

**Embodied Narratives: Dance and Literary Intersections in *uMabatha*, *Kaliyattam*, and
Shakespearean Performative Traditions**

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Embodied Narratives: Dance and Literary Intersections in *uMabatha*, *Kaliyattam*, and Shakespearean Performative Traditions** is a bona fide record of sincere work done by, Ann Varghese, Register Number: 220011028689, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature under the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam during the year 2022- 2024.

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented dissertation **Embodied Narratives: Dance and Literary Intersections in *uMabatha*, *Kaliyattam*, and Shakespearean Performative Traditions** is based on the research that I did on under the supervision and guidance of Ms.Maria Sharol Cherian, Guest Faculty, Post Graduate Department of English, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. This is a report of my hands based on the research done on the selected topic and it is my original work and interpretations drawn therein are based on material collected by myself. It has not been previously formed basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“When you do dance, I wish you a wave o’the sea, that you might ever do nothing but that”. These lines are from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (4.4.144-145). Shakespeare's influence on dance is profound and multifaceted, even though he primarily wrote for the theatre. His works, particularly his plays and sonnets, have inspired numerous choreographers and dancers to interpret his stories and themes through movement. Many of Shakespeare's plays, such as *The Winter's Tale*, have been adapted into ballets.

Shakespeare's use of language and emotion in his plays lends itself well to interpretation through dance. Through expressive movement, dancers often explore the psychological depth and dramatic tension of characters like Romeo, Juliet, Ophelia, and Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare's impact on dance highlights the universality and timelessness of his storytelling, demonstrating how his works can be reimagined and interpreted through the physicality and creativity of dance.

Dance can also act as a type of narrative that can be used to tell stories. Dance is to move one’s body rhythmically, usually to music. Dance and literature are considered art forms involving rhythmic movement and expression. Dance originated as a way for humans to communicate emotions through body movement accompanied by music. It is performed for various reasons such as worship, courtship, and entertainment.

Dance as a narrative is a profound artistic expression where movements convey stories, emotions, and themes without words. Dancers embody characters, relationships, and abstract concepts through choreography, engaging audiences in a visual and emotional journey. Each movement, gesture, and interaction contribute to the narrative arc, creating a

rich tapestry of meaning that transcends language. Whether through classical ballet, contemporary dance, or cultural forms, dance act as a narrative that invites interpretation and connection, offering a unique way to explore human experiences and perspectives. Dance also explores different narratives of which, Linear Narrative follows a chronological sequence of events, much like a traditional story arc, where dancers portray characters and progress through a plot.

Abstract Narrative conveys emotions, ideas, or themes without a specific storyline, relying on symbolic movements and visual metaphors to suggest meaning. Character-driven Narrative focuses on the development and interaction of characters through movement, gestures, and relationships portrayed by dancers.

Theme-based Narrative explores overarching ideas or concepts, using dance to illustrate or explore these themes through movement and choreographic choices. Narrative in dance allows for a range of interpretations, engaging audiences in an experiential journey that stimulates emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic responses. It harnesses the power of movement to evoke empathy, provoke thought, and create connections between performers and viewers, transcending linguistic and Cultural boundaries.

Within certain cultures or communities, ritual dancing is a type of dance that has its roots in religious or ceremonial customs. The purpose of this practice is to strengthen social cohesion within the community, establish spiritual connections, communicate with deities or ancestors, and mark important occasions like harvests and rites of passage. Ritual dances are characterized by exact rhythms and motions, perhaps paired with chanting, music, or gestures that have symbolic or religious connotations.

Performances of dance intended for artistic expression or amusement in a theatrically structured environment are referred to as theatre dancing, or dance in a theatrical context. It communicates stories, feelings, and ideas to the audience, frequently through choreographed scenes that could incorporate additional theatrical components.

Dance plays a vital role in numerous cultures, serving as a powerful means of cultural expression and identity. Through dance, people showcase their heritage, conveying their origins, historical context, social traditions, and religious beliefs, thereby connecting with their roots and community. However, dance is a performing art form consisting of purposefully selected sequences of human movement. This movement has aesthetic and symbolic value and is acknowledged as dance by performers and observers within a particular culture.

Dance can be categorized and described by its choreography, by its repertoire of movements, or by its historical period or place of origin. Entertainment is not the only function of dance; people also dance for a reason such as communication and expression. Dance has a message board by which people can talk to others, sharing their feelings together through movement without talking.

Dance serves as a powerful expression of cultural identity, preserving and transmitting traditions, histories, and values across generations. It embodies unique cultural aesthetics, movement styles, and symbolic meanings that are specific to particular communities or ethnic groups. In many cultures, dance plays crucial roles in social cohesion and ritualistic practices. It often accompanies ceremonies, celebrations, and rites of passage, fostering community bonds and marking important events in the life cycle or agricultural calendar. Also, transmission of knowledge happens through dance as it serves as a vehicle

for transmitting cultural knowledge, stories, and spiritual teachings. Through movement, gestures, and rhythms, dancers communicate narratives, mythologies, and moral lessons that are integral to their cultural heritage.

While rooted in tradition, dance in cultural context also evolves, influenced by historical changes, migrations, globalization, and interactions with other cultures. This dynamic adaptation reflects ongoing cultural exchange and innovation within dance practices. Traditional dances often incorporate symbolic gestures, costumes, props, and music that carry specific meanings related to spiritual beliefs, historical events, social roles, or natural elements. These symbols deepen the layers of interpretation and significance for both participants and audiences.

Indian mythology is rich in the tradition of stories about deities and mythological figures. Stories about Gods and other legendary characters are abundant in Indian mythology. Hindu scriptures like the Puranas and the Vedic literature provide accounts of Indian tales. There is no continuous storyline or framework to Hindu mythology as it is presented in these writings. Variations abound throughout mythology, and they frequently change over time.

Dance forms like Kathakali and Yakshagana almost entirely draw their material from the *Mahabharatha*. The *Mahabharatha* has been retold and rewritten several times emphasizing its various characters. Kathakali is an important medium for retelling epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana. It was very prominent in the early 16th century and tracked the cultural impact of Kerala. But in contemporary times, we see the pride of Kathakali shrank to the heading of tourism and a way to show off the old cultural heritage rather than enjoying it as an art itself. So did these dance forms propagate the cultural ideas of the Puranas is a major question to ask.

Storytelling, retelling or adaptations of works can play an important role in preserving culture and that to making it a medium to reach out to, other than the natives. Performativity in traditions holds significant cultural and social importance across the world.

