



## A Comparative Study of the Nanumuraya Dance of Riddiyāgaya Shanthikarmaya in Sri Lankan Low Country Traditional Dance and the Solah Shringar Used in Kathak Abhinaya in India



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### Abstract

*The Riddhiyāga Shanthikarma of the low-country dance tradition of Sri Lanka and the Kathak dance tradition of India depict female characters in the abhinaya. This study has investigated the female activities that are presented in the Nanumuraya dance of Riddhiyāga Shanthikarmaya and the Solah Shringar of Kathak. This study aims to study female expression in a social and cultural context through a comparative analysis of the activities of the above two dance forms. Accordingly, the problem of this research is to study what is the differences and similarities in these dance (activity) forms and the expression of women in their social contexts. Primary and secondary Data were collected through qualitative research types, such as library studies, observation, interviews, recorded video, photography, and content analysis. The data was analysed using a mixed methodological approach, using phenomenology, artistic formalism analysis, and comparative analysis because community-oriented and visual data were also used. Five dance forms of Nanumura and five dance forms of Kathak Solah Shringar were selected as the study sample. The study revealed that although both dance forms are used to portray women, there are differences in the purposes and activities of the performance. Also, the expression of women in social contexts varies culturally.*

**Key Words :** Comparative, Female Character, Nanumuraya, Solah Shringar, Social and cultural Context.

### Research Paper

#### Introduction

Various traditional dance styles are prevalent in South Asian countries and are intertwined with rituals, daily life, and folk art. This study has conducted a comparative analysis of the Nanumuraya dance of Riddhiyāgaya Shanthikarmaya in Sri Lankan low - country traditional dance and the solah shringar used in Kathak abhinaya in India. There are many unique elements to the popular low-country dance tradition of the southern and western provinces of Sri Lanka. These Shanthikarma have distinctive dance, singing, and drum-playing methods and dramatic aspects. They are Shanthikarma based on gods, demons, and the nine planets. The Riddhiyāgaya, or Ratayakuma, is one of the Shanthikarma performed for

the demons in the low-country dance tradition. It is held to address the problems of infertile women and women who have had miscarriages. The entire Shanthikarma is seen as a blessing for infertile women, with the aim of fertility and well-being. Among the dance elements of this Shanthikarma, the Nanumuraya dance is special. It represents how a woman prepares for motherhood through activities of purification and beautification. This study examined these activities. Kathak dance, prevalent in North India, is one of the classical dance forms of India. The Kathak dance tradition, spread under the three main gharanas of Lucknow, Jaipur, and Banaras, consists of the concepts of 'nritta' and 'nritya'. The solah shringar used in the abhinaya of this Kathak dance tradition is very

special. It represents the sixteen decorative activities of women. In Kathak dance, Solah Shringar is used to aesthetically express the feeling of love or sensuality (shringar rasa) as well as to aesthetically present the emotional states of the nayikas. This research has been conducted focusing on Solah Shringar.

India and Sri Lanka, two physically distant South Asian nations, contain a variety of traditional and classical dance forms. With much choreographic and thematic attention to its beauty, this comparative research examines the parallels and discrepancies between the female body decoration practices represented in the Solah Shringar of Kathak dance and the Nanumuraya of the Riddiyāgaya Shanthikarma. By contrasting the behaviours, meanings, and symbols found in these two components, the research seeks to get beyond the outward appearance and comprehend the significance of women's expression in the cultural environment and how it influences social activity. As a result, Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar will be compared in this study.

