

First Report

Extinct Condition of the Folk Martial Art Form: A Study of 'Nattu Adi Murai' Martial Art of Tamilnadu and its Relation to the Performances

Going through the region of kanyakumari district on field based study, the researcher has find out numerous Aasans (Masters) who are teaching and practicing Nattu Adi Muri (Country Fighting Methods) in various aspects. By interviewing and documenting those masters, so many fighting techniques of Nattu Adi Muri have been traced out. Importantly, Suvadhu Murai (empty hand combat methods), Adi Thadai, Nedukambu or Silambam (large stick fighting), Kurun thadi (Small stick fighting), Pootu Thirappu (lock and open system methods), Mallu (wrestling) Vettu Kaththi (knife fighting), Kandan Kodali (axe fighting), Vaal (Sword), Velkambu (spear fighting), Siramam (Medium stick fighting), Varma Prayogam (striking the vital spots), Maruthuvam (medical treatment) and Manthira Vithy (Chanting).

Last three months, the researcher has found out the few surviving great masters of Nattu Adi Muri in kanyakumari district who have severed and dedicated for this rare art form. More than 30 Aasan (Masters) have been interviewed, among them 12 of the masters' works have documented. Names of those Aasan (Masters) are given bellow:

1. Selvan
2. George
3. Thirupathi
4. Pandiyan
5. Shenbagalingam

6. Naanappan
7. Arjunan
8. Dharmayan
9. Mani
10. Visuvanathan
11. Palayan
12. Aaris

All the masters are given more importance to Suvadur Murai since it is the fundamental and essential of Nattu Adi Muri. Suvadur Murai can be considered the base for all the fighting methods. All the masters of kanyakumari district commonly teach Suvadur Murai to their students constantly since it improves the body movements, footsteps, strength, speed, balance, and knowledge of the skill.

At the time of interviewing, all the masters have enunciated that the relation between the skills learned in Suvadur Murai and those used for fighting are immense defensive and offensive part of this unique martial art. Thirdly, fights with any weapon would very often end with both combatants grappling with each other, and any person without Suvadur Murai experience would be at a deadly disadvantage.

The masters are teaching this Suvadur Murai (combat methods) not in a chronological order since it is in unidentified condition. Each master have learnt a minimal accessible Suvadur Murai among the hundred and thus the collective of hundred is not existing in the training system of the respective masters. The following Suvadur Murai are performed by the above mentioned masters:

1. Vanakka Suvadur

2. Nilai Suvadu or Ottai Suvadu
3. Pirivu Suvadu
4. Cheena Suvadu
5. Nadasali
6. Sailat
7. Ponnu Suvadu
8. Ozhivu Suvadu
9. Beeman vazhi Suvadu
10. Anga Suvadu
11. Koottu Suvadu
12. Vatta Suvadu
13. Mukkona Suvadu
14. Mon vaari Suvadu

This project created a DVD of documentation on Nattu Adi Murai (Country Fighting Method). The DVD covers introductions into a variety of practices and fighting methods of Nattu Adi Murai from various masters of kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu. The DVD also contains the documentation of available Suvadu Murai and other fighting methods which are performed by the masters and their disciples.

Few of the photos and videos which have been documented at the time of field work in kanyakumari district are attached along with this report for your kind reference.



Interview with Senpagalingam Aasan



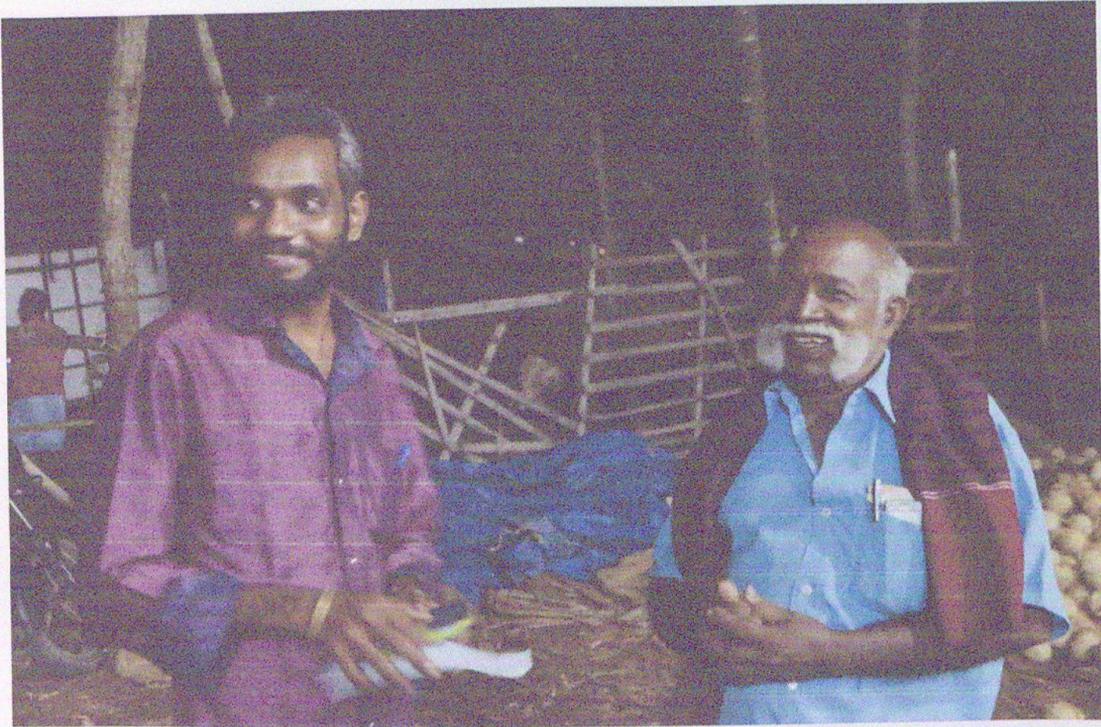
Suvadhu Demonstration by Senpagalingam Aasan