Performativity in traditions often involves rituals, ceremonies, dances, or performances that have been passed down through generations. These practices help preserve cultural heritage by maintaining and transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs. Participating in performative traditions fosters a sense of community and belonging among individuals. It strengthens social bonds as people come together to celebrate shared identities and histories. Performativity allows individuals and communities to express and reaffirm their identities. Through traditional costumes, music, dance, and rituals, people showcase their cultural distinctiveness and pride.

Traditional performances often serve as educational tools, teaching younger generations about their cultural roots, history, and moral values. They also socialize individuals to understand their roles and responsibilities within the community. While traditions maintain continuity by preserving core practices, they also evolve. Performativity allows for adaptations that keep traditions relevant in contemporary contexts, ensuring their survival and continued relevance.

Many performative traditions are associated with celebratory events such as festivals, weddings, and religious ceremonies. They provide occasions for joy, solidarity, and collective celebration within communities. Participating in performative traditions often has emotional and spiritual benefits. It can evoke feelings of pride, spirituality, connection to ancestors, and a sense of transcendence beyond everyday life. Storytelling, retelling or

adaptations of works can play an important role in preserving culture and that to making it a medium to reach out to, other than the natives.

India's rich cultural legacy is largely preserved through dance. Famous traditional dance genres like Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Koodiyattam, and Theyyam preserve Kerala's mythology, history, and social mores while also providing entertainment. These dances, which capture the spirit of Kerala's culture, frequently tell tales from classical literature like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. They ensure that Kerala's cultural identity stays vibrant and honoured by passing down cultural values and tales to future generations through elaborate dances, costumes, and music. Dance forms of Kerala, then, are a potent medium for maintaining and advancing culture.

We dance, but why? Why do we tell tales? These are primarily intended to look into the art form itself and to provide information about cultural attributes, social issues, and delight. Literature and dance share the same innate artistic origins. Individuals started dancing as a means of devotion and expression. to converse with the future and draw lessons from the past. Dancers use their bodies to communicate characters, conflicts, and resolutions, often without words, relying on gestures, facial expressions, and spatial dynamics to convey meaning.

This thesis aims to question:

1. Does dance ever play a role in literature?
2. Does storytelling or adaptation of Shakespearean work (through cultural dance form) into movies preserve culture?

3. Comparative study of Shakespearean adaptation (South African work *uMabatha* and Keralan work *Kaliyattam*)
4. The relevance of such works in the contemporary world.
5. The disappearance of 'Devdasi' who played an important role in preserving cultures through dance forms.

Prominent dance forms of Kerala have started to disappear because of the lack of importance we give to them and resisting the opportunities of adaptations which allow the culture to be preserved and to be known on a global level. Dance forms serve as educational tools, teaching future generations about their cultural roots and fostering pride in their heritage.

Through dedicated training, documentation, and ongoing performance, these dances ensure that cultural traditions are not only preserved but also celebrated and passed down to future generations, thereby acting as a lasting glory for cultural preservation. It is important to make sure that it is well preserved for the glory of future generations and the contemporary world.

Chapter 2

Cultural Dynamics in Dance and Literature

Looking into the intricate relationship between dance and literature, we can analyze how Cultural studies and Performance studies are interdependent. Cultural studies are a politically engaged post-disciplinary academic field that explores the dynamics of especially contemporary culture and its social and historical foundations. Researchers in cultural studies typically look into the connections between cultural practices and larger power structures that are connected to or function within social phenomena.

These comprise national formations, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, class structures, and generation. Cultural studies use cultural analysis to see cultures as dynamic, ever-changing systems of behaviors and processes rather than as fixed, bounded, stable, and discrete entities. A variety of theoretical stances and methodological approaches are included in the topic of cultural studies.

Cultural studies were initially developed by British Marxist academics in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and has been subsequently taken up and transformed by scholars from many different disciplines around the world. In the mid-1990s, several essays appeared in the dance literature advocating for a stronger collaboration between dance study and cultural studies. More lately, dance scholarship has been referred to as 'dance studies' implying that such a link has happened. Because multidimensionality is an important aspect of cultural studies, it is acceptable to examine it in dance studies by looking at the relationship between dance and cultural studies. This genealogical endeavor, however, is not as simple as it may appear.

Over a half-century, the relationship between cultural studies and other disciplines has shifted. Interdisciplinarity, which is so strongly connected to cultural studies; feeling of its unique individuality and political mission, has been difficult to maintain to the point where some say the discipline is in crisis. To make matters even more confusing, interconnections in dance studies are not usually comprehended in the same way as it is in cultural studies, as dance and cultural studies formed along quite different paths.

While dance research, which has long been associated with the fields of history and anthropology, not only adopted many of the theories and methods of these disciplines but also developed its own theories and methods as a means of aiding in the analysis of the human body in motion. Cultural studies were originally intended as a political and social intervention that deliberately avoided creating theories of its own. So, where and how do interdisciplinarity-based meetings between dance and cultural studies take place? Cultural studies have significantly influenced arts and literature so this is not a pointless question.

Judith Lynne Hanna (born 1936) is an American anthropologist, scholar, and author. She is an affiliate research professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research focuses on the relationship between dance and society in African villages and places of social interaction in America, such as schools and entertainment clubs. She has also researched African cities, urban studies, and at-risk youth. Judith Lynne Hanna's work emphasizes the anthropological perspective on dance, viewing it as a fundamental aspect of human culture and social life.

Key findings of the *Dancing to Learn: The Brain's Cognition, Emotion and Movement*, Judith Lynne Hanna states that dance is nonverbal language affecting similar places and learning

processes in the brain as verbal language, thus a powerful means of communication. Also, the book explores dance as physical exercise that sparks new brain cells (neurogenesis and neuroplasticity, the brain's amazing ability to change through-out life) and also dance as a means to help us cope with stress that can motivate or interfere with learning. The book explores venues for learning dance and other subjects, dance as an art, liberal art, and applied art, as well as a vehicle to find self, cultural, regional, and national identities.

It would seem sensible that performance studies would be an academic field devoted to the study of theatre and other forms of artistic performance. This notion would not be wholly untrue. Many performance scholars are still dedicated to studying creative performances, such as dance, music, and theatre, and performance studies research is largely influenced by advances in theatre and performance arts during the 20th century.

However, performance researchers embrace more than just the study performance as an art form. The notion of performance as a cultural process sets apart most performance studies, especially that which was mainly involved in artistic forms of performance.