The literature review examined in this study revealed that although separate research studies have been conducted on Solah Shringar in Kathak dance and Nanumuraya in Riddiyāgaya, there are no research studies that have examined them as a whole and examined women's expression in a social and cultural context. The publications Gami Natakaya (Saratchandra, 1968), Pahatharata Natum (Daluwatta, 1993), Ratayakuma Hewat Riddiyāgaya (Kariyawasam, 1982), and Pahatharata Shanthikarma Sahitya (Kottagoda, 2008) provide detailed descriptions of the Riddiyāgaya Shanthikarma of the low-country dance style. The genesis, the Shanthikarma's order, the dance pieces, the singing, and everything else are explained. Also, important information and details about Solah Shringar are presented in the book Raighar Darbar (Ashirvadam, 1990). Also, information about Solah Shringar is available in the books Shringar in Classical Indian Dance (Narayan, 2020) and Kathak aor Abhinaya (Singh, 2013). The book Natya Shastra (Manmohan, 2023; Charya, 2019) describes the jewellery worn, but does not specifically mention Solah Shringar. There hasn't been a thorough analysis of women's portrayal in the social and cultural context or a comparison of Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar, despite the fact that the aforementioned Indian and Sri Lankan works have only covered the corresponding dance items in their context. However, the works Sambhavaya Narthana Samiksha (2001) by Jayasena Kottagoda and Riddyāga Vimarshanaya ha Prabhanda Sahithya (2020) by Janaka

Kottagoda contain comparatively important information on Solah Shringar and Nanumuraya. Accordingly, the aforementioned literature review helped to create the background for this study. Similarly, while studies on gender in relation to dance have been conducted, studies on women's expression in social and cultural contexts through female adornment in Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar and other dance traditions are lacking in the global literature. It is evident from the above-stated literature analysis that while individual studies have been carried out on Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar, very few comparative studies have been carried out on them. Accordingly, this literature review can identify a knowledge gap in the world's academic literature related to the research topic.

### Statement of problem

The Nanumuraya in Riddiyāgaya shanthikarmaya and the Solah Shringar, which is used in the Kathak dance, both commonly represent women. "What are the similarities and differences between these two dance items and the expressive differences in the social and cultural contexts reflected in the female character?" Accordingly, by conducting a comparative study of the Solaha Shringar and the Nanumura items, the expression of women in the social and cultural context has been studied.

### Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of two items: the Nanumuraya of the Riddiyāgaya Shantikarma in low-country dance traditions and the Solah Shringar used in the abhinaya of Kathak dance, and to study women's expression in social and cultural contexts deeper than the visible meaning.

### Hypothesis

Women are represented by the Nanumuraya and Solaha Shringar. There are distinctions in their purpose of presentation, activities, and general features. Accordingly, the representation (expression) of women's character varies in each specific social and cultural context.

### Research limits

The Riddiyāga Shantikarmaya from the Matara Ranga tradition, which is performed for the Yakuns in the low-country dance tradition, and an abhinaya element of Kathak dance from Indian classical dance traditions have been chosen for this research. The focus of the research is limited to the Nanumuraya dance element of Riddiyāgaya Shanthikarm and the Solah Shringar used



for the abhinaya of Kathak dance. Five Nanumura elements and five dance elements belonging to Solah Shringar have been selected as the study sample.

## Research Methodology

This research has been conducted under the qualitative research type. Library studies, interviews, observations, videos, photographs, and content analysis have all been used to collect primary and secondary data. A variety of research techniques have been used to analyse the data. A key aspect of this study is to understand the experiences of the performers and audience performing the Nanumuraya dance and the Solah Shringar element, and to study the primary purposes of the performance. Accordingly, the research methodology of German philosopher Edmund Husserl's phenomenology (Kirsten, 1983) has been used to analyse the experiences of the dancers and audience. English art critic Clive Bell's theory of Artistic Formalism (Bell, 1914) has also been used to study the colours of costumes used in dance elements. Through Emile Durkheim's comparative analysis, the concept and activities of the Nanumura dance and the Solah Shringar have been studied, identifying similarities and differences and examining women's expression in cultural and social context.

