecht who himself distrusted his idea of actor as one who alternated between the sublime and transitional lines of detachment between flow and reflexivity opposed to each other in acting. The actor externalizes and shows his attitude than the feel by being the character and the audience think about the character by judging his performance (Schechner, *'Performers and Spectators'* 84, Willet, *The Theatre of 172-174*). Stanislavski the style of acting involvement has been more in restriction to the actor individually but Brecht style of detachment has been more in terms of acting process as a community life and theatre in society (Hodgson 108). Since the style of detachment acting is an ideal, it is constantly being criticized and rejected. Since Brecht regarded theatre as a community life he emphasized about the observation of the outside world. As part of his observation he emphasized that the actor who observes the other actors learns and develops his character as with the others collectively or as a community (Thomson 121, Willett, *The Theatre of 197*). The question was posed to Brecht as to whether his actors performed to his expectations. He replied that they acted wrong and went on to say that they should have demonstrated their knowledge to 'the audience of scientific age' and they would have expressed it 'consciously, suggestively, descriptively' (Willett, *Brecht on 26*). Brecht had encountered the problem from his actors.

In the theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanical system the importance of body in terms of space called scenic movement is of utmost importance. The actors theatricalized the action and regarded themselves as agents for the expression of emotion. They expressed themselves through their body on the basis of exercising physical control, rhythmic awareness, responding to the partners and the audience, as a work spirit of team (Leach 29, 31, 32). The expression of the physical body held to be valid, whereas characteristic part played, the voice, speech intonations and the emotions expressed detrimentally depends on the position of the body (Leach 29). The activities of bodily expression in space and position just take the necessary emotion and expression it through voice and body. Therefore, this theatrical body expression is related to the style of detachment.

Grotowski has been a influential tall figure who actively contributed to the development of experimental theatre and actor training techniques by citing inspiration from the contributions of Stanislavsky's work with physical actions Meyerhold's biomechanics and the Delsarte system as an Asian Theatre as valuable resources fruitful in the formation of his theatre of self-expression (Wolford 199, 208). Grotowski rejected any form of actor training which regarded teaching a particular set of skills (206). He emphasizes that an actor helps us in removing personal blockades or barriers that prevent us from fully confronting and experiencing the actions at hand (Schechner, *Performance theory* 47). The actor is able to feel and experience his own nature of reality and is able to express himself as an actor without personal barriers in a manner of his own self-expression. In this research the removal of personal obstacles and blocks were identified in the student actors in terms of cultural restrictions.

Peter Brook mentions about the need of the simultaneous inter-coordination of the body, thought and feelings which do help us gaining interconnections to others, leading to a wider network of relationships (Marshall and Williams 190). The body is regarded as both mediator of experience and reservoir storehouse of knowledge about the self-expression of the body, the intellect and the emotional faculties which are open, interconnected and active (Brook 1987: 232, Marshall and Williams 190). An actor should not commit the blunder of beginning a discussion of intellectual matters basing one's analysis potentially on rational thought. The intellect and the emotional faculties – are open, interconnected and active (Brook 108, Marshall and Williams 190). A young actor in his beginning discovers that his duty is to learn certain skills for him to be heard and seen for this his body has to obey his wishes (Brook 116). The actor must not only be sincere, but must also be insincere and must practice enacting insincerity with sincerity and how to lie truthfully. (Brook 117).

Eugenio Barba has emphasized more on training meticulously. Barba mainly emphasizes upon individual training practice as a necessity in exploring and honing one's skills through physical and vocal rhythms separately and independently, thus signifying the absence of dominance of one rhythm over the other. (Watson 239). Barba signifies technically that there are two phases, constituting two halves of the actor's presence; one is the human body and the other is the inner physiological tension that manifests only through the physical expression of an inner mental association which organizes as a psycho-physical essence (Watson 241). The actor practicing independently concentrates on the balance of muscular tensions which help him/her to be on a move and also on the inner essence of psycho-physical association aiding him in executing an overall physical exercise rather learning a specific skill. Barba exercised changes by drawing inspiration from Traditional Asian Forms

possibly suitable for Western actors relevantly. (Watson 243). The most important essence to be maintained by the training actors is daily self-discipline for conditioning one's own performance in terms of exploring and enhancing their physical and vocal potentials not only through an exercise but also through the process of mental discipline (Watson 246, 247). The actor's psycho-emotional responses to the events on the stage are also his own unique self-expression even among the theatre is to be pieced up personally in meeting up with the audience reactions (Watson 248). Since Barba's training encourages the actor to pursue one's self-discipline through individual's own self-expressions by training psycho-emotional expressions in connection with psycho-physical emotional expression. Thus Barba's acting style comes under the style of self-expression.

Babbage mentions that the works of Augusto Boal can be named as 'system of radical performance techniques' (305). Babbage further also states that Boal's statement regarding the actor training in formal sense that the actor does not need to train and professionalize to act for a formal training acquired in terms of traditional theatre practice for it will impede one's able understanding of effective theatre informally. The following statement was made by Boal: "Everyone can do theatre: even actors!" stated out of the frustrated responses of his fellow artists spiraled a controversy among the contemporaries". This statement of Boal has a dual significance in meaning about performing action in theatrical sense and also taking action socially and politically ((Babbage 305). Augusto Boal in his book titled "*Games for Actors and Non-Actors*" categorized and also defined the role specifications of who an actor and a non-actor and their significance. Babbage commenting on Boal's statement states that it signifies the argument of democratic ownership of art for all, reflecting

the connective attitude of Boal that all people have both the ability and right to act. (Babbage 305).

Boal asserts that actors discover expressions through the risk of experiencing emotion, quoting an example of a case study which had spoken about an actress who practiced the emotional recall and got carried away by the emotional experience consequently affecting her psychologically and had to be admitted in the mental hospital. But yet on the contrary, through the above example he does not intend to dismiss the practice of exercising emotionally (Boal, *Games for* 36). To overcome the risk of emotional memory exercises the actor has to rationalize what has happened (Boal, *Games for* 35). The above case of Boal is very significant because similar issue was confronted during the production made for the purpose of this research. It is discussed in the analytical chapter.

However, Boal emphasizes the crucial need for “rationalized emotion” in speaking about theatrical acting from self-consciousness. “The emotions the actor accesses through Stanislavskian emotional memory should not be employed in a raw state, but should be subjected to Brechtian rational analysis” (Auslander 101). This style of self-expression of one’s emotion memory should be expressed as a rationalized emotion.

Body and physical expression play a vital role in acting. Body and mind are not seen in isolation as far as acting is concerned. “Man is seen as a whole-mind-body and body-mind being one” (Clay 22). Body-related theories are looked at separately here. Human bodies are taken up and transformed as a result of living in society (Shilling 11). The body is the subsequent product of the interplay between social forces and relations (Shilling 160). Shilling cites Bryan Tuner as saying that the body in modern social system has been the primary component of political and cultural pursuit (1). Additionally the body is viewed as a fundamental site of cultural, social,

psychological and political contradiction (Leach 94). The body is closely related to ethnicity, gender, and class identity, health and disability. Understanding the historical and cultural construction of the 'natural' body is thus an important element (Evans 71). Marshall and Williams quoted Peter Brook as saying that the feasibility of intuitive comprehension through the body is stimulated and enhanced in many different ways (190). Females appeared to admit that their body was 'naturally' conditioned for social and domestic roles" (Evans 73). In naturalism, the actor attempts genuinely to imitate the emotions and actions of the day-to-day world and to live his role (Brook 117) Acting is absolutely immersed in the body. In order for us to experience the images, and bring out the things we are looking for, the images must be incorporated (Lenard 20). Stanislavski emphasizes that actors are able to communicate emotion and to signal the action of the psychophysical generation of emotion. The aim of 'neutral' body training is to open up the body to respond as directly, physically, spontaneously and naively as possible to emotion (Evans 86).

Stanislavsky's system is perceived to be psycho-physical, with body and psychology both of which depend on each other (Merlin, *Konstantin* 58). Stanislavsky stressed the importance of Yoga in actor training. This shows that he has given importance to body (Merlin, *Konstantin* 21). "Current research in cognitive neuroscience provides new insights into how the structures and processes of the brain, which is a part of the body, are related to consciousness, carrying with it the potential to deepen our understanding of acting methods" (Blair 03). This is particularly in line with the ideas of Stanislavsky and his heirs (Blair 03). "Biomechanics focuses on the body, particularly on balance, rhythmic awareness and responsiveness to the partner, to the audience, to other external stimuli through observation, listening and reaction (Leach 32). The physical form influences the speech intonations and the emotions because



they are ascertained by the position of the body” (Leach 29). According to Michael Chekhov, the psychological gesture is a means of bringing out the entire character in abbreviated physical form through an intuitive understanding of the character’s main desire” (Chamberlain 72)

Grotowski gives importance to the concept physical action put forward by Stanislavski. He believes that actor’s craft can be developed through this. In a sense Grotowski hints that his own research work is the continuation of Stanislavsky’s investigation (Wolford 201). Grotowski states that Stanislavsky’s work with physical actions, Meyerhold’s biomechanics and the Delsarte system the work of Vakhtangov and Dullin have benefitted the enhancement of his own practice. He admitted that he was inspired by the training methods of *Kathakali*, Peking Opera and Noh Theatre (Wolford 208).

The notion of ‘neutral’ body training is induced by the concept of pragmatism. This is to signify the necessity of training and honing the skills of the modern actor to his best with the physical skills necessary for the interpretation of dramatic roles and the development of a successful career (Morris 99). Zarrilli refers to Connerton as stating that actor training, acting, and spectating are “incorporating practices” through which the body mind and therefore experience and meaning, are “culturally shaped in its actual practices and behaviours (*Action, Structure* 147).

With the advent of Westerners, many changes occurred in Asia. Their presence caused disturbance, confusion and trauma in different domains- social, political, cultural and technological fields (Benegal 87). At the same time, cultures collide, the impact is a blending through mutual exchange, or a counter situation which can be resolved when one has dominated the other (Benegal 89). It can be historically observed that the synthesis, hybrid and enrichment or conflict and split are the result

of Western presence. This situation affected and changed the traditional theatre forms. The impact of Western elements, mainly due to a cultural expansion of West on Indian modern resulted in the development of Indian theatre during the late 1700 (Chandradasan 47). The Western influence of modern theatre in India contributed to the emergence of proscenium arch and painted scenery and this affected not only acting but also the play writing for instance Shakespear's dramatic texts (Benegal 91, 92). The Russian revolution is another impact produced on the Indian and other continents and the Moscow Art Theatre movement inspired Indian theatre (Benegal 94). *Kanhailal* states that "Western systems have managed to situate these borrowed elements into their specific cultural context. Practitioners in India, however, in borrowing from the West, have mostly taken up the received knowledge of these same Western practices of actor training, but have failed to contextualize them according to their own cultural milieus" (18). One of the theatre institutions in India is National School of Drama (NSD). Ebrahim Alkazi was the pioneer of this institution he employed the tool 'fundamentally based on Western models' (Ananthakrishnan 291).

'A whole culture' must be fostered over a long period. It cannot be imitated. An actor must get it into his/her nerves and it immerses in him, getting contextualized. He undergoes a process of transformation that is apt for the stage (B. Stanislavski 612). Through the above statement, it is highlighted that a new concept or practice adopted by a man must become part of him and ultimately come out through the culture of that man.

In sum, in light of the above discussion, the advent of Western elements in Asia brought about changes in many fields. In Indian theatre too, it caused changes, some of which are beneficial and some others are not desirable. The advent also caused cultural collision. However, Westerners were able to set the borrowed aspects into

their own 'cultural context', but the practitioners in the east have absorbed most part of the process of Western actor training, but have not succeeded in contextualizing them in accordance with them.

Till now the above analyzed summaries of Western theatre practitioners which spoke about physical, vocal and mental aspects particularly the emotional memory or affective memory and western influences in Eastern countries specially India and Sri Lanka (The changes identified in India by the influences of West which are incorporated the same to Sri Lanka, the chapter I included the facts and below of this chapter the fact is pointed out). How the practice has evolved and differed from one another. In all these theories the emphasized significance of how an actor is supposed to discover acting through emotion and transform in physical action, and physical action transformed into emotion. Irrespective of enacting a performance basing the transformation of emotion to physical action or vice versa, the need to rationalize one's memories, experiences and its consequences are to be rationalized to avoid obstacle, risks and deviances in performing action. Among the above stated practitioners some of them had uniquely borrowed understanding cross- culturally from the Asian Traditional Theatre forms. Next, now the need to explore how the Asian acting context has been applied under codified acting. Codified acting has been widespread all over the world and has expanded in scope extensively and relatively into countless systems of acting. In the Asian Acting Theatre context, the art of theatre acting is being passed on traditionally from teacher to student by rigorous means of laborious, arduous and meticulous practice through years-long training. They had placed keen importance on dance, music, songs, costumes and their relative gestures, movement and body language make up symbolically. (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 183, 184).

Another evident related acting training process comes from *Natyasastra*. According to the Chandradasan in the Asian context especially in India, *Natyasatra* occupies a key place in exploring theatre work (54). *Natyasastra* has classified the the parts of human body into Angas and Upaangas. *Natyasastra* has also mentioned the significance of enhancing body language and the necessity to exercise rigorously, whose types have been mentioned, which exercises changes on improving muscle tone and also stabilizing emotions on body parts such as facial muscles movement, exercise for eyes, gestures of limbs and hands, postures and emotional status as in Rasas. The practice of *Natyasastra* performance is still kept alive in the form of Kutiyattam in the South Indian state of Kerala (Chandradasan 54). In *Natyasasra*, emotion is of significant importance. . According to Richard Schechner, “every emotion is a sthayibhava. Acting is considered as an effective art of presenting the *sthayi bhava* where both the performer and the partaker can mutually “taste” and experience the emotion and the rasa” (*Performance Theory* 340). The emotions in the Indian aesthetics of *Natyasastra* Performance system, though based on individual experience yet is not personal, is accessibly tapped through recall of emotions (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 341). Indian Regional Theatre both the physical and emotional aspects are included. (Prasanna 178).

In Asian Context, Japanese Theatre’s *Noh* form of Art has been described to be extensively used and characteristically portrayed by Zeami. *Yugen* which is concerned with emotional aspects and also this Noh forms include other arts such as dance, music, and songs. All characterization in drama is symbolic and does serve as a vehicle to significantly represent something other than itself. This quality of symbolizing is seen practically in all forms and styles of the performing arts in Asia (Vatsyayan 21, 29 ).

The manual of Sanskrit tradition of performing arts is *Bharatha Natyasastra* (200 BC) which is called ‘the science of performance’ (Chandradasan 54). *Bharatha Natyasastra* entails the elements of arts such as dance, music, make up, costume, actor, acting, audience, types of dramas, styles, language, dramatic structure and architecture.

The parts of the body such as *Angas and Upaangas* and the exercises that different parts of the body receive are depicted through the actor training process in *Natyasastra*. Thoses physical exercises are facial muscles movement, exercise for eyes, gestures of limbs and hands, postures and emotional status as in *Rasas*. Sanskrit natiya in which actors were required to go through severe training was a professional actor’s theatre (Panchal 146). *Natyasastra* is still practiced in *Kutiyattam*.

Malik Vatsayan (30) cites Zeami as saying that *hana* is compared to mind and technique to the the seed, and that *hana* is brought out through intense training that is through “the accomplishment of technique on the stage. He further states that the presence of *hana* in the life of an artist is transitory at various stages of life however, later it becomes inherent in the life of an artist (29). Therefore, *hana* is a state of mind, and it is attained through intense training. *Hana* creates changes in the mind of an actor, equipping him/her with skills or talents to perform on stages. Yet the changes occurring in the minds of audience is called *yugen* ( MalikVatsyayan 29) In addition, *hana* and *yugen* can be compared with *Sthai Bhava* and *Rasa* in *Natyasastra*. These two can also be compared to the poetic of Aristotle in which, for example, the horror and grief brought out by actors creates pity and fear among audience which is called Catharsis. Moreoever, although *hana* involves severe training, non-aggressive techniques such as the Chinese *T'ai Chi Ch'uan* and the

Japanese Aikido that come under self-use training are also employed in the countries. These two are highly significant in performance training (Clay 22)

In the light of above discussion it can be said that the interaction between the mind and body of an actor plays a crucial part in actor training, and it is enhanced through training. Therefore, when the actors trained in this aspect perform, it results in the interaction between the actors and the spectators, ultimately training the viewers in a way. Presenting the performance to viewers through a trained actor is similar to dealing with the society. This research focuses on the contradiction, arising from the actors interacting with the society which is culture-bound.

In Indian context, martial arts have played a vital role in traditional theatre training. Particularly, *Kathakali* requires arduous training for the attainment of mastery in fundamental techniques and structures of performance (Zarrilli, *Kathakali* 65). Kathakali actors often practice, directing his focus and breath, contributing to “the engagement of the actor’s mind/attention/heart in the act of performing each ‘emotional’ state in turn” (Zarrilli, *Kathakali* 95). He further states that the mind (*mana*) “implies the engagement of the performer’s entire being/bodymind in a state of psycho-physiological connectedness and concentratedness through the internal coursing of the *prana-vayu*, and therefore engaging life itself (*jivan*) (95).

Traditional theatre forms and its related training existed in many parts of India. Training was provided from childhood through ‘Gurukula system’ that prevailed then (Zarrilli, *Kathakali* 68). Many conventional theatre forms were found in Tamil Nadu as well where even in ancient times they were found. This is mentioned by Sivathamby in his book titled “Drama in Ancient Tamil Society”. At the same time information on plays are found in ancient Tamil Literature books like Tholkappiam

and Syllappathikaram. Forms, emotions, and performing space are cited in these two books. Yet, training system related to drama is not given in the books in detail.

The link between Sri Lanka and India existed in the remote past. This relationship was also connected to arts and culture. As a result, the Sri Lankan arts were influenced by the arts from India. (Thani Nayagam 02). Some similarities between traditional theatre forms of Tamil Nadu and those of Sri Lanka substantiate the evidences for the ties between the countries. The theatre training in Sri Lankan traditional Tamil theatre forms has been family oriented; the required skills have been passed on to the younger generation from the previous generation through family system. Therefore giving or receiving training has not been a great issue. A traditional theatre artist assimilated the skills and feats through observation from childhood. Hence, training is the observation itself there. Nevertheless, in the contemporary situation, their survival has been questioned due to changing economic, cultural and social conditions (Mounaguru 243).

Late Professor Vithyanathan was a pioneer in reviving the traditional theatre forms (Sivathamby et al 194). He was a reformer, making changes in the theatre forms and upgrading it to the near level of modern theatre. For example, in his time the play "*Ravanesan*" was produced. After his demise, the desired outcomes achieved due to his work in the theatre forms could not be sustained.

These traditional theatre forms deal with the stories from myths and legends. These artists have not changed the subject matter or they do not like to incorporate contemporary matters into the theatre forms. However, some modern artists attempted to deal with current occurrences, employing traditional theatre artists (Jeyasankar 14). Traditional theatre forms were closely associated with religious and folk events. They

were at least annually performed in those events. Those events have omitted these traditional forms and sought some other alternatives such as musical concerts, speeches and debates. It can be observed in religious and social events now. As a result, the training in the older forms which was received through observation mostly was interrupted since the traditional theatre forms are not regularly required as in the past. Therefore the next generation to perform the traditional theatre forms has not emerged due to the interruption. In some Tamil areas, this theatre forms can be observed in the place of worship and communities due to the rigidity in religious and traditional norms.

Despite the changes which the traditional theatre forms went through, the foreign invasion also began to influence Sri Lankan traditional theatre forms. With the invasion of the Westerners, commerce, trade and arts, etc. between the countries flourished. In Tamil Nadu the influence of the Westerners brought about great changes in theatre forms. Sankaradas Swamikal (1867-1922) was regarded as the key figure in the development of modern Tamil drama. Historians claim that his works served as a bridge between tradition and modernity (Seizer 43).

The development in theatre forms also parallel took place in Ceylon as well. Arts were also brought from Tamil Nadu into Ceylon during the British colonial rule which permitted more liberty for the exchange of Arts between the two countries. For instance, Parsi model music drama was introduced to the country at the latter part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this type of plays was performed by Indian artists themselves in Ceylon (Sundharampillai, *Ezhathu Esai* 01). The existence of traditional and ritualistic theatre forms and the changes taking place in Tamil as well as Sinhala theatre due to the influence of the colonial rule are discussed in the next chapter. Now the role played by actor training in the modern Tamil theatre is looked at. To the



researcher's knowledge literature available on actor training in the modern Tamil theatre is very limited. Therefore, common theories related to actor training could not be worked out. Much of the data for the research was obtained through focus group discussion and interviews. Based on the information obtained from the artists, a systematic approach was created and analyzed, and emerging theories were recognized.

Sri Lanka Tamil theatre practitioners, Sithamparamathan and Mounaguru have made some observations on actor training related to the domains such as theatre for social development and the reformation of traditional theatre. First the remarks of Mounaguru are taken into consideration. According to him, actor training differs from trainer to trainer, and it refers to the process for enhancing skills and removing the obstacles of actors such the rigidity of body and tensed mind. Thus in his view the training is also meant to relax mind and make body flexible (*Arankiyal* 26). The problem he identified in the trainees was fear and inferiority complex. Besides, he claims that the training develops the qualities like personality and leadership in actors (*Arankiyal* 28). Besides, he divides theatre trainers into two categories; first category of the trainers impart everything they know to the trainees and second category of them provide training, considering the state of the mind, ability, maturity, and experiences of the trainees. The second category of the trainers is further categorized into two divisions; first division of trainers develops skills and the others identify problems during the training, arrive at solutions for them and try to produce changes in the attitude and behaviors of the participants (*Arankiyal* 27). They also used theatre training as a therapeutic work. This research is in line with the above category (the very last category). The above categorization by Mounaguru reveals that the participants have issues related to actor training.

Secondly, the Sri Lankan dramatist, Sithamaparanathan in his research titled “Theatre Dimensions in the Context of Social Conflict, Jaffna” mentions that an actor creates a role through his intuition that stems from notion about the character (86). According to him intuition must be developed in producing a character. It is understood that his actor training was focused on enhancing intuition. In addition, he lists three attributes such as inhibition, shyness and inferiority complex which dominate the novices for training (32). These influential attributes are in line with the experiences of this researcher. The attributes like fear and shyness are found in Tamil community (B. Sithampanathan 51). He also states that producing, acting in drams and staging them is seen as the work of the idlers in the community. He cites a Tamil proverb to substantiate his claim, “playing kooththu and twisting buttocks is done by those who lack other abilities” (B. Sithampanathan 51). In another instance he brings out cultural issue related to gender. That is a man did not want her lover to act on the street (70, 71). The writer stresses that the woman should have listened to her lover as she also has a right to maintain individual identity. Similarly, the research problem of this study is also closely related to gender based-cultural issues among the undergraduates. However, the researcher’s approach to the same issue mentioned above is quite different. He feels that an idea of the researcher/teacher cannot be imposed on the students. Only what is right and what is wrong can be discussed with them. The students themselves are supposed to make decisions. Therefore the researcher claims that there is a limitation in interfering students’ private matters that hamper theatrical work. Moreover, a European theatre is designed in a way that gives audience entertainment. Once the performance is over, the mindset of the audience goes back to present mood. Tamil society still considers Western arts form and culture as theirs (80). It loses its originality, trying to imitate the Western arts form and

culture. Sithamparanathan states that an actor from a Tamil society tries to enact the life of a character, but he/she does not express his/her own emotions. Yet, the experience gained by the researcher from this research and from the emotions expressed by the informants the researcher argues that an actor presents the life of a character through his own emotions on the stage. The acting method of Sithamparanathan deemed to be derived from ritualistic forms. He calls acting associated with rituals “revelation”. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that training is not necessary for one to act in a drama. He considers an institution set up for the purpose of training actors as superfluous. He states that he creates proper mood within his trainees ‘mind through workshops in which he lets the trainees play games or dance as they please (interviewed 05.08.2014)

Another significant artist in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre is Chornalingam about whose work related to theatre, actor, actor training was derived from his book titled “*Ezhaththil Nadakamum Nanum.*” (Tamil Drama in Ceylon and My Part in it, 1968).<sup>6</sup> He firmly believed that blanket training for everyone hardly proved suitable, as there would be differences when acting appropriate for one particular character is taught to different actors. Grotowski substantiates the above claims, saying that “the training is individual or personal” (Kumiega 111). Therefore actors should work out their own method, and a common method for different individuals is impossible. Further, Chornalingam stressed that observation was more important than training, even he practiced this throughout his life. When he portrayed the character, “Kooni”, he observed the body movements and gestures of many old women at different places,

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<sup>6</sup> The history of Tamil modern theatre starts with the work of Chornalingam (1889-1980). His Guru was Pammal Sambanda Mudaliyar. He staged the dramas written by his Guru in Ezham. Those dramas were admired and appreciated by then middle viewers here. His experiences gained from koothu tradition, musical dramas and modern theatrical work contributed to the sustainable development of his theatrical work. He was the one who reduced songs and raised a number of dialogues.

and also he listened to their dialectic expression and practiced them very often. Besides, he emphasized that actors had to practice Carnatic music for training their voice (79). S.T. Arasu <sup>7</sup> was also a significant contributor to the development of modern Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. He firmly believed that the acting in Sri Lanka utilizes the technique of Bharatha Nattiyam and that this technique, therefore, should be adapted in theatre acting. Facial expression, gesture and gaze are the significant components of Bharatha dance. It depends on dancing. He identified the techniques involved in Bharatha dance, adapted them and created unique techniques to use in theatre acting. He put forward the argument that some skills involved in Bharatha dance had to be practiced by actors. He portrayed characters by observing the pose and posture of traditional sculpture. According to him observation and practicing Bharatha dance gained importance in training. Besides he believed that one could gain training by participating in plays, and that no formal training was required (interviewed on 29.04.2014).

Another Sri Lankan traditional artist, Begaman Jeyarajah (1939- ), learnt the traditional performance skills, through observation and listening to the other experienced artists who are elder to him. He enhanced his voice by observing and singing along with professional mourners which increased his voice tone enabling him to act on stage in traditional theatre with louder voice. This learning process was attained right from his childhood, through singing along with the professional mourners during funeral rites which was detached from theatre influence and also enabled him to enter into theatre and pursue his interest as a traditional theatre artist. (interviewed 05.02.2014). G.P. Ferminus (1940- ) is another important figure in Sri

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<sup>7</sup> S.T. Arasu (1926-2016) watched many plays during his young age. He also worked for Indian army. He was a sculptor, photographer, make up-artist, actor and director. He directed and acted in many dramas. He acted in plays related to royal subject matter with classical language. He also performed in modern theatre.

Lankan traditional and modern performance. In the beginning, he pursued his interest in acting in the cinematic style of Sivaji Ganeshan, by imitating the South Indian cinema actor which began his transition from person towards a transformation as an actor. Moreover there has been many other individuals who also opted for mode of cinema through observation, imitation and learning as an aspiring actor. However, after getting trained at school of drama, his understanding towards expression of style and designing methods totally changed, and he worked out his own method as his learning acquired had been under the actor trainers who were influenced and trained in the mode of Western theatre actor training. This western mode of theatre actor training broke the boundaries of cinema acting and inspired the actors to practice through self-learning. (Interviewed 08.04.2014). Andrew Julius (1982- ) is also an actor, dancer and director in the Tamil Theatre. His learning process was through the imitation of the contemporary stage actors. This also was a kind of self-learning process. In the beginning, the process of learning through imitating other actors has been a kind of a regular form of learning, which is continuing even today as an aspiring foundation process by many. Later when he received his training from Centre for Performing Arts, his style of acting and its of imitation entirely changed and he developed a mode of learning which enabled him to create role which enabled him express himself detached from imitation of stage actor. (Interviewed 03.09.2014).

R. Jeyakanthan (1977) in his early ages was dwelling accessibly next to The Centre for Performing Arts. Eventually he got the opportunity of watching the rehearsals and got that experience by observing the actors practices. Incidentally in a audition at the centre, he qualified the skill required and began his journey as an actor. Here more than watching a performance, the rehearsals gave the actors behavior to create a role towards a character-(interviewed 03.09.2014). Johnson Rajkumar had a family

background of *Koothu* tradition which gave him an opportunity of moulding himself as an traditional theatre knowledge, but that did not become as a skill as he confessed that his shyness was his obstacle which he had to overcome. The training given at Centre for Performing Arts taught him to change and overcome himself. (Interviewed 10.04.2014).

Navadharshani (1970- ) learnt the fundamentals related to acting by watching plays, acting in plays and observing the rehearsals of plays acted by others. Being an actress and academic, she points out that the actor training conducted by universities hardly involves aesthetic part and instead, more attention is given to sociological and psychological aspects in actor training (interviewed. She encountered many challenges relating to culture while receiving training in UK. For example, as the director once told her that the wearing ‘pottu’<sup>8</sup> on her forehead and the dress, Sudithar was not appropriate for the occasion; in the following sessions she avoided wearing anything that represented her culture. And in a rehearsal of *Midsummer Night*, participants associated with each other without any gender discriminations. But, whenever she was in a situation in which she was supposed to hold others hand, she always chose a female partner (interviewed 15.07.2014).

K. Baheerathy (1952- ) was an actor, director, trainer, teacher and counselor. Her father altogether rejected the desire but she decided to act in dramas, she ,nevertheless, participated in solo acting against her father’s will and received training in converting lyrics into drama. At a time when women were not allowed to perform stage programs, she violated this social norm, and consequently she encountered so many challenges. Her parents finally allowed her to participate in dramas on the condition that she should neither wear eccentric costumes nor stay outside after 6.00

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<sup>8</sup> Hindu women wear it on the forehead.

pm and she was not allowed to watch '*Koothu*' at night. Besides, she was held in low esteem in the society because she had appeared in stages with male actors. The society she lived in labelled her as mere pretense. The good rapport she maintained with others and the altruistic activities she rented to the people in need were challenged (Interviewed 12.06.2014).

Next 26 theatre artists (1930-2000) who resided in Jaffna, but are no more, are taken into consideration for then approaches regarding acting and training. The information on these artists was collected from a book titled "*Ariyalayoor theatre personalities*". The unique and the significant fact about these Late. Artists is that they had an opportunity of observing plays and beginning acting in the tender age of 6-12 years which made them actors without receiving any training from institutions. Their learning process was in terms of rehearsing and performing on stage. The learning of acting has been in terms of observation and absorption of essence. Their acting styles was of two types in terms of acting like a cinema actor and also imitation of the stage actor. The above discussed actors had a career in acting by pioneering their learning through observation. When the western mode of actor training impacts their performance, then the need for finding one's own style begins to emerge rather than pursuing to imitate other actors. The next generation got influenced by the Western theatrical form which helped them in elevating their traditional platform of finding their own style and systematically standardized the traditional theatre and prepared a new training method.

When the history of Sri Lankan Tamil theatre actors is examined, almost all of them were amateur actors. When Parsi theatre (Sivathamby et al. 184) was brought to Sri Lanka, it was performed by a group of professional actors. In Sri Lankan Tamil theatre almost all the artists have been amateur. It is because acting is secondary to

them and for generating income they had/have another job. Only exception is the traditional artist, V. V. Vairamuththu, who had been a professional artist. He was a Carnatic vocalist and good at playing harmonium. Therefore he was a popular figure in musical dramas. He brought out emotions for acting through songs. That was the hallmark of his performance (Suntharampillai, *Biography and Theatre* 19).

When the training process in Tamil theatre examined, it is revealed that actors underwent from their childhood and they are/were not professional but amateur. It was observed that those actors are/were also engaged in some other skill- related activities simultaneously, such as sport, playing musical instruments, Carnatic music, etc. The evidences from books, interview and focus group discussion show that those actors got their training through the observation of the performances and rehearsal. It is a self- learning process of set of practices. The skills involved in actor training are naturally acquired by those actors. Besides, those who have a sense of commitment and dedication to theatre work have survived or succeeded longer. Those who are interested in social awareness and transformation and political transformation are willing to learn about theatrical work on their own and involve themselves in it.

Actors also acquire the skill of acting when there was a group of performers often performing. On occasions like this they unconsciously learn the skill of acting through repeated observation. For instance, those resided in close proximity to the Centre for Performing Arts, a private Institution located in Jaffna, Northern part of Sri Lanka enhanced their acting feats unconsciously ( This was revealed in the focus group discussion with actors on 12. 10.2014).

In Jaffna, a school of Drama and Theatre, a private institution was set up in 1978. The training given by this organization introduced modern theatre techniques to Tamil



population and has attempted to produce changes. Before the advent of this establishment, the actors pursued the styles of cinemas. With the arrival of this institution, real acting emerged, eliminating the cinematic styles. Two important people, Shanmugalingam and Tarcisus, contributed to the development of training in the above organization (Sivathamby et al. 202).

As highlighted above, training in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre developed gradually. Some, however, argue that training is not significant while some others claim that training is significant. These two sets of people put forward proper justification for their argument. For example, Chornalingam states that there is no need for an organization to provide training because each individual is unique so the same training cannot be given (Chornalingam 38). Sithamparanathan argues that actor training is not required, but students can engage in learning through the system of having workshops. In the method of Stanislavsky training becomes very important component. Boal feels that “training and professionalization in acting are unnecessary; further, that the acquisition of traditional skills might actively impede one’s ability to make effective theatre” (Babbage 305). Boal is also of the view that ‘everyone can do theatre: even actors’. That is to say that everyone naturally possesses the ability to act. Yet when Boal mentions about forum theatre, he says that different styles of acting is required for that theatre (Boal, *Forum Theatre* 260). Next argument put forward by him is that he stresses that “the actors must be dialectical, must know how to give and take, how to hold back, and lead on, how to be creative”. He also cites the abilities of a magician who is capable of both doing tricks and teaching those tricks to others. In a nut shell, one can learn acting by teaching it to others (Boal, *Forum Theatre* 276o). Training involves learning process. From the point of Boals’ view, training takes place naturally since it is centered on learning

process. Besides, he claims that “the actor should make use of Stanislavskian interpretation, in its most orthodox form” (Boal, *The theatre of oppressed* 180).

Finally in the history of actor training, the training was done, giving focus to body and mind. Later body and mind in the training were seen as an inseparable entity. In different contexts, the concept of body and mind was treated differently. In this sense different formations of training approaches can be identified in Western and Eastern regions. Western theatres assimilated the techniques from Eastern countries and incorporated them into their theatres. Similarly many Western techniques have been employed in the theatres of Eastern countries. When a new approach or method is introduced into a culture, its adaptability to suit the local culture and related problems when the new approach or method is incorporated into the culture should be investigated. In this research, new approaches were experimented and the problems arose are quite different from those encountered by Westerners. The challenges encountered in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre are unique and new, particularly in the present study the new approach was experimented in an academic teaching context.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Analyzing the Training- Method and Process**

The purpose of this chapter is to give the conceptual assumption to support this research and to bring out the approaches. Since methodology plays a vital role in this research, this is treated as a separate chapter; because practice as a research is a new phenomenon and new aspects emerged as the research was carried out. The reliability of the research is closely linked to the understanding of the process of data collection. The recording of the process of data collection is a prerequisite for this research. This research is based on acting practice and actor training. In addition to this a play production has been conducted. In this practice, since students have been the main focus, the practical of actor training have been conducted based on the syllabus of drama and theatre arts. This research basically deals with practical aspects of theatre arts based upon to the strategy of practice in research applied as a method. This research that has been conducted based on a syllabus and has also attempted to integrate theory and practice in terms of praxis of actor training. In the process of covering the syllabus, the aspects of Stanislavsky, Mayerhold, and Bretcht of body, mind and emotions in enabling actor training practice, have been covered which also helped in covering their theoretical aspects that had been taught in their theoretical classes to the students of University of Jaffna. So the first chapter, covered the background of the research, research questions and objectives. At the same time, the second chapter dealt with the theoretical framework of acting and training on the basis of literature study.

## **Contemporary Landscape of Drama and Theatre Research**

Investigations into theatre and performance have been done in various ways. Different scholars have expressed diverse views on the researches done so far or researches yet to be done. One of such scholars, Ananthakrishnan (292) argues “there are many directors, productions and different practice processes in modern theatre and many practice cultures embedded in traditional performance cultures with seminal value in terms of knowledge”. He further states that scholars have not done enough ‘research or study’ on the above aspects, resulting in lack of preliminary models and ideas for the next generation. His argumentation makes special reference to the Indian context. In fact, according to Ananthakrishnan, the availability of resources to teach all language Indian theatres is very limited. The situation is not exceptional even in places where ‘celebrated directors and their works’ are involved in. It is observed that ‘theatre is finding new avenues to negotiate between tradition and modernity’ outside academic institutions. In some parts of India young directors try to give ‘redefinition’ to tradition, playwright, space and actor (Ananthakrishnan 292). This ‘redefinition’ was not arbitrarily formed, but stems from the empirical evidence of researches.

Towards the end of his article, Ananthakrishnan emphasizes the following significant aspects such as enhancing some advanced trends in training, changing practice structures and adopting existing various Indian cultural contexts; the importance of expanding the area of research in respect of different performance cultures and bringing in new methodologies; initiating different practice as research models for diverse contexts in order to foster knowledge production of modern Indian theatre practice; and organizing workshops for researchers and practitioners on current trends in theory and practice as regular events (292). In light of the above discussion, it can be stressed that training, and teaching should be done systematically and the researches

related to this field should take place. This need is also essential for Sri Lankan theatre as the same constraints exist in Sri Lanka. Based on the above challenges, the present research was done.