John Locke's theory of blank slate and Lev Vygotsky's theory of social interaction are blended together in this thesis to put out the idea of how the 'blank slate' later is changed with the help of knowledgeable others and their social interaction. John Locke captures his idea of the *tabula rasa* "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Where is it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety?"(102).

John Locke believed that people begin life as a *Tabula Rasa*, or a blank slate. He thought that people's experiences then form the basis for more complex rational thought. *Tabula Rasa*

describes the idea that people begin life as a blank slate onto which experiences are mapped, forming a person. John Locke's seminal work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, first published in 1689, is when the term 'tabula rasa' and related concepts about the mind being a blank slate first appeared.

This seminal work outlines Locke's epistemological theories, including his arguments against innate ideas and his assertion that all knowledge is derived from experience. The concept of tabula rasa is particularly prominent in Book II of the Essay, titled *Of Ideas*. He contends that knowledge is progressively constructed through sensory experiences and introspection, and that our minds are initially empty.

This perspective has had significant influence in the fields of psychology, education, and philosophy, shaping debates about the nature of human understanding and the development of knowledge. Locke posited that when humans are born, their minds are like a blank sheet of paper (tabula rasa), devoid of any innate ideas, knowledge, or principles. This means that individuals do not possess inherent knowledge or understanding from the moment they are born.

According to his argument, people learn by their sensory encounters in the environment. These experiences include everything perceived through sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. This perspective also supports the idea that individuals have the potential to change and develop throughout their lives based on their experiences and reflections.

Lev Vygotsky was a prominent psychologist and the founder of the cultural-historical theory of cognitive development. His theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions in cognitive development, particularly how children learn and develop through their interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, teachers, and peers. Vygotsky emphasized that

cognitive development is influenced by cultural tools and practices. Cultural dance forms are rich expressions of cultural heritage, transmitting values, traditions, and social norms from one generation to another.

Studying performance as a cultural process entails viewing performances of art as a means of interpretation for grasping society and culture. Performances can be viewed as a distinct communicative medium for achieving social and political norms by preserving culture and traditions. The idea of performance as a cultural process is brought into everyday life by an interdisciplinary conversation between anthropology, communication, and critical studies of race, gender, and cultural differences.

The objective of this paper is to introduce interest in graduate learners to the study of performance in cultural phenomena. The approaches for understanding performance as a cultural process that is discussed here continue to be at the forefront of performance studies today. As a means of defining the sociopolitical nature of culture, performance scholars continue to be deeply interested in performance. They are also keenly aware of the dangers associated with trying to give other cultures a voice. A large number of contemporary performance researchers are dedicated to preserving the information of cultures that are underrepresented by supporting its members in expressing themselves whenever feasible.

To briefly point out, we can state that performance offers a unique resource for the preservation of cultural knowledge and traditions.

Chapter 3

Comparative study between African adaptation *uMabatha* and Indian adaptation *Kaliyattam*.

uMabatha is a 1970 play written by South African playwright Welcome Msimeni. It is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* set in the Zulu Kingdom during the early 19th century and details how Mabatha overthrows Danga. *uMabatha* can be considered the magnum opus in Msimeni's career as a playwright. It explores Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in its basic plot and woven into the original plot. *uMabatha* is a celebration of Zulu Practices, Zulu beliefs and Zulu Culture by including features of traditional Zulu dance, Zulu costume, and Zulu music. *uMabatha* has innovatively involved and preserved African culture.

The play begins with uMabatha, a famous warrior in the Zulu nation, meeting three witches who predict that he will become chief. uMabatha, supported by his ambitious wife Mabatha, plans to overthrow the current chief Danga. uMabatha murders Danga and takes over leadership after being misled by Mabatha and tormented by the witches' warnings. However, as his rule is challenged, uMabatha is consumed with guilt and anxiety. Mabatha, driven insane by her remorse and the gravity of their misdeeds, dies tragically. uMabatha's rule becomes crueler, leading to rebellion and civil war. uMabatha is eventually killed in battle, confirming the deadly prediction that foretold his demise.

Zulu culture is rich and diverse, rooted in the traditions of the Zulu people of South Africa. isiZulu is the most widely spoken language in South Africa and is central to Zulu identity. It not only serves as a means of communication but also preserves cultural values and histories through its rich oral traditions. Zulu culture places importance on respect for elders, community, and ancestors.

These events often involve music, dance, and traditional attire—rituals such as ceremonies marking important life events. Traditional attire includes isidwaba (loincloth for men) and isicholo (women's hat). Beadwork and accessories play a crucial role in adornment. Vibrant rhythms and traditional instruments like drums and rattles characterize Zulu music. In Zulu culture, dance holds profound significance as a form of cultural expression, social cohesion, and spiritual communication.

Various types of dances are integral to different aspects of Zulu life, reflecting their rich heritage and traditions. Dance forms such as the Zulu dance (indlamu) are integral to celebrations and social gatherings. Zulu society historically had a hierarchical structure with a king (or chief) at the top, followed by nobles, warriors, and commoners. This structure influenced everything from governance to social interactions and roles within the community.

Zulu Culture has heavily contributed to the vibrant cultural tapestry of South Africa. While traditional practices remain strong, modern influences have also shaped Zulu culture, particularly in urban areas where globalization and technological advancements impact lifestyles, fashion, and artistic expression. *uMabatha* has played an important role in preserving this Zulu culture and traditions being an adaptation of Shakespeare's well-celebrated *Macbeth*.

The Zulu culture's mythology is wide and varied, often interconnected with their history and beliefs. The main elements include the origins of tales, which often involve a supreme figure such as Shaka Zulu, who is regarded as the creator of all life. Ancestors are important because people believe they will continue to influence and guide them in their daily lives. Zulu mythology also includes spirits, both good and evil, who influence many elements of existence.

Rituals are performed to respect ancestors and pacify spirits, promoting harmony and balance in the community.

The sociology of Zulu culture is heavily influenced by kinship, community, and traditional roles which govern social structure and interaction. The notion of ubuntu is central to Zulu culture, emphasizing interdependence, mutual respect, and a healthy community. Kinship systems are complicated with lineage and descent influencing social hierarchy and obligations. Extended families (izigodi) are the core social unit, offering support, unity, and a sense of belonging.

