

A MOVING MEDITATION OF SILAMBAM - A SHORT VIEW

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ABSTRACT

A person holds a pair of 'Kai Silambam' in his hand and dance to the Music of Pambai, Udakai and Urami Melam. This dance is usually performed in front of god Shakthi. If we start observing the Silambattam we can find the unique foot and hand movements which differ from other form of dance. This foot and hand movement is the exact foot and hand movements in Silambam Martial Art. It is very difficult to the readers to understand in words as I mention, since its more in technical. This can happen only when you start observing the dance and compare it to the Silambam Martial Art movements. Silambam doing that moving to the movements of the body.

Keywords: Silambam, Moving Meditation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Martial Arts is considered as the best form of self-defense technique and is often practiced as a sport. It is often considered to be carried on without any weapon and there are many famous forms of martial arts, such as aikido, judo, karate but there is a unique type of martial art in which a weapon is used that is Silambam. It is believed to be originated somewhere around 1000 BCE and according to sources; it was brought by the sage Agastya Munivar. Sillappadikkaram and many other works of Sangam literature mentions about the practice and it dates back to 2nd century BC whereas oral folk tales traces it back even further around 7000 years. But according to recent surveys and archaeological excavation, it has been confirmed that Silambam was practiced from at least 10,000 BC. Silambam is an ancient weapon-based martial art that is slowly spreading in youth. It emerged in the southern part of the Indian subcontinent and is a unique form of martial arts.(Subrhi Khera, 2019)

2. KNOW MORE ABOUT SILAMBAM

The bamboo staff is the main weapon and the length of the bamboo staff depends on the height of the practitioner. To be more precise, it should touch the forehead about three fingers from the head which is around 1.68 meters. Also, practice is required to perform with different length of staffs. Besides this, there are more weapons used in Silambam which are as listed below:

- ✦ Maru- thrusting weapon which is made from horns of deer.
- ✦ Aruva- sickle
- ✦ Savuku- a whip
- ✦ Vaal- curved sword
- ✦ Kuttu Katai- spiked knuckleduster
- ✦ Sedikuchi- cudgel or short stick

Like boxing, both the combatants need to weigh approximately the same and are generally in the same age group and gender. Also, since it is a contact sport, participants are clad in protective gear, including a helmet with a face mask, a chest guard and an abdominal guard, over their jersey or vest. Competitive silambam takes place on a circular, hard surface, which is 20-25ft in radius. The duration of a match is around three minutes, with a 30-second break in between two 90-second fights. There are three referees with counters to register the points, one umpire on the mat with a stick to conduct the combat and a timekeeper. However, it is only recently that the martial art has entered the arena of competitive sport. "Silambam was originally taught in the typical guru-sishya tradition where

students would train with their master for years. There was no specific levels that were set in format," Traditional fitness is stimulating their growth, physically as well as intellectually for children.

2.1. BEGINNER TRAINER

Beginner trainer should learn and master the pattern of the foot movement before learning the technique of playing, patterns and method change their rotation without stopping the movement of the stick. Foot movement are keys elements to silambam and kutta varisai (empty hand version). There are sixteen movement need to learn to master the movement of foot to keep pace with the movement of the stick. The main goal of the training is to defend the user against several armed opposition.

2.2. STYLES

There are about 18 different styles of silambam practiced today. They are:

- ✦ Nillai Kalakki (The most popular style outside India, practiced mainly in Malaysia and Singapore)
- ✦ Karnatakan (Practiced mainly in southern Karnataka)
- ✦ Kuravanji (Practiced mainly in Kerala)
- ✦ Kuthu Kuravanji
- ✦ Komberi Mookan
- ✦ Paniyeri Mallan
- ✦ Minnal Veeran
- ✦ Minnal Vettu
- ✦ Nagam-16
- ✦ Naga Pasanam
- ✦ Kalla-Pathu
- ✦ Thuluk Kanam
- ✦ Markanam
- ✦ Kida Muttu
- ✦ Kalyana Varisai
- ✦ Tomman Kuthu
- ✦ Paarvai Vilayaatu
- ✦ Kallagam

3. HEALTH AND MEDICAL BENEFITS

Silambam is a good form of cardio workout that improves blood circulation and heart function. Burns calories, helps in weight reduction and shaping of body. Relieves mental stress, laziness and fatigue. Improves body flexibility and reflexive movement of joints and muscles. Silambam practitioner or regular training and Kai Silambam will get health benefits such as improving muscle flexibility, coordination arm with eyes, coordination foot and eyes, stabilize body posture, improve muscle endurance, increasing the speed of the body, relieving muscle and joint pain and resilience of hearth and lungs. Silambam also helps develop the memory power of the practitioner. It makes the practitioner to feel emotionally and physically stable. Moreover this will enable them to tend to be more focused and concentrated in their mission. So they will be able to enhance their memory power which will help them to develop themselves.