Suvadukam Demonstration by Senpagalingam Aasan



Nedunkampam Demonstration by Senpagalingam Aasan



Interview with Pandian Aasan



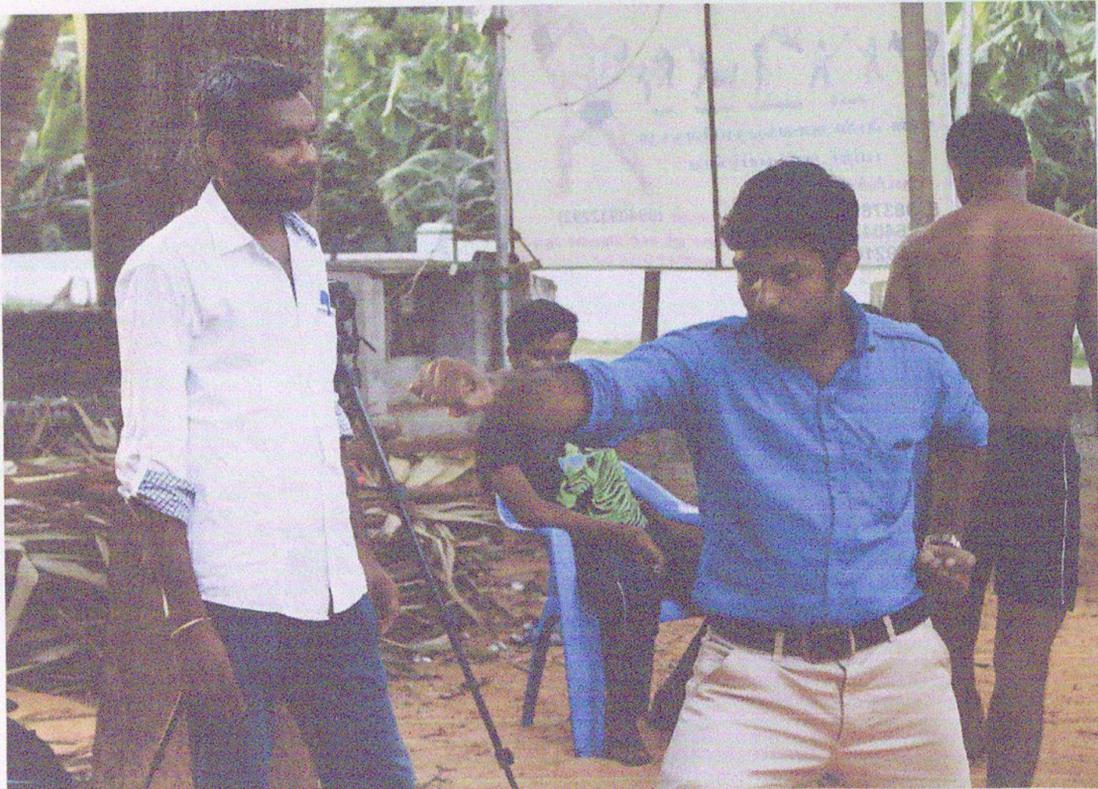
Nedunkampu Demonstration by Pandiyan Aasan