Gender roles are traditionally established, with distinct expectations for men and women in the community. Men often act as providers and protectors, and women have traditionally handled household tasks and raising children. However, these roles are changing as technology and education changes society's standards. Traditionally, male elders and chiefs have historically controlled authority and leadership roles, upholding customary laws and settling conflicts through traditional councils (indabas). Religion and spirituality remain intertwined, combining traditional devotion (ukubuyisa) with Christian influences acquired during colonialism.

The plot and the counterplots of the play echoed the Zulu history of Shaka. The character in *uMabatha*, which defamiliarizes Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, is shaped by King Shaka Zulu. He is considered a brave king, a real conqueror who was also murdered by those closest to him. In some Zulu communities, it is acceptable for unmarried couples to engage in sexual foreplay. He thus had a difficult childhood and was considered by the tribe as an illegitimate child. He gained authority by the methods he used to deal with the opposition during the conflict. As he is credited with bringing the Zulu tribe together, he eventually gained a reputation as a cruel king. In the

end, Dingane and Mhlangana killed him. As a result, the theatre serves as an environment for representing cultural diversity. It provides a fresh setting for viewers to see and enjoy the ethnic identity of Zulu culture.

In *uMabatha*, there are several instances where the cultural heritage is uplifted. The play opens with the heavy beating of sangoma drums. Three Sangomas in *uMabatha* have culturally replaced the three witches in *Macbeth*. The sangomas occupy a role in Zulu culture that is quite distinct from witchcraft. They have significance because it is thought that the deceased continue to guide the tribe and pass on their wisdom.

In Zulu tradition, they hold great spiritual, political, and emotional significance. Sangomas lacks the supernatural representation that *Macbeth* offers. However, they are highly regarded in Zulu society as witch doctors with the ability to throw out even personal spells. The use of sangomas within the play offers an important lens through which we can understand the play's logic of cultural translation.

The sangomas occupy a role in Zulu culture that is quite distinct from witchcraft. Sangomas are diviners who work socially in contrast to the possibly harmful witchcraft represented in *Macbeth*, but who were repeatedly misunderstood as witches by colonists. *uMabatha* perpetuates a post-colonial version of this misreading through its derogatory language and contextualized performance of divination practice before a Western audience that is almost universally unaware of the difference between the functions of sangomas and witches in Zulu culture. Instead of translating Shakespeare, the play is more of a translation of Zulu-ness, which is also simultaneously not a translation at all and a misrepresentation of Western ideas about what it means to be Zulu.

Macbeth's opening scene is set in a desert with thunder and lightning. The play's opening scene serves as a foundation for the events that unfold. Zulu culture has been integrated into *uMabatha* from the play's opening scene onward. The opening sequence of *uMabatha* is set on the backdrop of an open 'Veld'. An open agricultural plain in South Africa is called a veld. Without the need for stage artwork or props, the magical touch of Welcome Msomi plays an essential part in presenting the overall concept when the full atmosphere is portrayed on stage. In Act 3 Scene 1, uMabatha says to Bhangane, "Bhangane, tonight there will be a feast of thanks to the spirits of our ancestors For their protection and our good fortune"(1-2).

Here we witness the power of Sangomas, the presence of ancestral spirits and even the appearance of Bhangane's ghost all add to the authenticity Zulu believes in the play. In the drama, the soldiers and their battle dance become a vital part of the Zulu identity. *uMabatha's* Act 1 Scene 2 includes a war dance and a fight between two "impis" (168). 'Impis' are Bantu warriors from South Africa.

The war dance, which is done with shields and spears, goes back to the reign of King Shaka. These dance performances also serve as a reminder of the military's unity. The drum beatings, movement of spears and shields across the stage and rhythmic movement of the actors all add to the beauty of Zulu culture. Dancers wear traditional clothing while performing, and many beats from drums accompany the dance. There are many possibilities in the play regarding battles because it revolves around Mabatha's heroic battles throughout the entire story.

African shields and spears appear repeatedly in *uMabatha*. Zulu culture is known for its extravagant clothing. Bhangane mentions the "Beshu" (171) attire in Act 1 Scene 3 to show the authenticity of the Zulu culture as it is presented in *uMabatha*. African males use beshu, a Zulu

style of clothing, to cover their buttocks. It is frequently made of calfskin. Usually, men wear it knee-length, which facilitates effortless movement of the body during battle. In Zulu culture, making and drinking beer is a significant social event.

Kaliyattam (English: The Play of God) is a 1997 Indian Malayalam language tragedy film directed by Jayaraj. It stars Suresh Gopi, Lal, Biju Menon and Manju Warrier. The film is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's play *Othello* set against the backdrop of the Theyyam performance of Kerala. The film's screenplay is written by Balram Mattannur. Suresh Gopi plays Kannan Perumalayan, the equivalent to *Othello*, Lal plays Paniyan, the equivalent to Iago, Manju Warrier plays Thamara, the Desdemona version, and Biju Menon plays Kanthan, Cassio's role.

Theyyam is a traditional ritualistic dance form and a prominent cultural expression in the northern part of Kerala, India, particularly in the Malabar region. It is more than just a dance; it encompasses elements of ritual, theatre, and worship, making it a unique cultural phenomenon. Theyyam is believed to have ancient roots dating back to indigenous tribal beliefs and practices. Theyyam offers a compelling narrative that explores both personal and cultural dynamics.

Theyyam stands as a testament to the cultural richness and diversity of Kerala, embodying the intricate interplay between dance, ritual, folklore, and religious beliefs within the region's social fabric. It is performed primarily as a form of worship to appease and invoke the blessings of ancestral spirits, gods, and goddesses, known as 'Deities' or 'Kannikka'. Theyyam performers, known as 'Theyyam artists' or 'Theyyakkaran', undergo elaborate preparations. They wear vibrant costumes made of intricately woven fabrics, adorned with traditional jewellery and ornaments. Their makeup involves intricate facial paintings using natural colours and patterns that symbolize the deity they embody.

Theyyam performances are accompanied by traditional percussion instruments such as Chenda (drum), Elathalam (cymbals), and Kuzhal (pipe), creating a rhythmic and immersive atmosphere. The chants and songs (Vottam and Vayana) sung during Theyyam rituals are in the local Malabar dialect and often recount mythical stories, moral teachings, and historical events associated with the deity. The dance movements in Theyyam are characterized by slow, deliberate steps, and gestures that convey the mood and personality of the deity being portrayed.

The performers undergo a trance-like state during the ritual, believed to channel the spirit of the deity, and their movements may include sudden bursts of energetic and acrobatic displays. Despite its ancient origins, Theyyam continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary contexts while maintaining its core ritualistic and cultural significance.