### **Performative Research as an Alternative Research Approach for Drama and Theatre Studies**

Research, as universally known, is the systematic investigation into and study of data, i.e. materials, sources, etc., in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. The purpose of research, in general, is to discover new or collate old facts and figures in the form of data, a course of deductive or inductive investigation. A research is not a mere description; it can be concrete or abstract, and varies from a simple survey or a mega census to a critical investigation of multiple issues. Good description provokes the 'why' questions of explanatory research<sup>9</sup>. It is important to understand that theory-building (inductive research) and theories testing (deductive research) are both critical for the advancement of science (Battacherjee 04).

Haseman in his article titled "A Manifesto for Performative Research" states that both qualitative and quantitative research traditions are two different species of research, arising from fundamentally different views of the world, that embody alternative understandings of how knowledge is created (02). However, some researchers are found to be concerned about the methodological issues, restrictions of both qualitative and quantitative research, and impatient to devise innovative and capable interdisciplinary research approaches to investigate the realms like drama and theatre. Accepting the concern of traditional qualitative researchers about the 'performance

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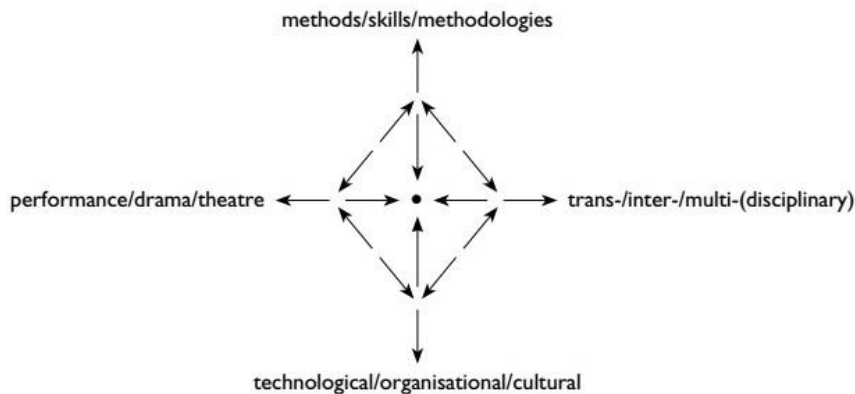
<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/methods/005847ch1.pdf> for more details

turn', it is possible to argue that a third methodological distinction is emerging. This third category is aligned with many of the values of qualitative research, but is nonetheless distinct from it (Haseman: 05). Accordingly, this is an approach of examining symbolic expressions.

In his another work of his titled "Practice as Research: Approaches to creative Arts Enquiry" Haseman compares quantitative and qualitative research paradigms with performative research, and concludes performative research is a multi-method approach led by practice, while quantitative research is more scientific, and qualitative research is a multi-method approach. He quotes Schwandt, (215) as stating that the quantitative research is the activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount, while all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data in the case of qualitative research (quotes Schwandt 213), at the same time Qualitative research can attend to how the body forms and informs the processes of data collecting – interviewing, observing, interpreting, and analyzing (Bresler 322), and Haseman finally mentions the performative deals with non-numeric data, but employs symbolic data such as material forms of practice, still and moving images, music and sound, etc (151). However, all practice is relevant to research, but does not necessarily contribute to research until it is subject to analysis and commentary using a language that aims to be as clear as unambiguous as possible (Trimingham 54).

Skills are central in all forms of research. However, it is as much foundational to research in theatre and performance. According to Kershaw and Nicholson (13) it is also the case that the 'objects' of research in performance and theatre are dependent on creative processes, so that such research per se may be just as unpredictably flexible in its material and ephemeral effects.' They use the following figure to depict

the centrality of skills in the research that does not use data in the form of numbers or texts.

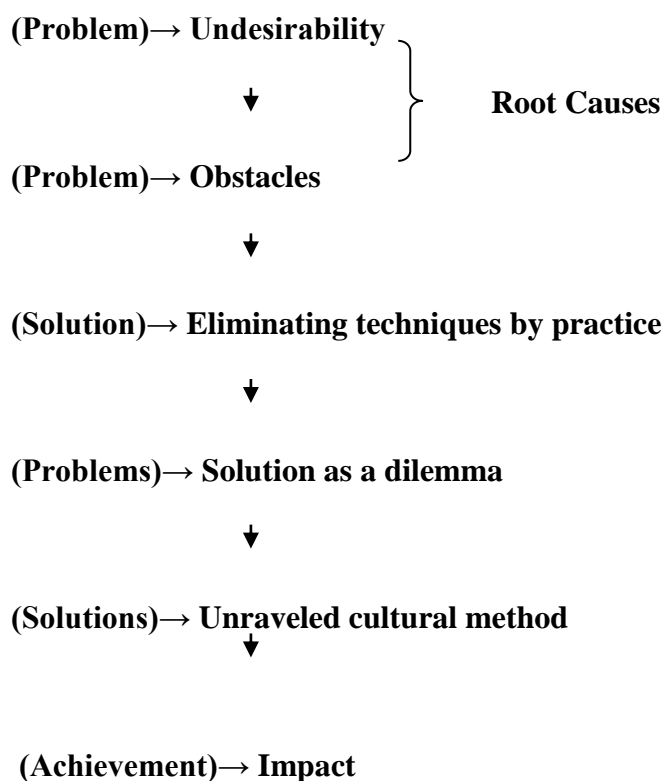


### **Towards an Overarching Research Methodology**

The purpose of this research, as aforementioned, is multifaceted. According to three objectives, it first aims to identify local cultural restrictions on performers, then attempts to investigate the impact of foreign performing techniques on Tamil theatre performers in Northern Sri Lanka and finally wish to experiment and devise culture-sensitive alternative suggestions. The research mainly involved interview, participatory observation and different categories of respondents and informants to obtain data. The nature of involvement of each respondent category was not identical. Therefore, the data obtained varied. On the other hand, since the analysis involves different socioeconomic and political aspects related to actor training, such as social issues, cultural limitations, and even issues that are sometimes sensitive to gender, the research utilized ethnographic research methods within the broader approach of performative research. It was mentioned by Starbuck and Mock's in the topic of *Researching the Body in/as Performance* that 'Theatre and performance researchers engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in its various forms and frequently rely upon methods such as participant observation' (225)

It is to be also mentioned the methodological part was designed in a flexible way; it does not stick to one certain method, but utilized every method suitable to the situation. Since the researcher has experience in teaching research methodology, he did not have much difficulty in approaching it. The problems encountered in practical classes were mostly the same and rarely changes happened due to the present global conditions. The approaches, strategy and methods which were employed in the research are explained below. Before giving the explanation, the outline of the research has been shown in the following diagram.

**Chart No: 3.1 the Spiral Model of Problem Solving**



There are 9 provinces in Sri Lanka. Most of the Tamils live in the North and East. A history of theatre exists in these two provinces; they have universities as well. There is one university in the North and two in the East. The subject, Drama and Theatre is



included in the curriculum of all three universities. In all the universities, training on drama preparation was given priority rather than to training on acting, whereas in Jaffna in the field of drama training on acting was done and it led to many problems. These challenges had an impact on preparation on drama too. But if our training on traditional drama is taken into consideration, one cannot easily see a 'training' process separately as it was intertwined with day-to-day life. For example, a '*Thavil*' (a kind of drum) player's son learns it himself by following his father, similarly '*Koothu*' too was passed on spontaneously from generation to generation. For instance, the statement of Ananda Lal is as follows '...imparted by Guru-Sishya Parampara (guru-disciple relationship) over period of many years, or through observation and participation from childhood within hereditary performing families'.(416) Thus it can be said that there no systematic training approach was pursued in the the training process. Consequently, there was no set traditional training approach for acting in universities or for training on drama. Therefore, there was a little possibility to get experiences or encounter problems to do researche on. Nevertheless, with the advent of modern theatre, some definitions and limitations appeared regarding culture and training.

This research involved a certain period for collecting information and considers the past as supporting period. Here the main period consists of one year and the supporting period entails the period from 1996, the time the subject started to be taught to the students up to now. Since the researcher hails from the same situation, his experiences also contribute to the research. A substantial amount of data was obtained as empirical evidences as it was difficult to find the reason for "why" or the logic for many challenges encountered regarding culture.

“We need to be clear and should not assume the obvious: practical research illuminates the nature of performance and does not reveal historical facts.” (Trimingham 58) This is not only a study about culture but also a study about actors too. It is given consideration / taken for study when the problems of culture become an obstacle to acting. Besides, actors come from the society and hence they have the typical characteristics of the society. Thus, in a sense this study can be considered a study on the problems found in the society.

The society consists of villages and towns. It can be said that no villages exist in the present era of Information and Technology. It may be correct to say so, but the typical habits and qualities of the villages are still found there without any change. Now more students who come from the villages select subjects connected to Art and Culture than the students from urban areas. It is observed according to the students’ background and their interests that the students from urban areas are more interested in income and they are often keen to opt for studies, which enable them to make income in private owned Industries and Commercial establishments.

### **Students’ Motivation and Learning**

In this section, it is important to find the reason/”why” the Advanced Level students offer the subject, drama because they want to enter the university, and again “why”/the reason for offering the same subject for their degree course is that most of the freshers are special intakes. However, it is also important to look at their motive for selecting this subject. The motivation varies from student to student in the university. (The following facts were organized through getting feedback, personal

discussion and unstructured questionnaire from present students and passed out students)

If the motivation of the students is examined based on the passage given above, actor training is provided, considering the differences between personal motivation and learning desire. For instance, the training for being an actor and being a teacher is differentiated from one another. It can be analyzed as follows:

1. To become popular (by being an actor)
2. To become educationist (by being a teacher)
3. To obtain a degree / To be a graduate
4. To get selected by UGC
5. Getting inspired about the subject after entering the university.
6. Hope to pass the examination without much effort
7. Hope to develop one's own personality – to get rid of fear and shyness
8. Since this is a subject that considers and deals with the society.
9. Hope to secure a lecturer post in the same field in the department.
10. Having real interest and involvement in the subject
11. After coming down in the examination, offering other subjects , and offering this as a second option
12. Lacking skills for offering the subjects like Dance and Music.

The students fall into following categories, based on the above mentioned causes:

1. From 1984 to 1997 the students offered this subject on an option basis. The students who came down in other subjects such as sociology, political science, history etc., but they had the talent to be actors, and who wished to be

the directors or lecturers also offered this subject. Its recent introduction and involvement in the welfare of the society have also inspired students to offer this subject.

2. Some students got an opportunity to enter the university because of the UGC cut out for a special intake of students. Most of these students had an attitude of just getting a degree certificate by offering this subject. Some of the students in this category got an inspiration and involvement after undergoing a practical course on this subject.
3. In addition to the students who had the opportunity to secure entrance by UGC special intake, the students who got enough points /marks to enter university too could be found in this category of students. But it should be noted that this type of students was relatively very little. It could be also noted that some of them would switch to other subjects /courses after following only a year in this course. Some others would switch to the three year general course. Less than 5% of the students in this category only stick to this four year course and pass out with a special degree certificate

Hence, the same type of training or methodology could not be applicable to these different types of students with differing kinds of attitudes. Consequently, different types of trainings and methodologies were used to enhance their talent and skills. Looking at this in detail, the importance were given to the students who had the interest in different course units like direction practical, acting theory, visual design, folk theatre, theatre history etc., but all students must gain skill and knowledge in acting practical. It is pointed out here that the Sri Lankan Tamil Dramatist Chornalingam negates this organizational training, emphasizing that the training and

methodology should vary from actor to actor (90) and Grotowski also argues that the method or path of actor training is individual and personal (Kumiega 111)

### **Strategy for Practice as research**

“Named variously as ‘practice as research’, ‘practice- based research’, ‘practice- led research’ or simply ‘artistic research’, by the twenty- first century a well- founded and sometimes controversial methodology had been added to research repertoires in university theatre and performance studies.” (Kershaw and Miller 63)

On one hand this can be understood and practiced in different contexts. On the other hand the same practical approaches are not incorporated into all cultural contexts and different branches of knowledge. The central method of data collection is based on the practice that is called practice as research which leads to a new knowledge. The research oriented work is already connected with script writing and play production. In the script writing process, an author normally deals with a data collection process in his primary script writing work and then the logical structure is analyzed and finally it will be organized. The script must be analyzed for play production by the director, in which the character analysis and, contextual and historical analysis are included. In addition, the form of performance text comprises the improvised social issues with a clear understanding. In accordance with this procedure, a play production was created and developed at the University of Jaffna by the theatre students and researcher.

There were many problems identified in the practical classes and play-production process on the basis of personal and professional experiences. Each and every student had his /her own strength and weakness. While problems are identified

with the setting, the research started spontaneously. The process of the research is detailed below:

1. Problems related to the student's practice emerged in terms of cultural inhibitions which affects the students' body, mind and emotion in terms of not only their cultural restriction and also student attitude and war effects.
2. Why these problems arise?
3. To use any method to find out the causes of the problems. The problems that have been identified through observation initially is to be verified and cross-checked by the methods of interview, feedback and focus group discussion both at the individual and group level.
4. To find out the cause for the problems through more than one method. (Observation, Feedback, personal discussion)
5. There would be basically certain root causes of the effects.
6. Root causes were different from person to person.
7. Different approaches were to be applied for each and every student.
8. Means to work out solutions.
9. Few problems cropped up again in the practical course of the students.

It was always the 1<sup>st</sup> year students to be met with 'tabula rasa' rather than with definite plans (Bryant and Charmaz 309). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a grounded theory related to this situation, since the students met and studied and

further problems were solved by applying methods accordingly. It was noted that as different methods were applied to different students in his/her practical class, different methods were to be handled instead of one particular methodology. The situation determines the ways to find solutions. Searching for new understanding and new techniques for identifying new facts is a substantial role in everyday practice (Candy 02)

### **Novices in Practice**

The process of data collection and the problems related to novices who did not know the fundamental experiences of play production are dealt in the middle of this chapter under the unit 'Method'. Students did not have the proper experience were required additional practice in the practical classes.

Theodore Clevenger states in his article on "Behavioral Research in Theatre" about dramatic strength to solve the problem which relates to a behavioral point of view. The problem will not be solved just by performing more experiments. The solution will emerge, if it ever does, from the creative mind of somebody who knows something about the theatre. (121). His argument reveals the truth that a person having a creative mind of theatre practice solves the problems in two ways such as theatrical and natural behaviors. These behaviours are discussed below.

#### **Step I:**

The students were requested to write down their own definition for acting. Then it was discussed with them.

#### **Step II:**

(The definition for 'Acting' from students was merely what they were taught by

teachers and what they studied from books, none more than that.) Again they were asked to write down their own definition. This time some improvement could be noticed in their writing.

### **Step III:**

They were asked to perform for not more than 5 minutes, either a character or a scene according to their own definition they wrote for 'acting.'

Except for a female student all others enacted. In their performance, it was observed that irrelevant physical and emotional changes were expressed, rather than bringing out their character. Physical and emotional changes observed the symptoms of trembling and nervousness. The reason for this was gathered through the feedback which mentioned fear and shyness as their implication.

### **Step IV:**

These emotions were found to be hindrances for the students to perform the role of the characters. This could be seen in most of the students. There were very few exceptional cases. The main reason for this was that the students were in their 1<sup>st</sup> year and new to the situation. When they were inquired regarding their emotion, they replied as follows:

- Though they imagined themselves as the character, their body language did not accommodate or cooperate.
- A fear associated with what would others (other students and lecturers) think of me if I don't perform well /perform wrongly / up to the standard.
- Uncertain whether I perform appropriately correct in my performance?
- Very difficult to practice in front of others.
- Afraid of the intimidation and ragging of the senior students.



They revealed the above mentioned factors that were the main causes for their incompetency.

#### **Step V:**

At the end of the practical class of step: IV, the students were requested to write down their feedback on whether there were any basic reasons underlying the problems encountered by them. The opinions given by them are as follows.

- ❖ If others agree with our ideas, we are ready to speak out our mind.
- ❖ I performed as a child and I was laughed at.
- ❖ Because of embarrassment and shyness, my self-confidence was shattered.  
May be this is the reason behind my panic. I was not encouraged in this field during my childhood.
- ❖ Scared to act individually
- ❖ In places where people have gathered I have difficulty in performing the scene. The fear that altercations might erupt in such places keeps lingering in my mind.
- ❖ After the performance or improvisation, others disparaged me.
- ❖ I become disheartened when I think that the audience watching me acting would treat me as an object of ridicule
- ❖ From my childhood onwards, the fear that whatever I do make others laugh is deeply rooted in my mind.
- ❖ Lack of prior experience in stage performances is one of the causes that prevent me from performing to the standard expected of me.
- ❖ I did not feel nervous, but I took precaution to ensure that I should not make any mistakes
- ❖ I hardly know anything about acting that makes me a typical actor

## Step VI:

This session revealed aspects that both favorable and unfavorable to theatre practice. Different approaches to finding solutions to their problems were tailored to the needs of the individual. In one session alone, various methods were adopted. For example, while those who seemed reluctant to improvise on their own were permitted to do their performance in pairs or in groups, some conditions they were supposed to abide by them while in practice were informed.

- ❖ No one should laugh while others are doing their part
- ❖ Once the performance is over, students should avoid talking about their performance afterwards and teasing each other about the same
- ❖ When one is performing his role, others should observe him very studiously
- ❖ Appreciating others' performance by applauding was allowed
- ❖ Others should wait patiently until the performer has rectified his mistakes on his own and redone the role right
- ❖ Asked to be very friendly and cooperative and maintain team spirit.
- ❖ Asked to adapt the practice given to him according to his temperament

The above mentioned rules and regulations proved useful. It does not mean that solutions to all the problems can be easily arrived at, that is to say, when one problem was tackled another one arose, to which the research attempted to find a solution. Hence this should be considered as “practice as research”. (Trimingham 57) In the actor training process, when a character is being created by a student in the process of practicing, improvisation and taking part in a scene work, which enables us to observe the drawback and also discuss the discomfort and inhibition confronting his training practice. In the process of discussion with the student about the solution for

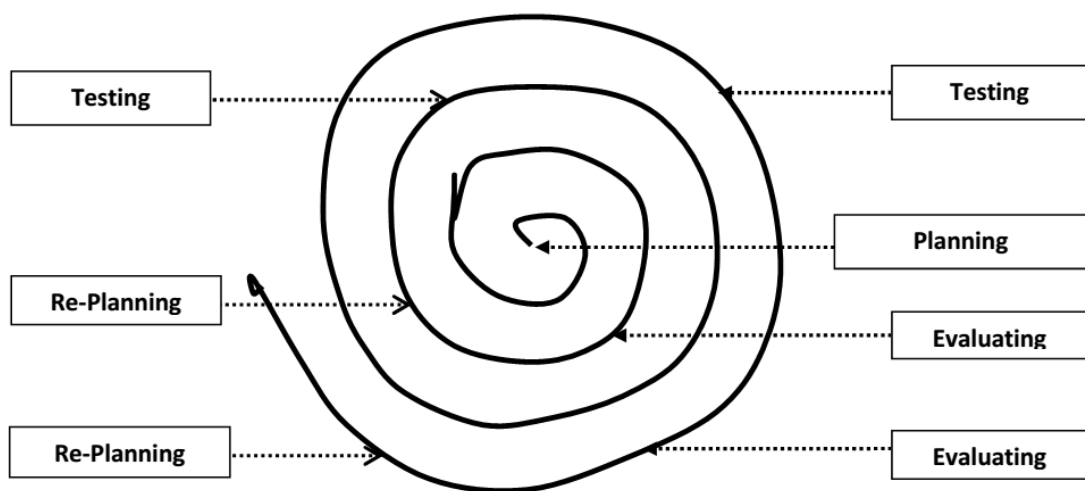
overcoming the discomfort, the opinions of both the student and also the trainer are integrated to empower the skills of the student actor.

### **Play Production for Research**

The method of gathering data through play production was employed in this research. It was an indicator of the theatre practical work. As a students' level study program the process of learning gains more importance than the outcomes of the play production because "it is an embodied study of interpersonal communication (Stucky 133). The first production was created by students with the help of the lecturer and it was recorded in a video format. The students' maximum ability was exhibited in the production. The causes of the problems were identified in the first production. Then the second production which aimed at solving the issues encountered by the students in the first production was made by the director/ lecturer/trainer. Both the productions were compared and analyzed by the researcher for solving the problems. For the above purpose, the impediments faced by the students, causes and ways to solve such problems were taken into consideration. This method, which is aimed at ascertaining the problems and working out solutions, is related to the spiral model in which the initial objective set at the outset of a session might change at the end of the session. The results emerging from an effort in achieving some objectives were different from those set out during the planning stage. The diagram which was made use of in 1948 by Kurt Lewin (Trimingham 56) is given below and it illustrates this point very well. Besides, action research is closely linked to practice as research. The following statement of Trimingham clearly describes the connection between action research and practice as research.

“The spiral model of understanding originated in Action Research in education and business studies; and it is this branch of research which has the closest parallels to practice as research in performance studies. Action Research, particularly in its recent forms, is the most extreme hermeneutic- interpretative research method; that is, it acknowledges that the researcher is intimately involved in the research, and affects the outcomes. In Action Research, such an involvement is the only reason such research can even take place”. (Trimingham 59)

**Chart No: 3.2 Spiral Model Diagram.**



This method helps in finding a solution to a problem by confining focus to the center of the problem, by trial and error, rather than trying a solution repeatedly in the same way based on interactive model. Accordingly, this spiral model entails 6 steps. Almost in all the research works this model was given priority. Here the model presents a cycle of emerging problems/ forming questions and answers/ solutions for the questions. Ultimately the movement of the cycle comes to a standstill, giving sustainable solutions. This model proceeds in a circle through the following phases.

- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Testing
- ❖ Evaluating

### ❖ Re planning

This method, as mentioned before was utilized in six steps during students' practical classes. In fact, evaluating and re planning both took place while testing was done. Only Kurt Lewin's techniques were used in this research work because its principles and practical aspects served as a multipurpose tool and proved to be so malleable that this, with some adaptation, helped in solving many problems encountered by the learners. This model almost possesses all the characteristics, belonging to action research. When applied to students, it bore fruit in the advancement of student's educational aspect, that is, a syllabus designed for a particular subject was able to be altered, depending on the problems that emerged when it was implemented, and the removal of the materials found inappropriate and the inclusion of the materials considered relevant, in the course of revision process possible.

### **Survey of the Area and Sampling Method**

The proposed study intended to use the sample of some theatre groups in the Northern Province in Sri Lanka. The beginners from some theatre institutions and theatre groups, teachers, artists, audience and theatre groups were considered for surveying and the selection of the theatre groups was made, using the judgment sampling and university students were selected by the purposive sampling. The sample includes.

1. Students
2. Lecturers
3. Teachers
4. Theatre Artists

5. Audience
6. Trainer as trainee

### **Drama and Theatre Arts Students (Trainees)**

Drama and theatre arts students of the University of Jaffna played primary role in the survey of this research work, especially those who attend the practical classes from 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> years and those students were selected based on purposive sampling.

The sample size of this study would be as follows:

A. First year students:

Male – 09 and, female – 05 = 14

B. Second students:

Male – 04 and, female – 11 = 15

C. Third year students:

Male – 04 and, female – 11 = 15

Total numbers = 44

In the exclusion criteria, the final year and repeat students were not included. The participant observation was made to collect some data while the learners were taught in the regular practical classes. There was no complication for them to divulge any of their personal space. Findings that are related to any of the participants are not revealed. In case a student feels inconvenienced to get along with my research, he/she can withdraw their consent of participation. The students who graduated from Jaffna

University in drama and theatre also got involved in the research. (Now some of them are employed and unemployed).

### **Drama and Theatre Lecturers**

Data were collected and discussions were held with the lecturers attached to the University of Jaffna, where the research was conducted. Even though the lecturers' motivations differed from each other, on some basis, they all agreeably shared the facts related to actor training.

### **School Teachers**

It is an obvious fact that from the Sri Lankan drama education, beyond the emergence of drama artists, drama teachers were produced in significant number. Drama teachers possess the characteristics of both artist and educationist.

1. Experiences that teachers gained while they were drama students at the same University
2. Giving the training to the school students while being a teacher

The data was collected in two ways mentioned above.

### **Theatre Artists**

Many types of people connected with theatre come under this topic: Playwright, Director, Designer and Actor, etc. Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre groomed more directors than actors. (The reason for this is discussed in analytical chapter).

Hence, it should be noted that when we say actors here it means the actors who were in theatre before 1980, from whom information was collected through interaction (group discussion). Thus, it is better to say that the collected data were from theatre artists in common and not specifically from actors. It should be said that we were privileged to meet the artists of the organization of Centre for Performing Arts (CPA), whose main task is to play the roles in performances. However, there is no possibility to categorize them as they differ in terms of skills, interest, profession, style (traditional, melodramatic, realistic and anti-realistic) and expertise and experience since they were very talented in every aspect of the theatre.

## **Audience**

As far as audience is concerned, they could be looked at from two different angles. This means that the data were collected, using two different methods: First, data was collected from the audience who have already seen the drama and secondly, from the drama (*Ninaivin Kanavu*) staged particularly for the purpose of data collection. It was staged three times and the information was collected, employing two different methods. Firstly, the data were collected having a casual interview with them after watching the play. Secondly, audience was provided with pencil and paper to write down their comments on the drama. The information got down in writing was bit different from the earlier one, since the audience wrote openly what struck to their mind. Consequently, a discussion was held with this type of audience after the performance. The opinion they aired were based on different aspects.

- ❖ Constructive criticism was made since the audience was well aware that they were invited to express opinions about the drama. They openly stated that



there should be some changes in the form and contents, and even they felt that some of the scenes should be removed from the drama.

- ❖ They expressed their views, considering the drama, the students who took part in, and the background and the environmental situation as a whole.
- ❖ Some even disagreed with the argument put forward earlier that as the artists have the right to express their views independently, they should not be overruled saying 'no' for this and that.

Thus, the interviewing the audience too becomes an important aspect in the data collection for this research.

### **The perspectives of the Trainer as Trainee**

(In this unit, the researcher would place himself as first person and he would bring out the matters in active voice.) I perceived myself as an informant to collect data. This method is famous among anthropologists. Rasanen also used this method for gathering data. She regarded 'herself as an informant'(34) and she quoted Hammersly and Atkinson's statement that a researcher can be an insider, not only as mere recorder of culture but as an interpreter in the research. She cites Mascarenhas as saying that we should incorporate the creative use of emotional reaction of self as methodological tools. In fact, the information collected and approaches adopted are genuine and true when I looked back at myself, not only that, it also proves that it is an easy method to collect information from other artists too, if it was done properly. It does not mean that I try to understand my present position, when I say I collect information from myself. If I do a study on myself now, it would bring things subjectively. To the contrary, when I look at my past theatre experiences I gained

from a third person point of view, it gives me a chance to observe myself objectively. Here is an opportunity for me to regard myself as a third person. In this sense, considering objectively my experiences of how I had got interested and involved in theatre from my childhood and the type of problems I had confronted, tackled and solved them during that period is parallel to obtain information from another artist or from a trainer. The main aspect of this data collection was that my body was observed through my mind. Saumya Liyanage's research article titled, 'My body taught me how to act: towards an epistemology of actor learning and apprenticeship', describes the self-learning and recalling the past memories for theorizing the actor learning process (185-195).

### **Data Collection Methods**

1. Observation
2. Casual discussion
3. Focus group discussion
4. Personal communication ( email, phone calls and written correspondence)
5. Feedback
6. Forum theatre techniques
7. Document study

This research makes use of two approaches. Firstly, the qualitative approach that is the research type utilized by using the method of observation and focus group discussion in which the open-ended and unstructured note taking and focus group guide were followed, and both participant and non-participant observation were adapted. Secondly, the performative approach that was described in the book titled "Practice as Research: Approaches to creative Arts Enquiry". The article by Brad

Haseman elaborates on the characteristics of the performative research (151). Performative research entails “non-numeric data’. They are often in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These symbolic data are still and moving photos, music and sounds and live action and digital codes. Performative research involves a multi-method approach led by practice. As detailed above, the researcher himself adapted the same for this research.

### **Observation**

In the process of my research I was a participant with other participants of my study and made the observation which is participant observation. Further, I had made some non-participant observation as a third person with being involved me in the process of students’ play production, rehearsal and public performance. There were two kinds of check list used: participant observation record and non-participant observation record.

1. Participant Observation Record: For example, in practical exercise I gave some instructions about acting and then students worked on it, at the same time researcher also enacted the acting and corrected the students’ mistakes. In this process researcher was a participant observer
2. Non Participant Observation Record: When the students made their own play production or rehearsal, I was a non-participant observer as third person In this research, the observation method had functioned in three ways
  1. Interaction
  2. Exchange
  3. Teaching.

Virginia Nightingale states “observation-based research method relies on interactions and exchanges between researcher and research participants” (105). The third way named as teaching is a phenomenon. The researcher himself also serves as teacher added strength to the relationship between the researcher and the participants, which was essential and added advantage in collecting data. In the teaching process, the data was collected, using the observation method. The research problems were not separated or alienated. However, the undeniable truth is, as Nightingale says, the embedded and immersed observation (117,119) that both were used in this participatory observation. And sympathetic and empathetic understanding was applied, depending on the students’ physical and emotional involvement in theatre practice.

In this qualitative research, there is no value judgment and it is mostly related to the outcome variables. The variants were identified through the words: artificial, natural, realistic, attractive, repellent, stylish, and persuasive, communicate, coordinate, glittering, pale, and unimpressive and so on. And the variables were described as short in form according to the different expressions of the actors (students). In the non-participant observation, the variables were written through the students’ attitude, talent and coordination of their work. For instance, while an actor acted his character on stage, the appropriate and inappropriate aspects were found out. The strength, attraction, tangible expression, and lack of acting method were the evidences to describe in an anecdotal observation record, in which the actor’s potential and the area to be further improved were included.

### **Casual Discussion**

Generally, tools such as observation, interview and questionnaire were used for data collection. As for this research, casual discussion was given more importance than anything else, because the students interviewed confided in interviewer when the interview was conducted in a matter-of-fact way. When approached with any predetermined method, the students readied themselves for a formal interview – determining in advance how to respond to the questions to be asked, but conversely, casual discussion gave the students a situation conducive to speaking their mind freely and spontaneously.

Sometimes, when spoken to outside the classroom during break, they shared valuable information and exchanged ideas that could not have been obtained otherwise. The losses they had suffered during the war and the racial harassments they had endured in the aftermath of the war, made the interventions with them very problematic and thus, they had to be interviewed so often in privacy.

The information confided on condition of anonymity by the students who were referred to for counseling could not be included in this research paper. Other details provided by students in general have been used here without their names being revealed.

### **Focus Group Discussion (FGD):**

This method was used mainly for collecting data from drama artistes. A focus group discussion should comprise participants numbering between 12 and 14, but for

this research purpose, a group of 8 participants were interviewed as only eight participants were available.

The discussion with the drama artists did not produce desired results initially. Despite being told that the purpose of having discussion with them was to glean information for the research in question, they nevertheless showed more interest in priding themselves on their own performance simultaneously, regardless of whether the answers they gave related to the questions posed to them. Therefore, this discussion lasted as long as two hours –double the time allocated. However, the researcher tried to obtain relevant responses through subsequent questions. It is worth mentioning that some responded specifically to the questions. All in all one can conclude that for the purpose of collecting information from drama artist, a personal interview is more appropriate than FGD. Here the researchers could nonetheless accumulate through this method enough information relevant to this study.

In the qualitative research, the next Focus Group Discussion was done with students to obtain data. The maximum number of the students or artists was fifteen for this FGD. The students of 1<sup>st</sup> year (14), 2<sup>nd</sup> year (15) and 3<sup>rd</sup> year (15) separately participated in FGD. The researcher was a facilitator and a note taker for this discussion. A focus group guide was used for asking questions and also some questions were raised, as per the responses of the participants in a natural context. A recorder was used for this work with the consent of the students and artists. The recorded information was transformed into the form of a transcript. After getting the transcript the recorded data had been deleted.

## Personal Communications

While writing process in research was started by using collected data, more data were needed to cross check the previous data and newly collected data. Mostly this type of data was collected via email and over the phone conversation and some facts written and scanned by artists were also sent to the researcher. After completing field work and settled down to writing at University of Hyderabad, researcher still needed additional data and used this method as a means of collecting data.

## Feedback

Helen Robinson claims that if we want to produce changes in what we do and what we need to know, feedback plays a crucial role in upholding relationship, and performs a vital role in improving self-awareness, enhancing self-esteem, raising morale, encouraging people to want to learn, providing reassurance, motivation, and enhancing individual performance<sup>10</sup>. One of the data collection methods was students' feedback in classroom where it was usually collected at the end of the class and it was an effective tool for data collection in practice as research. The students were instructed to write an answer for a question or a problem which culturally or non-culturally emerged and interrupted their practical or rehearsal. The reason to choose this method was that the students never spoke of their hindrances openly due to the cultural situation, (Sithamparanathan, *Samuganerukkadi* 51). It was mostly identified in female students. The reasons for their salience were analyzed in analytical chapter in detail. The students were requested to write down the favorable and unfavorable things that they either learnt or encountered in each class.

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<sup>10</sup> See the link- <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/red/rd/career-development/research-staff/mentoring/feedback>

The followings are included in the feedback:

- ❖ Date of the practical class, batch (year wise) and gender
- ❖ The same size and model paper were provided for them to write feedback (half of the A4 size paper)
- ❖ While writing their feedback at the end of the practical class, they were requested to write on one side of the paper the problems faced by them and on the other side thereof the benefits received from this class.

Students were requested to give their feedback without revealing their identity, because they rarely have the habit of expressing their opinions openly due to many reasons. The first reason is that it is associated with the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the student. Here it is worth noting that the relics of the ancient *Gurugula* educational system even today are prevalent unnoticeably throughout the south Asian countries. A great deal of the following was taken into consideration for obtaining genuine facts from the students interviewed.

### **Forum Theatre Technique**

This is a technique pioneered by Augusto Boal in which a solution is reached by provoking debates among the members of the participants (Boal, “Forum theatre” 251). Forum theatre technique was useful to collect some data. It is described by Anthony Jackson that in forum theatre the participant are encouraged to solve the problems by identifying the situation (236). In the same way unrevealed problems of the students were brought out with the help of the lecturer/researcher. This method is employed when the theme put forward involves the problems which the students are



confronting. This not only follows the problems of participants and understands their situation, but also leads to deeper discussions on the same. Especially when drama students followed the problems that they had faced, the researcher played the role of a facilitator.

Among the subjects that the students debated, cultural limitations and social issues were given more importance and they were incorporated into this research.

### **Documentary Study**

Scripts, written by playwright/playwrights, improvised script text were used for this research. Information regarding acting style, the problem of dialogue rendering, movement, stage position and stage direction and the director's notes was taken through reading different drama scripts. Under the documentary study, undermentioned two types were used for data collection

1. Literature review from reading materials and data from video and photo events.
2. Data collected from dramatic text and performing text.

This was availed to analyze the practical aspects that there were some constraints in the data collected through video and photo events, especially with regard to the plays in the video; the characteristics of visual media reflected more conspicuous than that of live stage performance. Nevertheless, when it was again watched on the video screen less problem was found by the researcher.

Yet, in reality if the drama was already seen by the researcher on stage, he could easily understand the drama when watching it in the video. The camera always shot

the stage performance in very close-up, therefore the real full dimension of the proscenium stage did not appear on video screen and also it looked like tele drama. The video did not reflect the liveliness of the actual stage program performed on stage due to the camera man who did not know the stage reality.

### **Study Setting and Descriptive Analysis**

The setting of this study was a classroom where the researcher observed and interacted with the students, thereby collecting the data. Some of the theatre institutions selected which were based on judgment sampling (Centre for Performing Arts, School of Drama and Theatre) in Jaffna had been studied to identify as to how they deal with the problems explained herein –on the assumption that these institutions encounter the same issues, but in different degrees. The students of drama and theatre arts in department of fine arts of the University of Jaffna were observed. In the regular practical classes which we usually conduct at the University study program, students participate or perform in accordance with the curriculum. While they were practicing and rehearsing the exercise or play production, the inherent problems that emerged were taken into account and later used for data analysis.

- ❖ The cultural determinant was one of the obstacles. The solutions to the identified problems were arrived at through practice as research. It consists of a four-step cycle process that was used as practice as necessary: Identify the tools
- ❖ Apply the method for collecting the data.
- ❖ Analyzes the data,
- ❖ Generate recommendations for dealing with the problems or issues in the practical.

The identified problems can be categorized and root causes were recognized and interpreted for solving the problems. The most empirical evidences can be recommended as the appropriate methods of acting practice in cultural context. “Qualitative research can attend to how the body forms and informs the processes of data collecting through observing, interpreting, and analyzing” (Shifra 32). This research was carried out with a view of probing through observation. In this methodology, the data was collected by some focus group discussion, and feedback information too was included. Some of the production materials were used for further evaluation of practice as research. Data collection through practical exercises was the main source for the method of practice as research. According to the theoretical framework, the data was analyzed and organized in the form of descriptive analysis. The data collected from observation and focus group discussion was disclosed to the students.

Imagination, emotion, innovation and improvisation are creative practice. To subject them to critical analysis is very problematic as this research involves a massive team of performers and audience, it is difficult to meet everyone in person and collect relevant information. “... Many contributors to establish imaginative uses of methods that trouble the boundaries, between creative practice and critical analysis, between epistemology and ontology” (Kershaw and Nicholson 01). The right way to find the result of developing actor’s skill is to make a production and evaluate the progress of the novices. There is an indication in the stage play, whether the novices enhance the skill or they have to improve further. The approach is related to practice as research and to some extent associated with ethnographic action research. The model of data collection and analyzed records are given below:

### **Application Mode: Actor Training**

Application mode is designed to deal with a specific problem evident in a particular situation and it requires constant monitoring and evaluation. (Mendis 33). In a training session held for first year students, they were requested to first write down their definition of acting and then act any character they liked according to the definition.