Suvadhu Demonstration by Pandiyan Aasan and his desiple



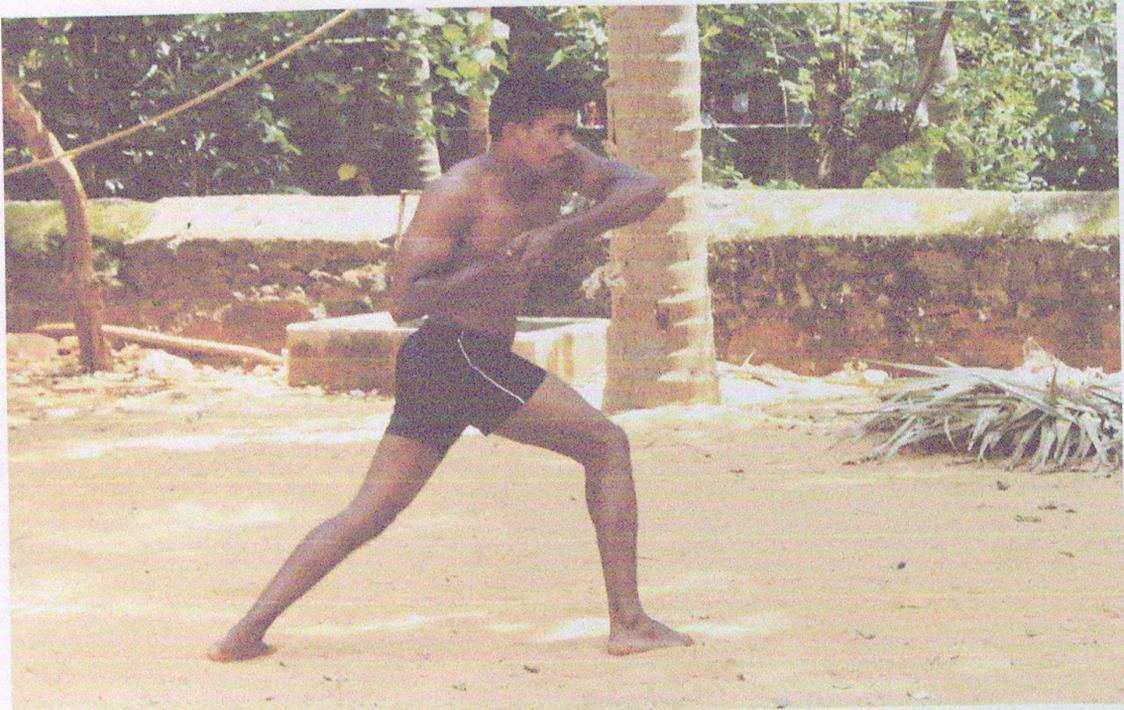
Lock Demonstration by Pandiyan Aasan and his desiple