Efforts are made to preserve and promote Theyyam as a vital aspect of Kerala's cultural heritage, attracting both local devotees and tourists interested in experiencing its unique blend of art, spirituality, and tradition. Theyyam originates from North Kerala which brings to life the great stories of our State. It encompasses dance, mime and music. It exalts the beliefs of the ancient tribes who gave a lot of importance to the worship of heroes and the spirits of their ancestors.

Kaliyattam is a Shakespearean rendition of *Othello* that centres on Thamara, the lovely daughter of the village chief, and Kannan Perumalayan, a Theyyam artist who represents *Othello*. Unni Thampuran dislikes Kannan because he is infatuated with Thamara, while Paniyan, the Komali actor, is lustful for the position of Theechamundi, which Perumalayan holds.

Kannan suspects that Thamara and his assistant, Kanthan, are having an affair after Paniyan plants doubts about Thamara's faithfulness in his mind. In Kanthan's hands, Kannan notices a silk robe that he had given to Thamara. Kannan, overwhelmed with sorrow and hatred, chokes Thamara with a pillow. On the same night, Paniyan plans to have Unni Thampuram kill Kanthan. But the scheme fails, and Thampuram is killed. During these events, Kannan is informed of his error by Paniyan's wife, Cheerma, before Paniyan murders her. Kannan kills Paniyan, breaking his legs with a stone and forcing him to live the rest of his life disabled. Kannan Perumalayan gives Kanthan the 'Perumalayan' role and commits suicide in the Theyyam ritual fire.

In *Kaliyattam* the lead character Kannan Perumalayan (Suresh Gopi) represents *Othello*, a highly skilled Theyyam artist who is respected by the community. Theyyam is a sacred ritualistic dance-drama that is performed in North Kerala temples. It is characterized by extravagant costumes, expressive makeup, and powerful dance and music storytelling. The film explores the complicated nature of traditional arts, its societal value, and the relationship between individual aspirations and tradition through Kannan's portrayal.

The *Othello* adaptation makes it possible for *Kaliyattam* to investigate issues of betrayal, jealousy, and love within the particular sociocultural context of Kerala. Similar to Desdemona, Kannan's relationship with Thamara (Manju Warrier) develops amid the backdrop of Theyyam ceremonies and performances.

The film highlights how art reflects and impacts cultural standards and individual fates by contrasting the larger-than-life expressions of Theyyam with the intensity of personal emotions. *Kaliyattam* also emphasizes the contrast between tradition and modernity. The portrayal of

Kannan's internal conflicts and final demise takes place against the backdrop of a Kerala that is evolving and where traditional customs clash with modern issues. In addition to showcasing Theyyam's artistic brilliance, the movie offers comments on identity, cultural preservation, and the changing place of traditional art forms in contemporary society.

Films like *Kaliyattam* provide a platform to showcase traditional art forms to wider audiences. They highlight the aesthetic beauty, ritual significance, and storytelling process of practices like Theyyam, thus fostering appreciation and respect for these art forms among both local and global viewers. Many traditional art forms, including Theyyam, are passed down through generations orally and experientially.

By integrating them into popular media like film, adaptations help preserve these traditions in a documented and widely accessible format. They contribute to the ongoing transmission of cultural knowledge and practices. In terms of culture genuine adaptations create a sense of pride in one's heritage. Native tales, stories, customs, and values are celebrated and validated, which strengthens their significance in the community and promotes their survival in the face of shifting social dynamics. Adaptations like these also serve as educational tools, introducing audiences to diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and histories. They stimulate curiosity and encourage further exploration of cultural traditions beyond what is depicted on screen.

Adaptations like these which creatively reinterpret classic narratives within the context of local cultural traditions like Theyyam, play a crucial role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Chapter 4

Performative traditions in Adaptations and its relevance in the Contemporary World.

Adaptations frequently use performative traditions which reflect both present theatrical approaches and historical practices. Adaptations may use classical, modernist, or experimental acting styles depending on the time and director's notion. Traditional adaptations often maintain historical accuracy in terms of clothing and locations, representing the time in which the play is set. The use of music and dance, whether historically correct or stylized, may boost the performance's state of mind and depth of emotion. Adaptations may vary from simple sets to advanced stagecraft and special effects in terms of visual and technical presentation.

Adaptations frequently reinterpret Shakespeare's works through the lens of present social and cultural challenges, making them more relevant to current audiences while preserving the original themes. Shakespearean adaptations shift with each generation of performers and directors, blending tradition and innovation to keep these timeless stories alive and relevant for contemporary viewers.

Shakespeare's works have been transformed into a variety of music performances and one of the most popular is ballet. The idea of creating ballet performances using the works of Shakespeare is not new. The first mention of such an idea was in 1761 when George Noverre used *Anthony and Cleopatra* as a ballet exhibition in the French court. There were examples throughout the 18th and 19th centuries including the staging of *Othello* and *Coriolano* by Salvatore Vigano in Milan.

Romeo and Juliet is not the only Shakespeare play that has been adapted for dancers, but it reflects both the romantic and tragic concepts that people want to see when they attend the ballet, and as a result, it has remained immensely popular on the stage. In her book *Dancing*

throughout History, Joan Cass discusses Shakespeare's influence on ballet. She cites Romeo and Juliet as an inspiration for numerous dance works, with at least a dozen different versions produced since 1993. Even today, Shakespeare continues to inspire the ballet world.

The Globe Theatre's productions often adhere to historical accuracy in costumes and settings, using Elizabethan-style costumes and minimalist stage designs to recreate the atmosphere of Shakespeare's time. Through this way, it tries to hold onto its traditions.

Julie Taymor's film adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2014) incorporates imaginative music and choreography, blending traditional orchestral music with modern pop songs to enhance the magical elements of the play. It is a filmed version of Julie Taymor's live theatrical adaptation of Shakespeare's romantic comedy about young lovers and magical sprites. Taymor is known for her innovative and visually stunning productions, and her adaptation of Shakespeare's play is no exception. She uses elaborate costumes, puppetry, and imaginative set designs to bring the magical world of the play to life.

Directors like Taymor might reinterpret the text in new ways by highlighting particular elements of the plot or exploring different topics in their film versions of classic plays. This can make Shakespeare more accessible to modern audiences while also challenging traditional interpretations. Taymor's work blurs the boundaries between theatre and film, influencing both mediums with her innovative techniques. Her adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contributes to ongoing discussions about how classic works should be adapted and presented in contemporary contexts.