- ❖ Female. 1: in a scene where one was supposed to cry, she performed it with laughter
- ❖ Female 2: she refused to come forward
- ❖ Male 1: he ran off the stage after doing, very nervously, a scene where one cuts wood with an axe.
- ❖ Female 3: in a scene where a woman sweeps her house, she artificially pretended to be a woman sweeping the house, although she was a woman herself
- ❖ Male 2: he acted as a teacher, in the part, he taught very tensely and nervously

The observations mentioned above reveal some problems confronting students. Challenges like this had to be met in practical class too. These things happened in one class alone. Students were requested at the end of the class to give their comments on the reasons for acting the characters, contrary to the natural way the characters should be acted and the other obstacles faced by them.

### **Feedback Report I: after Three Sessions**

In the feedback given by the students in the acting practical, they mentioned that the

obstacles to their acting/improvising on a character .

- ❖ We had fear, shame and shyness
- ❖ We were tensed because of the fear that we also might be ragged by our seniors
- ❖ Classmates and lecturer will hold us in low esteem when they see us participating in a character”
- ❖ Asked to act out of the blue, we felt nervous and quivered.
- ❖ We had difficulty performing extemporaneously”

In addition to the above mentioned impediments, there were many positive things mentioned by them, adding impetus to this research work.

- ❖ “Classes were very fun.
- ❖ It was a new experience.
- ❖ We are happy and love being taught how to act”

In the next session, the students were requested to write down the reasons behind what seemed to them to be hindrances.

### **Feedback Report: after Three Sessions**

In the feedback submitted by the students, they revealed what had held them back from acting practical. This relates to this quotation “Findings are applied immediately and further monitored for effectiveness” (Mendis 33)

- ❖ Female: the thought that my performance should be up to the expected standard increased tension

- ❖ Female : as a child I never participated in school functions .May be that is the reason for this
- ❖ Male: I doubt whether others will recognize the performance that I give them because I still remember other students ridiculing the mistakes I made in pronouncing words in my drama debut at a very young age. The impact of that remains ingrained in my mind
- ❖ Male; I keep thinking that I might make mistakes in my performance. That is why my performance goes wrong. Except for that, I have neither fear nor inhibition.
- ❖ Male: I become shy when requested to perform a character in front of audience and especially, when someone asks me any question in such a situation, I feel being unable to answer them despite being aware of the answer.
- ❖ Male: because I am doing this in an environment very new to me, I feel so
- ❖ Female: I am so shy that I fear I might make mistakes because of that shyness itself. The thought that I will become an object of ridicule prevents me from acting.
- ❖ Male: I can act because I have prior experience in acting. Nevertheless, I had fear within myself.

The factors causing fear and shyness in their minds are listed below

1. Fear resulting from the confidence that I should not make mistakes and fear from the suspicion that I might make mistakes
2. The thought that others will ridicule my performance poses a hindrance to acting Lingerin Memories of embarrassment suffered in front of people
3. Failure to participate in public functions held in schools

4. Impact of ridicule suffered from participating in programs held in school
5. Not encouraged, instead shown bias in primary education
6. Their being faulted, from childhood, no matter whether they did something right or wrong has affected them so badly that they are unable to achieve anything tangible despite being potentially capable of many things.
7. During the war People lived in constant dread of casualties. As a result, even after many years since the end of the war, they are still excessively afraid of everything around them, that is, they are far too sensitive to shouting and scolding
8. Loss of friends and relatives in the protracted war has left them with emotional scars; therefore they tend to suppress their real thoughts and feelings.
9. Inferiority complex
10. Homesick
11. There was no proper space for practical work

Many of the problems they faced were due to the experiences they had been through both as a child and during war. Dealing with such problems as these are mostly related to psychology and trauma and in no way linked to the research topic in question was found academically very challenging

In order to normalize their behaviors and restore their mind to equanimity, about sixty percent of the students were offered counseling. The method used for finding solution to the problems was trial and error method in which when arriving at a solution to a problem, another problem arises

1. Game; in this game, holding other's hand and touching each other were avoided in conformity with Tamil culture in which boys and girls are not

allowed to touch each other unless they are married. This game served the purpose of creating an understanding among the students and making this session something giving enjoyment

2. Everyone present was given the opportunity to introduce themselves to others and to speak to each other within the time allowed.
3. Cares was taken that every exercise or acting training consisted of at least two persons and that it was done as a team
4. Yoga and breathing exercises were held as a tool for improving their concentration power and physical health and also for helping them gain confidence

“When linked to the spiral model the researcher is not bound by such tasks; it is perfectly possible to abandon the original intent in the heat of creative work, and go with what is working well” (Trimingham 56,57)

### **Limitations of this Research**

The limitations inevitably occurred and some others were purposely created when the title of the research and the related problems were identified and the research work started to be implemented. In this sense, this research has unavoidably trespassed from the creative process to social issues. Similarly, when social context was taken into account, invariably the aftermath of the war was taken into consideration. Besides, the real objectives could be worked out only during the ongoing process of the research. Then only the vast research area got constricted and the focused research area was clearly seen. Thus, it was found that the student offering the subject drama and theatre was the nucleus of the study/research. In fact,



this research at the beginning comprised the vast area of Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre. After this study commenced, now it is difficult to say that the modern Tamil Theatre is vastly practiced. The reason for that was looked at in the section of the introduction.

Additionally, training is mainly done in schools and universities only. Hence, the sample of the research is mainly centered on the students. The other samples considered for collecting data are the groups who staged dramas aiming at social awareness with the financial assistance from non-governmental organizations (NGOs)-- Active Theatre Movement and Theatre Action Group; and the groups continuously produce dramas – Centre for Performing Arts is noteworthy, the other one is School of Drama And Theatre.

The next limitation was the inability to collect data from all Sri Lankan Universities. The reason was that the data collected from the students of Jaffna University was bulk in amount and deep in the sense, so it constrained the necessity for collecting data from any other university. At the same time, the researcher intended to make comparative studies of few matters at the Eastern University. However, since a practical problem arose, as there was a necessity to get ethical clearance and there was not enough time for such purpose, the intention was abandoned.

It was planned to meet most of the Tamil Drama artists at the initial phase of the research. But since the research was done along with the students, meeting the artists was limited. Moreover, the problems confronted by the students for the research were more than those confronted by the artists during the training and drama performance; also the problems confronted by the students were to be solved at once for their academic purposes.

In addition, one can find so many dramatic societies and groups in Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre History. The functions of all these should be analyzed separately. But, it was avoided, due to the fear, that it might involve vast area than the scope the research entailed. Anyhow, the societies and groups such as Centre for Performing Arts (CPA), School of Drama and Theatre (SDT), Active Theatre Movement (ATM), Theatre Action Group (TAG) and the people who were created by these societies through training and groups were superfluously dealt with in the research.

The data collection was constrained in terms of gender. This is discussed in detail in the Analytical Chapter.

Since cultural restriction was not identified in traditional theatre, as culture is intermingled, it was not deeply examined for this research, but two significant elements of the traditional theatre such as process of personal observation and childhood involvement were taken into consideration.

To the researcher's knowledge, research done on actor training in Sri Lanka was very limited.

Hence, the theatre practitioners/theorists named Stanislavski and Brecht too were taken into consideration. In the meantime, *Natyastra* was considered to be similar to ours. The above said were regarded as the limitations on data collection. Hereafter, the limitations found deeply on collected data are dealt with. It was observed that, at one stage the students were repeatedly giving the same answer to a specific matter. Anyhow, it should be noted that even then there were issues studied and it could be understood that, those issues were intertwined and deeply set. As far as students were concerned, they were fed up with the training/questioning and were not ready to come out with what they had in mind. This was the main limitation at this point.

It can be noticed that there was no transparency in the events and the story of the drama produced for the purpose of this research, because of the prevailing political situation. In other words we ourselves did the censorship on our own. Hence, when expressing a matter or studying a matter, it was difficult to go beyond the certain point where politics intruded. The issues and advantages of the students were looked at generally but not specifically. But this study would give better results, if it was done on taking each and every student specifically on case study basis. It could not be done so due to the constraints such as time, the number of students, and the cost involved in it and lack of manpower and another significant reason is the time limit for the research.

### **Ethical Issues**

Students' consent and university ethical clearance were obtained following a procedure. In the ethical committee, most of them are medical academics and they faced challenges in understanding and analyzing my proposal due to the creative, imaginative and practical aspects. (In my case, I was the first person to obtain this kind of ethical clearance in the aesthetic or artistic subject). Three times I resubmitted my proposal and responded to their several questions. All the questions and my responses are enclosed in appendices.

The MLA Handbook For Writers of Research papers edition seventh was followed for citation.

After this method and process of this research, the next chapter will explain according to the above methodological process, the data will be analyzed. Through the data, it

deals with the problems arising in the conducting of practical related to student's body, mind and emotions, gender stereotypes, and some society based cultural restrictions and war related affects and also in according relevant solutions to the confronted cultural situations. The ways to overcome the cultural restrictions and also to solve this problem practically through play production for better exploration of acting practice and training in rehearsal and off stage and on stage will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Actor Training in Cultural context: Challenges and Alternatives**

The vital significance towards need for enhancement of actor training skills has been contributed by several eminent theatre personalities worldwide. This topic of interest has been focused and analyzed in the second chapter. The third chapter explains the orientation of the tools and techniques of data gathering in accordance to research design and also method and methodology of field work participation in data collection.

In this chapter the data gathered has been organized and the problem represented and identified has been explained. In addition to this an alternative solution is also suggested to the problem. In this research the focus is not only on the diverse cultural interactions but also especially on cultural restrictions that have influenced the actor training process overall both in terms of acting practical classes and play productions. This research has been conducted in the University of Jaffna on the students of Drama & Theatre Arts by the researcher through the offering of a course on Acting & Play Production to the students. This research will also throw light upon teacher-student relationship in more interactive relationships. Tamil culture is related to a community or a nation, whereas adverse effects of actor training influences on the community. In this research the relationship between culture and training is considered as the prime significance of study. In the practical classes, actor training was imparted to the students where there has been a confrontation for the need to influence training keeping in mind their cultural backgrounds.

The word ‘culture’ has been used as a key term in the analysis of the research topic because culture is related to every field and is a highly controversial word as it

is also very unsatisfactory and always cries out for betterment to address right issues of great importance (Barker, Forward by Paul Willis xxi). The concept of ideology has led to an explosion of interpretations regarding ways of how culture and society are related to each other. (Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance* 18). In terms of cultural differences between East and West the emotional expressions do differ from one culture to another. (Smith 03). Erikson in his edited book “Small Places, Large Issues” Raymond Williams has described ‘Culture’ as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (87). Hence, all over the world, culture shows itself that it is related to the fields, such as, politics, philosophy, economics, sociology, psychology, linguistics, theology, religion and anthropology interdisciplinary, according to the diverse and various characteristics of each and every country. Any aspect of the community should be analyzed in this context. However, it is a fact that culture has always been a trend to convert anything to its inner structure before taking/absorbing/learning a matter.(Jenks 08). “Theatrical performances do not happen in isolation-moral or otherwise- from our everyday experiences and our deep cultural attitudes”(Stern 123). Culture in a society is the law and based on this the society is aided to function. Auslander quotes Grotowski that theatre must question the collective complexes of society which is encoded subconsciously through the myths and their relevant interpretations which are inherited (learnt and transmitted) through one’s blood, religion, culture, and environment. (Auslander 24). Next the conceptual and practical meaning of training both as a tool and a technique are discussed below.

Training as far as Sri Lankan theatre is concerned; the analysis on actor training in common has been superficially looked over. Here the main focus is on the actor training of Jaffna University which at present, is mainly provided as a course to the

students in the drama field. It is specifically done on the basis of a four year course. The training given by the drama groups other than University is covering the remaining persons who are interested in actor training irrespective of age. Though the same problems faced by the University are being encountered by these other groups too, but it is not to the extent to which the university particularly faces. At the same time, it cannot be said the trainees would be moulded into full- fledged artists as soon as they have undergone the training. But, it can be said the training would lead them to the path of acting. It is apt to quote, Eugenio Barba's statement<sup>11</sup> here: "Training does not guarantee artistic results. Rather, it is a way of making one's intentions coherent." Hence, it can be said, training is a process to know the techniques of a field one wants to achieve as it not only serves him with a degree but also helps him develop a clear consciousness and also self-disciplined life motivationally. The actor training is based upon daily life experiences and also based upon individual emotions encountered which must not be misused but must be utilized in his acting improvisation and formal theatre. (Spolin, *Imrovisation for* 15, 220). Richard Schechner emphasizes that for thoroughly training the actors must not only train in the Stanilavsky system but also equally in the *Natya Shastra* Rasa System. (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 342). The novices who are attaining acting practices initially experience a therapeutic function through the actor training. (Minnick 363). In this research, in terms of students learning most of them have experienced therapeutic function internally which is being manifested in their practice. Augusto Boal argued that for acting training and professionalization are not necessary, as traditional skills learn't may impede one's ability to make effective theatre as each

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<sup>11</sup> Mentioned in *Body Voice Imagination: Training for the Actor* by David G. Zinder, 2002, p. 3

actor may get restricted in his box of reference and is unable to get out of it (Babbage 305). Hence, he refused the traditional skill. The internal meaning of Augusto Boal is none of the actor performers should be kept restricted in any form of framing. This is to be considered in Actor Training.

Next what training is and its nature is discussed here. The Oxford dictionary defines training as an action of teaching a person or animal a particular skill or type of behavior.<sup>12</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines training as a process of learning the skills you need to do a particular job or activity.<sup>13</sup> The actual meaning in theatre context: teaching and learning activities to develop the skills by application of theoretical knowledge and adapting an appropriate methodology designed and processed based upon the actor's self-discretion. Training is looked at in various contexts. For instance, military training is a very tough and motivated to develop disciplined and physically robust force<sup>14</sup>, whereas academic training is based on educational aspects. As far as actor training is concerned, it should be noted that the following aspects should be taken into consideration: training for professional theatre, training for traditional theatre, training for the students from schools and universities, training for amateur theatre, training for applied theatre. The described theatre training process can be re-divided into three categories, based on the type of beneficiaries of training: Actor; Performer (ritual theatre- *poosari*(priest), applied theatre-facilitator); Happener<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/training>

<sup>13</sup> <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/training>

<sup>14</sup> See the link- <http://www.mod.gov.ba/files/file/dokumenti/defense/trainingpolicy.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Darko Suvin mentioned in the topic of Reflections on Happenings that Historically, Happenings have used various materials grouped around stylized human activities, as dramatic and diegetic theatre also does (dance and mime, music and noises, light and scenery, film, literature, etc.).



Specifically, actor plays an important role in the training of formal theatre. At the same time the training given to an actor may make a performer. It is already in the ethics of theatre to address all the activists in the drama performance as a performer. Meanwhile, the people who are attached to the fields of dance and music too are called as performers. According to Kuzhanthai M. Shanmugalingam's statement- "The actor in traditional theatre is a performer in the full sense of the word. The singer, the dancer, the speaker, the improviser, the narrator and the actor- all put together in one person- is the performer of the traditional theatre" (74) It is said that the actor takes a character and performer takes a role (Konijin 41). Either after Brecht's theatre or Meyerhold's theatre, it is found that the word performer is more apt than actor. In participatory theatre the performance is done by the actor /performer considering the audience too as participants. In this case, the performance is done by the actor and the audience getting together or it is done in passive position. It is worth mentioning here, Augusto Boal in his 'oppressed theatre:' used the word as aspect - actor. When an actor and a performer are compared, a performer is considered only as a carrier, a performer could then only be taken as a carrier if theatre is considered as a tool, particularly in all Theatres for social Development, Drama Therapy and Applied Theatre.

Training is a practical form of learning. Actor training which is a constant process of exploration and learning is trained subjectively by practicing persistently and is objectively learned and abstracted based upon certain improvised capabilities as a diligent performer. The learning objectives are such as Skill, Knowledge, Attitude, Abilities (Jehanzeb 245). These are necessary qualitative tools to be inculcated as a trainer for discovering a unique technique for improvising training and acting performances.

Physical factors are mainly taken into consideration in some sectors, for instance-. Military training.(Shilling 01). Here factors such as height and weight are given consideration in training. Body and a gun are the main instruments in army training. But, the chalk and talk are the main instruments in the case of a teacher. Unlikely, the instruments would be of different types – calculating, measuring, singing, dancing, speaking, running and acting. These are instruments to analyze a performer holistically and also participatory research a performance.

If a man's life is looked at, here too the learning process goes through a child's birth, growth and death. Through looking at the environment, hearing from it, teaching from it and being punished by it. (Gill, and Adams 16). It can be seen that some fields of art are passed on from generation to generation. (Zarrilli, *Kathakali* 68) For example: it can be seen in martial arts, music and dance. Even at the present time, it is observed in the fields such as carpentry and masonry, a person learns under a head/boss for some time before he starts work on his own. All the livelihood measures were regarded as art, and were learnt as art, in the Indian context of livelihood historically where each and every occupational livelihood such as pottery, shoemaking, blacksmith etc was all artistic apprentice but yet there has been no mobility as the transfer of artistic skills was from father to son and due to rigidity in occupational hierarchy there is more degeneration of the same livelihood skill due to the immobility in the long run. It is believed that all ancient 64 arts (*kalas*)<sup>16</sup> in Indian manuals- from archery to medicine - are in the hands of Goddess of Saraswathy - The Goddess of Learning.<sup>17</sup> All the training in the ancient traditional system were in the structure of Guru- Sishya. But later the system through education changed following

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<sup>16</sup> Vatsayana lists out 64 arts to be cultivated to make a person more attractive. See. <http://www.indianscriptures.com/vedic-society/arts/the-64-arts>

<sup>17</sup> It is mentioned in Kumaraguruparar *Abirami Anthathi*, Religios songs.

the western type and the training on education- or the learning became an organizational one (Chatterjee 83,88). However, the situation of teachers and students still related by the influence of the Guru-Sishya tradition will be discussed more in this chapter.

“Training in theatre is teaching or developing in oneself or others, any skill and knowledge that relate to specific use full competencies. Training has specific goals of improving one’s capability, capacity, productivity and performances” (Maunaguru, *Arankiyal* 138) when actor training is done in relation to creative work, it poses problems. The argument, whether an artist could be created by training is a good example. Here, the characteristics of an artist could be added to an artiste, but it cannot create an artist himself. A good example for this is the fact that, those who learned music, dance and drama were groomed to be teachers, not to be artists. Besides, the actor training is being taught as part of the course work and is being awarded a certificate as an academic qualification. But yet the course nor the teacher who taught can create or make an artist but in turn the student emerged will be capable of handling and directing production plays and also know the essentials of drama and actor training in an instructive mode as passed on by the teachings of his teacher. Hence, it is empirical evidence that, rather than being trained by another person in creative work, in fact, they devise their own training and evolve themselves into artistes. This is revealed in the interaction held with Sri Lankan Tamil traditional artists.

Therefore, if ‘Training’ does not generate an artist, how an artist could be created through the theatre field – a daunting quest related to training given to students in the Drama study programme? Hence at this stage, if it is concluded that an artist is created through training given to him/her, a question arises as to whether

the students who perform dramas on stages do not gain any experience. A belief had prevailed long, in Tamil culture is that; an artist is born, not made. But today's world is different. Today's reality according to Boal statement is that anybody could be transformed into anything by their own effort (Babbage 305). Hence, an artist, who came into existence by himself, could be compared to an entrepreneur. Thus the drama training though extended to various students with an intention of developing talent and honing the skills of the students. But it is notable that one or two exceptional students who have progressed towards the artistic skills and inspiration were developed through this training. The case stated above has been empirically verified among the drama and theatre students of Jaffna University. A characteristic thing that emerged for the researcher is that, a creative work cannot be accomplished by adhering to the trainer's disciplinary dimensions of systematic and punctual behaviour. It is experienced that nothing could be achieved without these two cultivable entities. But at the same time, the activities of Art and creativity are largely independent of these fixed notions of systematic and punctual as artistic work and creativity involves a continuous process of transcending the boundaries of being systematic and punctual. It has been observed that the student, who is serious of creating himself as an artist, based on his own training and objective motivation and orientation of his/her practice complying with his/her systematic and punctual understanding can reinstate and elevate himself/herself as an artist. When an actor and a performer are compared, a performer is considered only as a carrier, a performer could then only be taken as a carrier if theatre is considered as a tool. Particularly in all Theatres for Social Development, Drama Therapy and Applied Theatre, 'carrier' had to be used instead of the performer.

In the long history of Sri Lankan Tamil theatre, professional actors are found to be a rare species. During *Parsi* Theatre period, there were professional actors in large numbers. Therefore, only amateur actors were engaged in theatre activities. Hence, a deep-rooted acting tradition was not sustained. But, there were groups of good actors. (This had been discussed in chapter II). On the contrary, there are lots of professional actors in the Sinhala theatre. They are alternatively engaged in Theatre and Cinema and they also contribute largely to the TV sector. Here, it is observed that they have deep acting talents. When compared with Tamils, which are adequately enough to play character roles. But in Tamil society, the situation is quite different. The cinema and the TV had not contributed much towards the field of acting. But as of today, a 'short film' culture had appeared in Tamil and it has started growing. Even then, they partially rely on the camera or completely depend on the camera, not on the actor in creating short – films.

The school of Drama and Theatre established after 1978, was modeled as an establishment to provide training in a proper manner in acting and play production. Those who were already amateur actors also received proper training at this institution. Likewise, The Centre for Performing Arts, Jaffna, is also contributing towards the production of drama and providing training. Thus, it is notable that, the awareness regarding Training had already started to bloom in the history of Tamil theatre.

Whatever said and done, the Training in Sri Lanka Tamil Theatre brought out the methodology of having "Workshops"<sup>18</sup> as its base. These workshops which were conducted in a widespread way were concerned with how to create a small situation

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<sup>18</sup> The experience as a researcher along with other participants has consistently brought about an impact on the workshop training process.

and how to perform that situation. An example could be cited here to demonstrate the trends of these workshops. A student of medical faculty attended a theatre workshop on the first day and was not there for the second day. The reason given by him was that only social issues were highlighted and performed in the workshops without focusing on acting and the art and aesthetic aspects of drama. The contradiction arose because his intention was to become a good actor, but the workshop was intended for performers. The above conflict is in line with the idea of Augusto Boal, which is that a theatre which evolved through workshops was considered as a weapon (Boal ix), the word weapon was used by Augusto Boal in the foreword of his book "Theatre of the oppressed" In light of above facts, it can be argued that a systematic Actor Training had not emerged from workshops related to trainings. Hence, in Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre, performer training had got the prime place over actor trainings the above theatre trainings were limited to only short workshops focusing on social issues. With the outbreak of the war, people at that time who were also produced impact on had confronted various social issues. In this context, these theatre workshops played a vital role, relieving people of mental stress and agony. The workshops which contained therapeutic elements also served as a platform for open discussion. As people were stakeholders in the war, they were subjected to massive losses and because the society confronted with various social problems and crises, it is notable that, the attention of the dramatists was naturally drawn towards social problems. Much concern was shown by the Theatre regarding liberation and social development. Several dramas staged in that period dealt with the themes such as, the war, the impact of war and liberation.

Hence workshop was held generally for duration of 5 days. Those who participated in them prepared themselves instantly for drama performance and they

regarded themselves as drama performers. The performances which resulted from these workshops contained several issues like gender issues, family problems, health, education, healing, social awareness and children's rights as their themes. Besides, in the workshops training was generally considered as a secondary matter. A notion that prevailed in the workshops was that anybody can do anything. A statement of professor of theatre, Maunaguru is worth quoting at this point: He made the following statement based on the nature of the workshops. "When an actor is without mental and physical Training, how could he create deep characters? Because of this I was reluctant to produce good dramas with conflicting characters. This is a challenge." (Maunaguru, *Arankiyal* 138). The fact that an actor had not been developed through training process is indicated through the above statement. Also, it indicates that attention to the training is very much restrained in the workshops..

Although the workshops did not centre on the actor, the role it had played had created a big change in the Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre. Through the workshops only the shallow level characters had been produced and deep level characters could not create because the dramas produced through workshops were more concerned about social issues rather than the degree of artistic expression of an actor. Which in contrast plays a significant role in actor training was neglected. However, when actor training was taken into consideration, certain social issues emerged. All those issues were grounded in cultural basis.

The social issues highlighted through workshops paved way for the emergence of a new theatrical form. It was required for the society. In a sense, theatre was closely linked to the war. For instance, the play, "*Mansumantha Meniyar*" staged in 1985s ( Men who carried soil) was the symbolic of the war. Likewise "*Annai Idda Thee*" ( Fire lighted by the mother), staged in 1990s, spoke about the horrifying

consequences of the war. At the height of the war “*Aar Kollo Sathurar*” (Who won?) – Based on the destiny of Abimanyu on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the Maha Bharatham War) was staged in 2005. The war in Sri Lanka ended in 2009 and now the new Dramatic format of ‘Post war Theatre has come into existence’. It is a time in which the problems of the people affected due to the war were brought out through this format. In the post war context, providing actor training has become a challenging task. The attempts to give training, in bringing out the aspect of ‘Emotion’ out actors confronted with problems. The trainees were in a mentally affected state. Before giving the training, there existed a need to bring their state to composure. The above fact bears similarity with the statement of Fantan Walsh which is “to the extent that, actor training, sometimes resembled actor therapy.” (Walsh 34)

The above discussion about workshops indicates conducted on the basis of social issues but rarely on relooking at the actor training process of skill development for actor training was conducted as an objective purpose of this research at the university level. Three factors are considered for the following analysis carrying out the training. They are:- Common problem in practical due to external surrounding factors, Culture related issues in actor training and war and post-war conditions influenced on theatre practice.

In this chapter, the core idea of research is divided into eight categories for discreet analysis

1. Students’ inclination
2. Practical exercises and creative work on acting
3. Issues related to female students
4. Direct impacts of culture on practical works of theatre students



5. Production process for the performance
6. Breaking the culture at what extent
7. Theatre practice in the period of war and post war situations

### **1. Students' Inclination**

Some of the activities of the students due to their attitude were a hindrance to the practical work. It is looked at five sections: attitude, students' background, case studies of the students, internal conflict, and time factors and female Students.

#### **Attitude**

Here the word attitude mentioned above represents the attendance of the students and their responses towards the practical classes necessary to be attended continuously as the training is both an exploration of human body not only by the actor trainer but also to the learner. But this did not happen as planned as per the schedule of the University Curriculum, as the students kept absenting themselves stating various reasons which are not only cultural, ceremonial and also certainly recreational. Along with this, there lack of seriousness towards their fellow students in terms senior-junior clashes, laughing towards their performances and disturbing the practice without observing tediously the practice of their fellow students.

- Not on time to the classes
- Absent from the classes (without notice)
- Religious fasting affected the practical classes, since attendance was poor during fasting.
- Not attending classes due to illness

- Not actively participating in the classes and putting the responsibility on others.
- Taking holidays continuously with long weekends.
- Joining tours without prior permission.
- Taking advantage of social activities such as funeral, wedding and festivals and not attending classes.
- Students who were not having a role in a particular scene sit together and chat while rehearsal was going on
- Not attending classes on the pretext of looking after the father, mother or a relative under medical care.
- Not attending classes due to bad weather
- Giving more preference to the functions held at the university, for e.g. convocation
- Try to avoid classes when main roles are not given to them
- Laughing at the students practicing and this results in poor attention.
- The person of main character failed to attend the rehearsal. The mobile phone of the concerned actor was switched off and therefore, could not be reached out.

The absence of the students from the practical classes has a lot of effect. Normally many lame excuses are put forward for the absence. Very common excuses are such as funeral, wedding, sickness, festival, fasting, tour, check up for family members or sickness of them and bad weather (heavy rain). This shows that the life of the students revolves around their families and the community and they do not have an adequate commitment to the subject that they work with. As students they have all

the responsibility to attend the practical classes and contribute their participation, but family matters and social commitments dominate their minds more and they seem to be negligent towards the academic work. Hence, it can be said that the practical classes are closely connected with the issues of a community. The way to overcome this problem is to make the students stay at the place of practical classes till the training is over. A good example is given below for the reasons of absence of 18 students on the same day:

- A student went to a temple festival
- Another student went to attend temple '*Pongal*') (rice offering)
- Two male students and two female students were down with fever
- Two female students and two male students attended their relative's wedding
- One female student was affected by sprain on the neck

Whether the reasons are false or true, different reasons were easily given by them. It is regrettable that the students fail to honor the protocol of the subject and this reveals that they do not have enough dedication. Normally, the students are not enthusiastic when they are asked to improvise a matter concerned with practical classes. In addition, they do not actively participate in discussions. There are various explanations given to this attitude. Most of the students restrain themselves from involving in such matter to avoid trouble or to be in the comfortable zone. The students lack self-confidence and they are afraid of making mistakes. These were identified through observation, interview and feedback. Furthermore details from student's feedback that these habits are nurtured from schooling where the education system does not allow room for the students to air their views in the classes. It is disturbing when others chatter while the rehearsal was going on. They do not think that watching a rehearsal would do well for them and improve their skills in preparing

a drama. Another reason for this negligence is their unemployment status. If they had been employed, they would have had the instinct to learn more to improve their skills employment wise. Students are showing more interest in attending the functions held in the university, rather than attending the classes. The reason for this behavior is that students always like to be happy. But they cannot expect happiness in a rehearsal. Yet, the students have failed to treat the rehearsal and training as equal as social events. To get over this difficulty, the students were asked to avoid laughing at others and laughing during his/her performance while in practical classes. It was found that lack of self-confidence is the main reason for the laughter. It is evident from students' feedback.

### **Students' Background**

70% of the students hailed from the rural areas. The parents of 30% of the students were mostly government employees. Some of the students were working while studying; they were masons, carpenters, drivers or night shift workers in the press. Additionally, some students from war-torn places were forced to look after their families. Many students came from poor families. They depended on NGOs for the expenses for their studies. Some of the students were in the pathetic position of having their lunch only after getting home late or late in the night, after finishing their normal classes and extra-curricular activities - such as drama practice. Hence, a need arose for providing lunch for those students during the production of a drama which was conducted for this research purpose by the Department of Fine Arts. Further, the incentive granted by the University Grants Commission was not enough for all these purposes. The students also faced certain unexpected problems in terms of long

travels and their lack of affordance of transport fare due to their poverty. There has been certain exceptional and challenging case of two students who seemed to be mentally not sound and lacking stability unable to fit with the fellow students. The researcher in order to train them also took the assistance of a relevant medical counsellor.

### **Case Studies of the Students**

The case studies stated below are gathered during the classroom setting which not only address the trainer and student relationship but also the cultural and personal inhibitions that not only restricted the rehearsal and play production but also led the trainer to rise up to the situation and resolve the conflict of the student to improvise himself.

#### **Student A (Male)<sup>19</sup>**

A student was given a role of a dead man in a play production. The rehearsal was going on and he had to be in a coffin, but it could be seen that he was nervous. When inquired the answer was ‘his mother won’t be happy and she won’t agree with him playing that role’. Even the scene of sprinkling rice to his mouth as part of the Hindu funeral rites had also to be avoided, and his request was accepted. But still he continued to feel uneasy. The scene was that ‘the corpse would get out of the coffin to talk to his wife’, he was staggering at this stage. It was understood from the

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<sup>19</sup> He is a student of drama and theatre arts, who belongs to a rigid, conservative and orthodox background which was observed and learned through his discussion. Like this B and C case studies of other students are discussed below.

discussion with him that he was culturally and emotionally very much affected by that scene. He was sent for counselling. Then he was replaced by B.

### **Student B (Male)**

B was a first year student. He was helping his father as a driver to transport building materials, such as sand and metal by a heavy vehicle of his father, at his leisure time. He was chosen for this character for his physical appearance. He had to make up a lot in the rehearsal in a very short period. Suddenly one day he was seen in corner of the rehearsal location sobbing loudly and developing unusual behaviour, without telling the reason for his crying. He was taken to a room and allowed to come to himself. It came to light that the reason for his act was ‘love failure’. The drama was scheduled to be staged next day, so he was taken to a counsellor and prepared to perform his role, and he did it well. After the staging of the drama, he told that he capitalized on the agony of his love failure to make the role livelier. He was battered by few senior students after the drama when B was on his way back home. The reason said was, B was the one who betrayed a girl. But finally it was revealed that a friend of B was the cause for the ‘love failure’.

### **Student C (Female)**

C was a final year student. She rushed into the practical class saying that the first year student and the second year students are behaving disorderly under the cover of love and made commotion. It is a fact that love affairs created problems among students. But on the pretext of this matter the student C came to create a scene, and

started arguing and contradicting with the lecturers there with the students. An internal politics were identified behind this incident. Hence, this will be elaborately looked at in the next part of internal conflict.

### **Internal Conflict**

There were three types of internal conflicts identified. 1. Between students and students, 2. Between staff and staff. 3. Between Staff and students. The conflict between students and students was mainly the problems arising between senior and junior students. It is an unwritten law in the university to give respect to the seniors by the juniors. It starts from ragging, once the new batch of students enters the university. In Sri Lankan Universities ragging is one of the major challenges.

### **Time Factors and Female Students**

Rehearsals, mainly the final rehearsals, normally consume more time than the other. But it becomes a problem to the female students to wait till the end of the rehearsal or stay until 7:00 p.m. They prefer to get back home at 4:30 pm before it gets dark. The neighborhood would look at them suspiciously when the girls get back home late. Even they would not stop to ask them what is there for them to stay in the university so late. The female students are not happy in participating in the dramas staged in their own areas. If it is to say specifically, female students are not in favour of taking part in drama staged out of the university premises. This conveys the fact that the female students as an influence of their cultural socialization do not want to disrupt their conception of dignity and image that they want to maintain. They fear

that there late oncoming to home would disrupt their image and hamper their chance of getting married in near future based on the enquired opinions conveyed by the family neighborhood. This will be discussed in more detail in the section of issues related to female.

## **2. Practical Exercises and Creative Work on Acting**

Practical exercises are generally meant to bring about flexibility on the body and mind. They are a prerequisite for theatre acting. Creative work which is mentioned in the curriculum, Drama and Theatre is done to enhance students' talents and skills which supposedly enable them to get into artistic way and aesthetic mode. Besides, it is closely connected with improvisation and imagination in theatre practice. The challenges confronted, when the exercises for acting and the creative work were practiced with the drama and theatre students, are listed below.

1. Types and characteristics of the students
2. Exercises and related issues
3. Improvisation
4. Acting and character
5. Emotion
6. Demonstration for novices
7. Students' obstacles and requests

Most of the university students are between the age group of 19 – 26 years. Especially, the students who took part in this study were all undergraduates. It could be observed that the behavioural characteristics of this age group are unique, complex and problematic. Hence, differences in students should be taken into account in any



educational activities with university students. The classification of the students who had taken part in the practicals is based on, factors such as their interests, activities, volunteering, creativity, and emotion.

- A. Active and creative
- B. Inactive and Creative.
- C. Rhythmic (body).
- D. Passive to active
- E. Enthusiastic in activities. .
- F. Terminally Unhealthy.
- G. Psychiatric.
- H. Economically backward.
- I. Escapist.
- J. Physically and mentally affected by war.

It is notable that even if these students are classified according to physique and conduct, these attributes are interdependent and related to each other. However, this classification is not totally reliable and predictable in all cases. For example, an escapist may possess the creative skill of acting. Similarly, one who is economically backward may be very active in the class. Moreover, it was found that there was a limitation for persons who are active in bringing out creative ideas. It was observed during the research that the students who are inactive or lazy were creative. The different groups of students and their attributes are discussed in detail here. Some students were found to have rhythmic bodies. Students of this type easily expressed their roles in the rehearsal on stage. Another type of students remained calm in the class, but when it comes to creative work or creative acting, it was observed in

practical that they gradually increased their skills. Those who act emotionally and with speed expressed the role they acted, dramatically but they were problematic in the class. Some students were afflicted with Asthma, spine problems, and affected voice and body. The training that was given to these students was intended to suit their afflictions. It should be pointed out here that there were instances where their afflictions like asthma and body pains were cured by the yoga exercises given in the practical. Similarly various people with psychiatry problems had passed out successfully at various times. However, the training was imparted to them with care and big challenges were confronted in doing so. But their feedbacks indicated that the practical had helped them to progress.

The students who came to practical classes skipping their breakfast, or stayed away from the class for want of money for bus fare, dropped out of the class and opted for some work as they were found to be economically deprived. Because of this, meals and short eats had to be supplied during long rehearsals. Arrangements were made to provide these students with some financial assistance through organizations which provide financial assistance and other sources. The next type of students is escapists. They hindered acting as a team and they had the nature of contradicting themselves in conversation. When these students came to the class, they expressed themselves heavily and vigorously engaged in practical just to “show off”. Further, a few participants had fractures and big wounds caused by war. This factor was taken into consideration during the practical. For example, a student with shell pieces in his head did not do certain practical because they were advised to refrain from severe exercises. He would suffer from nausea and sit down, if he did so. However, he completed his practical and passed out. Similarly, trauma and mental disorders caused by war were big problems. Sometimes emotionally induced exercises done during

practical made them recall their experiences during the war and they were anguished in not being able to recover from it. Counseling was provided to them during moments like these, avoiding exercises connected to emotion or doing them at a reduced level.

Punctuality was found to be an obstacle. Classes sometimes started late, but they could not end late. Classes had to be finished within the stipulated time. Even though strict rules were administered regarding the time, it was difficult to pull them out of this practice. Following example demonstrates the absence of punctuality consciousness. 50% of the students were unable to sustain their punctuality. The following examples reveal the above fact.