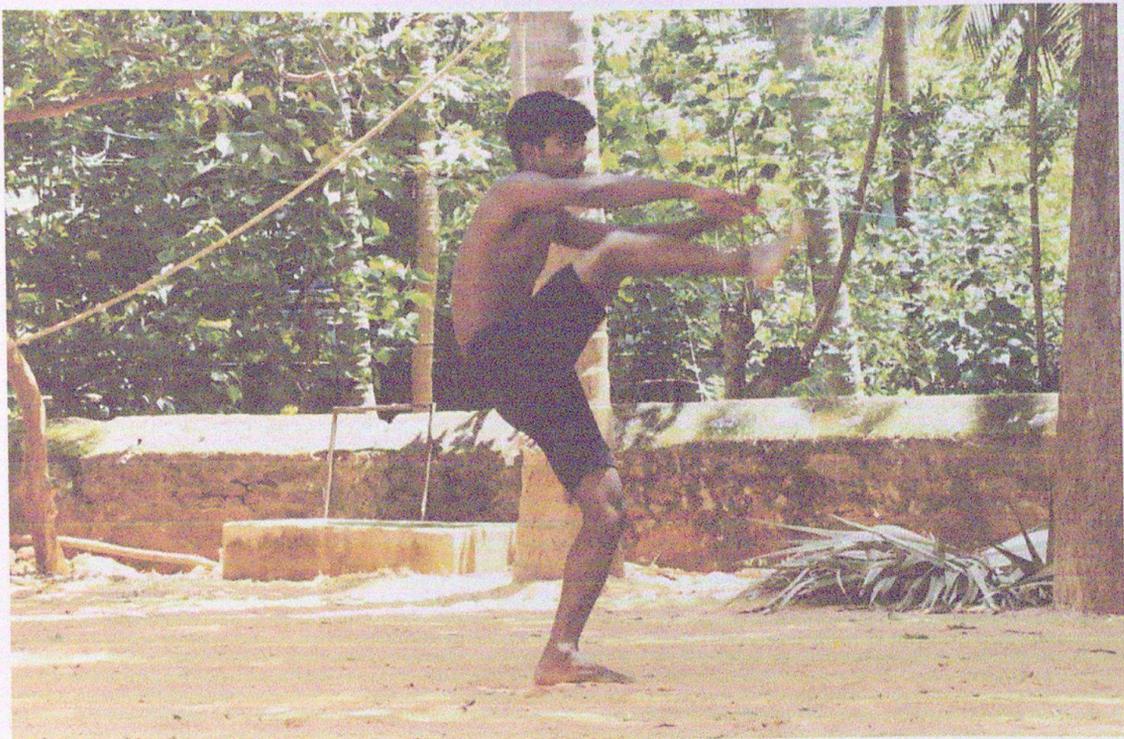
Suvadhu Demonstration by Selvam Aasan



Suvadhu Demonstration by Selvam Aasan and his desiple



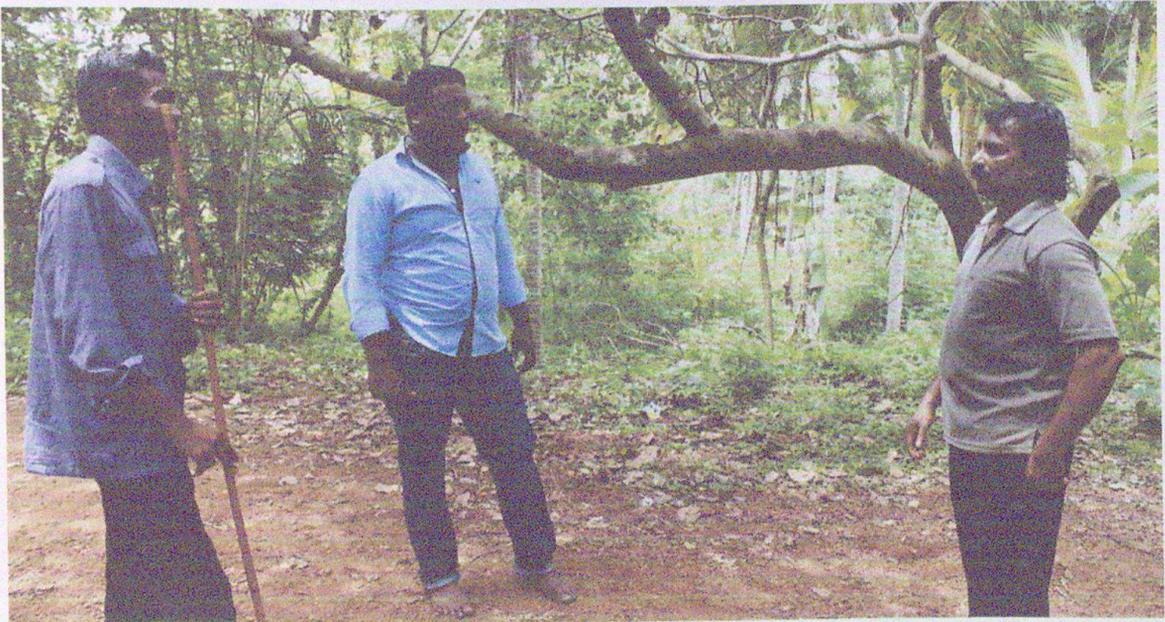
Suvadhu Demonstration by Selvam Aasan's desiple