Kathakali emerged as a distinct genre of performance art during the 16th and 17th centuries in Kerala, as a way of portraying the stories of the Hindu gods and goddesses. It is known for its elaborate costumes, intricate makeup, and expressive movements.

Kathakali is visually stunning, characterized by vibrant costumes and makeup. Performers wear elaborate, colorful costumes and use exaggerated facial makeup (known as ‘chutti’) to portray various characters, which can include gods, demons, heroes, and villains. The dance form is highly stylized, with performers using intricate hand gestures (‘mudras’), facial expressions (‘rasas’), and body movements to convey emotions and tell stories. Each movement and gesture have specific meanings and symbolism.

Kathakali emerged at the same time as Shakespearean drama. King Lear was also played by Kathakali artists. Production of King Lear in Kathakali style emerged in 1989 in Postcolonial Kerala. The same then travelled to Italy, France, Netherlands, and Spain. But Kathakali Lear was quite different. Kathakali performances typically depict stories from Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as other mythological tales. The narratives are often accompanied by vocalists singing in Sanskritized Malayalam and percussionists playing traditional instruments like chenda (drums) and maddalam (barrel-shaped drum). But Kathakali Lear opted for stories from outside its usual stories. Here, Lear adopts a less makeup appearance to convey his anguish over losing his identity as a complete nothingness. But because it deviates from the original shape, viewers in India viewed this as an insult. The combination was rejected.

They came to the conclusion that Kathakali and Theyyam were intended to be performed in front of gods, altering their religious setting in the process. Thus, Kathakali couldn’t be exposed to a global level. Accessibility issues, such as lack of exposure, limited performance venues, and language barriers (since Kathakali is traditionally performed in Malayalam and Sanskrit), hinder its outreach to broader audiences both within India and Globally.

While adaptation is crucial for the survival of any art form, the challenge lies in maintaining the essence and authenticity of Kathakali while making it relevant to contemporary

audiences which Kathakali couldn't. Shakespeare being a symbol of the West and Kathakali being a symbol of authentic India, together they could make a commodity for the new global market.

If Kathakali could have been explored in various retelling and adaptations, mythic Indian culture would have been able to establish a different hierarchy. Also, In the early ages, it was forbidden for great English literary masterpieces to develop. Consequently, interesting interpretations of Shakespeare's plays weren't appearing as frequently. Nowadays Kathakali and many such art forms have shrunk to acts of performing in the name of tourism. However, the magnificence of Kathakali appears to be fading. In the article Kathakali – a magnificent art or a struggle for survival?. Haritha John cites the experiences and words of various Kathakali artists “The magnificence of Kathakali seems to be crumbling. It is starting to earn the reputation of being 'a poor man's rich art. According to Sugeendran, foreigners are more interested in this art form than the natives”(24-27).

Kathakali artists are struggling for survival since opportunities to perform the art are limited and tourism remains the main source of income for the art form. And the audiences of the art form have also shrunk to foreigners which is quite ironic. Kathakali artists have been desperately trying to preserve their art form by adapting to various transformations. Some talented artists started to transform Bible stories and Shakespearean plays into Kathakali script, realizing that such retellings and adaptations are the way to preserve and take culture globally.

In the essay *Shakespeare and the Possibilities of Postcolonial Performances*, Ania Loomba says:

In a recent book, Rustom Bharucha (2001) argues that, despite the fact that so many "intercultural" performances simply reproduce the economic and cultural dynamics and

inequities of globalization, we must remain open to the possibilities of truly intercultural work (45-50).

Bharucha advocates for maintaining an openness to genuine intercultural endeavors. This suggests a call to critically engage with how cultural interactions are framed and executed in performance contexts, aiming for exchanges that transcend existing power dynamics and truly foster mutual understanding and collaboration across cultures.

Adaptations and retellings of stories from other cultures can include rich cultural symbolism. They can demonstrate how civilizations adapt and recreate traditional narratives to be relevant to modern audiences. These adaptations may include symbols, motifs, and themes that are meaningful within the cultural environment in which they originate.

They additionally function as platforms for exploring contemporary identities, values, and societal challenges while respecting the original stories' traditions and legacies. In essence, adaptations and retellings bridge the gap between tradition and modernity by providing innovative takes on timeless stories via the prism of varied cultural perspectives.

Rapid urbanization, globalization, and industrialization have caused modifications in societal values and priorities. Traditional cultural activities, including dancing forms, may not necessarily be consistent with modern lifestyles or interests, leading to a decline in their transmission and acceptance. Many traditional Indian art forms, particularly Kerala's dance traditions such as Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, lack institutional support. This involves financing, infrastructure, and educational initiatives geared toward preserving them and promoting them. John Locke captures his idea of the *tabula rasa*:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Where does it come from that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? (104-105).

John Locke's theory of the 'clean slate' primarily refers to his concept of the *tabula rasa*, Latin for 'blank slate'. The phrase 'tabula rasa' and the associated ideas about the mind being a blank slate are famously found in John Locke's work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which was first published in 1689. Here, Locke systematically explores how ideas are formed, starting from simple sensory impressions to more complex concepts and principles.

This work remains a cornerstone in the history of philosophy and continues to influence discussions on the nature of knowledge and the mind. This philosophical idea suggests that individuals are born without innate knowledge or ideas and that their minds are empty at birth. According to Locke, our knowledge and understanding of the world are derived from our experiences and perceptions as we interact with the world around us. Locke's theory contrasts with other philosophical views that suggest humans are born with certain innate ideas or knowledge.

He argues that our minds are initially blank, and knowledge is built gradually through sensory experiences and reflection. Locke posited that when humans are born, their minds are like a blank sheet of paper (*tabula rasa*), devoid of any innate ideas, knowledge, or principles. According to Locke, all knowledge and understanding are derived from experience. He argued

that individuals accumulate knowledge through sensory experiences they have in the world around them.

Lev Vygotsky who was a prominent psychologist and the founder of the cultural-historical theory of cognitive development. emphasized the importance of social interactions in cognitive development, particularly how children learn and develop through their interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, teachers, and peers. Central to Vygotsky's theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable person.

The Zone of Proximal Development highlights the potential for learning and development through social interactions and scaffolding. Vygotsky introduced the concept of scaffolding to describe the support provided by adults or more competent peers that enables a child to learn and perform tasks within their ZPD. This support is gradually reduced as the learner becomes more proficient and independent. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays a crucial role in cognitive development. Through interactions with others, children internalize cultural tools (such as language, symbols, and social norms) and acquire cognitive skills that are essential for higher mental functions. Vygotsky emphasized that cognitive development cannot be understood in isolation from the cultural and historical context in which it occurs. He argued that cultural tools and practices shape cognitive processes and influence how individuals think and solve problems. Vygotsky highlighted the role that cultural practices and instruments have in shaping cognitive development.