Rehearsal schedule time - 7.30

Trainer's (Director) arrival- 7.15

Students' arrivals

A - 7.35

B – 7.40

C – 7.45

D - 7.50

E - 8.00

F – 9.00

50% of the students arrived before 7.30 AM. This example is for an extra rehearsal on a Saturday. The reason for this is the absence of a time consciousness

culture among the students. This concept of time consciousness culture<sup>20</sup> is validated by the discussion of Robert Levine. He states in his book titled “Time of Geography” (2006) that attitude to time varies, depending on cultures and countries. The relationship between time and countries and cultures is discussed in detail. His discussion on the same topic in the Asian context brings out similar aspects noticed in the students regarding time factor. However, it was observed that during celebrations and programs organized by the students, although the punctuality is not there, they conduct them creatively and energetically. Female students who came from long distances and stay in hostels or rooms were found to be affected by homesickness.

Warm-up exercises always precede practical, to prepare the body of the students for the practical. Instead of this method the students were requested to practice warm-up exercises themselves, which were appropriate for their body conditions, their diseases and bodily afflictions. The students were requested to use the warm-up what is generally known in the local Tamil society as “*ulaivu eduththal*” (breaking fatigueness). Humans and even animals stretch or bend their bodies to remove fatigueness. The students began, capitalizing on it in developing further exercises. “What the actor needs is a unified self- use training based on a study of the fundamentals of his body mechanics and his energy systems.” (Clay 16) This method was adapted to suit individual ability because it was not possible to apply the same method to everybody.

Physical exercises such as *Yoga* and *Pranayama* breathing were given importance. These imparted calmness to the body and mind and as breathing was also included, they helped in the “Projection of the Voice”. These exercises were

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<sup>20</sup> The utilization of time based upon the change in climatic conditions based on the day, night or weather change is considered to be time consciousness culture. There is no tradition of exact culture being tracked through analogs such a watch.

performed by all students without any cultural barriers. Both males and females performed them well. The reason for this was that they looked at “*Yoga*” as a culturally related exercise and that it is method worship. If some western method were used instead of these, the students might have found it difficult to do them. For example, when the warm-up method of chain exercise (from head to toe warm up) was done, the female students did not move their chest or hip area and they had the habit of starting to laugh when the trainer rotated his hip.

The students who learned the subject of Drama would never have performed the practical without gender difference. Thus, this problem was more observed in the 1<sup>st</sup> year batches in the university. Particularly, the girls who had their secondary education in Ladies colleges found it difficult to perform the practical. Therefore, the training given to such students and was made easy by creating understanding. Exercises like “eye contact exercise” where students did not do the exercises of looking into each other’s eyes and the exercises done while holding hands were avoided. Freshers found it difficult to register the body gestures and postures in their memory. Reason for this is that they are very much used to register in their minds only what they read and see. The practice of registering body language in mind was learned later through training.

Certain problems were identified in the activity of bringing concentration and relaxation through meditation. But, it should be also pointed out here that a lot of benefits were also derived from them. In initial meditation exercises, some students were unable to remain eyes closed with others. The fear in their mind is the reason behind this. The fear most probably resulted from their insecurity, as they were not in the safety zone, because they had not come out the zone before. Nevertheless, gradually, the situation changed and finally they gained the confidence to close their

eyes whole being with others. Likewise, during meditation the degree of concentration was found to vary from student to student, the lowest level was 20% and the highest 80%. However, students attained inner calmness and unity through this. Their feedback shows the above fact. Further certain students did not like to go through the process prior to the actual drama acting. According to their views, they wanted to attain the skills related to drama by getting on to the stage immediately. . But, this kind of attitude does not help students progress in the relevant field. . These types of students were interested in acting training rather than actor training, which enables students to act on stage. These two types of training are different from one another. Aspects like rhythm, balance, concentration, movement, flexible body, and voice projection leads an actor to enhancing his/her skills. On the contrary, acting training is based on whatever that is necessary to act a role. The desire of some students to play a role directly is like anyone treating patients without studying medicine.

Another exercise which produced issues was formless dance. When the students had attained rhythm, it could be noticed that there existed a overall harmony in rendering dialogue, moving in the space and expressing posture and gesture. As far as female students were concerned, ‘formless dance was not a comfortable exercise since it involved a lot of body shaking to which they were not used. Besides, their cultural background, and consciousness of their body which preoccupied their minds always restricted their observance. This was observed in participatory observation and the observation was checked against the feedback of the female students in order to ensure the validity.

In addition, when the functions of their body and its mechanisms related to the exercises were explained prior to the exercises, they found it difficult to perform. The

following example demonstrates the above fact. For example, if a person is walking, when his left leg goes forward his right arm should be swung forward. If his right leg goes forward his left arm should be swung forward. When the students naturally were allowed to do this without being given the explanations in advance, they did it without even realizing that they were doing it. But, when the students were requested to observe the dynamics of their body they made mistakes. This generally happened when dance motions were learnt. If only the mechanisms of walking and running were learnt, the 'slow motion' was performed correctly. Hence, a conclusion that could be drawn from this is that, the students should train in something without being conscious doing it. Something that is artificial should be learnt naturally. Similarly, before a student absorbs something naturally, the explanation of the mechanical aspects involved in that thing should be avoided.

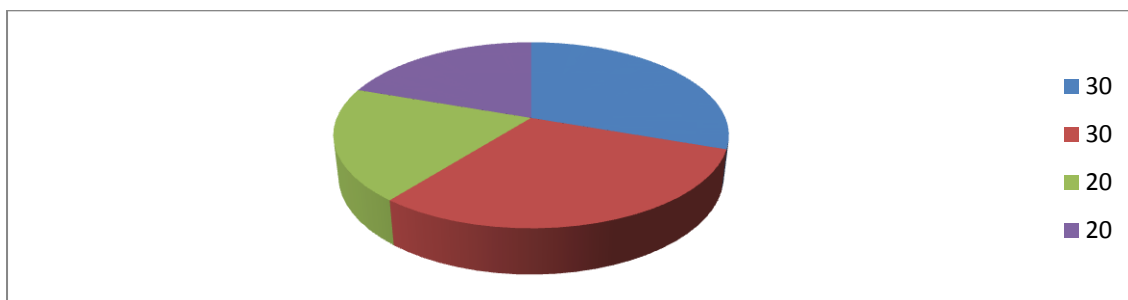
Improvisation is the most significant tool for an actor to establish his/her own ideas and creativities in terms of acting practical. "Improvisation is a relatively understudied aspect of creativity and cognition. One way of viewing improvisation is as the act of real-time dynamic problem solving."(Magerko, et al. 01). While doing improvisation the common students' confusion is whether perform realistically in life or theatrically on stage. In response to the confusion of the students the first stage the students were thought to is to express themselves as in real life, then they can act and learn theatrically. But here is different. They had two opportunities for improvisation: Improvisation done for exercise in the regular practical classes and improvisation of small events with the intention of producing a play.

First one of these two was done routinely. It was done to enhance the experience, proficiency, self – ability, and the imagination. This could be performed according to the individual wishes, but the second one was little different. That is to

say that, as it was done with the intention of presenting a drama to the audience, some limitation, order, and correct expression were expected. When the students improvised for the second one, most of them imitated the cinema and TV characters. The basic reason for this is that, as the students viewed lot of TV and cinema and they did not have the opportunity of watching dramas to that extent. To overcome this problem they were deliberately asked to imitate TV and cinema characters. What naturally came out the students was made to be brought out in order to encourage them to do something different from what they had done was the basic of this technique. Additionally, in the improvisations done with a view of performing a play production, the output of the students was somewhat limited and found to be stereotyped. Generally the primary improvisations were perhaps not attractive, and the output of these students was at a low level. Particularly, in order to add aesthetic aspects, the event improvised by the students was broken into several parts, and explained to the students and they were left to practice it again and again.

In these improvisational activities, 20% of the students eagerly and imaginatively engaged in the activity, while 30% they showed dual attitudes, for example, sometimes they were eager and at other times they were not eager. 30% of them were with low level interest and the remaining 20% moved towards changes in stages. The following chart shows the degree of involvement the students showed in improvisation.



**Chart No: 4.1 Percentages of Improvisation on Acting Practice**

The division of the students into several groups to improvise the same situation was much productive. When the four groups performed the same situation in several ways, multidimensional views were achieved. Students got the opportunity of doing and identifying correct things.

When the novices who came to learn acting, are asked to take a character to practice, invariably they selected and acted three types of characters. They were the characters like madman, beggar and drunkard. Generally, the reason for selecting the above characters is their notion that acting was something abnormal. These characters were selected because they facilitated more movements and distortions. Although this was allowed for the novices, it was avoided for other students. To stimulate the presentation of the character, three methods were adopted.

- A. Presenting a character with the realistic nature of the life.
- B. Asking to overdo or exaggerate the character in presentation.
- C. Presenting the character, in the likeness of an animal.

All three methods paved the way to different kinds of expressions of a character, particularly, in these three methods, different methods were found suitable to each one of the performers. This was found to be a good method for the beginners who were under training. The students found it difficult to use their body only without

voice in presenting a character through miming. The reason for this was that the nature or attributes of a character were expressed through dialogue as it was practiced in the past. In second year the undergraduates are given proper training on acting. However, the output of the undergraduate's was not adequate because, although they had received adequate training they had the experience of watching very limited number of plays. . The following problems were identified mostly among the students. 50% of the students were afraid to act because of their fear whether what they were doing was correct. Some of these students were affected by their personal problems. They were unable to control their minds at all (These students had psychiatric problems)

This problem was solved by giving necessary support and encouragement to muster their self-confidence. Some students were provided with counseling. Some were left to watch what others were doing and to take them into their minds without any insistence. Another significant problem was projecting their voice. When voice training was given to the students, it was found out that the natural voice splendour of the early actors was very sound. It, however, began to decline when those actors were given microphones. The present research participants preferred to use microphones instead of natural voice projections which they did not possess. The students also thought that voice training meant merely shouting aloud. Hence, at the initial phase of the training, the students were provided with the method of the Carnatic music and discourses were given on how the voice should be projected. It was explained to them that the true voice projection could be obtained only through continuously speaking the Drama Dialogue.

The emotion directly bridges the connection between mind and brain. The researchers in psychology mention that the emotion relates to the sociocultural issues.

(Panksepp 301). Some scholars argue that there is no number and nature of basic emotion.(Panksepp 41).At the same time in theatrical context the emotions are divided into eight as *Natyasastra*. Kenny states in his book *Action, Emotion and Will* that the intellectual emotion which is unreal circumstances, as at the theatre, or while reading a book (08). Many acting practitioners employed the emotion in different contexts. Pros and cons of the emotion in acting have been clearly discussed in the second chapter

As an initial attempt to undertake playing roles, the students were asked to act a character, enacting the personal problems in their minds. This method produced desired results. They were able to project their feeling through a character very easily. They were encouraged to memorize the gestures projected through the character and repeatedly practice them. It was found that when they went into emotions, the acting came out from them, spontaneously. The method of insisting is a technique greatly emphasized by David Zinder<sup>21</sup>. Large number of students gave importance to dialogue when playing a role. They brought out all the aspects of the character through dialogue. Hence, mime related training, which gives importance to body language was increasingly undertaken. When student actors spoke the dialogue emotionally, their voices were in their natural form and volume of ordinary colloquial terms. But, this was not adequate to be heard by a large audience. This was a major problem confronted while giving the voice training. When the volume of the voice increased, the emotions that were naturally present in the voice were lost. After explaining this situation, the students made some progress.

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<sup>21</sup> An acting workshop was organized by department of Theatre Arts, S.N. School, University of Hyderabad from 19th to 24th February 2013. Professor David Zinder was the resource person for this workshop. The data collected from his workshop about psychological gesture.

The problem encountered, when the student acted emotionally are discussed in a subsection of this section called “War and Theatre”. The students who were affected due to the conflict were not asked to perform the problems in their mind. Instead, they built up characters, based on objective matters, which were not related to their personal experience. For instance, a Sri Lankan Tamil traditional theatre actor called Selvam had mostly acted in female roles. When he was on the stage, his eyes gave a “hallucinated eyes” look. The facial expression looked like as if the character had gone into the situation and had been living that life. Psychiatric patient’s eyes also gave the same “hallucinated eyes”<sup>22</sup> look. That is to say that the patient’s face reflected an illusion as if the patient was living in a different world in imaginary scenes. Those eyes were true eyes because of the illness, illusions and imaginations occurring in the mind of the patients. What is emphasized here is that the actor Selvam<sup>23</sup> was able to go into the internal world by his mind. But if the above students had attempted this, they would have been affected. Their personal emotions would probably have led them to the bad experiences they went through during the war. Therefore, that kind of exercises was avoided and these students were advised to omit emotions and utilize the body. Stanislavsky’s concept of emotional memory stated about recalling the emotional memories to create a character (Stanislavsky, *Actor’s work* 196). Augusto Boal mentioned about rationalized emotion which would be applicable for the theatrical work. (Boal, *Games for* 35). Auslander pointed out in Brecht theatre the same rationalized emotion was applied. Micheal Checkov preferred imagination and images significantly more than emotions. One of the

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<sup>22</sup> This was discussed with psychiatric consultant Dr S.Sivayogan regarding actor’s hallucination on stage.

<sup>23</sup> He was a traditional theatre (Isai Nadakam- sond drama) actor and he mainly acted female roles: Valli, Pavalakkodi, Chandramathi, Saviththiri. When he acted a role he expressed his facial expression as hallucinated eyes with emotion for the particular character.

examples, that will be discussed in the students' case studies. (Chekhov, *To The Actor* 21,22).

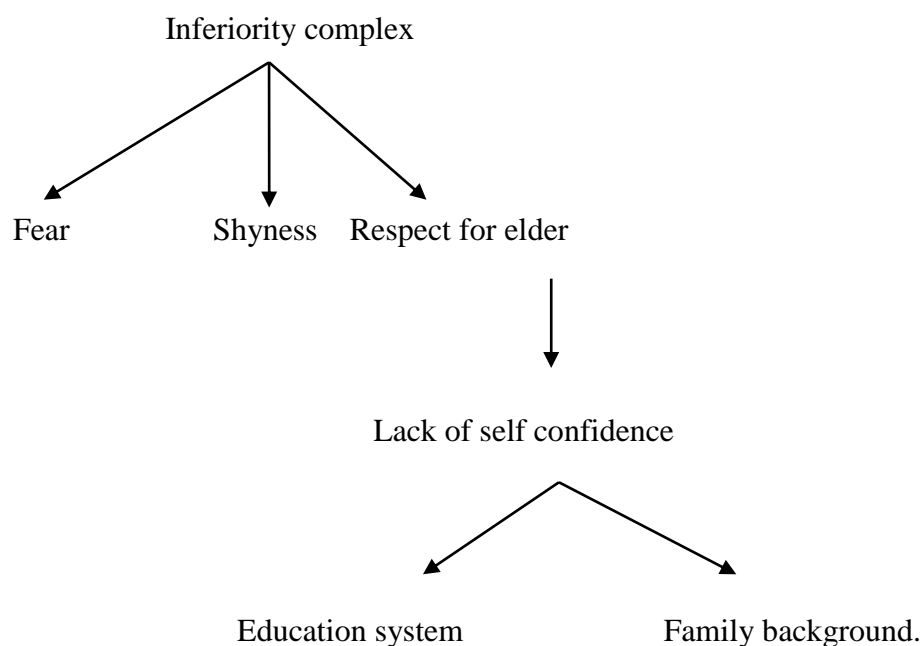
Although during the rehearsals of the acting exercises, a lot of explanation about characters was given to the students, they were unable to act the characters well. Main reason for this was the lack of experience due to the lack of maturity associated with the young age. It was observed that they were unable to grasp the situation of the character. That is to say that, this was related to the maturity of the students. Because of this, a need arose for the Director /Trainer, to explain things further, demonstrating a character's physical situation related to action. The Director is essentially an actor. When a director demonstrates the nature of a character; how it moves; and when the actor copies his director's acting, he stands a chance of losing his own originality and this might turn into a problem. Because of this, whenever a director demonstrates a character, he has to reinforce the statement given below.

*"I will perform in some way. Take it as an example. Please don't copy me. You take in this example in your own style and perform"* (Researcher /Trainer statement to the novices). This is a method like Guru-Sishya still being practiced in educational level in dance and music to certain extent (Chatterjea 84). For novices they have to be guided by the director and must be enacted by the director as an actor which has existed traditionally quite a long time (Guru-Shishya). Well this approach is quite suitable only for beginners but will affect the remaining who are having basic knowledge and do have experience of practice which will hamper natural form of creativity.

However, this was unavoidable with the beginner level and trainee level students, although some practitioners do not agree with the idea of giving

demonstrations to them, since it may result in the loss of originality. . When explanations as to how to act a character are given once, students always tend to request for an example demonstration of their roles. Based on the practical experiences, the researcher believes that demonstrations should be given to the beginner level or trainee level students as they do not have prior sufficient experience of building a character and therefore demonstrations serve as a basis for carrying on subsequent practices more effectively and efficiently.

The researcher had discussions regarding the challenges they faced during the practices in which most of them could not perform to their fullest potential. The discussion revealed problems that emerged during practical classes. Those problems were analyzed further in relation to body and mind and it was found that they centered on the following causes such as family circumstances, economic situation, distress, diseases, disabilities and inferiority complex. These cause hindrances to their performance. As a result of the discussion, it was found that the root cause for most of these issues was the inferiority complex. The subsequent discussions revealed that the inferiority complex was closely associated with shyness, fear and respect for the elders. The causes of inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence, which were identified through the discussions and the feedback of the students, are shown in the following diagrams below.

**Chart No: 4.2 Identifying the Problem**

. To overcome this obstacle, the students who lacked self-confidence were asked to perform collaboratively in order to muster self-confidence. According to the students, a significant reason for this was the lack of an educational system, which could impart self-confidence through primary education. Moreover, instead of building up the personality of the children in the family environment, their personality is being judged on the basis of competitive examinations. The students themselves related their personal experiences to demonstrate the above fact.

The above problems were manifested in various symptoms during the practical. It was observed by the researcher. The observed symptoms are listed below.

- Being able to do improvisation as a group, but unable to do it alone.
- Being unable to concentrate and get into feelings.
- Being unable to do like others.
- Being unable to do the practical without having meals.
- The condition of being unhealthy. .

- Inertia in the classes due to watching cinema or cricket matches on the TV and part time job in the previous night. (This was experienced by other practitioner Whyman who gave the attention exercise the students were some other agenda (28).

The next problem was that the students showed reluctance in volunteering to participate. When this problem was examined, several truths came out. The most serious of them were the questions like:

“Am I telling correct thing?”

“What will the others think of me?”

“Will I make any mistake while saying this?”

The above questions also result from the lack of self-confidence. This fact also was revealed by the students themselves. Another challenge was that the students were conscious of the opinion of others. Both of them are related to the culture because they have been passed down from generation to generation and have become a habit. It could be seen in Tamil culture that some people have fear or worry about what the others may think of them, which has an inherent power to destroy human personality. The students think that if they violate the expectations of others, they will stand a chance of being marginalized. What others may think of us is a cultural issue prevailing in Sri Lankan Tamil society. Rasanen, when she talks about self-identity, quoted Cooley in his book titled “*Caste and Nation Building: Constructing Vellalah Identity in Jaffna*” as saying that there exist three levels of self-identity construction. And Rasanen adds the fourth identity to the list which is ‘how one sees others’. These levels of self-identity significantly influence others’ opinions which cause difficulties to the participants of this research.



Based on the experiences they got during practice, the students presented some requests.

- All exercises done should be connected to acting.
- Before commencing the practical, warm ups, yoga or games must be undertaken
- When female students do some exercises, it is better if a lady Lecturer is present.
- Doing or practicing the same role over and over again is creating languor.
- It is better to practice new characters.
- Trainer should not be late (sometimes he was late due to departmental work, Result Board meeting, etc., sometimes due to personal, family problems.)
- The trainer should be able to differentiate between students who pretend to work hard in the presence of the trainer and the students who really work hard.
- The classes should be concluded early to facilitate female students going home early.
- The problems of students who come from the same place should be considered.

### **3. Issues related to Female students**

Although women play a major role in the Tamil society, the status or place given to them in the Tamil society is somewhat low. But the women's status in relation to education employment opportunities and income is fairly in a good position. Women had held or have held several high positions of the country such as President, Prime Minister, Minister, Vice-Chancellor and District Secretary. But when

it comes to the family, it is notable that patriarchy is in existence. An important aspect is that women are expected to be in subjection to her husband. But there are families living in contravention of this norm. Some of these families are the families of equal opportunity. Further, youths like to marry modest girls and expect the girl to uphold family bond.

Although there are families with equal opportunity and living respectfully, the aspect of culture is found to exert more influence on the society. But in this post war era, large number of woman-headed families is found here. That is to say that these women had lost their husbands and led their lives, confronting several challenges. When it comes to the Art and Aesthetics of women, lots of them are engaged in writing (Poetry, Short Stories and Novels). There are some painters among them as well. Here, a woman creates a work alone and stays away from her team or others. By this reason, most women wish to indulge in the form of making art and writing artistic work. The creation and its creator will be separated. But in the form of performing art, the character created and the actor, who created the character, will be inseparable.

Particularly, in performing Arts (Drama, Dance, Music), women in the traditional Tamil society prefer dance and music over Drama. Because in the field is dance, invariably trainer will be a woman, although there are some exceptions (like Vel Ananthan<sup>24</sup>). Hence, many women like to learn *Bharatha* dance and Carnatic music. This is a trait acceptable to the society.

On the contrary, when it comes to drama, the contemporary situation is somewhat different from earlier trends. If we look at the history of the Tamil stage in retrospect, we could see that men and women equally had participated in religious

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<sup>24</sup> He is a dance teacher and some other male artists also working in dance field but comparatively there are less than female artists.

rituals. Especially more women than men went into ‘Trance’ at Temples and other ritual places. (But they avoided rituals during their mensuration) In one of the best classics in Tamil Literature, *Silapathikaram*, the main characters are two women *Kannaki* and *Mathavy*, the latter being a performing artist, was a dancer by profession. The ‘dance’ elaborated in this classic is essentially theatrical. The roles women could perform are described well in the ancient book “*Natya Sashttra*” definitions. In Literatures and Hindu religion, the female deities are respected with importance and with nearly equal status. But in practical life we could see that this situation is a little different.

In traditional theatre form “*Naddu Koothu*”, males used to perform the female characters. Why women were excluded is a matter for a meaningful research. In dramas created by famous Sangarathas Swamigal, males acted the female roles. In Greek theatre also, the practice of males playing female roles had prevailed. In countries like India, China, and Japan also, the practice of males playing female roles had existed. A study should be undertaken to determine how this tradition was subjected to change. (Arulchandran, *Forwarded by Shanmugalingam* 04)

It was desired to make women act in dialogue oriented dramas which followed the *Parsi* theatre. The influence of this impacted the Bengali theatre and they in turn, in their wish to make a woman act in the woman’s role, hired a prostitute to act on it (Chatterjee 20). In the Western dramatic text, there was a need to act female role as a real female. In contrast, the text’s requirement was connected with some kind of sexual scene. They brought the girls called nautch who usually entertained people with dance from some red light areas. They all were having unconventional family structure. Due to this phenomenon, the women performers in theatre, the value and

respect of the performers in society were questioned. It is clearly described in the book *Theatre beyond the Threshold* by Chatterjee.

In Tamil, “*Koothan*” means the God, Shiva (famous for his cosmic dance while being in anger with Uma Devi, his better half). The feminine form of “*Koothan*” is “*Koothi*”, which means a prostitute in Tamil. If ‘*koothan*’ is a Dancing god, then *Koothi* should have denoted Uma Devi. On the contrary, in practice it denotes a bad woman. (Sithamparanathan, *Theatre dimensions* 71) Thus, there was some complexity in the old society structure, in women dancing or acting.

Women did not have a prominent place in the history of Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. At one time women were not allowed to watch musical dramas. (*Parsi drama*). Later, a section behind male audience, in the auditoriums was separated with thatch and women were allowed to watch the drama through the hole between two thatches. (Chornalingam 14). Christian missionary produced a traditional drama *Gnana Savunthari* on 1896 by sisters (nuns) of the Jaffna missionary (Arulchandran 17). The Christian missionary played a significant role in encouraging the role of female in theatre. Similarly, the dance form of “*Sinna melam*” which was performed by women was banned from being staged around the famous Nallur temple (Jaffna-North province) by Arumuga Navalar. Still, there is a practice of scolding women “*Sinnameyakari*” or “*Aaddakkari*” both meaning in a foul way. But after some period, women started to act in professional theatre, with an intention of earning an income. K.P. Suntharampal is a classic example. Later, the cinema came in drawing women into it. This was caused by the big income associated with the cinema. But even in the Amateur dramas of the Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre, which adopted the style of the cinema, men played the woman roles. Women very rarely acted in dramas. There prevailed always a societal evaluation regarding, ‘What is a woman?’ How should she

live? What is her nature? This is strengthened further in literature. It could be observed in practice that it had permeated into the society as a cultural aspect.

The section “women in Theatre” is one which should be subjected to deep analysis. To date the participation of women freely in theatre is riddled with much complication. Research into this has to be done separately. In this study, women refer to female students generally, In Sri Lankan Tamil theatre; the contribution of women is limited. The Jaffna University Drama Lecturer Navadarsani had commented as follows, regarding this.

“In the modern period in Sri Lanka, women are generally allowed to involve in theatre practice, but the involvement is only related to institutions or socially accepted organizations like schools, university and some theatre groups” (Email message by Navadharshani)

It was observed during actor training practice that female students being confronted with several problems. Following problems were encountered during training process:

### **Bodily Contact between Males and Females during Acting or Practicing**

This unit starts with a statement - “Here the body is not simply a biological gift of nature, but is worked over by culture” (Barker 118). The body in the modern social system has become the principal field of political and cultural activity (Shilling 01). The ‘natural’ body was also a (contested) site for the negotiation of ethnic, gender, and class identity and of notions of health and disability (Evans 71). Females were generally expected to accept that their body was ‘naturally’ conditioned for social and domestic roles (Evans 73). In the Sri Lankan Tamil Society, especially

among the female students in this research context, due to the various reasons (will be discussed below) in students theatre exercises, males and females have to hold their hands and stand in circles. In certain exercised games they are required to touch the head, shoulder, hands of their partners. The following analysis was undertaken on the basis of the feedback from female students, on what they felt regarding this and observations also made during the exercises. Regarding the exercises in which male and female students stood in circles, holding their hands, female students noted the following as positive aspects: Happiness, Cheerfulness, Brotherhood, Friendship, Unity, Faith, Getting out of shyness among the opposite sex. Along with the above positive aspects the following conditions also were submitted by Female students.

1. The exercise - standing in circles and holding hands - should be done once in a while, not every day.
2. As the society will not accept the Females, holding hands of males, this exercise should be done in class room only.

Some of the female students suggested that practices be done separately for female and male students and they said that outsiders might take it as a bad practice and that they did not like the trainer touching them. 60% of the trainees were women. 40% of the trainees were men. 20% of these female trainees did not like to act in contact or practical in contact at all. However, all female students did not like acting in contact on the stage. However, there were certain scenes which needed holding or touching hands. These scenes were enacted with the consent of the performers. Anyhow 10% of the female students did not like the trainer (male lecturers) touching and guiding in practice at all.

Body contact is a culturally learnt aspect of individual of both opposite sex and gender. There is an unwritten scale in Tamil culture which determines what

distance should be kept between males and males, females and Females and males and females in public places. For example, in a family there is a distance to be kept between even the mother and the father in front of their children. This scale or cultural distance is in a varying level in western countries. Not only the distance but also the degree of touching will be different. In a classroom the degree of proximity depends on individual mind set. Similarly a certain distance is maintained between a teacher and male and female students. At the same time those who act as husband and wife on stage maintain a distance which is wider than what is kept in real life. 4 plays acted by the students are given below as examples.

#### **A. Othello<sup>25</sup>**

In this play, which was performed in Tamil, the scene of Othello kissing Desdemona could not be performed. At the same time it could not be also expressed through dialogue. On a cultural basis, these types of scenes could not be performed. But there is a scene where Othello had to hold the hands of Desdemona. When this scene was performed in front of an audience, the audience applauded. But it was learnt that the audience themselves covertly did not like scenes like that in their cultural perspective. Here the audience is considered as a “society”. However, this scene of holding hands was repeated in every consecutive stage. It was not removed from the play. This was possible because the male and female students who acted in that scene consented to do so.

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<sup>25</sup> Othello a play of Honourable British Playwriter Late. William Shakespeare was an already translated tamil play directed by this researcher in the year 2010 at the University of Jaffna. The above written case study of Othello has been based on the experience of directing the play.

When casting was done for Othello, a male student was selected to play the role Othello. When the rehearsals commenced, this student neither attended the rehearsal nor acted in a cooperative manner. Rehearsals were interrupted. After some time when he was asked for the reason for his behavior, the reason he gave was shocking. That student was fall in love with a girl outside the campus. She was preventing him from acting. She had told him that she did not like him acting with another girl or moving with one in rehearsal and had asked him not to act in the drama.

### ***B. Abignana Sakunthalam***<sup>26</sup>

This play was staged by the theatre students. A scene was enacted in this play where, the king Thushyanthan meets Sakunthalai, falls in love with her and eventually marries her. Here it was required that the students had to act touching each other. But the scene was acted by them not touching each other. It is notable here that those students were already a married couple. Audience will take touching as an issue and may shout or make offensive noises when such scenes are performed. There is a notion among youngsters that touching the opposite sex during the performance of a play is not acceptable. At the same time the same couple acted the scene with the required touching in a TV drama. Here, there is no direct contact with the audience as they performed in front of a camera. When performance is done in front of a live audience, then the direct response and reactions will be more. This is a culture related barrier. Touching each other in a play is not given recognition by the society. ,

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<sup>26</sup> This play was directed by Navadarshini Lecturer in Drama and Theatre Arts University of Jaffna. The photo attached below has been inserted with the permission of the director and the fellow students. All the photos have been inserted based upon the permission of the relavant students.



Therefore, the atmosphere is not always conducive for the involvement of touching during a performance.

**Chart No: 4.3 Photo on *Abignana Sakunthalam***



**C. *Udaiyar Midukku*<sup>27</sup> – (pride of village chief.)**

In this play written by professor K. Kanapathypillai the character, “village chief” gets hurt in heart and while speaking his dialogue he falters his steps and falls down. In this situation, the other characters playing the roles of his daughter and the domestic servant had to lift him to get up. But that scene could not be performed in that way. In the minds of the audience, it amounts to only “two female students are lifting up a male student”. In fact, those two female students were ready to lift the

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<sup>27</sup> This play also directed by researcher in 2011 University of Jaffna.

male student in the rehearsal. But it is notable that they were not prepared to do the same thing in the presence of the audience. The photo of the scene is given below.

**Chart No: 4.4 Photo on *Udaiyar Midukku***



In the next example, the play was symbolic. In this play the actress had to play the role of a greedy girl and expresses the character, rolling the tongue over the watering mouth. After the end of the drama, many criticized her acting with such exaggerated facial expression. It was also told that a young girl should not distort her face like that during acting. However, when the same drama was later staged several times, that student acted with the same facial expression.

Another example is that a workshop was held for the undergraduates by a foreign lady. She requested the male students to touch the shoulders and hip of the female students in order to create a dance scene. One of the male students completely

refused to act in the scene. Most girls did not like to act this part. Having understood the cultural situation, the lady, then, made some adjustments to suit the cultural distance. A photo of the workshop scene is shown below.

### **Cultural Limitations of Body and Movement**

It could be observed that, in Tamil society, the general physical appearance of young girls, especially, female students adapt to the footsteps of the culture. This observation is very distinctive when compared to western countries. The body movements of female students are in a closed form. They do not look directly into others; head bowed slightly and exhibit a meek nature. The culture based bringing up is the reason for this. The literature and proverbs reject the open body gestures of the women. Laughing aloud, speaking loud, acting speedily and moving with an erect posture are considered unbecoming of a woman and undesirable conduct. As most of the marriages are arranged marriages and by the tradition of granting dowry (Somasundaram and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 160), it is an age old practice to expect the girls to be modest (Srikanthan 194). Although many struggles were taken up against this, it is very difficult to get out of this, which has soaked deep in the culture. Despite the existence of a history of women taking up arms and fighting battles, the postwar period had seen the instances of oppression of women and the increase of violence against women. In this context, it was observed in this study that, several cultures related barriers came up in women engaging in stage practices and acting in dramas with matters related to their bodies.

Female novices who come for practical classes should wear suitable costume. When the female students wear light jackets or pants (Track Suit) for the first time

they feel uncomfortable. They (not all female students) find it difficult to engage in practical in those attires. Even if they get used to it, they feel shy to go out in that dress. Although there are exceptions, the practice of girls wearing jeans, is very much less at the University of Jaffna. But now, the Sinhalese girls come wearing jeans to the lectures. Actually the practice of wearing a skirt and blouse is a western trait. But it is considered a culturally acceptable dress in the Tamil Society. Punjabi is also now considered and accepted now as a very comfortable dress for girls. Now it had become a practice that Punjabi is mostly worn when the female students come for practical.

As the girls always have a consciousness of their bodies, it was observed during the practice that they do not really get involved in hopping while acting, dancing and doing Yoga. For instance, in another practice of dance, *Bharatha Natyam*, the movements or shaking of breasts and hip are very much less since, only legs, hands, and head provide the body language. Sri Lankan women, particularly Tamil women tend to opt for Bharatha Natyam when they want to pursue a performing art as this form of dance does not involve the movement of the above parts of body with which they are uncomfortable. (This fact was obtained from the girls attending Bharatha Natyam classes, their parents and teachers).

It could be said that arranged marriage and the dowry systems subject women to a behavior related culture. When a girl is considered for marriage, the groom's party inquiries about her through her neighbors, relatives and friends. A compulsion is there for a girl to get a good name from others as the 'others' are the deciding factors of the life of the girl since the opinions of 'others' about the girl play a prominent role in determining the marriage life of the girl. This causes fear in female students, resulting in limited performance, and consequently they ensure that their behavior

does not violate social norms. Srikanthan substantiates the above fact, stating that parents, before fixing marriage, gather information from ‘others’ about bride/bridegroom and his/her family, especially regarding morality and characteristics (194). In this context the parents of bridegroom are more concerned about the morality and characteristics of girls, consequently girls are in more cases affected. This aspect affects the freedom and independence of the girls when it comes to practical work or performance. This is the factor responsible that exerts influence on practical classes. Hence, the girls invariably had to behave modestly in front of others.

Traditionally in Tamil culture or in India menstruation is considered as polluted or an unholy thing. Even today the women never go into the prayer room during menstruation period. In the olden days they would draw lines with charcoal and sit away, isolating themselves from the household or they would be made to sit like that. (Somasundaram and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 147). They would not go to temples on those days or would not attend any celebration. Because of the lack of proper sanitary napkins on those days, women avoided going out or working. But today the situation has changed. Now they can wear proper sanitary pads and do any kind of work. But even today the following of the old practices is there. There is a belief prevailing even today that, during mensur time women cannot do any work or should not do any work. Moreover, even the educated women do not attend important auspicious events even today. (Interviewed Sudharshini Lecturer of Sports and Physical Science). In a way it has gone beyond science and health and has become cultural psychology. Although there is no scientific reason behind this, it is a matter that had got embedded deep in their minds. In this context, it is viewed in the sections below, as to what kind of reaction the students showed, and what ways and means were used to solve them or handle them.

Menstruation is one of the problems confronted by female students during Actor Training. So, they avoided taking part in the practical, in the presence of male students, they feign all sorts of excuses (such as cold, fever, headache and body Pains) and stay away from exercise and training. It was found from the feedbacks provided by the female students that, they simply forgo the classes for this reason. As far as the female students are concerned, they consider this as a bodily weakness. When this was studied jointly with a female sport teacher, it was found that the performance of girls during mensus time, to be high in sports. (Interviewed Sudharshini, Lecturer of Sports and Physical Science). Girls in sports do not worry about this and if they had to engage in sports during expected mensus time, they simply used appropriate tablets to postpone it. This could be considered as empirical evidence. Generally, this problem is not encountered while acting roles. On the contrary, it was greatly encountered in practical, exercise, warm-up sessions and yoga. Hence, the department decided to invite a Gynecologist to answer doubts and give necessary scientific explanations because, two of the students were married and pregnant. Another one was a feeding mother. These students also encountered problems in participating in the practicals. Hence it was a wise thought to clear the doubts through the qualified Doctor, in this juncture.

Clarifications were given related to this issue. . Participants forwarded written anonymous questions. On the basis of these questions most of the doubts were cleared. Some female students wished to avoid discussing these things in the presence of male students. But as it was essential that male students also should be aware of these problems, the discussion was held with both sexes. Additional questions regarding sex and maternity related problems were among the written questions asked from the Gynecologist. As per what the Gynecologist said around 5% of the women

experience pains during periods, and the balance 95% could, not only engage in practical but also, could hop and jump and indulge in all activities. After this discussion many female students understood this as a healthiest process happening in the body. However, even after the visit, 20% of the female students wrote in their feedback that they would not engage in practical during that time. Anyhow, marked changes were observed after the visit of the Gynecologist.

In one batch of the Drama section, altogether four students took up Drama as a special subject. Three of them were girls. Only one was male. First one of the females fell in love, married and dropped out of the batch. After some time she got pregnant and wished to continue the studies. It was not proper for her to engage in practice with a baby in the womb. However, that student said that if she only completed the studies she could secure a job and that the difficulties of the family would be alleviated, and begged that she be allowed to continue the studies. Hence, she was allowed to do practical suitable to her body condition. Another Female student got married all of a sudden, dropped out of the class and came back to study after the child birth. Although it was not proper for her to engage in hard practical work immediately, on the basis of her Family situation, she was allowed to do practical appropriate to her body condition.