Mostly, silambam practitioners will be tea toddlers. They will not smoke and drink alcohol. Studies shows that consuming alcohol and smoking is an act to release tension and to feel relaxed. When people practice silambam they will feel stable and clear which will stop them from becoming smokers or drunkards or even drug addicts. So this will also make them to feel more healthier as it becomes part of diet.

4. SILAMBAM FOR THE STARS

In the 1964 Tamil film Padagotti, the legendary **M.G. Ramachandran** plays Manickam, the leader of a small fishing community, at war with a rival community in the same region. Star-crossed love, betrayal and drama aside, one of the most riveting spectacles in this movie is the sight of **MGR** wielding the kambu. "Any actor who watches that movie will want to do this," says E. Kumaravel, actor, scriptwriter and founder of theatre-group Magic Lantern. "I am one of the few people who is learning silambam for the sake of the art itself," says **Manivannan**. "Most of my classmates are learning it to get into the stunt industry." Watch a class in progress and you will understand why. The complex moves push your body to the limit, testing not just strength but flexibility, reflexes and endurance—essential to perform stunts in a film. National Award-winning actor-director **Samuthirakani** agrees. "Many of the action heroes in Tamil cinema start training in silambam as it helps tone the body, enhance confidence and helps master the fight sequences in movies," he says. "I first began to learn it for a film and I hope to make a movie about it someday." **Pandian** comes from the same teaching lineage as the man who taught MGR the art. "My teacher, Madakulan Ravi aasan, was the son of Alagar Sami, who was MGR's teacher," he says, adding that he was 16 when he was first introduced to silambam. "I would practise with **Ravi aasan** in the night under the streetlights of a temple courtyard," he says, adding that since his teacher was a member of the **South Indian Cine Stunt Directors and Stunt Artists Union**, he had a chance to train actors too. Silambam is firmly entrenched in Kollywood—MGR, M.N. Nambiar and Jaishankar were all exponents and used it in their fight sequences in the 1950s; more recently, it has been used by **Suriya** in *7aum Arivu* and **Kamal Hassan** in *Thevar Magan*. Tamil actor **Dhansika** is another enthusiast who swears by silambam. "I was always fit, but silambam made me so much fitter. Besides, I became calmer, happier, more focused. It is moving meditation for me—I would even go so far to say that silambam changed my life," she says.

5. SILAMBAM AS A THERAPY

Silambam training is found to have therapeutic and curative effects on people. One of the aspects of Silambam is, it is more than a moving form of meditation. Silambam training has effect on Varma points (Vital points) of human body. Practising Silambam increases the ability to focus on mental and physical powers, it improves overall health and balance, as well as an improved sense of psychological well being. In few cases, Silambam training can be given as therapy for differently abled children / special children. They can join after consultation / counselling. If your child has ADD (Attention deficit disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), our regular training can be the perfect thing to help him or her get focused. We can offer private lessons for learning disabled children, but specific prognosis must be discussed with our instructors. Currently we do not offer any group training for learning impaired children and not able to accommodate severely disabled children. (Mighty Martial Arts Academy, 2009)

6. CONCLUSION

Silambam is not just a physical activity. It is a form of meditation. I practise Silambam every day in the morning. What seems like dance movements are all a series of attack moves. I find Silambam beautiful and graceful. Each and every strand is made by hand, and the finished product epitomises the creator's thoughts and feelings. In Silambam, there is no age limit and the benefits from Silambam are multifaceted and holistic especially for children as the art form focuses on the use of both hands vigorously which helps to trigger both the right and left sides of the brain thus aiding in brain development. This is the reason why a number of schools are getting interested in including it in their curriculum, and I hope this trend spreads to the entire nation.

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