## Result and Discussion

When examining the two elements, Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar, it becomes clear that they represent the beauty activities (activities including cleansing and wearing ornaments) of a woman (Narayan, p. 136; Sarachchandra, pp. 55-56). According to the story of the birth of Riddiyāgaya, it is said that the barren Riddhi queens wove a new robe to have children and offered it to the Buddha of Dipankara, wishing for their wish. before The way the barren queens cleansed themselves and adorned themselves is depicted in the Nanumura dance. The Nanumuraya depicts the bathing, purification, and adornment of the body with ornaments. (Kariyawasam, 1995) But in the Solah Shringar item, the woman (Naikas) performs activities that purify and beautify herself before meeting her lover or husband (Sing, p. 84). The main purpose of performing the Riddiyāga Shanthikarma is to help infertile women achieve their goals of having children and preserving their pregnancies (Kottagoada, p. 33). Also, the Nanumura creates a sense of psychological well-being for the viewer (patient, infertile woman). It implicitly presents the activities (physical cleanliness and sexual activity) and preparations that a woman should undertake before becoming a mother (Gunawardena, 2021). While Nanumuraya is presented based on the patient, Solah Shringar is presented based on the audience. However, the Solah Shringar Nayikas' emotional state and love or sensuality (shringar rasa) are aesthetically presented. Solah Shringar is used especially when performing the ashtanayikas contained in the abhinaya. It portrays the various emotional states of the nayikas (women), such as desire, fulfilment, and love (Gupta, 2014). This Solah Shringar aspect is not simply a cosmetic activity. It is an aesthetic process in which Nayikas intend to arouse shringar rasa in their lover (Nayak) or observer. According to the concept of rasa contained in Natya Shastra, the permanent emotional state of shringar rasa created by Solah Shringar represents love or happiness. (Rangcharya, pp. 53-59).

The activities included in the Nanumuraya differ between the Bentara and Matara gurukuls. That is, the Matara Gurukul offers 16 activities, and the Bentara Gurukul offers 12 activities. (Kottagoda, 2001) According to the work Narthan Sarwaswam by Raja Chakradhar Singh, only 14 shringars are mentioned in the Sangeet Darpan (unpublished) manuscript, but they are called Solah Shringar. However, they have been studied and systematically described in this work as 16 anangas in sequence. (Ashirwadam, 1990).

Below are the activities of the Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar.

Nanumuraya	Solah Shringar
1. Nanu Gama (applying liquid hair conditioner made from natural ingredients)	1. Snāna(Taking Bath)
2. Snanaya Kirima (Taking Bath)	2. Vastra Dhāraṇa (wearing Clothes)
3. Salu Palandima (wearing Clothes)	3. Snehanulepan (Applying oil to hair)
4. Hisa pirima (Hair combing)	4. Keśapāśaracanā making the hair, combing and tying it in a knot or Plaits)
5. TheI Gama (Applying oil to hair)	5. Tilak Dhāraṇa (Wearing Tilak on the forehead)



6. Hawariya Palandima (Wearing artificial hair)	6. Añjana Dhāraṇa (Applying kajal to the eyelids)
7. Kuru Palandima (Tie the hair and pin it up)	7. Til Nirmān (Making the beauty spot)
8. Andun Gasima (Applying kajal to the eyelids)	8. Alaktak Dhāraṇa (Applying lac dye to the feet)
9. Sandun Gasima (Applying sandalwood)	9. Alnkar Prasadana (wearing a different kind of armaments)
10. Thodu Damima (Wearing earrings)	10. Tambul Carwan ( Chewing betel leaves or pan)
11.Thalla Palandiam(Wearing Necklace)	11. Sugandi Lapan (smearing of Scent or Perfume)
12.Walalu Damima(Wearing bangles)	12. Vilas Gati (Walking Gracefully)
13. Bulath Kama (Chewing betel leaves)	13. Spheet Dṛṣṭi.(Amorous looks)
14. Pulli Mal Palandima (wearing flowers in the hair)	14. Smit (Smail)
15. Mottakkili Palandiam (A type of headpiece made of cloth)	15. Prem ( The feeling of love)
16. Kadapathakin Muna Balima (Seeing one's face in a mirror)	16. Seel (Chasity)

There are differences in the activities shown above in the items of Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar. That is, the activities of Tilak Dhāraṇa and Til Nirmān in Solah Shringar are similar to the activities of applying andun gama and sandun gama in Nanumuraya. Furthermore, several activities such as talla palandima, thodu palandima, and walalu palandima are presented at Nanumura, and all of these activities are included in the alankar prasadana section of Solah Shringar. Further study of these two items reveals that although the elements Vilas Gati, Spheet, Drishti, and Smit presented in Solah Shringar are not presented separately in the Nanumura, their functions are found throughout the entire Nanumura. Also, the Alaktak Dhāraṇa and seel performed in the Solah Shringar aspect are not found in the Nanumuraya.