But she later got into the practice of leaving in the middle of the class to feed the baby or was absent for the class. Next the male student also got married, but he did not encounter any problem in attending practical. . The 3<sup>rd</sup> female student also got married in the final year. After the end of the war, the practice of marrying, while being undergraduate, had increased. However, with regard to the practical subject, a girl getting married is not a problem, but pregnancy and childbirth are major problems. Generally, female students created certain self-made limitations, in

performing dramas on public stages. Reasons for this had been already discussed in this section. The most significant among them is related to getting married, which may depend on having an image of a girl of good conduct and virtues among “others” (Society). Because of this when they acted a role on the stage the thought that they should not stand as a controversial figure among others, prevented the acting from being expressed outwardly. Meanwhile, it was adopted practice to finish the rehearsal so that girls could go home early. If a girl goes home late, the neighbours talk bad about her. In the same way, if they come to rehearsal on weekends and holidays neighbours will cast bad remarks about her. This happens because of the compulsion of the social structure. This is also considered as a moral virtue.

A student was asked to act a role of a widow. That student refused straight away to act that role. For she thought that the first role she was going to play should not be that of a widow. Moral considerations of a society regarding a widow’s position culturally and also auspiciously is somewhat low. That is why the students refused to act that role. Later, some other role was assigned to that student.

A student who did not seem to sound mentally fit and did not want the others getting to know her illness. Hence, her state was not explainable to others. If that student engaged in practical or performs on stage, her real condition would be obvious to others. Her basic problem was that if her illness was known to others, then her matrimonial prospects would be affected and she would get her reputation damaged. This kind of illness is not looked at by the society just as an illness but as disease. Somasundaram and Sivayokan in their book *Mental Health* discussed the relation between psychiatric problems and society. Another example is that in a theatre training programme held outside the university, when a girl came to attend the workshop, her fiancé sneaked in to watch the workshop and later he insisted that she



should not continue with the workshop. In the focus group discussion, one question was posed by the researcher to male drama and theatre students who had recently passed out and others were studying in their final year students. “Will you allow your sister or daughter to study drama and act in play in future?” A few students said that they would not permit them. Here the reason for such answer is the cultural complexity in the minds of the male students regarding females.

A drama was staged for the purpose of this research (The further details of this play production are discussed below). The male and female students wore the same costume, but for female students costumes were designed by the female lecturers in a way that, the breast areas were not prominently displayed. This alteration in the costume was done to ensure the female students acted without stage shyness as they are conscious of their body (it was discussed earlier in this chapter). After watching the drama, a feminist critique vehemently criticized making alterations only in the costumes of the female students, which created differences between male and female students. Hence, the biggest problem here is to what extent the culture should be preserved and to what extent it could be violated. When the culture is violated beyond limits, the attendance of female students coming to study drama falls. It is notable here that parents; siblings, neighbours are the main causes behind this fall.

#### **4. Direct Impact of Culture on Practical Works of theatre students**

In this section, the direct influence of the culture’ on ‘Acting’ and practical is dealt with. The term culture had already been used as an umbrella term in this study. Although a unique definition could not be arrived for the term culture, a general practical application and the usage are described below“... a collection of beliefs,

values and ways of doing things which are typical of a particular community and which are expressed and presented through various codes.” (Gill and Adams 56). The coming up of a barrier in the name of culture, entails a research on the nature of culture and its origin. In fact the artistic or Aesthetic problems are the matter that should have been subjected to widespread research. Instead, it happened that, only culture is being studied here. Cultural values exert excessive influence on the process of creating an artistic work. Hence, the next step could be taken only if a study is undertaken and the problems are solved. There are two states of cultural situation: Urban Culture and Rural Culture.

Earlier in Tamil society, cycling by girls<sup>28</sup> was a very rare occurrence. But during the war period, when transport was affected due to the shortage of kerosene, petrol, most of the women learned to ride bicycle. Here the necessity had changed a cultural condition.<sup>29</sup> However, attempts to change several other aspects ended in failures. Dowry and caste systems are good examples for this. During the civil disturbances here, caste discrimination was at a low level. But post - war periods saw that these trends raising their ugly heads again. Although cultural restrictions are present in both rural and urban areas, it could be said that they are more in rural areas life than in urban areas. Lots of students who gain entry to university is gaining entry into the subject of Arts stream. Particularly, 75% of the students who gain admission to Drama and Theatre subject are from the middle class or lower than that<sup>30</sup>, and most of them come from rural areas. Now, the percentage of students who take up Arts and

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<sup>28</sup> In the previous time, women had avoided riding bicycle, in spite of this condition, if somebody rode bicycle, they were considered as arrogant girl: from the interview of Shanmugalingam

<sup>29</sup> In previous days, girls riding bicycle was looked down as undignified act. But during the war time, the women participation in household chores and their necessity to fetch their daily needs made them opt for bicycle as a vehicle of transport. As a researcher lived during the war time and observed these changes in transition at the same time as a researcher had a lot of discussion with other eminent people of this theatre field, Sociology, and Anthropology.

<sup>30</sup> The Quality assurance report of Department of Fine Arts, University of Jaffna.

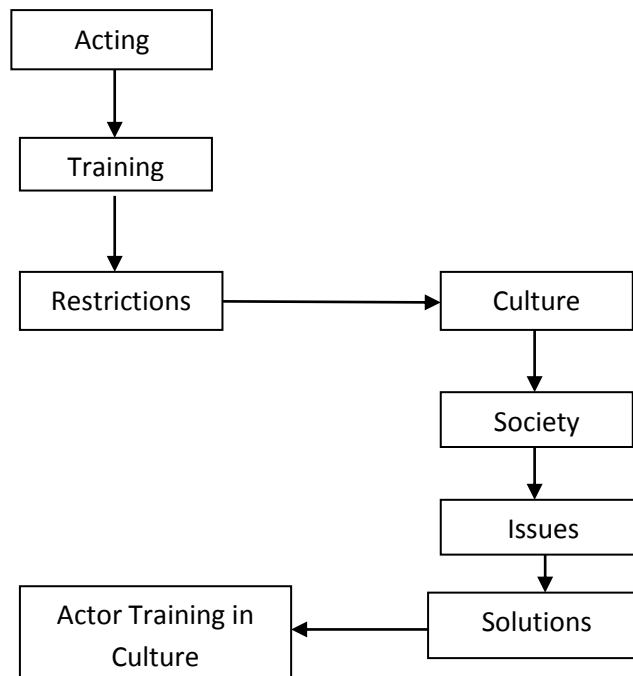
Aesthetic subjects is on the decline. It was observable that more students are opting for commercial and management subjects, which have much demand in job markets. Parents prefer either to send their children abroad or to make them to take subjects with more employment opportunities. Particularly, there is a decline in the number of students opting for visual and performing arts. But rural students prefer art, visual, and performing subjects. In this research it was observed that there were more cultural restrictions on rural students, when compared to the urban students, but they have more creative talents. However, system and punctuality were observed to be lacking in them. It was experimented in rural and urban side by using a children's play, and the both sides reaction and participation clearly showed creative and punctuality differences (Rathitharan 10). As far as the body was concerned, it is notable that the expressions were in compliance with culture. Particularly, there were culturally related limitation in gesture, posture, stance, and facial expression. There were an inadequacy in the outputs, particularly the facial expressions and body language for stylized acting. The reason for this is that their body structures were not conducive enough to the method of acting of distorting their bodies and faces. When compared to western students, body language output is very much less here. The trait of expressing everything through speech is in existence here in life as well as on stages. Tadashi Suzuki in his essay "culture is the body" says - "In my method of training actors, I place special emphasis on the feet" (Suzuki 157). He offers his culture related discourse in accordance with the feet and gravitational force from an Asian cultural context. Anyhow the cultural body which was encountered in this study is related to some standards determined by society. For example, "we should be modest in front of elders and teachers"<sup>31</sup> It means that we should not contravene them, or refutes them.

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<sup>31</sup> The above statement given was conveyed by a student through the discussion of a researcher.

Although this study was supposed to be connected with Acting and the creativity related to it, it was unavoidably forced to look into how the Actor Training is influenced by the culture and social structure.

**Chart No: 4.5 Creative Process vs Cultural Conditions**



There has been always a clash between creative process and culture which is due to the cultural restrictions and inhibitions not only imposed by the culture but also eclipsed watchfully over by society surrounding us. In the above chart the ‘Acting Training’ deviates from its determined path due to cultural restrictions, absorbs the nature and the state of the society, finds suitable solutions to problems and returns to the Actor training process. Actually speaking, when the problems are identified, the solution to them emerges themselves. This process is quite continuous to again meet with a problem in a different way. It was empirically understood that, the solutions to culture related problems had to be found with the cooperation of all factions.

Mental images vary from culture to culture. If a person in the West and a person in the East develop different imagination when they are affected with psychiatric problem and have the related symptoms, they both get hallucination. The form of the hallucination is universal. But the content always in accordance with the context of the respective culture differs. “The content can be changed, culture is culture. A person in the eastern culture may believe that, he is being possessed by ‘Kali’, whereas in Western culture, a person may believe that, he is being possessed by aliens.” (This fact was obtained through personal communication with Psychiatrist Doctor Sivayogan.<sup>32</sup> He talked about East West cultural variation in psychiatric problems) The culture functioning as a law is discussed in this chapter. Andrew Edgar’s statement regarding the culture being an unconscious process: “...culture in Jungian terms, is therefore to be understood as an objectification of unconscious process, giving conscious meaning to human existence.”(119) hence, as culture is an integral part of Psychology, in Actor training, the handling of problems related to it was found to be very complex in nature. Several direct impact of culture is presented through various views in previous chapters. These views and some new matters are divided with a general view into following sections and discussed here.

1. Ostracism.
2. Gender Identity.
3. Family and Social system.
4. Caste system.
5. Proposed marriage.
6. Beliefs of Notions.

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<sup>32</sup> Psychiatrist Dr. Sivayogan has been a person highly interested in theatre and has also been capable of directing a drama. As a researcher, I had interviewed him about the symptoms of psychiatric patient in both Eastern Context and also Western Context.

7. Educational system.

8. Occidental approaches.

These aspects are part and parcel of the Tamil Culture. They have introduced favorable and unfavorable aspects. It is discussed in the following sections as to how these influenced the practical work or created barriers to it.

There are certain comments and questions like “others”, “Four people”, “known and familiar ones”, “what will the others say about you” being mentioned often in Tamil society. The “four people” mentioned here the four people necessary to carry his remains to the crematorium after his death. (Notion of otherness in the first chapter, Rasanen mentioned. In a system of joint families, relatives, neighbors, and society, everyone will be observed by everyone else. These observations keep one under control and discipline. Those who violate these checks and controls will be excluded by the society. According to E.B.Taylor the definition of culture was that culture is a custom, moral and law. Culture prevails as an un-written Law. In earlier times these controls had the force of Law was because everybody wants to behave well in the presence of others.

If someone makes a mistake, the whole village will get together to discuss it. The society will identify the wrong doer as one with bad conduct, and behaviour. It should be noted here that, this social procedure affected the practicals of the students. In practice, students were reluctant to perform, thinking others would laugh or say something if he made a mistake or would not display their acting talent. This exclusion trait makes the students to be always spontaneously vigilant and conscious of others. To eradicate this attitude from students, facilities were provided to strengthen the conscience and to operate on that basis. It was observed that the effects

of these notions declined after the students were made aware of these conservative notions.

Next the discussion continues towards gender related stereotype. When female students acted in Drama, they used utterances and voice instead of their body in acting. It was learned that deep in their minds they had the notion that if their body or face excessively expressed its feeling, the ‘others’ (audience) would form a bad or wrong opinion about them. The above fact was revealed in the discussion held with the female students. For example, this when one girl utilized her facial expression and gesture excessively; a lot of criticism came from the spectators. A few female students bravely surmounted these barriers and expressed their body language. Generally, as a part of acting training, it is usual to stage dramas in the presence of audience. Another observation was that a few female students did not like to act plays outside the university, that is, in the society.

To understand this problem easily, the history of men playing women’s roles could be considered as an example. But in the later periods women played in professional theatres. (*Parsi* theatre form). Now when the women play women’s roles, men who had acted women’s roles earlier were training women on how to act as women. When an NGO funded a drama, to approach some of the social problems, women came forward from the society and joined the Theatre group. This was due to the fact that, the actors were paid monthly or on per performance basis. However, in some NGOs, it is notable that, men played women’s roles.

The involvement of the Female students of the Drama department in practical work and play production is very important, the culture based barrier created by the “woman” identity was, however, poses challenges. The students say that they were

doing that because of the society. But the truth is that they create the barriers themselves in the name of the Society.

“Caste is one of the strongly embedded institutions within the Tamil socio-cultural system,” (Somasundaram and Sivayokan 20). Students belonging to different castes are studying at the university. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to distinguish students based on castes. On the contrary, in India caste identification is required for the opportunities of studies and employment. All the castes are, therefore, clearly demarcated and identified. Unlike India, in Sri Lankan Tamil Society in its caste system there are no demarcation or addressing one’s caste and it is not mentioned in the birth certificate. This is not the state at the University of Jaffna. If one’s caste is mentioned in any way it is considered a stigma. R.S. Perinpanayagam in his book, “The Karmic Theatre” clearly mentions Jaffna caste system and its practice. Further, whatever caste one may belong to, he/ she will never divulge his/ her caste. In Jaffna the lowest caste is called *Panchamar*. ” (Silva, Sivapragasam and Thanges 06). In this context two main problems were confronted in the practicals. In first case, a student was given a role that matched his caste. It was not deliberately done, but his friends secretly informed the director about it and he had to be given an alternate role.

Secondly, some rural students who were badly affected by the caste problem in their villages did not reveal their natural voice and body language in the presence of the audience. When they were asked for the reasons, they divulged the truth secretly. This fact, however, should be investigated further. It is also notable that changes are occurring in the caste system.

The role played by beliefs and norms in culture is discussed in previous chapters. It was observed that superstitious beliefs weighed heavily on some students.



Kokila Mahendran<sup>33</sup> mentions that most of the society's beliefs are embedded in the core much likely as cultural co-beliefs. The case of playing the role of a widow character could be cited here. In that instance a student refused to play the widow's character as her first role. It is a practice even now that widows should not be presence in auspicious events. What is important here is that even though the present society insists on this, the real situation is that the widows themselves withdraw from auspicious functions. It is related to bad omen or *sakunam* (Jagadas) commonly observed in the Tamil society. In another instance, a student backed out from acting as a dead body lying in a coffin. His problem was that the rites done for a dead person should not be done for a person alive. At the same time it is notable that another student came forward to act that role.

Artaud, Grotowski, Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook, Richard Schechner, and Eugeno Barba all these theatrical pioneers included the Eastern theatrical aspects which were described as a celebration towards the use of other cultures as a mode and presentation of enrichment. Chandradasan questioned "So why shouldn't we do the same?"(52) According to Coomaraswamy this mode of inclusion can only lead to serious miscomprehension of the Western culture assumed to be befitting with the non-conformist ethics (27). Rustom Barucha says that unless and until an element of a naïve culture being introduced through borrowing or exchanging is not examined in an unbiased manner and has not been absorbed into the culture as an aspect of enrichment of the theatre in terms of Interculturalism. Then the naïve element is bound to the risk of unnecessary simplification and also distortion of its contents in orientation. This signifies a continuation of colonialism and ethnocentrism towards the other culture in an exploitative sense. (14) Although it was possible, to bring the

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<sup>33</sup> Theatre Artist and Counsellor, she worked with society people theatrically and psychologically. The researcher had a discussion with her through which this data has been gathered.

theory and practice of western theatre, in to a culture, some problems also popped up in it. No principle is a 'must' to produce a drama. At village level the villagers discuss how among themselves to create a story and perform it on the stage. Today speaking about principles has increased very much rather than performing drama or getting involved in Practical Theatre. Practically, this is the greatest shortcoming of theatre practice. If the right practical work and proper production are done, a principle is spontaneously created. On the contrary, one cannot copy the principles and introduce them into a culture.

Western aspects are absorbed in a way conforming to the culture. For example, in English speech, the accent is practiced with marked distinction in countries like India, Sri Lanka, and China. Hence, English is spoken with the intonation of the local language. It is not pure British English or pure American English. This absorption of aspects could also be attributed to Ecology. If a tree from one country is transplanted in another country, it grows in accordance with the fertility of the soil, and the environment. If not, it cannot survive at all. Similarly when something is absorbed in accordance with its culture, it poses no problem. On the contrary when they directly come in, problems crop up.

Most of the actor trainers would have taken their training in Western countries or would have been trained by western trainers in Sri Lanka. When these actor trainers got their training, they would not have had any problem. This is because they would have got their training without any limitations or barriers. But, they will not apply the training they have got as it is, when they give training at the ordinary society level or the village level. They will give the training in conformation with the environmental context.

Thus, whether it is Stanislavsky's "System" or Bertolt Brecht's Epic theatre, the training was given, taking the cultural context and standpoint of the students into consideration. Traditionally existing methods were used in giving acting exercises. Particularly methods in *Yoga*, *Bharatha Natyam*, *Silampam* (Stick defense), *Kalaripayattu* (*Martial Art*) technique were employed. For elocution and pronunciation excerpts from Tamil Literature were used.

Strong objection was raised during the training provided by some Tamils who were trained abroad. For example, a person trained in London came here to provide training, and while he was giving training, he simply removed his trousers and standing only in his underwear, changed into his track suit. The ladies who were present were put to much discomfort. Later, this was pointed out to the person concerned and further practices like that were avoided.

Likewise, in a workshop conducted by a western trainer from abroad, a game was arranged. This game was played on pieces of newspaper spread at several places in the hall. There is a practice in Tamil culture, whenever a book or some reading material is accidentally trampled, the trampling person should touch trampled piece and bow down in expiation. When this western trainer did this game, some of the participants were uncomfortable. This was pointed out to the westerner during the feedback. Later, the next day, when he did the training he did it with due consideration to this cultural aspect. Important among these is the avoidance of males and females lifting each other.

Several Western Theatre Scholars like Peter Brook, Philip B. Zarrilli, Brecht, Grotowsky, and Eugenio Barbara used several oriental drama techniques in their western theatre. They created their stage with oriental methods. Similarly, nuances of

the west should be used in conformation to cultural conjuncture. It is appropriate to quote the statement of Sri Lankan Tamil Dramatist, Maunaguru, here: “When all the advanced trends of the world are absorbed in, assimilated and brought out through our problems, it transforms into a Tamil theatre and will no longer be a German theatre or French theatre” (Maunaguru, *Interviews* 47)

### **5. Production process for the performance**

In this study, a play production was performed as a part of reducing the cultural restrictions found in actor training. Instead of the method of “Think and do”, “Do and Think” was adopted. However, much acting training was done in practice; it was observed that the acting training obtained through staging a play was far better. This production was done on the basis of the research strategy of practice as research. Accordingly a play was produced; its deficiencies and its problems were rectified. Two procedures were adopted in this process.

A. A social issue was selected and discussed in detail with the help of the trainer.

Public opinion about it was collected, another discussion was held, consultation done with field related experts, then the issue was improvised by the students themselves, a text was prepared, rehearsals done and students themselves staged the drama.

B. The Drama created by students on the basis of their own ideas and efforts was re – directed by trainer due to the deficiencies of the students. The prepared dramas were remodified through rehearsals, aesthetic aspects were added and the same drama was restaged.

The above processes are explained in the section ‘Text’ through the chart no: 4.6. In the social issue, importance had been given to “Teen age pregnancy.” This problem is related to various external factors. Particularly, the issues that surface in a somewhat peaceful situation were given importance. At the same time, the background of the family, their displacement and staying in a rented house, father’s death and the alcoholic elder son acted as external factors. Thus it was also considered a politically and socially related issue. Then the situation prevailing in the country was explained to the students and the students were allowed to improvise the story and the incident and the stage the drama.

Another outcome was the students’ participation in the production with a view of obtaining acting training. After participating in this production, students were able to understand acting theory taught after the production. It is notable here that, all possible nuances were utilized wherever necessary and appropriate, without any limitations in the acting method.

At the same time some field related experts criticized this production as Bourgeois Theatre. They had the notion that only applied theatre is “People Theatre” and all other stage dramas are Bourgeois Theatre. In truth, Bourgeois Theatre nearly does not exist in Tamil areas. Historically, several dramas groups got together from societies in the villages produced the dramas for them which were enjoyed by relatives and neighbours.

The next accusation was that this drama was staged for gratifying certain people and was done for researching a certain individual. After the production of this drama, various talent enhancements were directly observable among students. They

had informed through their feedbacks that they were able to learn acting and drama production methods.

The contrast between the two versions of this drama production, i.e. version A done first by the students as against version B, shows clearly the importance of training. Here it could be stated that a methodical rehearsal is also a training process. This play production is classified as follows and analyzed.

1. Performance text
2. Acting style
3. Performance
4. Process Vs production.
5. Post-performance.

In the process of preparing performance text, inner aspects of culture, politics and war were considered. In the history of Sri Lankan Theatre, while drama had not only remained a mere entertainment, but also functioned as a social educative method. The Tamil Theatre, transformed the problems found in the society, and the country into dramas. These dramas were not staged in a hero - villain mode, but were performed as a portrayal of real life with a view of providing solutions to these problems.

The South Indian cinema industry produced movies, centering on heroism and love and they provided solutions beyond reality.

Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre was always modelled on the prevailing needs. In the same vein, the theme of this drama was also drawn to provide solutions to the problems of the society. By selecting this particular theme 3 factors benefited.

- A. When the problems were identified, the society was also identified.
- B. The students analyzed the identified problems, learned about the sociological and psychological aspects of the problems and learned about the solutions to these problems or methods of solving these problems.
- C. When a performer becomes aware of the problems, his knowledge will be transferred to the audience, who in this case is the society.

Themes, Events and Improvisations were discussed next with the students. As most of the students were from a war-torn society, they endeavored to select a theme from the problems of the society. What emerged from their minds were the losses due to war, and scenes of devastation shown by the war videos and they talked about rape and extra-judicial killings during the period. As the existing environment is not conducive to select war period themes, the students were directed by the lecturers to select themes from the social issues of post-war context. . All though 25% of the students did not accept this, they all gave support for the drama.

Comparatively, in the post war period social violence has increased very much, particularly the suicide rate was higher in post war period than in war period. There are several reasons for this increase. However, teenage pregnancy, which was an important problem, was identified as the main issue. This had increased mainly due to the deterioration of the situation, law and order, the use of cell phones, internet, and the face book.

The story of a family with an only son and 3 daughters provided the theme of the drama. Father expires. The drama commences with the funeral of the father. They had been displaced, leaving their house and land, and are currently living in a rented

house. The eldest daughter is married. The 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter is in love. The 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter is the victim of an unwanted pregnancy. As all the students were eager to do something to their society, this drama created a lot of interest in them. The students were asked to gather the opinions of their family, neighbors and friends. Several solutions given by them are listed below.

- Abortion
- Deliver the child and give it to somebody
- Let the girl commit suicide
- First slap the girl and then make inquiries.
- The girl should be given counseling
- The culprit should be caught and handed over to the police.

The above were some of the ideas. However, some of the suggestions were of an unrealistic nature. Some of the findings the students arrived at after discussing the theme with their parents and siblings are given below:

- When a student told her sister, sister presumed that she was the one who had the problem and started to approach a Family Health Nurse, asking for her advice, but she prevented her sister, saying she was only seeking a solution for a drama.
- When a female student asked her parents, they started to scold her, asking whether they go to the campus to talk about such things and asked her not to participate in the drama.
- Most of the female students were ready to hear about what should be done

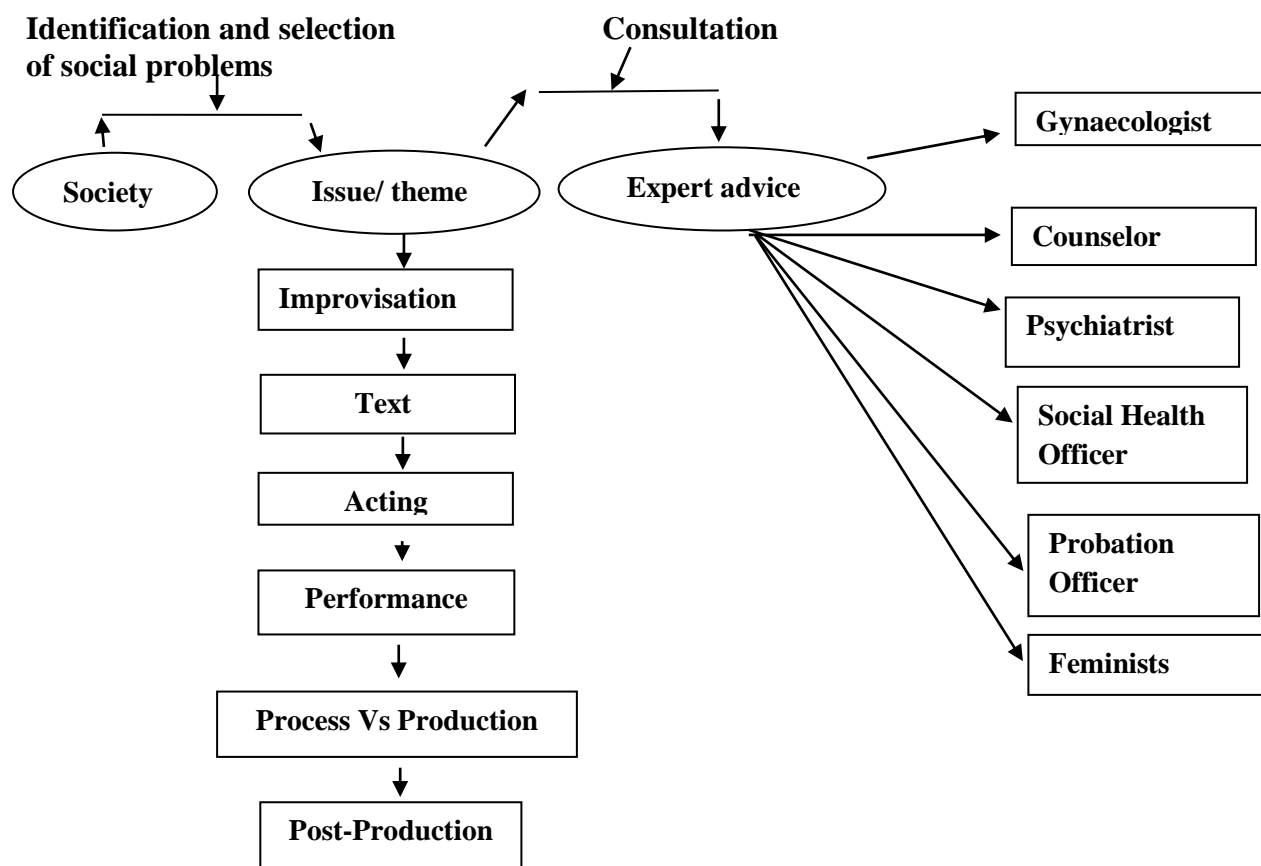


immediately after something like getting pregnancy, but avoid speaking about them with males or in the presence of males.

- Only one female student wrote in her feedback that her feelings were roused when speaking about sex.
- Some male students wrote in their feedback that awareness was created in them that they should not make any sexually related mistakes.
- Several students wrote that their knowledge about sex was inadequate. Later, discourses on reproductive health were given to the students through the Gynaecologist.

As there was a need for the performers (students) to get some knowledge regarding the society, the drama was built up in consultation with several people including Psychological Counsellors, Gynecologist, and Social Service officer. The following chart provides the relations between the sections of the drama production.

**Chart No: 4.6 Issues and Production Process**



Thus, a social problem was selected, discussed with various members of the society. Experts were consulted, and using knowledge and the experience the drama was prepared, acted and staged. The opinions of the audience and the performers were obtained.

Next the acting style in terms of practical mode is discussed. The script of the play, “Dream of the consciousness” is annexed in the Appendix of this study. The students were guided to improvise. The director wrote the script. It is called an Improvised Text. In the improvisation the students handled burning issues through a game. It appeared as if they were playing a game instead of acting.

However, when the Improvised Text was created and the rehearsals resumed with the improvised text as the basis, only, the problems propped up. The question was which acting style should be adopted. Because, in Stanislavsky’s system, emotional memory should be utilized in order to build up the character. But when it was tried out in the rehearsal, problems were encountered. Hence, a combination of traditional “*Katha prasangam*” or *Harikatha* (A religious discourse with songs and narrations) and the performance was found to be suitable. It was a near adoption of Brecht’s method – but the students were told to act without any constraints or principles. All were asked to act in any way they wished. The actors were asked to keep in mind three things.

- A. They were allowed to use their own dialogue suitable for the situation, whatever they could utter as per the dictates of the mind
- B. Not keeping to any order while approaching the target.
- C. Doing serious matters in a playful manner.

They were asked to do like this, because, after the war, whenever the students were asked to take even a small role, they revealed many emotions. Sometimes those emotions were appropriate to the roles. For example, when they were asked to express fear, they expressed sorrow and anger. This was not a healthy situation. When the emotions needed for the role tangled with personal problems, it was observed that those emotions were from the role. “Boal emphasizes the need for “rationalized emotion”: the emotions the actor accesses through Stanislavskian emotional memory should not be employed in a raw state, but should be subjected to Brechtian rational analysis.” (Auslander 101). Students were advised to utilize their rationalized emotions. Hence, students were requested to act as if they were narrating a story. Thus, the acting part of this performance was reduced to a narrative form. Then they were asked to avoid doing it through the body or emotion and to do it exclusively with dialogue. The acting method was handled with a view of taking the mind and emotions into performance gradually. As a result of continuous rehearsal, the students started to understand the run of the drama and they went into the individual role they were doing. Those who expressed emotions were encouraged to sing and act, changing their dialogues to songs. , “Do actors feel the emotions they communicate? Feeling the emotions is not necessary though it is not a bad thing either.” (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 341). To feel means to observe something objectively, this is equivalent to observing oneself in an objective manner, observing oneself with the other objectively equal to observing the character objectively. Feeling the emotion played an important significant role in acting for this production. Feeling mostly relates to empathy towards the situation. From the position of an actor, he goes into the character, then leaves slowly and acts as a performer. For example, the character of the eldest son who was grief stricken, narrowed down the nature of his role. Soon

after his acting of his character, he had to remove a stage property, facilitating the scene change. In this instance, when the character is relaxed and comes to the state of a role, his state changes from actor to that of a performer. Here acting becomes something that lies between acting and doing. Actors came to the stage as performers and talked about the characters they were going to play. For example the dialogue below was spoken by the eldest son in this drama (Appendices: text – page:4)

- **Vakeesan:** I am the eldest son of that family. I have three younger sisters.

Likewise the eldest son stood, crying at the funeral of his father. All of a sudden he came to the front stage, stopped crying and started speaking to the audience. At this point the audiences were also considered as performer.

- **Eldest son:** I am unable to bear the loss of my father. I have three sisters. Appa (father) was responsible for our family. He was bedridden for a long time. We always expected that he will recover from his illness. I was wasting my time here and there, drank a lot, spent unnecessarily and was an extravagance. Now, I have to look after this Family. As my father is dead, the whole responsibility has fallen on my head. Now I have to find some work. (Appendices: text : page, 05)

In standing in the funeral house of his father, and realizing himself, without disturbing the mood of the role, and speaking to the audience, he went into a state of not crying, and stood as a story teller. In this instance, he left the state of character, assuming the state of role. In this Drama the character of the dead person comes to the stage and introduces himself. (This method is also practiced in *Koothu* – an indigenous song and dance- stylized art) and gets into the coffin on the stage.

- **Dead Person:** I am going to play the role of a dead person. Sometimes I may come to the stage and converse for the dead person's role. (Appendices: Text: Page, 04).

When this role was played, the audience broke into laughter. But as the drama proceeded, they understood the technique and were solemn thereafter in watching it. Sometimes the character spoke in chorus. This method of expressing one opinion in accordance with the situation was used very often in Greek Drama. This method was utilized to avoid going into deep emotions. In this type of drama, an actor need not act with emotion. The audiences go into the setting if they are given a small cue or information. They have this capability due to their background of understanding, the losses they experienced during the war, and the emotion related to the circumstances which prevailed in the country.

There are no facilities to calm down the audience, nor provide counseling to them, if excessive emotions are stimulated. Therefore, consequent to every emotion stimulating scene, a comic scene is staged. This is a method adopted in *Koothu*. In fact, duet scenes and comic interludes from *Koothu* and musical dramas get into Tamil Cinema and remain there to date, as the reminders of Folk Theatre. In such comic scenes, two persons stand on the stage and converse, sometimes with body movements. Avoiding the main theme of the drama they express other issues of the society in a comical way. For example, issues like increasing thuggery, robbery, the spread of dengue fever, drug abuse, increasing abuse of children, violence are discussed. The biggest problem encountered by the students in this drama is, with regard to the taking of the nature of the character and acting. For example, when a girl of 22 years acted as a mother of 60 years, the absence of maturity was evident. They were made to watch videos of mother character already acted in other dramas and were encouraged to draw on the aspects in them and use them in their acting.

The Forum Theatre Techniques of Augusto Boal were handled in accordance with the nature of the drama, the attitude of the audience and the techniques were

adopted keeping in mind the situation in the country. Several other people had used these techniques in accordance with their environment. “Other practitioners follow different routes, but find the combination of observation and participation action and discussion, production and process similarly suited to their needs.” (Babbage 68). The statement above supports this view. Here also, Forum Theatre techniques had been used in this Formal Theatre. These techniques had to be used as there was a need to obtain several approaches, solutions and the opinions of several people for the same problem. When the male students improvised about teenage pregnancy, several arguments were put forward. Hence, during the rehearsal itself, the above issue was discussed using Forum Theatre Techniques. As per the quote, “Forum Theatre moves from familiar to the unfamiliar” (Babbage, 68), several matters that were not known regarding the issue became known. Students performed Forum Theatre in classroom rehearsal. There a different type of acting was needed. Augusto Boal also had noted it.” Forum theatre demands a different style of acting. Nevertheless, through Forum Theatre, a story and several solutions were received. (Forum Theatre Acting has already been discussed in the second chapter). Later, they were adopted into the formal form of the Proscenium Theatre and performed.

In (There won't be any story, but only events joined in an order) this drama there is a character called 'Yaman' This character is a symbol of death, Yaman comes in dream scenes. Particularly, he comes often in the dreams of the eldest son. This was a symbolic character. The people had witnessed the deaths and the memory of those dead ones are rooted deeply in their minds. When lives resurrected after the deaths with a hope, several problems were encountered. Among those several problems, importance was given to teenage pregnancy. The problems encountered by the parents, neighbours and the society due to a 14 year old girl getting unwanted

pregnancy were demonstrated. This problem was found to be a culturally very complicated..

- ❖ How to handle this in the family?
- ❖ Complication created by informing the police and tracking down the culprit.
- ❖ Problem of the future of the girl, if the neighbours, and relatives learn about this
- ❖ To abort or deliver the child?
- ❖ After delivering the child, will her old school allow her to continue her studies?
- ❖ Suppose, she is allowed, the way the peers and teachers will view her.

To bring all these issues related to the girl on to the stage, Forum Theatre techniques are much relevant and effective. Audience is not often willing to discuss this sort of issue in front of a large number of audiences. In addition, this method is much appropriate to arrive at a solution for many questions related to an issue like the one mentioned above. When the formal theatre incorporating the forum theatre techniques were rehearsed, it was found that solution could be reached through four approaches. (It is available in the performance text in the appendices). The effects of a problem happening in four possible ways are found in the 4 approaches. Out of the four approaches one was selected best through the discussions with the actors and the responses from the audience. Augusto Boal well made the audience participate and solve the problem through Joker or facilitator. In the rehearsals of the present play, the director as a Joker or Facilitator performed this forum theatre with the actors and some invited audience. Then, based on the responses from the audience, the above four approaches were worked out and later the elements of the approaches were incorporated and the play was staged as a formal theatre. Yet, the responses of the

audience sometimes lead to take up unwanted or politically motivated issues, putting the researcher at risk. In order to avoid this potential challenge, at the end of the drama, they were given writing sheets and their opinions were collected in written form. It is important to note here that any drama form adopted was constituted in accordance with the conjunctures, appropriateness to the needs and conforming to the culture. By way of an example, the fourth of the above said approaches are given below:

All four of these approaches were designed in the same way. The changes that occur in certain stages of them would display different endings. In this 4<sup>th</sup> approach, the mother, brother and sisters comfort the teenage girl who had become pregnant, making her realize her mistake, admit her to a caring home, as per the advices of the doctor and counselor, make her deliver the child, bring her back home and attempt to send her to school again. But the school administration refuses to admit the girl back, saying that it will create a bad precedence. But the family of the girl and the organizations in the society support her in continuing her studies and the curtain falls with the girl taking her first step towards the school.

Post - war situations are at the core of this drama. The de-mining served as its biggest indicator. De-mining also is a part of this drama. This is added as a symbolic aspect. Land mines are the remains of the concluded war. There are several other remains of the concluded war. They create great impacts on the society. Similarly, the scenes of picking lice and washing the house represent the removal of unwanted things and the restoration of a secure situation.



## Performance

The first performance, which was produced with the full-fledged efforts of the students was the fruit of 88 hours' of our rehearsals in 36 days within period of 3 months '88 hours were spent for rehearsals during 36 days in three months . This first production was taken as the basis. This was done to demonstrate the importance of training, and training, received through the director during rehearsals in the production of a drama. The second performance was prepared with the training of the trainer and rehearsals, which were held for 28 days for a total of 82 hours two months. All sections of the drama students were allowed to incorporate their own initiatives. The drama was created, incorporating the initiatives and ideas of students into all dramatic events, poetry, chorus, dance *Koothu*, visuals and technical matters. The ideas of all, regarding events to be improvised were considered and the best and appropriate ones were decided by all and then the scene was made.