Suvadhu Demonstration by Selvam Aasan's desiple



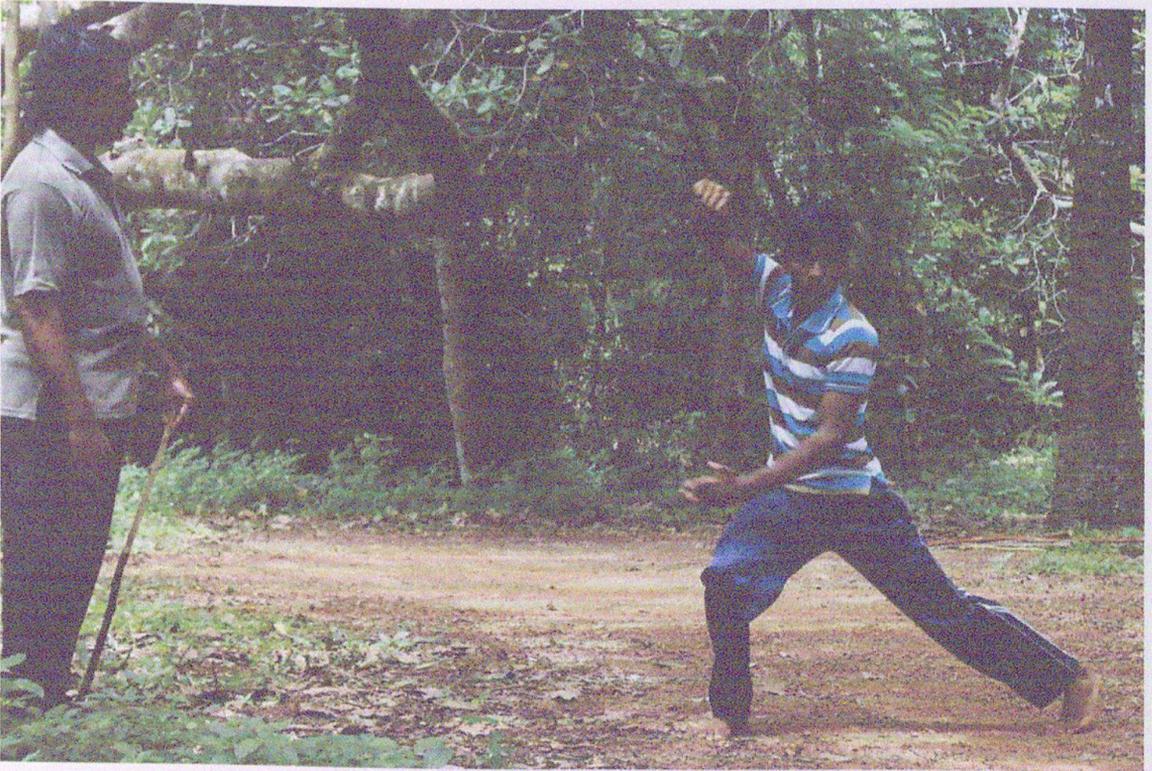
Interview with Nanappan Aasan



Interview with Nanappan Aasan



Siramam Demonstration by Nanappan Aasan and his desiple



Suvadukku Demonstration by Nanappan Aasan's desiple



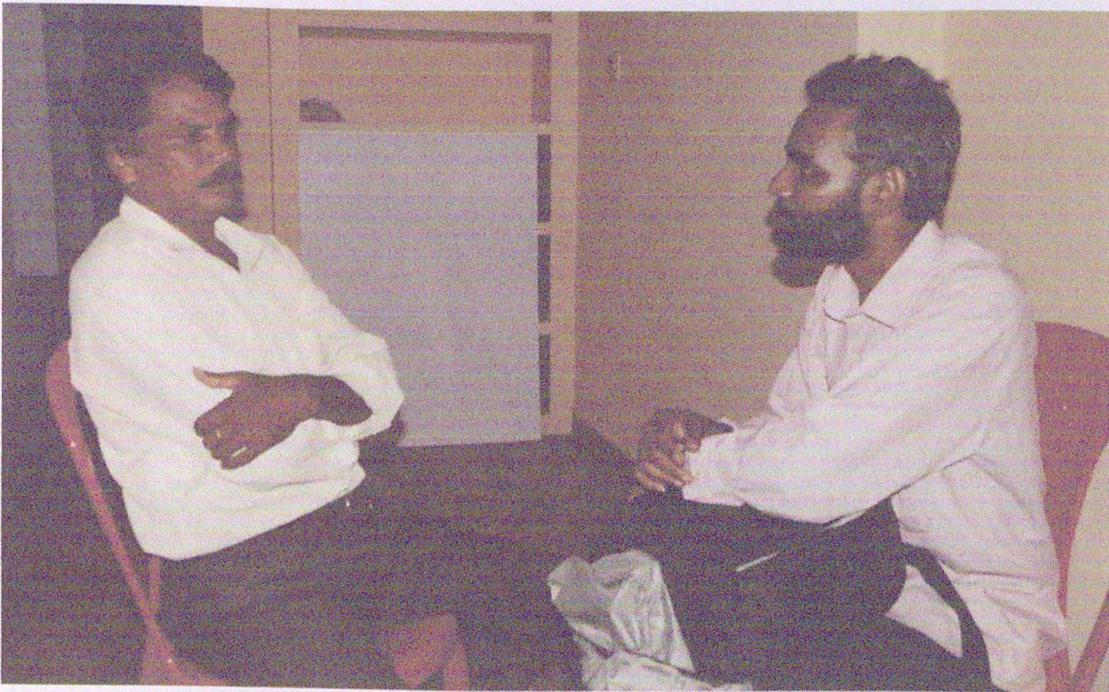
Interview with Mani Aasan



Interview with Mani Aasan



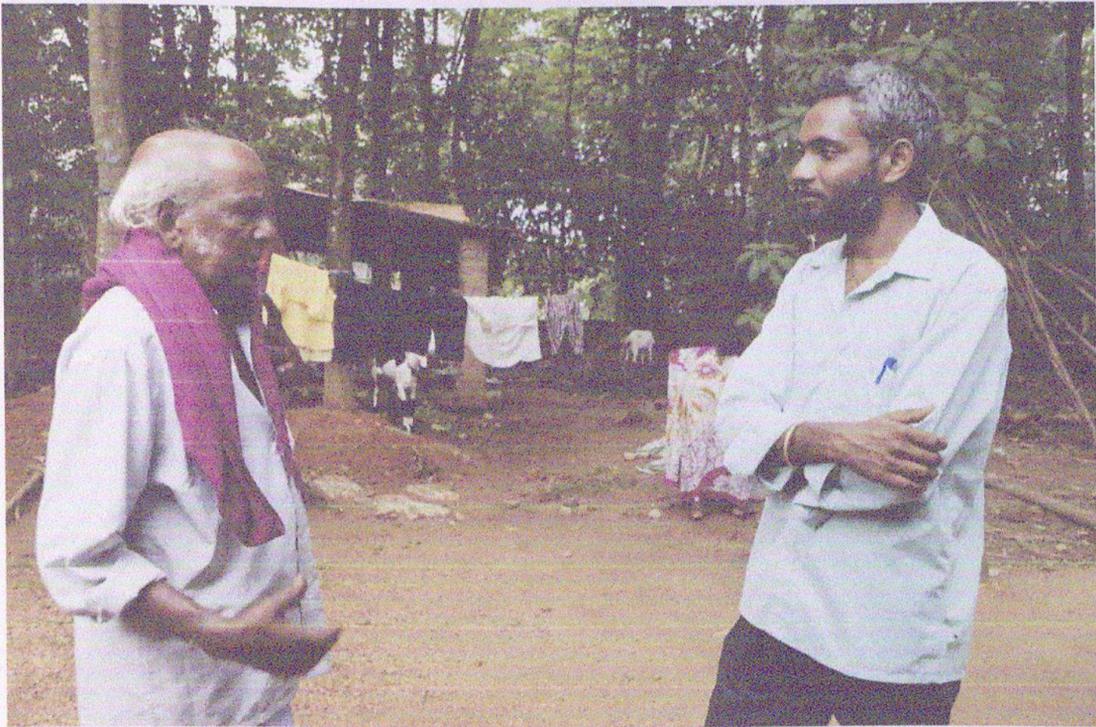
Interview with Aaris Aasan



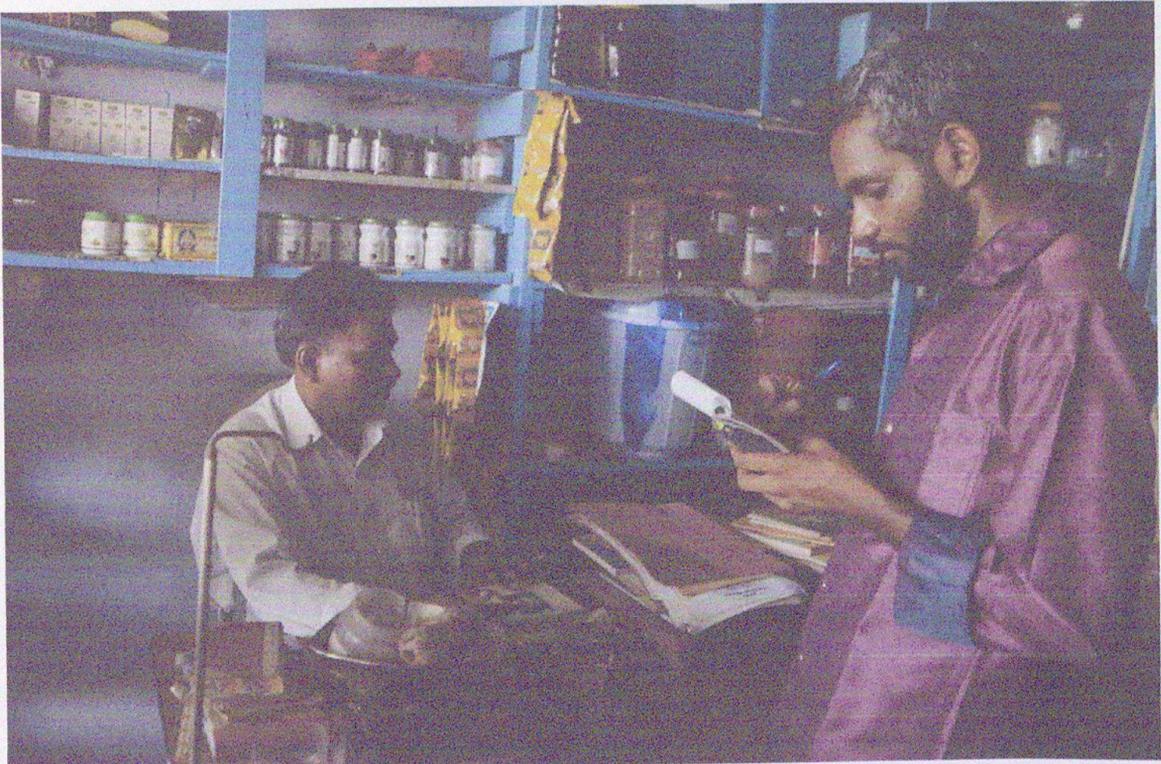
Interview with George Aasan



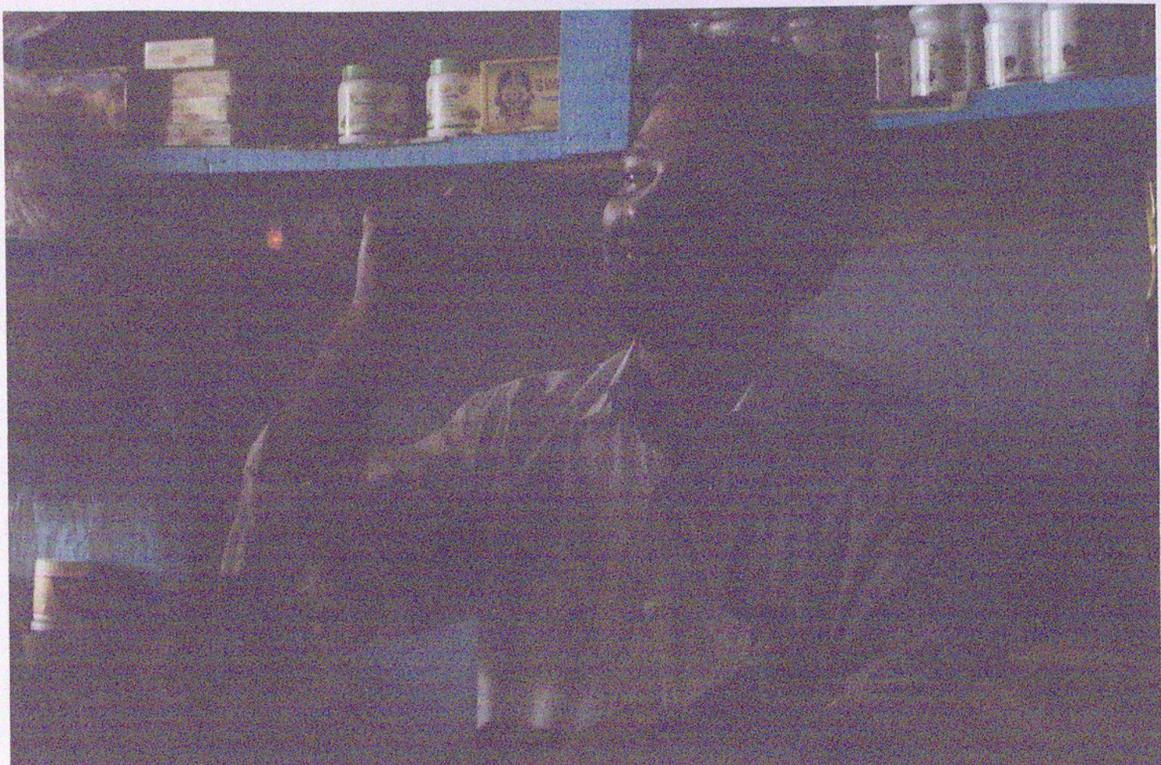
Interview with Tharmaiyan Aasan



Interview with Visvanasthan Aasan



Interview with Arjunan Aasan



Interview with Arjunan Aasan