In Kathak dance, both male and female dancers perform Solah Shringar during the Abhinaya performance. Here, male dancers do not wear costumes and ornaments like women (Fig. 1.2). However, Nanumuraya is performed only by male Shanthikama dancers. They wear costumes and ornaments like women and perform Nanumuraya (Fig. 3). There is a separate poetry literature for each activity in the performance of Nanumuraya, which is presented through dialogue, dance, and drama (Kariyawasam, 1982). This item is performed for at least 20 minutes. Nayikas are performed in the Kathak dance. There, the Solah Shringar is performed, and there is no written song literature for each activity. The study of Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar revealed that while Nanumura uses theatrical props made from natural materials for every activity (Figs 4), all activities in Solah Shringar are performed using mudras (Fig 5). There are no specific costumes and ornaments for the performance of Solah Shringar. The item is presented dressed in traditional costumes and ornaments, and no inherent use of colours is seen. But when presenting the Nanumuraya, there is an inherent combination of women's clothing and colours. It was clear from the study that the colours white, yellow, and red were used for the clothing and that they had a meaning. These colours provide mental well-being to the sick woman.

The overall result of the analysis is that the elements of Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar generally represent women and beauty. However, the purposes of the performance, the activities, and the dance content are different, which reveals a deeper situation than what is apparent on the surface in the Sri Lankan and Indian social and cultural contexts. The solah shringar element is an aesthetic process that focuses on the emotional state of the nayikas and the audience. Its purpose is to artistically highlight the taste of shringar. But a different situation is revealed in Nanumuraya, which is that Nanumura's goal goes beyond the aesthetic shringar rasa and is therapeutic, spiritual, and mental well-being. Analysing experiential and visual data from research approaches such as phenomenology and artistic formalism, it was concluded that the cultural and social meaning that emerges from choreographic changes is presented. These two elements, which symbolize women's roles and social expectations, are not only dance items but also a representation of social and cultural values and structures.



## Conclusion

This comparative analysis has managed to explore the Nanumuraya dance of Riddiyāgaya Shanthikarmaya of Sri Lanka, as well as the Solah Shringar of Abhinaya of Kathak of India, in order to discover the cultural elements embedded in these dances in presenting women characters. This study used a mixed methodology that combined phenomenology, artistic formalism, and comparative study, and this analysis allowed us to go beyond not only the similarities of the dances but also into their functional intentions. The major hypothesis that, contrary to a common theme of female ornamentation, the intent and expression are expected to differ according to the socio-cultural context was largely confirmed. The research has disclosed a profound disparity in the rationale of the two dance items, accentuating their respective roles in the societies from which they originated. Nanumuraya is organically associated with a patient-focused ritual (Shanthikarma), acting as a curative-performative prelude to motherhood and fertility, providing psychological solace to the infertile woman. In direct juxtaposition, Solah Shringar has an audience-focused aesthetic role in the Abhinaya, solely designed to kindle the "shringar rasa" or "sensuality" or "love" emotion and translate the sentiment of "nayika" for the sake of art appreciation. Though the practice involves cleansing and ornamentation in both traditions, the details and the order are indicative of the stated aims. While Vilas Gati (Graceful Walking), Spheet Drishti (Amorous Looks), and other abstract qualities are implicit in the entire Nanumuraya, it is the explicit mention of these components in Solah Shringar that reveals the transformation from the holistic ritualism to the formalised performance act. In conclusion, the work done in this research proves that the representation of the figure of female beauty and preparation is not a universal notion but a culturally embedded narrative with various instances of representation in society across the globe. Both Nanumuraya and Solah Shringar can be identified as excellent examples of the representation of the figure of female beauty and preparation in the form of dance traditions, which are based on rituals and aesthetic expressions, respectively, and convey the distinct social perceptions and demands in society with respect to female representation and expressions, respectively.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig.4



Fig.5



## Referances

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