It was a great challenge to transform this student level production into an Aesthetic and an art form. Two examples regarding this are given below:

A. After the students prepared the dialogue by themselves, it was very difficult to enhance the literary quality of the dialogues.

B. It was very difficult to correct the movements the students improvised on their own.

However, it was, based on the feedback of the students, noted that this method helped to develop the skill and knowledge of the students related to theatre.

### **Process Vs Production.**

This drama played an important part in learning activities of the students. That is to say that, as far as the students are concerned the learning process was very satisfactory. However, when the drama was performed in front of the audience, it was evident that several things were technically artificial, while learning through training was excellent. But in such dramas, the creative process is more important than production. But in considering this performance as student oriented and audience oriented there were aesthetics - related problems.

### **Post- Performance.**

Under this section the opinions of two factions were obtained

A. Students (Performers)

B. Audience

It is emphasized here that the opinions of the students constituted the indicators of the outputs of the training programmer. The knowledge and skill of the students could be evaluated through an examination and their practical knowledge through a drama production. Thus, the opinions of the students are given below in a summarized form.

- It was a new experience, acting on a stage.
- I am very happy.
- When several people praised me, I felt proud and an image had been created among others.
- I have gained acting and theatre skills.
- Learning to cope with the errors and mistakes on the stage.

- Stage fright and shyness were eliminated.
- Am encouraged to act in more dramas.
- Lot of self –confidence developed.
- Compromising attitude had developed.

Along with the above general observations they also submitted some considerable aspects.

- “When acting in the funeral scene, I felt like wanting to cry aloud. But if I had done so the drama environment would have got disturbed.
- “Acting was disturbed when the audience laughed at inappropriate points”
- “This being my maiden attempt to act in a drama, I was able to realize about my own self. I am a timid woman by nature, but I was able to act on stage without fear”
- Earlier, I used to be dumb founded among others. But, now I have danced and acted in front of several people
- Acting a comic role immediately after acting a tragic role was very difficult, mentally

After this drama was performed it was found that stage fright and the shyness of the students had diminished and they had cultivated their self – confidence. Further, it was observed that their acting skill had grown. The next problem was that when the actors went deep into the emotion in an emotional scene, it got linked up with their personal problems, which led to another challenge. Particularly, in the funeral house scene, the student who had said that she felt like crying aloud had experienced the loss of a beloved one very recently. However, the structure of the drama continuously demanded changes in the emotional state of actors, actors, therefore, had to switch between different moods as demanded. Changing between

moods also posed a challenge to some students initially, but later on they got used to this. .

Additionally, the actors adapted a new trend. When the actor came to the stage, first he/she introduced his/her character and then became his/her character, some of the audience laughed. This was a new trend and further, the contemporary audience was not used to watching a stage play, to the extent they watch Cinema or TV. In addition to that, new audience came into the auditorium intermittently. They did not understand the run of the drama and were also the cause of their laughter. Another one is that, when the comic scenes came in between, the audience laughed liberally. This problem lasted only for some time, after the commencement of the Drama. It was notable that, after some time, when some audience started to laugh, some other members of the audience silenced them with their “...sssh!...sssh!” sound.

Moreover, several opinions were expressed by the audience. 60% of the audience had rated this drama as “Good”. 20% of them had stated that more rehearsals were necessary for this Drama. Some of the audience did not like the narrators who moved the events of the Drama forward. They indicated that, these narrators prevented them enjoying the Drama. To a lesser extent, narrators were liberally used to prevent the audience from getting “drowned” in the drama. Several people, including, Feminists, Psychologists, VOGs, Doctors, Social Officers, Probation Officers, Social activists, Common audience, Students, University staff, and the members of Military Intelligence watched this Drama.

## 6. Breaking the culture at what extent?

As discussed earlier, the culture influenced practical work of this study. The extent to which the culture can be exceeded during the practical work is unspecified. Having observed the challenges posed by the culture, the researcher sometimes had to struggle against cultural norms. The changes that occurred in culture in the past in terms of gender, rites and rituals, western influence, the effects of war, etc are discussed below. A culture takes on several things as per its need and standards and continues. This assimilation does not happen easily. On the contrary, it happens invisibly. “The need” is related to new inventions, employment opportunities, and products. Likewise a culture assimilates new aspects. The assimilation of some aspects of western culture by Sri Lankans could be cited as an example here.

The Sri Lankan Tamil girls did not ride bicycles some decades ago. Earlier, such girls were branded as ‘arrogance’ and ‘termagant’. But when the war intensified, economic embargo was imposed and petrol and kerosene were banned, the transport facilities were affected completely. Hence, a need rose for every one to cycle to fulfill their daily needs. It brought about radical changes in culture as well. It could be seen now that the rituals performed in funeral houses and wedding houses are undergoing changes now. The advent of technology has affected rituals and rites. After the introduction of the video all functions are now conducted with video recording of the events and the camera man plays a prominent role in those events, giving directions.

Next change is the gradual transformation of extended family system into the nuclear family system. This is happening in order to manage the family economically. A big problem in the culture is that it follows something without understanding or comprehending the reason. Contradictions also in some cases arise between the

expectations of people and the cultural norms because when people wish something, the culture dictates something else. . Although culture assimilates new aspects, accommodating changes, it is not always ready to accept changes in its core aspects. Hence, to what extent this could be violated or broken remains a complicated issue.

The change that is happening now in the realm of culture seems to be drifting towards Western culture. Here it could be seen the existence of acculturation. Anyhow, the extent to which the culture in the practical study of this research, could be assimilated or violated for the purpose of engaging in drama practicals or performance is a controversial issue. For instance, the parents of the students who study drama as a subject in most cases influence the decision making of the students, particularly in relation to public performance, playing roles in a drama and rehearse. If drastic changes related to cultural norms are made, the number of students who attend drama classes will fall, particularly the number of female students. This was derived from the opinions of the students. Hence, any deviation from culture was done with the full cooperation of the students. As to how far could the deviation go, was decided after long discussions with the participants? However the student's consent was not requested in some matters. For example, it was compulsory that everybody should wear track-suits in practical sessions. At the same time one cannot ask the girls to shorten their hair. (The girls who joined the militant movement had their hair plaited and tied. But later this created several life-risk problems (like, the hair getting entangled in the barbed wire while creeping under the barbed wires in the battle field. Later they cut their hair short. Here a need and command matched)

Another shortcoming is the inability to change power relationship between seniors and juniors. Seniors have certain degree of power and control over juniors.

This power relationship has been passed on since the inception of the university. Even today it is noticeable. This dominant nature of the senior students limited the students' ability, creativity, free expression and maximum performance. This was evident when the senior and junior students were asked to perform together. Most significantly, it was observed in practical classes that the juniors often did not want to outdo their seniors. Ragging is more prevalent in this cultural context as the power relationship between brothers based on age difference is still prevalent in families. .

Another cultural factor that influenced the practical classes is "Guru-Sishya" system which was predominant in the teacher–student relationship. This old system is, to a certain extent, still in force covertly. One aspect of this system is not to demonstrate the teacher or to ask questions from him. As far as the field of Drama is concerned a friendly relationship exists between teachers and students. However, the instinct of the teachers appears to be wishing that the students should obey them.

Gender difference also posed a challenge to the effectiveness of the acting practice. The trainees, however, tried as much as possible to eliminate the gender difference in limited way. They could not exceed certain constraints. It was decided that girls and boys could touch each other in acting practice, but not to do so outside. Out of the 60% girls who attended the classes, 35% had a view in favor of touching in acting and 25% thought it was not right to do it. Students were willing to do anything, transcending cultural norms. But the biggest obstacle was the consciousness of "others". They did not want to violate certain norms as discussed earlier, keeping their future life in mind and saying that this would lead to ostracism.

In order to make the students surpass certain norms, it was felt that scientific explanations needed to be given to them. Hence, a Gynecologist was called in to give

discourses on culture related problems. Several changes were observable after the talk. In the evaluation among students as to how much of our culture should be changed, most of the students said 70% of the current aspects of our culture should be preserved and 30% should be changed. However, a few students said that only 30% should be preserved and 70% changed. A few drama groups operate on a basis of “Women’s Liberation”. But in practice finally most of them accept the culture and live again in the same society, adhering to the norms set out by the same culture. For example, one feminist theatre artist who depicted “Thali Kodi” as a hanging noose in her performance on stage, finally had to wear the Thali in her own private life (had to get married). But a few feminists still maintain a balance and are clamouring to institute changes in the culture.

## **7. Theatre Practice in the Period of War and Post War Context**

In this section theatre practices during the war and in the post war context are reviewed. Family has been the basic building block and also the nucleus of love and care for the Tamil Communities of Sri Lanka. But the conditions that has been prevailing both during the war and the post-war contexts has affected both the extended and nuclear families, there has been quite a lot of unrest in the form of disappearances, which has traumatically impacted the family and its kin members both in terms of occupation and also in terms of separation, displacement and poverty. Its quintessential for the social service units to track down the whereabouts of these separated or dysfunctional families and unite them. (Somasundaram and Sivayokan, *Rebuilding Community* 20). Dramatist Shanmugalingam described the post-war situation below and its impact on the people and artists.



“With the cessation of war in mid- 2009, the climate and atmosphere prevailing in the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka changed and the people and artists needed breathing time to relax, recollect, and adapt themselves to the new situation...the all country psychologically felt the pains and pangs of war and its effects in the postwar situation”. (Shanmugalingam, *An Introduction* to 80)

Here, the nature of the dramas staged during war and the aftermath of war and the barriers and practical problems experienced by the students in the Actor training are examined. During 1980s, certain performers suddenly appeared at places where people congregated, presented some public performance and disappeared from the spot as suddenly as they came. For instance, the title of a drama staged then was “Maya Mann” –Disguised Deer -(Mounaguru, *Arankiyal* 191). Their faces were masked while performing, and these performances were generally made at places sans military presence.

Several dramas were staged, highlighting the ethnic problem, which was the cause behind the war. They dealt with the loss of life and damages due to the war, and the problems encountered ethnically. “*Man sumantha meniar*” staged in 1985 is a typical example. It could be said that the form and content of this drama were decided by the war situation. When the intensity of the war grew more severe, performance on public stages became impossible due to security reasons<sup>34</sup>. At the same time drama artists utilized this as a base and staged several dramas at school level. Symbolic drama could be cited as the most important drama form developed during the war period. Indicated here are two main factors behind the development of this form. (Shanmugalingam *An Introduction* to 77)

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<sup>34</sup> During the war time, people gathering for any purpose was very chaotic and hazardous as one cannot predict when their lives could be in danger.

1. This form helped in expressing emotions through stylization. When something is represented symbolically, the situation could be expressed through the body, voice and visuals, i.e beyond the limitations imposed by realism. This format made it easy to express violence, atrocities and large scale oppression.
2. This format helped to suggest covertly the matters which entailed a war environment. For example, the role of a monster<sup>35</sup> was used to represent all the aspects of the oppression. That is to say, that format helped to express something gargantuan very easily.

However, there have been criticisms that, such symbolic drama, did not reach the audience. IT is said that the reason for this is the use of inappropriate and extra - cultural symbols, signs and metaphors. The staging of dramas which continued even through the trying war – period losses, paved the way for the people and artistes to remain lively. The people suffered not only the losses of lives and property but also traumatically. Dramas of that period spoke about these psychological consequences. Dramas helped to draw the people out of these traumatic impacts. There were problems of a different nature propped up in the post-war context. They emerged in the form of cultural aberrations, drug usage, suicides and abuse. A lot of people were affected badly due to psychological trauma. (Somasundaram *A Lost Generation of Tamil Youth* 04).

During these two periods educational and training related learning activities continued in the Drama department of the University of Jaffna. The actor training process, undertaken during this period was plagued by the War, war effects and post war situations. As curfew was often in force during the war period, students came late for the classes. In the evenings the curfew was imposed at irregular hours like 6 p.m.,

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<sup>35</sup> When certain political issues are spoken in order entail its secure conveyance this symbolic expression is adopted.

7 p.m., 9 p.m. Students had to leave for home very early. No night classes were held and no lighting facilities were available. There was a situation where nobody could stay in the campus and carry out any stage work. Even after the end of the war when no more curfews were imposed, they could not get out of the habit of going home early. Nobody could be seen on the roads late in the evening after dusk. Two or three years were needed for the situation to change.<sup>36</sup>

As far as acting was concerned, it was noted that during the war period it was somewhat of a different form. Particularly the expressions of the actors who played the roles of the victims of war were very much inappropriate. It was beyond expressing the feelings of the affected. It was merely an expression of his personal problems and affectations. Besides, some actors fainted during the drama. Affectations and frenzy were the reasons for that. There was a trace of violence in the acting of the actors. For example, a person who was acting with a glass of liquor in his hand crushed that glass in the wake of his anger and his hand became a bloody mess.<sup>37</sup>

### **Case Study- Student: W (Male)**

This male student was interested in acting. The lecturer explained to him about the necessity of ‘Stanislavsky’s emotional memory’ to look deep into the character and act. That is, a situation in our experiences is recalled during this. It is said in Stanislavsky’s “Actor’s work” that: “the actor’s personal memories which arise

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<sup>36</sup> The facts stated in this above paragraph during the war situation, the researcher has also been an eye-witness participant in the war zone rendering the facts stated above to be empirical.

<sup>37</sup> The reason for such an outrageous and self-inflicted act was due to the affect of war environment which has infuriated the student internally and has kindled his trans of violence. As a researcher, the interview has been conducted.

spontaneously as he explores the dramatic situation or which are consciously evoked to strengthen the natural reactions”. (Stanislavsky 683). That student after understanding this nuance, attempted to use this nuance in expressing his character in the rehearsal.

During one rehearsal, this student cried out aloud. But this was not an ordinary wailing. On the other hand it was very abnormal and that of a person who was critically affected. The rehearsal was suspended and he was isolated and asked for the reason for his behavior. He came out with a tragic story. He said that his brother had gone as a fighter and had blown himself up in an attack and died, and that, it was only known to him personally, that, if the story leaked out, it would harm his personal security and that, his parents would not bear the loss. He was given counseling.

In fact, this happened because that student recalled his emotional memory before attempting to act. From that day onwards the student was not given the training. After this, the training was undertaken after careful consideration of the personal background of individuals, particularly in relation to the effects of war and appropriate or suitable method was applied to individual students. Accordingly, those who had suppressed psychological complications were identified and they were provided with counseling first, to enable them to come out of their mental state. This entailed the selection of a story appropriate to the cultural context and environment. The mode of acting gave importance to “doing it” rather than “acting it”. Thus, although the methods of Berthold Brecht and Mayerhold, Augusta Boal, Richard Schechner are more appropriate. (The explanation of emotions and feelings has been discussed above and also chapter 2). If a drama is performed or a practical is conducted, a method had to be found which is suitable and appropriate adaptably, to cope against any problems which may arise from the play settings and also from

ourselves, solving it by accommodating all methods being adopted in a way suitable to our environment and situation. No matter how many ever training methods may be implemented, the practice carried out is to be refined and improvised according to the real situation to be applicable within our system in the real world. (Prior 154)

### **Performance and Audience in the War Situation**

The war period dramas were staged with self-censorship. All dramas were kept under surveillance by the intelligence units of the censorship section. The reason for this is that dramas were used to rouse people towards the freedom struggle. Some dramas were performed directly by the supporters of the struggle on streets. In those days the area was divided into (i) Defense controlled area (ii) uncontrolled area. The nature of the dramas was in accordance with the security situation of the areas where they were staged. The staging of a symbolic drama is always subjected to multiple interpretations and also political disturbances whose message conveyed and the issue represented can be misguided and misconceptualized by the public diversely. Yet, the play was meant to bring out social issues then people confronted. Now the situation is changing for the better in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. But the artistes had not got out of their self-censorship.

Whatever the type of the drama, be it classical, be it children's play, or a social theme play, the viewpoint of the audience never wavered from the political point of view. For example, a children's play titled 'Lion and Hare' was criticized by an audience that it was staged with "a political motive." In another instance, when a translated play of Rabindranath Tagore was staged very recently in 2015, a critic who watched the play said that, it dealt with the effects of the war and affected people had

to rise against oppression. The truth is that nothing in connection to the struggle or politics was suggested by those dramas. But the audience came out with the scant comments as they perceived things in terms of experience in war.

There are some reasons for people viewing the dramas which had no political motives in a different light. A. The audience tried to fulfill their wishes deep in their mind regarding the politics or the oppressive environment they were living in. They enjoy the dramas on the basis of their wishes, whether it was a children's play or a classical play. This is comparable to Sigmund Freud's discourse about dramas. Freud pointed out that theatre is a sense of unconscious desire. (Wright 175). This sense of unconscious desire is both present not only in the perspective of audience but also in the performer's perspective. Like the unfulfilled wishes returning as dreams, here also the audience fit themselves into the dramas they view, their unfulfilled wishes or the demands they were clamoring for<sup>38</sup>. B. in Jaffna modern theatrical tradition started with symbolic dramas. The audience who used to watch them comprehended them from their perspectives which differed as per their experiences which were related to the war since it prevailed then.

A group of Sinhala artistes came from the south and staged a drama with a jail as the background. The Jaffna audience who viewed the drama was found to be mentally confused and disturbed by the drama. Staging this kind of dramas for an audience severely affected by war was like adding insult to injury<sup>39</sup>. On another occasion, a drama based on the impact of Tsunami was staged by the drama students of the

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<sup>38</sup> This is not an arbitrary conclusion. Further research is needed. This opinion is being put forward as an impressionist view.

<sup>39</sup> This drama has been viewed by the researcher as an audience and also as an observer of the war situation. The researcher has interviewed the other audience about their mixed reactions as this play has re-kindled their bitter war memories.

University of Jaffna. The people who were not affected by the Tsunami understood the effects of the Tsunami through the drama. But, at the same time 10 Advanced Level students who were affected by the Tsunami were also in the audience and they were badly upset. When their advice was sought regarding the staging of that drama in Tsunami affected areas, they rejected the idea outright, saying that those people were recovering only then from the effects of the Tsunami, and that staging this sort of drama there only opened the healing wounds and they requested us not to perform it there. In this context a therapeutic theatre was required for this audience. This kind of method had already been introduced into Tamil Theatre. It had been added to the curriculum under the unit of Drama Therapy. A therapeutic Theatre suitable for the aftermath of War should be created, following the footsteps of the nuances of J.L Moreno and Augusto Boal. It is suggested a stage suitable for the Tamil cultural environment be worked out for this purpose.

In this chapter, all the data gathered has been organized, verified and also analyzed in the context of practice as research. After the analyzing some alternative solutions has been suggested for the cultural issues. For some issues, as data was collected, solutions were worked out, since this research directly involved students and practical works, solutions were presented then and there. As highlighted above, the issues are closely related to students and culture has had a great impact on the issues. However, the other external factors such as the university system and its defects, challenges related attitudes and behaviors, students' protests, etc also influenced the issues. In the next section, the problems the researcher encountered during the practices and appropriate solutions for them are discussed through reasoning. Also the experiences the researcher gained through the research is a kind of learning process for himself.

This section discusses about the challenges faced in theatre practices especially in actor training. The students who opted for the drama course at the University of Jaffna were not only interested to participate in learning theatre but also were quite self-conscious about their cultural restrictions which led them to have inhibitions in bodily expressions related to the problem of body contacts with the opposite sexes due to cultural distance maintained because of the consciousness of the other in terms of neighbors, family relatives and also the overall society. Regarding the issues related female actors, the biological superstition that has brought in inhibitions in terms of body contact on and off the practices in terms of rehearsals and stage performances in spite of understanding the significance of actor training. In this research of practice as research methodology, the play productions which mentioned the application of emotions to express the war affected trauma of the society and the social issues related to the performers and the audience as mutual participants. There has been a lot of hindrances in the path of presenting play production for students in spite of that the practice could impart creativity and substantiate their originality and also resolve their understanding beyond their cultural barriers. The students when practicing acting should strive to develop flexibility of their mind and must fight out their prejudices compassionately beyond their gender and identity set bounded by their cultures. As mentioned above about the problems of play production of various social problems during the war and also post-war period which not only uplifted the prominence of artistes and drama plays staging the various issues of war and also its aftermath which had also resulted in traumatic inflictions of the people affected. War is not only related to culture but also to the actor training imparted which had been disturbed by loss of lives, family, property, separation, displacement, disappearances (uncertain of whether dead or alive), and poverty in which the students were influenced and also



affected as victims. The entire process of actor training practices was planned to render both aesthetically and artistically but these unprecedented events in terms of culture, sociological, psychological and biological impediments confronted practically in this research. The next chapter deals with the conclusion of this research in which the alternatives to overcome the problems and suggest the solutions will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Historically, from time to time according to different practitioners and different styles, philosophical principles about both training and practice on acting have been transformed. Each style of acting and training had its own principles and practices. The theatre for social development, theatre for education and theatre for therapy have all come under the nexus of Applied Theatre. Babbage pointed out that Augusto Boal's Theatre of Oppressed also required certain training for those who shoulder responsibilities for the event to plan, present and facilitate (311). Actor training should be culturally shaped by incorporating acting and spectating attained through body-mind coordination through the actual practices and behaviors which finally shapes your experience and meaning. (*Zarrilli Action, Structure* 147). Generally during the training process body is related to behavior, mind is related to emotion and imagination, both the body-mind have been constantly modified by culture. The training involving the body-mind is not only shaped by culture but also impacted by the specific community. Therefore, the Sri Lankan Tamil Community and its culture influenced the Actor Training. In this research, the theatre students of University of Jaffna are part of larger community. The following stream of statement signifies that theatre activities are always inseparably influenced by culture "Theatrical performances do not happen in isolation-moral or otherwise- from our everyday experiences and our deep cultural attitudes."(Stern 123).

In this research the two key conceptual words that have been considered quintessential are culture and training. Firstly, the concept culture has been interpreted and defined by various disciplinary scholars in various periods diversely. In the

European linguistic point of view culture is civilization. (Jenks 09). Anthropologists and sociologists have defined the term culture in diverse perspectives which represents the learned, symbolic and the ideational aspects of human society rendering a holistic understanding of values, beliefs, norms and customs of the people's life. (Jenks 08, 10). Culture includes the way people behave, social norms and beliefs, and practices. (Griswold 03). Culture learned in the form of beliefs, values and attitudes always inevitably leaves an indelible condition from the group one belongs to. (Gill, and Adams 16). Beliefs, norms, attitudes and values are the four key aspects of this research considered. During this research, all the problems encountered in the actor training among the theatre students of University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka has been scaled under these four key aspects of the culture. Secondly, the actual meaning of training in theatre context is teaching and learning of activities which helps in developing the skills necessary for the application of theoretical knowledge especially in practice and in adapting and formulating an appropriate methodology designed and processed based upon the actor's self-discretion. David Zinder quoted Eugenio Barba's statement that the training given cannot guarantee artistic results but can only help the learner in cultivating coherence of thought (03). The actor training is based upon daily life experiences and also based upon individual emotions (Spolin, *Improvisation for* 15, 220). Training is a form of learning process which impacts both the self and the other all through practice. In this research, when training meets culture through blending, the reactions emerged as problems for the researcher tended to change the mode of confronting with the understanding of training students both individually and also as a group belonging to a culture. During the training process, it has been noticed that there had been Western influences in terms of actor training practical orientation

and at the same time it had been confronted by some unprecedented circumstances of war and aftermath of war situations.

Actor Training in the Northern Part of Sri Lanka entails restrictions due to the inherent aspects of the culture. This was mainly identified in the University level theatre practice in Jaffna University through the following categories in terms of behavior and attitude related issues from the students. The following aspects analyzed the first research questions that were “How the cultural restrictions impacted the training practice of the theatre students in University of Jaffna?” In this actor training, in relation to practical exercises the problems encountered by students in expressing themselves creatively due to their consciousness of their normative culture to which they wanted to adhere to. Especially during the actor training, the major problem that challenged the trainer was in training the female students. The actor training practice was influenced by the need to take culture of the students into account as culture and its restrictions levied serious inhibitions in attaining coordination between body and mind for the students acting practice. In this acting practice the elements of beliefs and values impeded directly the role in theatre practice both in terms of rehearsals, play productions and final staging. The play production remarks a significant role in the research because the practice as research, the strategy was tool for identifying the problem and also solving the problems. It is already evident cultural restrictions do exist but in spite of that the students could express themselves beyond their cultural restrictions. In the community, though they were levied with cultural restrictions at the same time war and post-war conditions influenced the theatre practice. The effect of war during its happening and beyond its aftermath, also affected the body-mind relationship similarly to culture. In the body mind relations, the emotions played a very important role in acting practice.

The second research question of how the western influences impacted in the actor training? The culture of theatre practice has been incorporating western elements into actor training which has contributed and the same time impacted in the Tamil theatre performances. The focus of this research was to ascertain how effectively actor training could be done through the modification in the theatre practice in order to suit to the local needs. Through the accounts of the use of western theatre techniques in the face of a very conservative culture, how modifications and adjustments' during practical work are made and their implications are explored in the study. This helps in recognizing the inherent barriers associated with the culture and work out alternatives through the modifications. The research, therefore, attempted to work out effective actor training in accordance with the Tamil cultural context of the Northern Sri Lanka. In a sense, it is an insight into the extent to which the participants could adopt or move away from cultural norms during the practical work. The Tamil community in the Northern region is conservative and people adhere to their traditional cultural, norms, values and beliefs set out by their community. Yet the rules may be altered by the same people who constitute the community. And the life of an individual and family cannot be inseparable from the community, (Somasundram and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 16). This research study though has been carried on based on the cultural elements; external factors have also played an important role which in this research could not be considered. For example, the conflict among the students and the staffs and the necessary developments to be accommodated in the University system in order to fill up faulty lacunae which has not been discussed in my research and which is my limitation. The research carried out had very limited data and has been mostly unexplored as there has been no model in actor training serving the purpose of research in Sri Lankan Tamil Culture as none of the other researchers have

carried any study inside Sri Lanka especially in the context of student, culture and actor training.

As mentioned in the introduction, when a society's behavioral issues are dealt to be bound with culture, culture is inextricably interwoven with the population influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors like family, marriage, kinship, language, technology, politics, economics, morals and ethics, health & hygiene, religion, human rights and duties, law and order, etc and other institutions which help in maintaining harmonious social order collectively among the people. (Erikssen 1,3). At the same time, it can be observed that these factors are sometimes in conflict with culture. Hence, theatre and actor trainings were done by taking everything related to culture into consideration. And also the avoidable and unavoidable elements in the culture were engaged for discussion.

The reason for considering the culture as an issue is that many related obstacles were encountered in the acting practice. When the obstacles that surfaced among the students during the practical sessions were identified and the causes for them was sought, it dawned on the researcher that the main issue causing most of the problems is related to the Tamil culture. It is worth mentioning that there is a dilemma of whether to abide by the conditions of the culture, or to deviate from it or to go totally against the culture. Whatever deviation beyond the culture had been discussed with the student concerned and sought his permit for example the male student and female student who had to touch or holding hands was carried out with their consent. The touching and holding hands were carried out in the theatre games and exercises and also acting characters.

Besides, the problems encountered in practical classes were not related to culture alone. Conversely, they were related to other different factors too. Every activity absorbs those cultural aspects, when they are carried out in a particular culture. For example, 'sex education' could not be implemented under the same title. This is seen by many as something disgusting and something violating the Tamil cultural values because sex should not be discussed in public according to the norms of the Tamil culture (Somasundaram and Sivayokan, *Mental Health* 185). Therefore, this suggestion faces much opposition. This subject has not been included in the university syllabus either. However, nowadays the same concept, to some degree, is being implemented under a different title "reproductive health"

Caste issues, dowry problem and gender discrimination are found even today, with some changes, in the Tamil society. Neither revolution nor law could succeed in abolishing them. The practical classes for the students were conducted, considering all these events happenings at the grass root level of the society. If the trainer imposed his own ideologies on the students participating in the practical classes and such an act contradicts with the stance the students hold regarding their culture, then the researcher would have incurred antagonism from their parents and the society as a whole. This would jeopardize the whole effort put on encouraging students to offer this subject. The subject of drama and theatre, unlike that of reading and writing, meets the public audience with the activities of acting, doing, being and embodying along with the emotion and feeling.

The impact of the war also influenced the performance of the students. The impact of the scars inflicted by the war, that was waged for 30 years and concluded recently, are emerging as the aftermath consequences now. It had transformed into a vital aspect of the Tamil community. In actor training in terms of expressing acting in the form of

emotions has faced a lot inhibitory obstacles in body-mind expressions due to the war. Initially the concern of the researcher has been towards the role of culture and the western influence on the culture but later as the research was being conducted, it had to withstand with a new phenomenon which confronted issues newly beyond the researcher's research questions that was war effect on community and individuals also. This is the reason war and its impact has been added along with the study as it is quintessential to relate the culture study of Sri Lankan Tamils along with the war and its aftermath creating a vital understanding of community that has affected them both mentally and physically. Arguably in this research, the strategy of practice as research, the hypothesis to be mentioned in the research question and the objectives has been practically subjected to change in the field or new aspects of vital research concern could be included. Melissa Trimingham in her research article named "A Methodology for Practice as Research" has spoken about practice research which begins with a starting point which will be subjected to change subsequently as unexpected data to get informed might spring up according to the field setting chosen which will enable the research to confront them as an added reality of the research conducted. (58).

Psychologists say that, the impacts of the war are constantly present in several people who seek counsel. The Psychologists felt the concern of including this dimension that has affected the people's lives and also address their related concerns when necessary to the person who seeks his counsel. This could be seen in practical life now. There are situations where people get shocked even for a banging of a window or door getting shut due to gush of wind etc which could be related to that of a blast or glass break or aircraft's sound. The reaction would be more than the natural reaction to large noises. Lighting crackers and flying helicopters are factors which bring back the



memories of the war. Although this situation is changing, it still remains as postwar situation. Therefore, as the actor training is connected to several emotions, feelings and events of the life, the impact was more visible here as well. During the actor training when Stanislavsky's 'emotional memory' was applied, it resulted in rekindling of war memories in students, especially certain of them had to be counseled and if necessary replaced in training practice. The mode of training also had to accommodate Bertolt Brecht's and Augusto Boal's 'rationalized emotion' acting technique as a replacement. In this research the play productions stages, the scenes of emotional attachment had to be added in-between with comical scenes which could create a sense of emotional detachment for the audience and actor to relate. The actors were advised not to go to the depth of emotion but to feel the emotion. This has been mentioned by Richard Schechner. (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 341). This had been already pointed out in this study. The overall barriers that arose and the problems encountered could be classified into three types such as culture, western approach and aftermath of war. This Research had delved into the three stated problems above and found the ways and means of solving them.

Most of the students who are studying in the Drama section are from rural areas. On the wake of the growth of the information technology, the villages may have become nonexistent, but there are many who still follow the cultural traditions. Even now, the agrarian time system is in use mostly in the rural areas. The adoption of agrarian time system is the trait of doing everything at the students want<sup>40</sup>. The students have not yet moved away from the systems. This affected the time schedules and punctuality in the class. Giving more priority to fasting, festivals and celebrations, affected the

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<sup>40</sup> This concept of time consciousness culture is validated by the discussion of Robert Levine. He states in his book titled "Time of Geography" (2006) that attitude to time varies, depending on cultures and countries

classes largely. When the students stayed away from theoretical classes, usually it does not affect the students as they can borrow the notes from friends and study later. But this restriction in the student's behavior affected the practical classes where they had to act with team spirit especially in the practical classes of kinesthetic learning. Further the cultural inhibitions and their customary superstitions also impeded their practice. For example, the students were not willing to act as a dead body lying in the coffin or as a widow. In addition to this female students who secretly claimed about biologically natural problem also refused to attend to practice. The research participants comprised students' population of both urban and rural areas. The creativity and imaginations among rural students were comparatively better than those of the urban students. Therefore, to some extent it was easier to teach and train those students from under-privileged areas. This is not a final conclusion but only an empirical observation. One of the significant challenges the researcher was faced with was that certain students were confronted with their cultural superstitions which also caused inhibitions during the practice. As discussed in the analytical chapter, for instance, a student was reluctant to act as a widow for the first time and another did not want to act as a death character in a coffin. This mindset was most probably inherited from the community itself with which the beliefs and superstitions have been closely interwoven. Creating changes in the mind of the students created a great challenge for the researcher. Hence several logical matters needed to be explained psychologically and scientifically in order to convince them. Yet a few students were unable to be convinced. But, depending on their capacity, they were permitted to perform in practical sessions. The capacity of different students varied in accordance with the restrictions imposed by culture and other social attributes. Different approaches, therefore, needed to be adapted by the researcher to treat the students.

The practical oriented classes, particularly training connected to the body and movement were more affected than the other theoretical classes. The practical classes involved kinesthetic learning through which gestures, postures, body movements and dancing steps can be learned (Anthony-Lengel 17). It requires good practice. Therefore, when a student misses the classes, they cannot learn it later. Consistency and continuity was required on the part of the learners. Missing a single class sometimes affected the dynamics of the practical work. That is to say if the classes were disrupted by unexpected happenings such as protests or strikes, the whole thing had to be started from the beginning.

Differences in students also posed obstacle in practical classes. Every single student had his/ her own agenda, motives and the phenomenology varying from the other students. Some possessed more creativity and less body expressions. The reverse was also true for some other students. Some excelled in off stage work than in acting. Some had more theoretical knowledge than practical skills. This list grows more. (This had been explained clearly in chapter IV). Here the problem was how to orient the student with several viewpoints and with various skill levels, in a training method with a single objective.

Next challenge was the fear, shyness and lack of self-confidence exhibited in the practical classes. This state was not caused instantaneously. This resulted from the social structure and the cultural consciousness, existing all the time and education given to them from the very young age. Among them “otherness” caused more impact than the other attributes. “Otherness” was a big barrier of self-consciousness on the path to expressing one’s own “self”. This had rooted deeply along with the opinions of ostracism in the culture. During the practice, the opinions of the other and their views were creating conscious obstacles in the students. However, after the

participants had been given explanations on the above de-motivating factors, considerable improvement in the performance of the students could be observed.

Moreover, the contribution of women in theatre is not on par with their contribution in the writing field. As far as writing is concerned, a woman could write and also aspire to be a writer (poetry, short story, novels and articles) but yet stay away from it in practice. In the case of a drama, however, a woman should appear before the audience. A less number of women artists is found in Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. Most of them are Directors. There is no one to be named as a considerable actress. There are two reasons behind this, one of them is being a director is culturally safer than being an actress and also rendering and improvising their script writing skills, the other one is that in practice, a theatre education does not produce many actors. It produces only directors.<sup>41</sup>

Touching each other is another significant challenge in theatrical performance. Male and female students had to touch each other in games and acting during practical work. That was problematic for them. According to the feedback from the students, although they touched each other in the rehearsal, they did not like to do it on the public stage. Female students constituted 60% of the total students. Out of them 25% of the girls had indicated that they did not like to do rehearsals or games touching the boys. The cultural distance present in every culture was present here also. The distance which should be kept between a male and female were both already biologically and culturally determined.

‘Culture is the body’ (Suzuki 155) which is an indicator of the society. There were limitations in gesture, posture, facial expressions and movement, as far as girls were

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<sup>41</sup> Arul Chandran authored book *Female Artists in Jaffna Theatre Tradition*. Women who have acted in theatre have faced a lot of objections and this was due to their culture and their family and also society.

concerned. When the requirements of drama were of one kind, the limitations of the girls who perform it were of another kind. The body acts only according to the situations of marriage, family and society. There were barriers to act in response to created or fictional situation. The girls had a pre-conceived opinion that if they expressed themselves through excessive body movements, then their people or neighbors would declare them of not having a modest upbringing and will judge them to be lacking in character which might affect their future prospects of marriage proposals. Proposed marriage and dowry system which exerts indirect influence on this is the reason. Most of the discussions and feedback from students mentioned these issues. Further, as far as the menstruation is concerned, it had taken root deeply as an exclusive cultural restriction. They believed that engaging in practice harms their health. The idea of menstruation and its problems were perceived variedly by students of diverse religious backgrounds in various intensities which also became an added dimension to cultural restrictions and their associated inhibitions. Hence a Gynecologist was brought down and several doubts about reproductive health were cleared even arguably explaining them beyond their superstitions which positively helped up to an agreeable extent especially among the female students. There was a situation where attention had to be paid for menstruation, maternity and pregnancies during the practical activities.

Besides, the problems which were encountered during the war and aftermath of the war were identified in the practical classes. Emotional issues and drowning into emotion during the acting practice created problems. They emerged as the side effects of the war. Hence the method of acting and the practices for emotions was undertaken with much care and the assistance of the psychologists and psychiatric consultants were also sought. Hence the nature of the acting was based on storytelling and

incorporating comical aspects. The expressions were largely detached to the audience's attitude and their environment.

Among the inhibitions of the theatre students the shyness and fear play a major hurdle in acting practice due to their early schooling and other learning experiences. In the feedback, the students mentioned events that turned out to be unpleasant during their early days in relevance to their fear and shyness they exhibited as inhibitions in the present acting practice. However, this was not the case in all the students. For a clear understanding, one of the examples is discussed in the case of a student who constantly kept trembling during practice and performing in public, in his counseling he revealed a childhood schooling incident where he had become a laughing stock on stage while delivering a speech due to improper pronunciation. This insult has wounded his self-confidence deeply and has been manifested as one of his reasons of inhibitions. In order resolve the student's problem researcher as a trainer took special consideration and paid attention in making him practice certain exercises to encourage him to overcome from the problem.