Extinct Condition of the Folk Martial Art Form: A Study of 'Nattu Adi Murai' Martial Art of Tamil Nadu and its Relation to the Performances

Introduction

Martial arts in any tradition are considered as the most vital entity which holds the identity of that particular society. Though it represents the identity of respective people, the importance are not given by the mass. In that, 'Nattu Adi Murai' (Country fighting method) or 'Nattu Vilaiyattu' (country martial games) is one among the traditional martial art forms of Tamil Nadu which is quite unfamiliar throughout the ages. Among the master of this martial art form is also known as 'Kavya Abyasam'. There is a faith in the southern part of Tamil Nadu that Kalarippayattu and Silambam are emerged from this 'Nattu Adi Murai' or 'Kavya Abyasam' and thus it might be considered as the proto-form of Kalarippayattu and Silambam.

'Nattu Adi Murai' is a unique art form of southwestern region of Tamil Nadu, especially Kanyakumari District. The place of 'Nattu Adi Murai' training is called Kalari. In Kanyakumari most of the villages have its own Kalari for the training of dedicated students under the guidance of Aasans. The word 'Aasan' means teachers or masters. As a traditional folk art form still performed widely but not largely by

numerous masters who are unknown in the district of Kanyakumari is quite unrecognized in Tamil Nadu.