Cultural dance styles serve as rich channels for cultural history, passing down customs, values, and social conventions from one generation to the next. People who take part in cultural dances learn not just the dance's technical movements but also its background, meaning, and social connotations. Vygotsky highlighted the role that cultural practices and instruments have in shaping cognitive development.

Cultural dance styles serve as a rich medium for cultural history, passing down customs, values, and social conventions from one generation to the next. People who take part in cultural dances learn not just the dance's technical movements but also its background, meaning, and social connotations. Vygotsky's theory of social development can be interpreted as a framework for understanding how cultural dance forms facilitate cognitive, social, and emotional growth through participation, social interaction, and engagement with cultural practices and traditions. Cultural dances serve as dynamic cultural tools that promote learning, identity formation, and community cohesion among participants. Traditional art forms like Kathakali highlight the cultural heritage of Kerala.

Neythe by Rima Kallingal is a dance production that serves as a profound ode to the weavers of Chendamangalam, Kerala, showcasing the importance of such works in preserving cultural heritage. This production not only highlights the rich tradition of handloom weaving but also addresses broader societal issues of cultural sustainability and community resilience. It is an on-stage interpretation and a tribute to the art of weaving and an ode to the weavers of Chendamangalam. The 35-minute production features eight dancers showcasing the journey of a piece of fabric, tracing its transformation from thread to cloth. *Neythe*, produced in collaboration with Save the Loom, a non-profit that works to help handloom weavers, was inspired by the loss

of fabric stock and livelihood faced by the weavers' community post the devastating Kerala floods of 2018.

Firstly, *Neythe* exemplifies the role of art and performance in cultural preservation. By focusing on the traditional craft of weaving practiced in Chendamangalam, the production celebrates the artistic skills and cultural legacy passed down through generations. Through dance, music, and storytelling, *Neythe* brings to life the intricate patterns, vibrant colors, and historical significance of Chendamangalam's weaving tradition, ensuring that this cultural heritage is not only remembered but also cherished and perpetuated. In today's rapidly changing world, traditional crafts such as handloom weaving face numerous challenges, including technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and economic pressures.

Neythe serves as a powerful advocacy tool, raising awareness about the importance of supporting local artisans and preserving indigenous knowledge systems. It emphasizes the resilience of communities like Chendamangalam in safeguarding their cultural identity amidst modernization and globalization. Moreover, *Neythe* embodies the principles of cultural sustainability and community empowerment. By collaborating with local weavers and artists, Rima Kallingal and her team foster a sense of pride and belonging within the community. The production not only provides a platform for artisans to showcase their skills but also stimulates economic opportunities and cultural tourism, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the region.

The significance of *Neythe* extends beyond its artistic merit; it also serves as a catalyst for social change and advocacy. Through its performances and outreach initiatives, the production raises awareness about the socio-economic challenges faced by traditional artisans. It encourages

dialogue on issues such as fair trade, ethical consumerism, and the preservation of cultural diversity, promoting greater appreciation and support for traditional crafts and livelihoods.

From a theoretical perspective, *Neythe* aligns with John Locke's concept of the blank slate by imprinting cultural narratives onto the minds of its audiences. Through immersive storytelling and emotional engagement, the production fosters a deeper understanding of Chendamangalam's weaving heritage and its cultural significance. Audiences are not merely passive spectators but active participants in the preservation and promotion of cultural traditions. Also, Vygotsky's theory of social interaction is evident in the collaborative nature of *Neythe*.

The production brings together artists, musicians, choreographers, and weavers in a collaborative effort to create a multi-sensory experience that transcends language and cultural barriers. This collaborative process not only enriches the artistic quality of the production but also strengthens community bonds and intergenerational knowledge sharing. *Neythe* by Rima Kallingal exemplifies the transformative power of art and performance in preserving cultural heritage.

Through its tribute to the weavers of Chendamangalam, the production celebrates the resilience of traditional craftsmanship and promotes cultural sustainability. It serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, encouraging communities worldwide to value and safeguard their cultural legacies. By engaging with theories of cultural studies, performance studies, and cognitive development, *Neythe* underscores the importance of artistic expressions in shaping collective memory, fostering social cohesion, and promoting cultural diversity in a rapidly changing world.

Everyone and everything in India rely significantly on their culture for identity. It reflects the historical foundations, values, beliefs, and traditions that define who we are and where we come from. India has a rich history of culture spanning thousands of years, including various traditions, languages, arts, and philosophies.

Preserving these traditions ensures that future generations have a legacy that connects them to their ancestors and roots. India is noted for its Cultural diversity, with various areas and groups contributing unique rituals and art forms. Preserving this diversity promotes national unity by celebrating India's uniqueness and shared heritage.

Cultural preservation fosters economic growth through tourism, crafts, performing arts, and cultural organizations. It also promotes social cohesion by encouraging communication, understanding, and mutual respect among varied cultures. Many cultural activities in India are connected to spirituality, rituals, and emotional expression. Preserving these rituals promotes spiritual well-being and emotional bonds among communities.

India's cultural history, which includes traditional dances, music, literature, and philosophy, has received worldwide recognition and admiration. Preserving and promoting these components of culture boosts India's subtle power around the world. Indian culture preservation initiatives involve a wide range of those involved, including government agencies, cultural institutions, educational institutions, communities, and people. These activities include documentation, heritage site conservation, traditional arts and crafts promotion, cultural education support, and the preservation of intangible cultural resources. By investing in cultural preservation, India can continue to celebrate its variety, foster cultural diplomacy, and ensure that its rich cultural fabric lives on for future generations.

Devadasis was also an important figure in early India who helped in the retelling of epics thereby educating the ordinary masses. This tradition dates back to the sixth century, when young girls were married to the deity and then served as temple caretakers, performing all ceremonies, including dance and song, in honor of the deity. These women also learn and perform classical Indian dances including Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi, and Odissi. Their roles as dancers, musicians, and consorts were essential elements of temple worship. The girl's dedication takes place during a ritual known as 'pottukattu', which is similar to marriage. The Devadasi system was widely adopted in South India. It refers to a woman who worshipped the gods at the temple.