The next challenge is related to trainers. Western theatre approaches play a major role in the Sri Lankan Modern Theatre. Here most of the important trainers were either trained in the West or were trained by trainers who were trained in the West. The western training methods which were given in Tamil theatre were given in ways appropriate to the culture conjunctures. The new theatre, which was created from western Theatre and Eastern theatre, was used by eastern practitioners claiming that it is theirs. But truly it was created for the Western Theatre. One cannot use the Eastern theatre as it is. Rustom Bharucha describes this clearly in his book "Theater and the world". Western methods were used from Stanislavski to Augusto Boal. All these were changed and adopted according to the respective cultures. A theatre artist though

has learnt actor training under western influence or trained from the west does inextricably orient the mode of actor training according to the cultural situations. When western actor training practice is incorporated directly it fails to fit into these cultural settings. In this research, the adaptation of the western techniques has been done according to the own cultural setting. For example, Stanislavski says that, an actor trained under a system cannot learn or systematize exactly as a parrot-fashion, but can only cultivate and nurture it as a part of his own flesh and blood, influenced by one's own culture can only assimilate it as a second nature, until it integrates internally and transforms him on stage. (Stanislavski, *An Actor's work* 612)

Additionally, freedom of expression plays a major role in the production of a drama. But in the drama produced for this research with university students especially affected by war, self-censorship had to be applied. The address of issues in terms of war and ethnic problems would only kindle the trauma, may also intensify the situation instigating a conflict within the student culture initially and may also spread to the wider public audience. The mode of performance had to be modified consciously in terms of avoiding certain terminological aspects and related occurrences of war which may kindle the trauma in the individual student and may also lead to consequent ban in the country as there has been a ban levied upon such play productions which has been thematically representing any war memories. Hence, the necessity to address the issue by modifying the dramatic style in terms of avoiding the ban is to be passively reflected. During the research, the war and the affect of its aftermath were confronted as the research was carried on and thus added as one of the conscious objective, though as a researcher was focused upon cultural restriction in terms of theatre practice. This is commonly acceptable in practice as a research. (Trimingham 58).

The style of the drama and the nature of getting linked up with the emotional aspects do affect both the performers and the audience, if done more realistically this emotion cannot be compared to the catharsis or purgation or Rasa. (It has been mentioned in the book “A General Theory of Emotions and Social Life” by Warren D. Ten Houten that “A rich tradition of scholarly contemplation of what Plato and Aristotle meant by katharsis and kathairein (to cleanse or purify), along with a history of the usages of both catharsis and abreaction in the histories of psychoanalysis and, more generally, in the psychology of healing, is masterfully explicated”) This drama varies from the usual drama and was done with a Therapeutic nature. Theatre and the therapeutic tradition have been stated by Fintan Walsh in his book written titled Theatre and Therapy quoting: “Theatre, like therapy, can prompt us to reflect upon our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the presence of others, within a specific time frame. As we observe lives play out before us as spectators, or actively collaborate in the process as performers, practitioners, and participants theatre can illuminate and stimulate mental and emotional activity, those primary targets of therapeutic intervention” (01). The way of explaining the drama and the mode of performance has been contextually and deliberately framed intelligible to the audience around keeping in mind the social situation as a context of investigating into their cultural background such as to nurture the dramatic feel in each student uniquely and also avoid any repercussions from the situation occurrences.

All the above issues were encountered in the acting practice, and the ways and means of solving them were also found. The way to find a solution itself was a problem. The reason for this is that, the requirements of practical work entail one thing and the cultural limitations entail something else. There was a problem regarding the extent to which the culture could be violated. This problem was solved through good dialogue



and discussions with the students. The sections below will give what kind of solutions was found for the problems.

The problems that are encountered in acting practice should be problems related to artistic work. The fieldwork that had been carried out was intended to understand the expression of students in actor training both in the artistic and aesthetic sense of expression. But it turned out to be that there is another factor impeding and challenging the progress of the artistic work which is deviating and does not encourage a scope of abstracting and integrating aesthetics in to the teaching curriculum this obstacle has been the students cultural background and their morally imposed cultural inhibitions restricting their expression and engaging outcome. On the contrary, cultural problems were the ones which were mostly encountered. Hence this research is a process for the actor to get himself broadened and released from certain controls of the society. Cultural problems relate to the society. It is related to the problems of the Tamil society as a whole. Beyond that, the problems of drugs, suicides, robbery, child abuse, and violence against women, alcoholism, and other problems were witnessed after the end of the war. Along with ethnic problem, there were problems like, caste system, dowry problem and regionalism. Further, how the beliefs and values would influence the practical work and the ways and means of avoiding them have been discussed in the analytical chapter.

In practical work, the primary stage students were always grouped in pairs or in groups during the training so as to solve the problems like, fear, shyness lack of self confidence in them. Their fear and shyness decreased through this. Further, it was observed that, after acting in a drama their self-confidence had increased and also their team spirit of participation. More than that, the praises from the audience encouraged them to engage more as a team. The above group integration was

analyzed through feedback and focused group discussions carried on between students and trainer and also group discussions among the students played a major role to solve the problems and also find the alternatives.

As per the opinion of the students, when it comes to the training, there should not be any discrimination whether male or female. But, at the same time, some girls maintained a cultural distance. However, some exercises were done with the consent of the students. After that, a change occurred in the male – female discrimination that had been in their mind for a long time. They indicated about brotherhood, happiness and friendship in their feedback. It should be pointed out that this problem has its roots in boys and girls sitting separately in the classrooms from very young ages.

In the actor training process, the students had the “others” deeply rooted in their minds. The self vs the others is always a dichotomy of an individual’s curious understanding of life and living. They serve as a lens and mirror in reflecting the deep inner consciousness of an individual as a social being. The others are the collective that constitute the socializing of an individual in terms of family and social structure. Others are being influenced by the agency<sup>42</sup> of the socialization into which a person is instructed to modify himself as a cultural individual acceptably. This “others’ will not be a factor that could be seen overtly. Covertly it will influence their every deed. The “others” will be the joint family system, and caste and division system. Living, depending on each other’s, makes the “others” very important. Those who make mistakes and deviate in this will be subjected to ostracism. This is considered a

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<sup>42</sup> “The concepts of agent and agency, perhaps related most closely to that of power, are usually deployed in debates over the relationship between individuals and social structure. They also pertain, however, to the nature of individual consciousness, its ability to constitute and reconstitute itself, and, ultimately, the extent of its freedom from exterior determination.” (Rapport and Overing 1).

punishment method<sup>43</sup>. Now that the nuclear family system had been largely started, a secure environment is available for a single man to survive and changes are happening. But the cultural residue of old things continues. So, it was insisted to the students to adhere to a “conscience” method. Steps were taken to build up that. Important among them is “If you think it is correct to do it, don’t leave it just because others would say something”. It was notable that the student adhered to both at 50% - 50%. The culture of speaking openly several things was very much less in the males. “Others” is the main reason behind this also. In the anonymous feedbacks received from the students, at the end of the classes, they had come out openly about their opinions and oppositions. On the basis of this feedback changes were made in the practical class. The real stances of the students were understood. It is noteworthy to mention that essential things which are important for this research, but not openly mentionable were received through this type of feedbacks.

In this research, that is concerned with cultural restrictions in actor training the researcher had to unexpectedly confront with the following problem. Senior – Junior is the next problem. Family structure and the society are the main reasons behind the continuous occurrence of ragging in the university. Workshop and play production played more important roles in creating change on senior and junior system. By bringing the students together in the workshop basing the research on social issues and allowing them to speak freely, lots of conflicts were revealed and solved. This workshop though conducted by other staff, as researcher a interview was conducted and feedback was received from other lecturer and students. It was observed that a team spirit had formed among the students at the end of the play production. Speaking

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<sup>43</sup> E.B.Taylor according to his statement culture is a law, wherever there is law, there is order then order also automates punishment inclusively. Jenks according to his statement, culture is a moral development in society. (11). Morality indirectly includes kind of punishment or ostracism in Sri Lankan Tamil Culture.

to the students individually gave many benefits. Speaking to them as a group is one method. When they were approached to express their opinions individually, they opened their hearts. As the trainer/ researcher is a male, a lady lecturer was present in these individual conversations. This paved way for the girls to speak out all their problems. Good rapport was built, and it caused a change in the Interaction between the fellow students and also the actor trainer.

At the end of the training students were allowed to do some scenes without any control. This method was adopted by the trainer as a part of the training to the students. This proved to be very beneficial. Here, the presence of the trainer was not always necessary. The trainer stood in isolation in observing the students. The students also independently opted for this technique for their own individual acting practice enthusiastically. In their feedback they mentioned that their practice individually helped in exploring their self-confidence courageously further. . Boundless abilities of the students were brought to limelight due to this. This enabled students to improvise their creative idea freely beyond any third person observing and commenting them consciously.

“Known to unknown” was one of the successful training methods. This is a method in Forum Theatre which practices familiar to unfamiliar as techniques of learning practice and also spectators also. (Babbage, *Augusto Boal* 68). Most of the improvisations were done with the problems encountered by the students in their lives and in the university. They were very enthusiastic. It also produced solutions to their personal problems. A good amount of mental impacts due to the war were identified through the improvisation and they were directed forward as solutions. No difficulty was encountered in improvising their problems. It was observed that acting flowed spontaneously. After the new training started it was easier for them. Similarly, when

they started to act characters they were allowed to model the characters they have seen in cinema, drama and tele-dramas as a first stage. Through this, the perception of ‘acting as a hard task’ was alleviated. At the next phase, they were allowed to imitate people they have seen in their village and neighborhood. This method also was easy for them. After this, they were allowed to act the characters in the script. Doing the practice, before the theory classes, makes the understanding of the theory easier. Hence, rather than giving training on a small portion of a drama it was more beneficial to train them to act a whole drama. In other words, this is the “Do and Think” method. Evan quoted Morris that “By focusing on unpremeditated action, the ‘neutral’ body is respecting the flow and physicality of the acting process: ‘They don’t learn intellectually. They learn through experience. I think through doing’.” (88). Hence a drama was produced with the problems found in the environment of the students and research information are added in the chapter.

In a training process, the demonstration of a trainer is more effective than verbal explanation by him and it accords with Novices explanation. The students grasp it more when a trainer does the training along with them. This makes the students to have more confidence on a trainer. The students understood practically that the theatre is not only related to the skill, but also related to social knowledge. They also understood that the training process is not merely creative, but it is transferred through social knowledge. A student could go into creative work which is embedded in practical work, once he/she is enabled to know himself /herself and identifies the obstacles confronted by him/her. The students get a better understanding of the society when a play production is completed regarding a drama that revolves around the social dynamics. The assistance of experts of relevant sectors (gynecologists and counselors) was called to overcome physical and mental barriers of the students.

Similarly, the discussions with professionals such as social officers and probation officers in analyzing the social problems and cultural obstacles encountered by the students were eradicated.

Artistic and aesthetic values were the first preference in actor training process, since the performance capacity of the students in trainee level is very low. Hence, a performance capacity of a professional actor cannot be expected in a play production produced by the students. So the production process surpasses aesthetic value.

On this basis, the students were allowed to select independent and different criteria according to their cultural background, instead of specific common criteria to all. This Eclectic method was chosen to handle this matter. It could be known that this method was in practice in the Sri Lankan Theatre. The advantage of this method is that it could be employed for different types of students; a method for female students, another method for those who were affected by war and a different method for those who were affected by cultural barriers. The cultural barrier restricts the bodily expressions and this leads to more verbal expressions. Thus, the Tamil Theatre became more dialogue oriented theatre.

Therefore, in a drama produced for the purpose of a research on this theme, a funeral scene was done mainly with verbal expression. Though the eyes were enough to be expressive, the bodily expression was nil. When the gestures of Bharatha Natya were taught to the students to change this mode of action, the students were more expressive physically. Though the moves looked very awkward for that scene, the action combined with those moves and emotions made the scene livelier as though something rejuvenated. Though the students were not acquainted with Bharatha Natya they were not at all hesitant to adopt those steps. When Yoga was introduced for their

relaxation as it was combined with their culture they readily accepted it. Since, traditionally yoga was familiar culturally and religious practiced by the people in the society it was more readily accepted. The continuous learning and the stage performances took away their shyness and fear and simultaneously developed their self-confidence and satisfaction. It enabled them to have faith in their lives too. When the Sri Lankan Tamil theatre was researched in terms of Actor training in Folk Theatre three main matters was found: Childhood involvement and observation, Devotion, Vow.

There is no method such as training in traditional form of '*Naatu Koothu*'<sup>44</sup>. The children of the performers would sit and watch while their parents do the rehearsals. Here the observation is the primary method of training. This can be found in the countries like China, Japan and India. Hence, it is important to use the observation in modern training also, so the students were forced to observe rehearsals held in other places. In '*Isai Naatakam*' which was introduced by 'Parsi Theatre', the methods of training which was carried for several generations were based on observation and oral traditions. In the rural areas, certain traditional forms are being delivered by artists who are perpetuating their ascribed family succession as they are born into a family with artistic background. But, unfortunately, the people born in the other backgrounds are not taught and not even allowed to watch the rehearsal process which further inhibits their aspiration of evolving into an artist. Hence, the observation method introduced among the students during their action training induced the students to learn voluntarily. The Sri Lankan Tamil Modern and Traditional Theatre Artists gathered from the reading materials and interviewed conveyed that they explored the

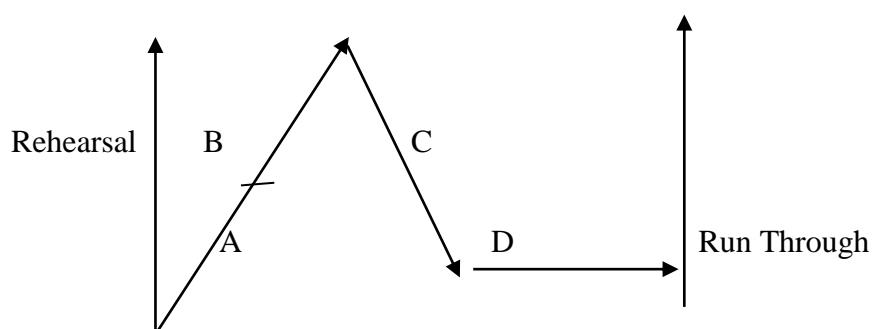
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<sup>44</sup> Included all form of traditional dance and song plays

fact of self-learning through tedious observation of their pioneers performing. This has been an oral tradition and also an observation right from their childhood<sup>45</sup>.

Training is living with an environment. In one of the villages in Jaffna where The Institute of Centre for Performing Art (CPA) is situated, the people are used to stage different types of plays. It is because the people are induced to by the institution. The artists created by the institution said, in an interview, that they became dramatists by watching the rehearsals held in the institution from their childhood. (The interview of theirs is being vividly explained in chapter II). So it is understood that the training is voluntarily taking place in the form of observation in a suitable environment. It is found in practical life that those who are engaged in actor training with dedication and commitment would be better performers. Related matters to a training such as talent, skill and understanding take second place compared to devotion. It is proved well in the training for the students that in the wake of devotion the other matters as talent, skill and understanding would develop step by step. Problems were encountered when emotional actions were performed in the Drama. The ways and means used to solve them are shown in the chart below:

**Chart No: 5.1 Emotion Expression Level**



<sup>45</sup> The following artists are included such as Late. Chornalingam, Late. S.T.Arasu, Dr. M. Shanmugalingam, Dr. Sithamparanathan, Prof. Mounaguru and study report of the 26 artists based on the book- Sriskanthan, P.*AriyaliyoorNadaga Aalumaikal* (Theatre Personalities of Ariyalai). Chennai: vadaly veliyedu.2003. Tamil, Print..



- A. Expression of personal Emotions: When the students played roles during the production of the drama, inappropriate emotions and emotions in excess of the nature of the characters were expressed. Reasons for this are the socio-cultural conflicts and the war. Therefore the initial stages of the rehearsals were like a Therapeutic process. Counseling was also used
- B. Modulated emotions: The rehearsal was done after the actors expressed their personal emotions and reaching a balanced state. This was a normal one.
- C. Dramatic emotions: When the drama was run through, their emotions were in accordance with the nature of the character, and the needs of the drama.
- D. Ritualistic Emotions: Emotions were repeated several times and emotion in body language was given importance.<sup>46</sup>

This body language emerged out as the suitable acting mode, suitable for the cultural environment. Here, the actor was first prepared. After that, it reached the audience with an emotional balance. After this the students were aware of how to express emotions through the body. This was helpful in their life and on stage.

Generally it could be observed that, whatever the field may be, if employment opportunity is available immediately after the completion of the training, students will eagerly participate in the training with discipline. The students who did actor training or theatre training in the theatre Art study programme entered not only fields connected to theatre but also are now engaged in various employments. They say that their theatre training is very helpful in their jobs. They have found employment in Police Department, Agriculture Department, Media, Banks, and have become social and cultural officers, counselors, teachers, etc.

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<sup>46</sup> This is one of the implementation of the research work to overcome emotional imbalance to stabilize oneself beyond his culture towards balance.

The curriculum of Drama and Theatre Arts is usually altered often, taking in matters learned. Thus, opportunities should be available to increase the punctuality of the students and space available for training, like the science students using their laboratory round the clock. Similarly, if the theatre is also allowed to utilize their rehearsal spaces for actor training practice, then they could overcome their cultural restrictions beyond their cultural societies. The students like to appear on stage directly for a play or to get their training for acting in a drama instead of taking an actor training. This matter was taken into consideration. Further, those who get their training in theatre, were given the chance of studying, Sociology and Psychology as optional subjects.

Finally, when it was attempted to solve the artistic problems in Actor training, cultural restrictions emerged as a problem. They emerged from physique and vocalization, and emotion, had a cultural impact in this research. Beyond them the culturally devastating impact of the aftermath of war and postwar, psychological traits, gender identity and other extrinsic factors played a major challenge. In this practice as research, according to the Trimmingham's statement (58) research objective got modified and changed which had confronted the research with an unexpected dynamic change that eventually couldn't escape the researcher's attention to be included and challenged as an added dimension. It was seen that, the strengths and the weaknesses of the culture, the restricted expressions of the women, western approaches, the old notion regarding dramatists – and the concept of “others” emerged as the root causes. Various methods and means to solve these issues were developed considering the practical environment, development and adoption of appropriate methods, appropriately expression of the adopted methods, and elimination of unnecessary matters. Actor training process was very much helpful in

the activity related to bringing the students to a mentally free state. Mental freeness is the need of this research, for the people who are restricted in their cultural context.

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## **Interview and Discussion**

### **Personal Interview**

- Arasu,S.T., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 29.04.2014.
- Jeyarajah, Begaman., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 05.02.2014.
- Ferminus,G.P., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 08.04.2014.
- Julius, Andrew., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 03.09.2014.
- Jeyakanthan, R., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 03.09.2014.
- Rajkumar, Johnson., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 10.04.2014.
- Baheerathy, K., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 12.06.2014.
- Tharmalingam, T., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 08.07.2014.
- Shanmugalingam, N. Kuzhanthai., (Dramatist) Personal Interview, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, July, 2014.
- Sithamparanathan, K., (Dramatist and lecturer) Personal Interview, 09.08.2014.
- Sudharshini, S., Personal Interview, 01.03.2014.
- Navaraj, S., (Counsellor) Personal Interview, 06.04.2014.
- Mahendran, Kokila., (Counsellor and dramatist) Personal Interview, 08.08.2015.

### **E-mail Communication**

- Sivayogan, S., (Psychiatric consultant) E-mail, 05.09.2014.
- Mounaguru, S.,(Professor) Email, 01.05.2015.
- Navadharshini, K., (Dramatist and lecturer) Email, 03.09.2014.
- Tharmalingam,T., (Dramatist) E-mail, 04.09.2014.

### **Discussion**

- Gurupuran (Gyanaecolist) Discussion with the students and lecturers. 06.08.2014.



**Telephone Conversation**

Sathyasheela, K., (Dramatist ) Phone conversation 10.02.2014

Ramaniyam, S. (Prefessor) Phone conversation 08.05.2015

Thavachchelvi, (Dramatist ) Phone conversation, 08.02.2014.

Raveendran, R., (Professor) Phone conversation, 09.08.2014.

## Appendix - A

### **Sri Lankan Modern Theatre and the changes it underwent.**

This section provides an account of what changes the Sri Lankan Sinhala and Tamil modern theatre underwent through after the arrival of Westerners; and the causes of those changes and who made them. The changes that occurred in the theatre are related to three factors; firstly the changes in education and the influences of the performances by Westerners, second the changes caused by those who trained in the West, and third an awareness on how to adapt plays in accordance with our culture and tradition. The chapter goes on to set out the changes that occurred, particularly in the Tamil theatre and the influences caused due to those changes. The concept of modern theatre came into existence with the colonization. (Obeyesekere 30)

### **Sinhala Modern Theatre**

Modern Sinhala stage started to draw attention with the emergence of Prof. Ediriweera Sarathchandra: he established the Modern Theatre based on the Sinhala Traditional Theatre which found to be rite – dramas like *Thovil*, *Ratayaguma*, *Kokhomba*, *Kankariya*. These dramas are detached from the rites of *kolam* and *sokkary* and *Nadagama*, a theatre that was introduced to the Southern Sri Lanka through the North Indian *Noorthi* tradition. Among these, *Kolam* has been performed along the coastal areas from Weligama to Ambalangoda. *Sokary* in the central hills, along *Nadagama* and *Noorthy* in Colombo. (Neryala and Wimal 28) Thus the Sinhala Theatre is found to be regionalized and Sarathchandra attempted to create the universal theatre style and succeeded in his venture .

He was well versed in Sinhala, *Pali* and English languages. He teamed up with Ludowyke to produce the drama, “*Mudalalige peraliya*” (Boss’s revolution) which was an adoption of Mollier’s drama and ultimately it was staged. Later Sarathchandra and Ludowyke jointly produced the drama “*kapuwa kapothy*” (Broker gone bankrupt). These dramas were the adoptions of European dramas. In collaboration with others Sarathchandra also produced the drama “*Vetha Haddana*” written by by the Newman Jeepal, an European. However, “*Vetha haddana*” was not popular among Sinhala people. The production of this drama was the cause behind Sarathchandra’s thinking that when we receive Western characteristics, we must include local characteristics, as much as possible. (Neryala and Wimal 40)

Sarathchandra’s researches on Traditional Sinhala Theatre, ( The folk drama of Ceylon) enhanced his drama productions. His productions were also influenced by Nadagama traditions and by the visit to India and Japan. He presented the Theatre form for Sinhala people through his drama “*Maname*”. Sinhala artists of the later periods except for a few seemed to be influenced by the *Maname* drama. Consequently, several dramas are being staged like *maname* drama, which had drawn its theme from Kolam stage and its form from Nadagama. Further Sarathchandra had been identified as a person who had transformed a complex human conflict, on stage very realistically. He went beyond Jathaka stories and gave a new interpretation to them. Sarathchandra handled *Maname* from the perspective of a marriage while he perceived “*Sinhabahu*” drama from a family angle.

Sarathchandra obtained the forms of his dramas from the traditional Sinhala stage. He utilized poetic lyrics and music for his dramas. In the drama “*papathy*” (Bicycle) he wrote the dialogue in a colloquial language. It is notable that the literary critic Rathnapala de Silva had said that Ediriweera Sarathchandra is considered a

great drama artist because he had produced dramas which demonstrated the cultures of this country to the world. (James 227)

Another personality of Sinhala drama is Dhamma Jagoda. Jagoda, who lived up to his 47<sup>th</sup> year, had been identified as a person who had many achievements to his credit in Sinhala stage. He possessed a multi – faceted personality. He was a celebrated figure in many fields like, stage artist, writer, director, trainer, consultant, course director , organizer, Singer, Drama “bera” player, Radio artist, TV Journalist and Director. (Neryala and Wimal 40)

In addition, while the Drama Productions widespread, theatre trainings were also undertaken parallel to it. Dhamma Jagoda had a good awareness of the importance of training. He had provided the training through the organization called “ *Kala Kendra Ranga Silpa Sarasikawa*”, for 10 years. He invited popular Drama Artists and gave them intensive training. This training course helped the growth of the Sinhala theatre very much. Dhamma Jagoda is seen as a person who re-enacted the popular Dramas of Sarathchandra. This gave an opportunity of enjoying the dramas like Maname again, to the audience. He was also the person who created Sinhala TV tradition. He had served as the first Director of the Drama Unit of the Rupavahini TV Corporation. His first TV serial was “ Palingu Manike”. He had made a significant contribution towards the growth of Sinhala Stage Dramas and TV dramas. Another notable figure among the Sinhala Drama personalities is S.Karunarathna. His main task related to drama involved translating, the dramas from foreign languages into Sinhala. This paved the way to learn about various Drama Traditions. Such tasks of translating and adopting dramas were very widespread in Sri Lanka then. Not only S. Karunarathne, but also Professor Sunantha Mahendra produced translated Dramas. Another characteristic of most of the Sinhala Drama

artists is their practice of participation in State Drama Festivals. This opened the way for the production of high caliber Dramas. (Neryala and Wimal 59)

As the Modern Sinhala Drama presentation was wide-spread, they gave the momentum or the encouragement to emerging artists. For example, a Sinhala Drama artist, Dayanantha Goonawardene, says that the inspiration he got from seeing Professor Ediriweer Sarathchandra was the reason which made him produce the drama, “Swarnathilaka”. Hence, we could say that the familiarity with dramas helps the growth of Dramas. The pioneer of the revival of Sinhala Children’s Theatre is Chandrasena Dasanayake. While developing the knowledge of Children he is also engaged in Political theatre. His play called “Ran Kantha” (Golden Mountain) was a drama against Sinhala Language struggle. This drama was banned by the Government. When this ban was proclaimed, the artists rallied together to express their opposition to it. Editorials were written with regard to this ban. It was a notable aspect that the theatre artistes and the society rallied together in voicing out their opposition to the ban on a drama, which is a media for expressing opinion.

Another distinguished personality of the Sinhala Theatre is Henry Jayasena. He had gained popularity as an actor, play writer and a director. His Drama ‘Janelaya’ (Window) is noted as a drama that expanded the horizons of Sinhala Drama. Another play of Henri Jayasena “Kuvani” is identified as a drama which moved forward the Art of Sinhala Drama. His Drama, “*Mana Ranjana Vada Varjana*” ( the Strike that won the heart) had striking as its theme while his “Thavath Uthasana” (Another Dawn) had poverty and rural life as its theme. Thus, it can be said that the Sinhala theatre produced Dramas with a wide spectrum of themes. Sarathchandra produced dramas adopting Brekedt’s dramas in a way to suit Sinhala theatre. Henry Jayasena was not in favour of adopting Brekedt’s dramas as they are. We see that both Henry

Jayasena and Ediriweera Sarathchandra were not in favour of following the Western Darama traditions in their original forms. Henry Jayasena is identified as a personality, who brought the conflicts prevailing in the society to the attention of the people; one who provided good lyrics to the Sinhala Drama Literature, one who showed that anything that could not be done by dialogue could be done with lyrics and music, and one who produced self-creations, translated plays and adopted plays.

Professor Ediriweera Sarathchandra later worked independent of the European (Austrian) Artist, Newman Jeepal. But, Dayanantha Gunawardene remembers the union with Newman Jeepal with gratitude. Newman Jeepal was the source behind the flourishing of the Drama-career of Dayanantha Gunawaardene. He had produced dramas such as Swarnathileka, Parassaya, Nari bana, Amathy paddam, Cambare pora, Pinkuththara, Bak maha akkunu, Jasayalaha lencina, Jeevana Vanchava hevath kibi kata, Pathmawathy, Gajaman puvatha, Pangu Nadagama, Anantha Javanika, and Mathura Javanika. Despite having a relationship with Newman Jeepal, DayananthaGunawardene gave more importance to local drama traditions over western drama traditions. Particularly, he seemed to have followed the style of Maname. His Artistic journey came to a conclusion, right on the stage, he loved, breathing his last, just after his last stage call.

A notable figure in the personalities of Sinhala Theatre is Gunasena Galappathi. He carried forward his drama activities through undertaking research and search for information on theatre trends. Galappathi is also one of the persons who provided training to drama artists. Several drama artists who were popular in the 1960s were trained by him. He is found to be a follower of Sarathchandra's style. Sugathapala de Silva deviated from Sarathchandra's style and adopted the Western Realistic Drama form. He is celebrated as the person who had “ transformed the

Sinhala Realistic Theatre into an Art Media searching for Social reality”. The creation of his ‘ *Boardingkarayo* ’(Boarders) is said to have heralded the dawn of the realistic theatre.

R.R.Samarakone produced self-created dramas. It is notable that his ‘Kelani Palama’ had been credited as having the characteristics that could be comparable to Sinhabahu Drama by A.J.Gunawardene. Having been influenced by Western theatrical ideologies, all the above mentioned artistes gave importance to modern theatrical approaches in Sri Lanka which paved way for the productions of translated dramas, adopted Dramas, self-created dramas and modified traditional plays on a wide scale. All the artists had been united and participated in each other’s drama, thereby contributing to the development of Sri Lankan theatre. Besides, a trend of healthy criticism also added to the growth of Sri Lankan theatre. In this theatre, realistic drama types and Sarathchandra’s style were followed. (Neryala and Wimal 78)

### **Modern Tamil theatre:**

“It is time that someone should do a detailed study on the theatre history of Tamils of Sri Lanka” (Shanmugalingam 63). There is not much evidence to know or study about the history of Sri Lankan Tamil theatre. Besides, even the information available was not utilized properly to establish truth. . Whatsoever, it can be presumed as to how the theatre was in ancient days, on the basis of our present day ceremonies, traditional theatres etc.

The changes took place in the country due to foreign occupation and the English Education also affected the Traditional Theatre. The effects can be divided into three:

1. 'Parsi Tradition' occurred with the combination of local types
2. Using '*Koothu*' for preaching Christianity
3. Introduction of dialogue type drama

The Catholic mode of '*Koothu*' was introduced, comprising many techniques of '*Koothu*' to preach the religion of Catholic. If such *koothu* had not existed, there would not have been much evidence to trace and make research on the form of Tamil *Koothu*. Dancing played a limited role in Catholic *Koothu* since it was spun around depicting mainly God, and having the feeling of tragedy throughout the *Koothu*. Yet, in some parts of Jaffna and Batticaloa the part of dancing is not reduced, it is still in the same scale. At Vaddukkoddai Kanapathy Iyer wrote "*Markandan Nadagam*" and "*Bala Beeman Nadagam*." If the date of the scripts are to be calculated, the demise of the playwright has to be taken into consideration. He passed away in 1803, hence the conclusion can be made that the scripts were written much earlier than that year.

Similarly, if the forms of *Koothu* in India are examined, there too they were based on storytelling, and there were 'doing' rather than acting. A drama form called "*Vilasam*" was introduced in Tamil Nadu in the latter part of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Sri Lanka. In this form a characteristic of '*Kathakali*' was found. The performing space was round and the costume was *Karappu* (Costume) black in colour. (Chornalingam 04) In 1859, Muthaliyar Kumarasingam wrote the drama "*Pathi Virathai*", and it was staged in Tellippalai. One can come across the names such as the "*Iranyan Drama*", "*Arichandra Vilasam*", "*Thamayanthi*



*Vilasam*”, “*Erothu Drama*”, and “*Rama Nadagam*”, in a notice Arumuganavalar issued in 1872. (Sackalingam 55).

The Jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated throughout Sri Lanka in 1887 in a grand scale. The two dramas “*Varthaga Drama*” and “*Arichandra Vilasam*” were staged in the open space (muththa veli) of Jaffna on this occasion. Both of these were performed in the form of either ‘*Koothu*’ or ‘*Vilasam*’.

In 1896, for the first time in Jaffna the dramas were staged in tents, made solely for the purpose of staging. Screens and curtains were also introduced. The forms of drama took a change from ‘*koothu*’ and ‘*vilasam*’ to ‘Parsi stage performance’. Later the drama companies from South India directed the dramas. In 1900, “*Sarangathara*” was staged by the companies in Jaffna. The dramas continued to be in this form. Thereafter “*Naddukkoothu*’ and ‘*TentKoothu*’ won the heart of the people. They appreciated the dancing and singing of the actors. But the dancing and singing were reduced in the later days and dialogues played a vital role. In 1911, many dramas were staged in Colombo, through “*Suguna Vilasa Sabai*”, which was formed by Muthaliyar Sampantham. The dramas such as “*Leelawathy and Sulochana*” (Two sisters), “*Manohara*” were presented for the people by the organization. ‘Parsi Theatre’ absorbed and copied the techniques of the stage of the western world, such as ‘Proscenium Theatre’, ‘side wing’, curtain, as well as using Harmonium for singing in local style and using stories of myth. Muthaliyar Sampantham was influenced by the Western world and resorted to dialogue style in his drama. Since the learned men involved in the field of drama by writing the scripts and staging them, the mentality of the people despising dramas started to change. (Sackalingam 14)

In 1891, Professor P. Suntharampillai wrote a drama adopting an English drama, and became precedent to Muthaliyar Sampantham. In 1897, K. Sooriyanarayana sasthri wrote a book titled '*Nadakaviyal*', dealing with the aspects of drama. Thus, the learned men entering the field of drama made a drastic change in it. In the wake of this influence and change in the South Indian drama field, there was a trend arising among Tamils to produce drama on their own.

The tendency to produce drama could be divided into two groups:

1. Professional Theatre Group
2. Amateur Theatre Group

“The competition between these two groups was the cause for not only theatre arts, but also literary art” (Sockalingam 16). Whereas the mode of acting was dancing and singing in 'Koothu' and singing in Musical – drama, dialogue drama of Muthaliyar contained acting and facial expressions of the actors as well as conversation symmetrical to them. Though there was much influence of South Indian drama on Sri Lankan theatre, in the long run it found its own mode of presentation. a good example for it is 'Markandayan Drama' of Muthaliyar Sampantham. Since the original script of 'Markandayan Drama' contradicted with the story of '*Kantha Puranam*', Saraswathy Vilasa Sabai' rewrote the script on its own and staged it. The Sugirtha Vilasa Sabai' of Batticaloa too, took the same path.

In 1926, Vipulanantha Adikal wrote a book named '*Mathanga Choolamani*'. This book depicted the tradition of drama very clearly. In 1931, the drama "*kalidas*" was staged in South India for the first time. From this time onwards, dramas were presented, combining both the cinema techniques and methods. Later Dialogue – Dramas tinted with revolutionary thoughts written by Annathurai and Karunanithy came to the stages. Many dramas emerged with the influence of Dialogue- Drama and

cinema, in Sri Lanka too. Dramas were written, adapting the dramas produced by the western writers such as Shakespeare, Shaw, Ibsen and Chekhov. In the period of 1940-50, there were dramas by such as Prof. Franxis, Prof. Kanapathipillai and M. Ramalingam. These dramas were written on their own completely different from the qualities of cinema. The themes of the dramas of Prof. Kanapathipillai were against colonialism, caste system and such reactionary attitudes prevailing in the society. Not only that, Prof. Kanapathipillai was to be commended for the first to use Sri Lankan colloquial language instead of Indian colloquial conversation. This type of dramas paved a new path in the domain of drama.

In the context of post independence, in Sri Lanka nationalism gained prominence. Thus all nationalists had awareness regarding their culture and tradition and started to uphold them. In, 1952, the government of Sri Lanka established a society named 'The society of Art of Sri Lanka.' It started to work in full swing from 1957. Prof. Kanapathipillai as the president of the section of drama of this society made a big contribution to resuscitating the different types of '*Naaddu Koothu*'. He was a resuscitator of forms of '*koothu*' by introducing new techniques to them.

Those changes introduced by him can be listed as below:

- The performance time of drama from dusk to dawn was reduced to the minimum of convenient time for the people for two to three hours.
- Modern lighting technique was introduced.
- New technique of stage was introduced.
- The '*koothu*' was changed to the manner that it could be acceptable to the time it was staged.
- Made the scripts in '*olai*' (Palm leaf) to be available in print.

➤ ‘*Annaviyar*’ the main persons who directed the dramas were given due respect.

Prof. Vidyananthan, in his endeavor to resuscitate ‘Koothu’, encountered so many problems with South Indian dramas infiltrating Sri Lanka,.

The problems are such:

1. Such as History, society and culture of Sri Lanka were not at all highlighted.
2. The characteristics of dramas were lost since South Indian dramas were copied.
3. The Sri Lankan drama writers lost chance to write dramas. (Sokalingam 159)

The drama competition held by The Society of Art of Sri Lanka’ inspired the drama writers to produce new dramas. Lots of different types of dramas was produced. Historic Dramas were produced by Sokkan, and Shanmugasundaram, Poetic Dramas were produced by Murukaiyan, Mahakavi and Devan.. The people such as Chembiyan Selvan, Yalini and ATP wrote one act plays, literary dramas were written by Sokan and A. T. Ponnudurai and Navalayur S. Nadarajah was good at translating plays, Sivanesan was famous for adapting dramas, Musical dramas too were also produced on this inspiration. In this period Radio Dramas got popularity. Radio Dramas highlighted the social problems and traditional aspects. At the same time these Radio Dramas were staged on stages like other dramas. Besides, Due to the influence of the Sinhala drama ‘maname’ the process of drama took a turn towards experimental basis of new types in Sri Lanka. Another significant development that took place was the exposure to the Western dramas and training. One could find new introductions to the venture of direction of English Drama of Earnest Macantyre. Likewise, the artists in places such as Colombo and Peradeniya had a rare chance to participate in the Western type of training held on the subject of acting and direction

by Ashley Halpey. At the same time these artists developed the skill to make new forms of drama, as they had the opportunity to watch Sinhala and Western dramas.

Another remarkable development was that the introduction of music drama had started to influence the Tamil theatre. In 1969, A. Thasiyas laid a foundation for a new type of theatre by staging the musical- drama 'Kodai' written by Mahakavi. Following this phenomenon people like Suhar Hameed and N. Sundaralingam directed dramas of playwrights such as Ambi and Murugaiyan. In 1977, Mounaguru modified and directed the poetic drama 'Puthiyathoru Veedu' (A New House), utilizing the forms of 'Koothu.' Similarly, he wrote and directed the dramas such as 'Sangkaram' and 'Porkkalam'. The newly introduced aspects of drama are as follows: (Sackalingam 227)

- Using '*Naaddu Koothu*' tunes in new dramas
- Symbolic stage setting
- Singers and characters were made visible to the audience
- The conversation of narrators
- Bringing in lots of matters to the stage by miming

What Kuzhanthai M. Shanmugalingam says about the classification of the characteristics of the Sri Lankan dramas in the period of 1950-1960 and 1960 -1970 has been given below from his book titled "*Naadaga Vazhakku*": Give the page number?????

### **1950 – 1960**

1. The youngsters made their drama influenced by the movies they watched
2. They staged dramas of their own with improvisation and using colloquial language to make people attracted towards drama

3. The learned writers wrote and staged their dramas based on the social problems which have a great impact on the society
4. The dramas were made giving prominence to Nationalism by combining the doctrine of Tamil Arasu Party
5. They took a stand with the Communist party and made dramas based on many different subjects such as caste system, feminism, equality, nationalism etc.
6. The drama scripts of 'Indian Madyathara Saba' were made into dramas
7. The dramas of Dravidian Munnetrak kazhakam (DMK) which focused on reforms of society were staged.
- 8.

### **1960 – 1970**

1. There were changes in the form, content, performance and thoughts
2. The social and theatre framework advanced to a next stage absorbing the available present social and theatre framework
3. These artists who belong to this period hailed from and with different experiences and background
4. The main aspect dominated them was communist ideology
5. That period had a good foundation
6. The dramas were made, depicting the present day problems, by using the traditional forms, at the same time, traditional techniques were used in modern dramas
7. The stages were arranged in the style of Modi
8. Foreign dramas were translated and staged

**After 1980**, most of the dramas was found vented with nationalist feeling as their prime theme. The war has started by this time. Deaths and losses were frequent events

of those days. The setting of the country changed the situation for staging performance. The habit of staging dramas in school was instigated by the war. The law of emergency was imposed due to the tense situation of the war. Only 12 hours mobility was permitted in areas where battles were being waged, since the nights were not available either for staging or practicing dramas. Different types of theatre emerged since the need arose for them. (Sackalingam)

New types of theatre such as street drama, revolutionary theatre, theatre work in displacement period, applied theatre and therapeutic theatre that gave priority to then needs were produced in order to suit the situation that prevailed during the conflict. The processes of present Tamil Dramas have many bases. Of which most important is the process of producing dramas, giving prominence to social problems.

The social problems are mainly:

1. The never ending problems of the society such as caste system, dowry system, and poverty.
2. Social problems which arose due to the war

*Example:*

- Migration and its related problems thereafter
- Loss of family members and its consequences
- Loss of houses, properties, land etc. and related problems arose due to that
- Mental depression and trauma caused by war and displacement
- Problems due to economic constraints and missing persons
- Suicides
- Addiction to drugs

- Murders
- Thefts and looting

3. War and Theatre performance Plays were staged even during the war since they were a useful tool to convey messages. The performance of plays during the conflict significantly differed from those produced and performed in the post war period. The main themes of the dramas of the battle period were woven around above mentioned-issues in order to highlight the challenges people went through during that time. Based on these themes, they can be classified into three periods:

- A. The period of war under the control of the security forces
- B. The period of war without the control of the security forces
- C. post war period

The subjects related to the struggle:

This type of dramas brought out the problems during the struggle and served as a propaganda for getting people involved in the struggle, reflecting the attitude of people and the existing situation; the themes of the street dramas became very popular then. In fact, since the drama are closely linked to the effects of the war and the results of it, they were known as social based or the social needs based theatre. Hence, the theatre of this period could be analyzed on a need basis. Now the theatre is considered on the basis of artists who produced plays for the Tamil Theatre. Sundaralingam, Thasiyas, Murukaiyan and Maha kavi Uriththiramoorthy were well-known for writing dramas and directing them. Among them Murukaiyan and Mahakavi produced good scripts. Sundaralingam and Tarcisius were noted for their



direction rather than for their scripts. Tarcisius is a very good trainer. In short, these are the people who introduced modern theatre to Sri Lankan Tamils

The other artists, Shanmugalingam and Mounaguru are still in the drama field contributing to it. Shanmugalingam not only portrayed the facts of the life of the Tamils periodically by his scripts, but also made a new tradition to the theatre.

Mounaguru used '*Koothu*' method in his dramas and created a new trend by blending traditional and modern theatrical techniques together. He is still an active artist in the field of theatre. Among the next generation of artistes, Sithamparanathan and Jeashankar played a vital role. Sithamparanathan helped to display very powerful performances. He added more dancing and singing to it. Moreover, he used theatre as a tool to find a way to identify and solve the social problems. This is called applied theatre. Jaishankar motivate the '*Koothu*' on their respective areas in their own manner/ as they are. But he used applied theatre which handled the social problems.

When the changes which the modern theatre underwent, the type and contents of the modern drama process were immensely affected. In fact, what is called 'modern theatre' started with the influence of the West. The Parsi, which introduced music drama contains the blend of traditional and Eastern theatrical elements, it can, therefore, be regarded as the beginning of modern drama. Music drama followed a very rigid system in all theatrical aspects. stage system; Dialogue theatre superseded dancing and singing theatre. Dramas on translation and drama on adaptation produced an impact on the process of drama. Another influence was that Western drama techniques infiltrated into Tamil drama. Besides, the Diploma Course on drama which was held in 1978 served as a basis for the emergence of new forms of modern drama, training system, and studies in Tamil theatre. It can be said that with the introduction of this study programme, the Tamil Drama took a new turn. The

internal war too brought about changes and effects on the form and theme of drama that was amateur. (Amateur Professionals).

The militant struggle, its consequences and other related issues were the main themes of war time theatre. At that time there were a lot of symbolic dramas on the stage. The main reason for that was to allude political aspects. The tense situation of wartime demanded the artistes to stage only the dramas based on literary works and drama on translation or old dramas. This situation prevailed long even after the war ended. However, the present day political changes give importance to the freedom of speech, and this conducive setting may potentially encourage the emergence of new dramas. When the Sri Lankan Tamils theatre is examined, it reveals that there existed a traditional ritualistic theatre. It had many common aspects with the Indian traditional theatre. The advent of Buddhism in Ceylon brought about a drastic changes in the theatre. Drama was perceived as a 'taboo art form' by Buddhist monks who were the chief writers then. This art form intertwined with folk religions was initially ignored because of this attitude of the authors (Brandon 225). This traditional form, however, continued to survive because of the influence of folk religions despite the above challenge. The traditional theatre of Sri Lanka first time went through great changes after the arrival of Westerners. Portuguese who invaded Ceylon first strictly prohibited the native religious practices. This resulted in lack of development in traditional art form which was closely linked to religious worship. (Sackalingam 30) Later the traditional theatre form began to flourish with the arrival of British missionary, which attempted to promote Christianity with which the theatre form was also associated. The concept of the modern theatre began to emerge with the advent of Parsi theatre from India in 1880s. Parsi theatre was primarily staged for commercial and entertainment purposes in Ceylon. Some came back to the island after having

completed their education particularly art and theatre in the West. As a result, intuitions for practising art forms were set up in the island. Some Sri Lankans have now practiced here what they learnt in the West. One of the consequent changes was that an attempt was made to incorporate Western elements into the traditional folk forms, Especially this change took place in the traditional theatre. Later these art forms which had been mingled with traditional and modern elements so far became a study programme. They were also included in the curriculum of the universities in the island. Now in Sri Lanka University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Eastern University, Batticalo, Vipulanantha Institute, Batticalo, University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo and University of Jaffna. This research was done, involving the students of Jaffna University.

**Appendix - B**  
**Anecdotal Participatory Observation Record for Play  
Production**

Name and year :

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Unit :

.....

Observer : Mr. K.Rathitharan

Project : Actor training in cultural context: based on Srilankan Tamil theatre

Play Production: *NinaivinKanavu*( The dream of Consciousness)

**Observations of Rehearsal and Play Production**

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**Comments / Summary**

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## Appendix - C

### **Anecdotal Observation Record**

Unit :

.....  
.....

Date and Time:

.....

Observer : Mr. K.Rathitharan

Project : Actor training in cultural context: based on Srilankan Tamil theatre

Expression                      Name      Name      Name      Name      Name      Name

Facial expression (FE)						
Emotion of actors & characters (EAC)						
Originality of Expression (OE)						
Gesture, Posture, and Movement (GPM)						
Imagination and Improvisation (II)						
Cultural Restriction (CR)						

## **Appendix- D**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide**

**Batch (Year):**

**Note taker/facilitator:** Mr. Rathitharan

**Research title** : Actor training in cultural context: based on Sri Lankan Tamil theatre.

*Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to hear your valuable opinion on how we can create new acting method to retain a strong theatre practice with cultural context.*

1. Let's start the discussion by talking about what makes our practice, rehearsal and production to improve the skill and knowledge. What are some of the positive aspects of doing practical at classroom and rehearsal?
2. What are some things that aren't appropriate in our previous acting practical work?
3. Would you specify some of the problems that you confronted with our acting practical? Would you describe those? What suggestion do you have to improve this situation?
4. Did you feel something in acting practice is not incorporated with our cultural nature?
5. Would you explain about stage fright? How did you face in acting practice? Did you overcome from that? Was it any useful the techniques you learned to overcome the fear?
6. Is there any problem with shyness when you were taking a role or doing acting exercises? How was it disrupted or how did you control or get over?
7. Is which acting method more appropriate, whether the Tamil traditional theatre method or western theatre method? Or both? Why?
8. Did you get any hindrances to act with male participant or female participant? Is this problematic to act a local play or translated western play?
9. What are the overall opinion about our practical work and suggest your valuable ideas or any solutions to the problems which already discussed.
10. Do you like to ask anything related to the practice or research work? Please don't hesitate to ask any doubts.

*That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. We have a empty paper that we would like you to write out if you time. If you have additional information that you did not get to say in the focus group, please feel free to write it on the empty sheet.*

## **Appendix - E**

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### ***Actor Training in Cultural Context: based on Sri Lankan Tamil Theatre***

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet herself / himself

***(Please mark as “X” in the correct one)***

1. I have fully read the information sheet about the actor training research.

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

(Please keep a copy of information sheet about the actor training study)

2. I have had an opportunity to discuss this study and ask questions

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

3. I have has satisfactory answers to all my questions

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

4. I received enough information about the study

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

5. Mr....K.RATHITHARAN.....

.....

Explained about the study to me.

6. I understand that we are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reason for my withdrawal and this research will not affect my future studies.

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

7. I understand that the information collected by the researcher may be subjected to further the analysis and that the personal details will be treated as strictly confidential. I gave my permission for the study investigator to have access the data

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

8. I had sufficient time to make my decision

☐☐

**YES**

**NO**

9. I agree to take part in this study

**YES**

☐

**NO**

☐

Name of student (**BLOCK CAPITALS**)

.....  
.....

Signature: .....

Date :

.....

### **INVESTIGATOR**

I have clearly explained about the research to the student who has come forward to participate in the research. He/she has given me his/her consent to participate in it.

Name (**BLOCK CAPITALS**) : KATHIRESU RATHITHARAN

.....  
.....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

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***For office use only***

Serial No :

.....  
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## **Appendix - F**

### **Actor Training in Cultural Context: based on Srilankan Tamil Theatre.**

From time to time Sri Lankan Tamil theatre has been subjected to many changes. The major cultures change among them took place after colonization. Indigenous dramatic forms were suppressed during this time and also some forms which they found favorable for their own purpose were made use of. At the same time traditional *kooththu* forms were performed in temples and villages. Colonial dramatic forms influenced the traditional dramatic forms resulting in so many adaptations thereof. Western approaches and education paved the way for modern theatrical trend in Sri Lanka.

Western method of practice and theories caused many problems relating to culture. The obstacles faced when western training method is adopted for the training of university drama students emerge owing to our cultural condition. This research will enable us to evolve solution to these problems by inventing a new methodology for training.

In this research, you have been selected for the participation of acting practice. Therefore, after reading and clearly understanding the following detail, please make your own decision independently as to your participation in the research.

#### **1. Purpose of the Study:**

I am doing this research in order to identify cultural constraints found in practical of drama and theatre arts students.

#### **2. Voluntary Participant**

Though you have been selected, your participation should be of your own accord. You have all the rights either to participate in it or withdraw from this while participating. Your doing so will not affect your continuity of the studies in future.

### **3. What will happen if you decide to participate**

If you decide to participate in it, you must express your willingness by filling the form attached hereto you have all the rights to without row from this even after your conformation of this participation. The obstacles faced by you while participating in it will be identified and solutions to such problems also will be evolved. After words, changes occurring in their ability to express will be observed and data on the same will be collected. I conformed that the data collected by observation will be kept as confidential.

### **4. Benefits of Participation**

It is expected that the solutions that we will drive from this research will enable you to develop acting skills and theoretical knowledge. It gives you an opportunity to become an actor and director in future.

### **5. Discomforts of Participants**

There will not be any inconvenience caused by our research work. Your spare time alone will be made use of for play producing activities. We will make sure that occupation of your time in our work will not encroach on your mainstream studies.

### **6. Confidentiality**

I conform that the information collected during your participation will be treated as confidential. I will not disclose to anyone any information containing your name and identify that is, everything about to will remain anonymous. You will be allowed to discuss and to have access to all the data collected from you.

### **7. Termination of Study Participation**

You can withdraw at any time your consent you give us in this regard. This will not affect continuity of your study. In case you decide to terminate this agreement, please inform me without any hesitation of your decision as soon as

### **8. Clarification**

Mr K.Rathitharan

**Appendix - G**

**Performance Text**

**Improvised Notes for Performance/Performers**

***“Ninaivin Kanavu”***

***நினைவின் கனவு***

**(The Dream of Consciousness)**

**(Tamil Performance Text, translated into English)**

**Mr. K. Rathitharan (Facilitator/Director of the Performance/Play)  
and students of Drama and Theatre Arts**

## **Content of the Events**

Lighting of Traditional lamp

Directors Address

Jester's entry

Baboon entry

Chorus song

Chorus story

Introduction of all Roles

Funeral house

Jester's dialogue

### **House Scene 1**

Father's Entry

De – licing

Getting Watcher work

Jester's dialogue

Chorus – wage not enough

### **House Scene II**

daughter - daughter in law

daughter – mother III

Father – mother

Mother –daughter

Chorus –demining work

Change of house – Dance

New House

House warming

Son going to work

Fighting through phone

jester's entry

Land mine – dance

Chorus – Friend dying

Coming of Son's Friend

Son – dialogue

Son – Friend

Chorus and Night Scene

Night Mother's Recalling her past event

Jaman's entry

chorus Jaman

Approach I VII

Approach II VIII

Approach III IX

Approach IV X

### **Performance starts**

- \* Lighting of Traditional Lamp.
- \* Director's discourse about drama.
- \* Jester entering
- \* Discussion between director and baboon

Jester calling his friend baboon

J : - Come Arun

J : We will take part in the drama, and commonly talk about things connected with this drama&out of the way of this drama, here and there during the course of the drama. I am the Jester ,he is the baboon

Ok , shall be start the drama ?

Chorus :Yes ...Yes

Baboon : Ok . We will go out and watch this performance.

Choir (Chorus ) : Raising “Aum .....” sound/6 times

Soft dance movement.

Sudden turning of head.

Again soft dance movement.

Turning of head.

Singing softly, the inaugural song of the drama starts

(Very softly)

“Please come.

Come ...come ...you can watch the drama (2)

Come ...come ...you can watch the drama(raised )

Come ...come ...you can watch the drama(lowered )

C..o..m..e – (2) “

Following dialogues are rendered by chorus

- 1). A suburban village by the side of the Town
- 2). In that suburban village
- 3). There lived a family.
- 4).that family had a big problem.
- 5). Head of that family is dead.
- 6). That family did not know what to do.
- 7). No body knows what will happen to that family.
- 8). Those children were in deep sorrow.
- 9). We will perform that scene and watch it.

Chorus: Kayanthan come.

Kayanthan: I am that father.

I am going to play the role of the dead person.Sometimes I may come to  
the stage and converse in the dead person's role.

Chorus: Kayanthan here is the garland.

Chorus: Kisanthi..... Please come

Kisanthi: Yes, I am that mother.

Chorus: Come Vakeesan.

Vakeesan : I am the elder son of that family. I have three younger sisters in this drama.

Anitha: I am the eldest daughter.

Pakeenthiran: I am the eldest son-in- law.

Sankeerthana: I am the second daughter.

Chorus: Where is the youngest daughter?

Chorus: There, she is coming.

Chorus: everyone here?

Family: yes...yes.

### **Scene I**

Father wears sand adjusting the garland and lying into a coffin.

Iyer (cremation ritual by a pugari) comes and performs the religious rites. Others are coming to the funeral house.

Chorus: singing the Chunnappaddu (Funeral song.)

“How has such a strong tree fallen down”

Mother: He was shouldering the responsibilities of our family. Now, I have taken over that responsibility. He is dead now. Although he is dead, he will guide me.

Chorus: singing the Chunnappaddu (Funeral song.)

“how has the unceasing sea has stilled”

Son : I am unable to bear the loss of my father. I have three sisters. Appa was responsible for our family. He was bed ridden for a long time. We always



expected that he will recover from his illness. I wasting my time here and there, drank a lot, spent unnecessarily and I was an extravagane. Now I have to look after this family. As my father had died the whole responsibility has fallen on my head. Now I had to find some work.

Chorus: singing the Chunnappaddu (Funeral song.)

“how is this singing cuckoo has fallen dried and silent.”

Son –in –law: Uncle is a very good man. He did farming first. Because of the drought and losses suffered continuously he went to mason work and used stay at the workplace for a long time. I am a clerk in the kachcheri. All these uncle and I looked after this family. Without uncle, it will be much difficult for the family. They will also talk.

( All three children come and stay in a straight line)

Eldest daughter: We were displaced. While being displaced father bought this land and house cheaply. As I am the eldest daughter, he gave it to me as dowry. The land behind was not written to anybody. Bank loans were taken for my wedding. The death of my father is unbearable to me.

2<sup>nd</sup> daughter: Father is no more. Brother is unemployed. I am highly worried about the situation of the family.

3<sup>rd</sup> daughter: He toiled hard to bring us up.... If he is no more then....(Crying)....(Taking her sister away)

Chorus : singing the Chunnappaddu (Funeral song.)

( How has such a strong tree fallen down)

Some mourner: Usually the ‘thali kodi’ is plced at this place during funeral. But she has no ‘thali ‘kodi’ now.Hid wife had told me that the ‘thali kodi’ was sold to meet the expenditure of the wedding of the eldest

daughter..now they have no 'Thali',...  
scene. ....now we can lift the body.

so we cannot enact that

(Singing funeral song, holding the torch, paying floral tributes, lifting gently the body and placing it in the funeral pyre, carrying it away, sending off the iyer and crying silently.)

Chorus: (Adornment song) Mother character comes with much sorrow.

Why has the ground medicine gone waste...

Why has the dissolved medicine gone powerless

I could have run to you, but I don't know the lane...

I could have flown to you, but I don't know where the gate is..

Mother: when he was alive we had no suffering. He face all difficulties. He will  
always say not to worry about anything. He will say, not to worry  
about anything. ...about anything.

Father: Don't worry about anything . Ask our son to find some work. Get a rented  
house and go there. Talk with the people abroad. When I died they sent  
money. Look after the children well. where is Nithya? (searching for  
her).

Mother: Nithya where are you... Nithya!

Nithya: (coming in looking at the phone and scratching her head)

Mother: Nithya where are you? why are scratching your head ...come ... I will  
pick some lice. ( picking lice)

Mother: There are more lice now.

Nithya: Yes mom. they are biting a lot.

Mother: If we pick some each day, they will decrease.

(Thinking)

(father comes and stand near)

( Daughter looking at mother - father going away.)

Nithya : what do we have for dinner mom?

Mother: why daughter, its rice and curry.

Nithya: Rice Mother ?

Mother: Why darling, what do you want?

Nithya; Mom, can you make some string hoppers?

Mother: Ok ! I will make them. ... why the way, how are your studies going?  
father is not here. you will have to study and come to a good position.

Nithya: I will study mommy.

Mother: ( pick some lice and giving it to Nithya).

Nithya: ( Keeping the lice without killing it . getting the second lice)

Mother: Why are you keeping them?

kill them.

Stay still.

Come here...

wait for some time

Nithya : (puts the lice on the floor and watch them moving. Then take a photo of them)

Mother: ( picking lice for some time and then gets up)

hey! why are just looking at them...just kill them

Gather the lice and killing them)

Nithya: No Mommy don't kill them.

Mother: Leave me...to kill them.

One from the chorus place the chair in another place.

( 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter speaking on the phone. Eldest daughter folding clothes.Son lying on the bed.mother sitting on the floor near the bed. Youngest daughter sitting on on one side of the bed with phone.)

Eldest daughter Kausi: Selvi come and fold the clothes without sitting always with the phone.

Selvi : wait... I am coming( saying with anger)

Eldest daughter Kausi: wait mom. I will prepare some tea.

Friends: Siva...Siva.

Selvi: Anna.. Anna

Nithya : Anna somebody is calling you.

Selvi : Amma, that is the boy who used to drink with anna.

Mother: Thamby don't move with them.

Siva: Yes mom. sayanna is not in.

Nithya: (looking at him in an odd way)

Anna is not here. He has gone out.

Friends: O! not here....

Mother: Fathers 31<sup>st</sup> day also coming near... Loan letter also had come from the bank son.

Siva: Yes mother. I don't know what to do. If the loan recover comes, we can say about the death of the father and they will give some grace.

Mother: So, what are going do staying like this.why don't you try to get some work.

Siva: I am trying get some work .... why don't you try to talk to people abroad?

Mother: How can I trouble them so often. Alright, I will ask them and see.

Selvi: Anna shall I ask from him?

Mother: Yes daughter ask him.

Siva: No. don't ...go ..go

SIL Kugan: Kausi...kausi;;

Kausi: I am coming...

Kugan: has he not got any work still?

Kausi: No not yet...he is searching for some work.

Kugan : Ask him to go to at least to some small work.

Kausi: Don't shout. I will tell him.

Kugan: ask him to get it quickly

Nithya: ( speaking in the phone) ....Yes..yes... anna is here. I will give it to him.

Anna here..a call for you..

Siva: hello. how are you? ...I am ok. I am looking for a job....oh.... I see..Mother... he says there is a watcher work.

Mother: Its OK son...go to it for a while...

Siva: Night watcher..? oh! 600 rupees per night? Mother 600 rupees per night he says.

Mother: Its OK son... go to that work.

Siva: Ok.. I will come to work from tomorrow.

Kausi: What is matter anna?

Siva: Sister, there is a watcher work.

Kausi: Here...brother has got a watcher work.

Kugan: What is it?

Kausi: Brother has got a work.

Kugan: Good...good... ask him to go for that work ... it is very difficult to get work now.Don't refuse the offer you have got ... go for it.

Mother: You are also idling daughter .why don't you ask your husband...why don't you ask him to find some job for you?

Selvi: No mother... he don't like me going for work.

Mother: Don't say like that. You can't cope with the expenses if both of you don't work.

Enter Jester

Chorus:

1. Son starts going to work.
2. only 10 or days had passed.
3. Salary was not paid till but it is not enough.
4. Don't know how this family is going to cope up.

### Scene III

Mother: Give him the lunch packet.

Kausi: Anna, take your lunch packet.

Siva: Don't worry sister, I will eat from the shop.

Cause: No. takes this and go Anna.

Mother: Son, take it and go.

Siva: Not necessary ma , I am going.

Kugan: what is in your hand ...food packet?

Cause: I got the parcel, but he did not take it with him.

Kugan: (after watching in the direction of Siva and after some time) then take it inside.

Kugan: Kausi!

Kausi: what is it?

Kugan : He has got a job now. why don't you ask them to find another house?

Kausi: He has got the job only now ... he has not got even the first month's salary....however they are looking for a house.

Kugan: Your sister is always phoning that biscuit company fellow.

Kausi: she will be talking only business ...otherwise she is listening to songs.

Kugan: Niithya is also with the phone always... she does not seem to be studying.

Kausi: No. she goes to tuition and studying... even otherwise she is the one who can study well in our family.

Kugan: Then it is OK, anyhow tell him what I told you.

Kausi: Ma, Anna has got a job....why can't you find another house.

Mother: He has only started to go to work now... he has not taken salary also.  
..how to go all of a sudden?

Kausi: You know his type ... his salary also not enough.

Mother: His salary is enough only for his meals... he is looking for an additional job. when he get one we will go..

Kausi: No mother... If you are going I will help you with utensils, some rice and other kitchen stuff ... speak about this with anna.

Mother: Ok! I will talk to him.

Mother: by what Kausi say, it seems, we should go away. I don't know what to do if we had to go all of a sudden. If you are alive you will always say ... I will bring a solution... you will say not to worry about anything.....don't worry about anything...

Father: Don't worry for anything... speak to people abroad ...get money from them and the advance ...pay the rent from his salary ...Ok!

Mother: yes. ok...I will pay the advance and pay the rent from son's salary.  
(When the son comes in, he knocks against the son-in-law)

Mother: Selvi! make some tea for anna and give it to him.  
( Bringing of tea.)  
How is the work son?

Siva: Work is OK mom, but the salary is low.

Mother: It is clear from what your sister say, we will have to go out of the house soon.

Siva: We can't pay even the advance from my salary. I have asked for another work. It seems that I will get that job. We can go when I get it.

Selvi: Mom, anna has got a job now. Let's go to a new house. Brother in law is also seems to be irritated of our staying here.



Siva: No. we will wait for some time more patiently. Let me get the job. then we  
will see.

Selvi: Ok. anna.

Chorus: 1.He has got a new job  
2. Oh! That is a damning work  
3. Isn't it a work dangerous to life  
4. If he dies they will give one million.  
5.It will help greatly the lives of his sisters.  
6. It shows his broad mind.

( Changing from the old house to the new house.)

Mother: We will see you again daughter

Kausi: Ok Mom. Please call me if any problem arises. I will come .

All: Good bye then

Kugan: Good bye.

Chorus: 1. Mother, you said you want ask money from that distant uncle  
abroad.why don't you ask him.

2. Yes daughter, dial the number and give me.

3. Hello

4. Hello

5. Hello, I am kuramahal calling.

6. Hanging rope has come from Jaffna

7. What do they want ?

8. They would have asked for money
9. Say nobody is here
10. Her husband died recently. They are asking for money
11. say I am not here
12. Hello!.they are not here.

2. They sold the chain of the second daughter to pay the advance.
3. Advance 50,000 monthly rent 3,000
4. hope has come that a prosperous life could be led.
5. We can live prosperously(All say)

Dance – changing house

#### Scene IV

(unloading and organizing things)

Nithya: where can I charge the phone, Anna?

Siva: There look at the corner of the small room.

Selvi: (talking on phone)

We just came into the new house.

Neighbour: Sister!

Selvi: Somebody is calling at the door.

Neighbour: Sister I am coming from the neighbouring house. You have come newly to  
this house. I saw you in the neighbourhood. Our cow has

calved. So I brought some milk. you cook the milk. I will come later.

Mother: Why don't you sit for some time and go.

Neighbour: I left some thing on the hearth. I will come later.

Mother: Ok. Go now. but come later when you have time. Pillai cook this milk.

Neighbour: Yes...yes...

Mother: Drink some cooked milk

Siva: Mom... I will go now.

Mother: OK. Son.

(Selvi talking in a phone )

Selvi: I have no money in my phone. So I took a call in sister's phone.

Nithya: Why did you take my phone? give it to me.

Selvi: Why can't I take it?

Nithya: Don't take without asking me.

Selvi : Mom.. look here..

Enter Jester

Landmine dance.

Chorus: 1.Siva's friend was thinking about problems at home and he was unable  
concentrate on his work and because that he had died.

2. From the demining area Siva took the body to hospital and from there  
returned from there with his friend.

3. Loss of that boy had affected Siva's mind badly.

4. It is night time now.
5. His friend also came home.
6. His mother and sister are at home.
7. It is very silent everywhere.

### **Scene V**

( son and friend coming after demining work)

Mother: You are not alright... what happened?

Son: a boy working with us had died in a land mine explosion at the work site.

Mother: oh! god....

Selvi, Nithya: Don't go to that work again anna.

Son : (his mood changes.)

No Mom...its his mistake

he did the work carelessly.

He died because did the work in a wrong way.

Friend: why are hiding things to home people. Why don't you tell them the truth.

Son: No..No..we should not tell these things to them.

Friend: You also should be careful.

You also think about home at work.

Son: It does not matter what happens to me. one million Insurance money will come.

Friend: Don't talk like this....

If you want to earn there are several other jobs.

**Enters Jester.**

- Chorus:
1. ok! it is already night
  2. All had switched on the lights.
  3. All had had their dinner.
  4. Youngest daughter is studying .
  5. Second daughter had spoken in phone and had gone to sleep.
  6. Son also had gone to sleep.
  7. It's very dark now. It's almost mid night.
  8. In that house, that mother's husband used to come in her dreams and  
talk to her. Like that, son's dreams also started to be filled with  
sorrows now.
  9. In those sorrowful nights he will go right up to the brink of the death  
and come back.

**Scene VI**

- Mother: These things happen in the worksite of our son....I am afraid..
- Father: our youngest daughter is always busy saying... studies...studies.. It don't  
look right to me...pay some attention to her..
- Mother: Oh! Don't say like that...we believe our children... We arranged the  
marriage for the eldest....When Selvi started her affair, she  
revealed it first to us... youngest one Nithya will not do anything  
wrong....She is our pet...I fully well believe her..

**Enter Yaman**

Chorus: Yaman has started to come in his dreams reminding him of that dead boy.

**Enter Jester**

**Scene VII**

Approach I

Selvi: Hello!

I have no balance in my phone. so I took the call from sister's phone.

Nithya: Why did you take my phone? (Trying to wrenching)

Selvi: Can't you see? I am talking.

Nithya: Give me my phone

( two of them fighting)

Selvi: Mom...

Mother: What?... why are you fighting...?

Nithya: She had taken my phone...

Mother: Why did you take her phone?

Selvi: I took it because I have no balance in my phone.

Mother: she has taken because there is no balance in her phone.

Nithya: She don't need to take even if there is no balance in hers.

Selvi: look at her mother..

Mother: Never mind... come let's go..

Nithya after the fight come and speak in a lonely place. At that time Siva slowly come, hide behind and listen to the conversation. After some time he grab the phone and put it to his ears.

Chorus: what language .... what religion

What age ....what relationship

what discipline.....what culture

what mind... what conscience

what day ...what night

what...what

what's he

what... what

what's he

(Siva trying to throw the phone)

Chorus: Don't...Don't

No...No

chee...chee

Ah! ...Ah!

2. No brother don't do it.
3. you remove the sim and hide it
4. get the phone also
5. Don't do like that
6. Listen what I say

She was talking improperly with somebody.

Siva:           Ask her... she will not answer.

Mother: She was talking improperly on the phone with somebody..

Chorus 1. If you start receiving anonymous calls from new numbers like this then there will be problems.

3. Now you saw it happening in one way.

now.

## Scene VIII



Selvi: Hello!

I had no balance in my phone ....so I took the call from my sisters  
phone

Nithya: Why did you take my phone? ( wrenching)

Selvi: Can't you ...I am talking...

Nithya: Give me my phone.

( two of them fighting)

Selvi: Mom..

Mother: Why child?...why are you fighting?

Nithya: She had taken my phone.

Mother: Why did you take her phone...child?

Selvi: I had no balance in my phone ... so I took her phone

Mother: She had taken because there was no balance in her phone.

Nithya: Even if there balance she don't need to take my phone

Selvi: see mom ... how she is talking

Mother: Never mind it... come... let's go

( Nithya stand alone and talking into the phone ... Siva coming at that  
time.)

Siva: Mom...mom..!

Mother: What is it son?

Siva: If she continues to talk in phone likes her ears will go for a six.

Mother: Yes child... if you continue to talk with your girl friend like this ... what  
will her father and mother think of you ?they will think that you are  
talking continuously over the phone.

( All are walking here and there no body is taking notice of her)

Chorus: 1.Nobody saw this girl taking calls.

2. Nobody in the area also did not know.

3. but it is not known where this girl is going

4. she was not caught . she continues to go

5. you ..Nithya... you won't hear what we say

6. Don't behave like this ... please listen to us...

7. this child don't know that she will get Venereal Diseases by this

8. Nithya you are doing a wrong thing ... listen to us...

9. You are thinking this is wrong if it become known to others

10. I am telling you like God ... listen to me...

11. This happened in one way..... now see ... how it will be if it happens  
in a different way.

### **Approach 3**

#### **Scene IX**

Selvi: Hello!

I had no balance in my phone ....so I took the call from my sisters  
phone

Nithya: Why did you take my phone? ( wrenching)

Selvi: Can't you ...I am talking...

Nithya: Give me my phone.

( two of them fighting)

Selvi: Mom..

Mother: Why child?...why are you fighting?

Nithya: She had taken my phone.

Mother: Why did you take her phone...child?

Selvi: I had no balance in my phone ... so I took her phone

Mother: She had taken because there was no balance in her phone.

Nithya: Even if there balance she don't need to take my phone

Selvi: see mom ... how she is talking

Mother: Never mind it... come... let's go

( Nithya stand alone and talking into the phone ... Siva coming at that time.)

Chrous: Time is passing

three, four months have passed

( Nithya coming with the phone.... the phone of the person she contacted did not work...she throws the phone with fear)

Mother: What is the noise there...?



6. she is saying, son, such a problem had occurred.
7. They call it teenage pregnancy.
8. Son phones eldest daughter and inform the problem
9. Eldest daughter and son in law coming in hastily
10. This is a time to lose patience, but actually you should not lose patience.
11. How can we take this child to the next stage?
12. Nobody should be told about this
13. An entry should be made with the police.
14. Oh!..no... no ... if police entry is made, police will come home and everybody will know about it.
15. We had to take that girl slowly to the hospital and check her.
16. we must take her to juvenile court.
17. All over.
18. That problem is not known to the society.
19. The girl is going to the same school again.
20. This took place in one way. now watch it's going to happen in another

way.

## Approach 4

### Scene X

Selvi: Hello!

I had no balance in my phone ....so I took the call from my sisters  
phone

Nithya: Why did you take my phone? ( wrenching)

Selvi: Can't you ...I am talking...

Nithya: Give me my phone.

( two of them fighting)

Selvi: Mom..

Mother: Why child?...why are you fighting?

Nithya: She had taken my phone.

Mother: Why did you take her phone...child?

Selvi: I had no balance in my phone ... so I took her phone

Mother: She had taken because there was no balance in her phone.

Nithya: Even if there balance she don't need to take my phone

Selvi: see mom ... how she is talking

Mother: Never mind it... come... let's go

( Nithya stand alone and talking into the phone ... Siva coming at that  
time.)

Chrous: Time is passing

three, four months have passed

( Nithya coming with the phone.... the phone of the person she contacted did not work...she throws the phone with fear)

Mother: What is the noise there...?

why did you throw the phone.... do you know the worth of it? ... if it breaks you can't do anything...why did you drop it....here take this...

Nithya: I don't want it.

Mother : They gave it you with much eagerness. you too loved having it....here have it...

Nithya: I don't want it any more...

Mother: why child? why are saying ... you don't want it?  
( she places the phone on the table.)

why are you thinking...I have not picked lice for you for a long time....lice had multiplied much...I have not paid attention on you for some time.. you too have not paid any attention on yourself. get that lice shampoo and come...

Nithya: I don't want anything.

Mother: why child? what's the matter with you?

Nithya: Oh! leave me alone... ( She goes away crying ... and the mother follows her)

Mother: Nithya....!

Chorus: 1. Nithya!

2. why this girl is cry while going

3. Mother is also running behind.

4. The girl was sad at first.

5. Mother had beaten the girl and asked the reason
6. wailings filled the air.
7. Brother pulled by the hair it seems.
8. Elder sister had stopped the beating.
9. Poor girl.
10. Eldest sister had told her husband and he had told the mother.
11. Neighbours came in hearing the noise.
12. Some problem there.
13. people are vilifying
14. full of dishonor...disgrace...insult
15. on one of these days Jaman started coming again in his dreams.

Enter Jaman: also enter the demining workers

De-mining workers: Siva don't worry about anything ...I will marry your sister.

(each say like that.)

Chorus:

1. Here that girl is coming.
2. I am going to commit suicide.
3. Why are you saying like that.
4. I had been deceived. I am going to commit suicide
5. Why are you saying like that
6. I had been deceived...I am going to commit suicide...leave me
7. No... you can achieve a lot...



( the talk about the girl going to school)

Chorus:

her to

1. The administration of the former school had refused to allow  
continue studying there.

2. There was reason for doing so.

3. The society says that she is immoral

4. this girl had got involved in a worst crisis

5. Schools don't admit students who had got involved in worst  
crises.

6. If this girl is admitted the name of the school will be spoiled.

7. So, the school administration did not accept this girl.

8. But by the efforts of her parents and people with good heartsshe  
got admitted in a school little far away.

9. Now she is ready to go that school.

( Mother, Nithya , Selvi , son are standing )

Son is going forward but Niyhya stays where she is.

Son:

Come..Sister.

(Nithya put one step forward)

Chorus:

This girl faced some problem earlier.

(Put the leg back)

Son:

Come.

Nithya walks away and the curtain falls.

## 6.1 Photos of Play Production, *Ninaivin Kanavu*.



Narrators



Telling story through dance



Using dance for performance



Symbolic expressions for performance



Chorus



Using traditional forms for performance