Sangam literature constantly mentions dancing women and prostitutes. Between the sixth and thirteenth centuries, Devadasis had a position of privilege and were extremely wealthy because they were regarded as the protectors of the arts.

Originally, the girls learned and practiced skills such as Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and other classical dance forms, alongside taking care of the temple and performing ceremonies. They have traditionally held a high social status because music and dancing were essential components of temple worship. They were considered auspicious because they were devoted to the deity. The offspring of the Devadasis were also taught music or devoted to temples.

During British rule in the Indian subcontinent, kings who served as temple patrons lost power, and as a result, temple artist groups lost significance. As a result, Devadasis were no longer able to rely on their old sources of funding and patronage and were increasingly connected with prostitution. The colonial understanding of Devadasi activities is still

controversial, as the British colonial authorities were unable to distinguish between Devadasis and non-religious street dancers.

Later, with the arrival of Mughals and Britishers in the land, many temples were destroyed, their social standing deteriorated, and they were exploited and humiliated. Also, during the British colonial period, several British soldiers were exposed to venereal diseases in brothels, and Devadasis were mistakenly blamed. To restrict the spread of venereal disease, the British government compelled all prostitutes to register themselves. The British Government considered Devadasis to be prostitutes and ordered them to register. And it was Sethu Lekshmi Bai, the Queen Regent of Travancore, who dissolved the system in 1930.

Globalization and Colonialism have been having a profound impact on Indian art forms, triggering the decline of some traditional traditions that could have helped to conserve components of Indian culture. During the Colonial administration, economic policies frequently overlooked local industries and artisans in favor of exploiting resources for colonial benefit.

This frustrated old patronage systems that supported artists and craftspeople, leading to economic hardship and a decline in artistic production. Colonial powers imposed their cultural standards and ideals, frequently dismissing local creative traditions as primitive or inferior. This resulted in a devaluation of native artistic traditions and a preference for Western cultural activities, undermining the status and popularity of indigenous art forms.

Colonial educational programs prioritized Western knowledge and languages over indigenous languages and traditional knowledge systems. This move reduced the transfer of cultural activities, including art forms, via formal schooling channels, eroding intergenerational continuity.

Traditional patrons of art, such as royal courts and wealthy merchants, were at times replaced or repressed by colonial administrators and industrialists who favoured Western art forms. This decline in patronage weakened the financial support and societal status that traditional artists and performers formerly enjoyed. Globalization has resulted in the standardization and homogenization of cultural expressions, promoting popular and commercialized art forms over traditional and local ones. This approach has devalued indigenous creative forms that are at odds with international tastes and commercial interests.

Globalization-related urbanization and migration have damaged traditional rural areas, where many art forms originated. This has resulted in the downfall of cultural practices that were formerly maintained within these communities. While technology can help to preserve and spread culture, it can also lead to the marginalization of traditional art forms. Globalized media platforms frequently promote popular and monetized material, marginalizing traditional and niche cultural appearances. Recognizing the impact of globalization and colonialism on Indian art forms enables more targeted efforts to restore and sustain these valuable elements of India's cultural heritage.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The paper is set to analyze the power of dance forms as a narrative, retelling tales and adaptations and powerful dynamics of cultural studies and performance studies persistent in literature. The paper also provides light on the relevance of preserving such traditional dance forms in order to preserve the cultural heritage of that place. The paper also explains the current situation of such art forms and their struggle to thrive. By analyzing the works *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam*, the paper tries to show the importance of art forms to be persistent through adaptations. The relevance of these forms, its cultural symbolism and the need to preserve the cultural heritage and the cultural and historical influences are discussed in the paper.

The comparative study of *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam* provides a compelling framework for understanding how cultural traditional dance forms can be preserved and revitalized through literary adaptations, while also addressing broader societal and cultural challenges. Both adaptations, rooted in Shakespearean plays and embedded within their respective cultural contexts of South Africa and Kerala, India, exemplify the transformative power of performance in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Firstly, *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam* serve as poignant examples of how adaptations of Shakespeare's works can act as vehicles for cultural preservation. These adaptations not only reinterpret well-known narratives but also integrate indigenous dance forms, music, and theatrical traditions. In *uMabatha*, the adaptation of Macbeth incorporates Zulu cultural elements, enhancing the authenticity and resonance of the narrative within the local context. Similarly, *Kaliyattam* reimagines *Othello* through the vibrant dance-drama traditions of Kerala,

showcasing the enduring relevance and adaptability of cultural performances across geographical and temporal boundaries.

From a cultural studies perspective, these adaptations highlight the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation. They demonstrate how traditional dance forms can evolve and thrive within contemporary theatrical frameworks, thereby appealing to diverse audiences while preserving ancestral knowledge and practices. John Locke's theory of the blank slate is pertinent here, as it underscores how cultural performances can imprint cultural narratives onto the minds of individuals, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity.

Vygotsky's theory of social development provides valuable insights into the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in cultural transmission. Both *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam* exemplify collaborative processes wherein artists, choreographers, musicians, and performers collectively contribute to the preservation and evolution of traditional dance forms. Through these collaborative efforts, cultural practitioners not only pass down technical skills but also impart cultural values, rituals, and social norms embedded within the performances.

The disappearance of the devadasi tradition in India and the broader challenges facing performative traditions globally underscore the urgency of cultural preservation efforts. Cultural dance forms serve as repositories of historical memory and cultural identity, embodying centuries-old traditions that reflect the complex tapestry of human experience. By adapting and promoting these traditions through literary adaptations like *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam*, scholars and practitioners contribute to the ongoing revitalization and sustainability of intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, these adaptations contribute to the global visibility and appreciation of local cultural traditions. Shakespeare's works, known for their universal themes and humanistic insights, provide a platform for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. Through adaptations such as *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam*, cultural practitioners bridge the gap between local traditions and global audiences, promoting cultural exchange and mutual respect.

In conclusion, the comparative study of *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam* underscores the significance of literary adaptations in preserving and promoting cultural traditional dance forms. These adaptations not only celebrate the richness and diversity of cultural expressions but also address contemporary issues of cultural sustainability and identity.

By engaging with theories such as John Locke's blank slate and Vygotsky's theory of social interaction, this thesis highlights how cultural performances engrave cultural narratives onto collective consciousness, fostering empathy, dialogue, and appreciation across diverse communities. Ultimately, *uMabatha* and *Kaliyattam* exemplify the enduring power of performance to transcend borders, preserve heritage, and inspire future generations to cherish and uphold their cultural legacies.

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