In this art form, a variety of jumps and turns, and coordinated hand, arm and foot movements performed in increasingly swift and difficult succession and combinations back and forth. Suvadhu Murai (empty hand combat methods), Kambu Vilaiyattu or Silambam (long stick fencing), Siramam (short stick fencing), Pootu Thirappu (lock and open methods) Vettu Kaththi (sword and knife fighting) and Varma Ati (striking the vital spots) are the important combat methods which are considered to be the fundamental sequences of offensive and defensive moves of this art form.

There are one hundred and eight forms with various divisions of Suvadhu Murai is in Nattu Vilaiyattu, but now this one hundred and eight forms are not existing in Tamil Nadu because it is vanished due the lack of awareness in the Martial art. On the other hand, the masters are teaching this Suvadhu Murai (combat methods) not in a chronological order since it is in unidentified condition. Each master have learnt a minimal accessible Suvadhu Murai among the hundred and thus the collective of hundred is not existing in the training system of the respective masters and even not in its extracting art forms like Kalarippayattu of Kerala and Silambam of Tamil Nadu. Though this art form has a long primordial background throughout the ages, now it is in a vanished-plaint in Tamilnadu. The lack of support and importance has also forced this Nattu Adi Murai or Nattu Vilaiyattu art to vanish slowly from its native land.

This project is an effort to document these combat methods with the available masters since it lost many masters who know the above mentioned tactics of this art. So it documented the rare masters of Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu who are still practicing Suvadururai and other forms and methods which is otherwise going to extinct soon.

This research project aims to explore and explicate an invaluable art form, Nattururai of the land of Tamils, and it is performed and taught by the least artists who are mostly unknown in this modern era. Hence, while contributing to the serious academic knowledge, this research also will be an attempt to bring the significance of this art and the plight of these artists to the light and it can be give an innovative scope for the theatre activities. Documenting the techniques, aesthetic values and methods of this art will produce a much needed source for the contemporary researchers and future generation for getting knowledge about this rare art.

Martial Art

The term Martial Arts refers to the art of warfare and this term comes from the 15th century European term for fighting art form. The practitioner of martial art is referred to as a martial artist. In popular culture the term martial arts refers to the combat system that originated in South East Asian countries. However the term actually refers to any codified combat system.

Martial arts are the systems at codified practices and traditions of training for combat. Martial arts share a single objective: to physically defeat other persons and to defend oneself or other from physical threat. Martial arts are very wide, and may focus any specific area or combination of areas, but they can be broadly grouped in to focusing on strikes, grappling, or weapon training.

Most of the countries in the world has martial arts in different style which originated their or migrated to their, was known in different names. Such as Europe and Asia is home to many of the existing system of martial arts, both living traditional form Asian martial arts are older systems and that has existed through the past, many of which are now being reconstructed and many of martial art forms doesn't exist in the present.

While each style has unique facets that make it different from other martial arts a common characteristic are the Systemization of fighting techniques, Method of training include sparring and the formal sets or routines at techniques known as forms.

Indian tradition lots of martial art forms are there. According to the culture of the people the forms has some difference. The cultural difference makes the different communities and each community has their own martial arts. All the martial art forms have some differences. On the other hand they have close relation and many similarities as well as they are very much relates to the culture of the communities.

Kanyakumari district which is the research area is the place of different communities and culture. It is placed in the border of the state Kerala and southern end of Tamil Nadu are the different two languages spoken areas. So we can perceive the language of this area which includes the words of both Tamil and Malayalam languages and also some of the words traditionally used by the people of this area which are not told in the other part of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. As well as there we can see the mixed culture and its reflection to the dress, food, architecture, celebrations, festivals, rituals and art forms too.

Once there were so many masters and that was the place which everybody knows the traditional Martial Art form called 'Nattu Adi Murai'. This form was teaches in the martial art schools called Kalari, near the master's house, private places and also in secret places. Now in some region they use to say it as Silamba vilayattu and some say Kalari vilayattu. But somewhere we can see this amazing art form with it's various sub-forms and uniqueness, it is very necessary to describing about this forms.

Still we can see many masters and the braver in many villages of Kanyakumari district specially in such as Athancodu, Vavarai, Palavilai, Vilavan Codu, Parakkuntu, Palappallam, Valiya Vilai, Nadaikavu, Vengcodu, Kalkulam, Thikkurucchi, Eenchakcodu, Idaikcodu, Marthandam, Villukuri, Asaripallam, Pazhivilai, Sooriyacodu, Aattoor, Thiruvattar, Kattakadai, Thicckanan Codu, Kumarapuram, Muttai kadu, Kuttai Codu, Kurunthancodu, Puthoor, Punnai Kadu,

Makecodu, Vallanoor, Kurumatthoor, Matthoor, Munchirai, Kappikkadu, Kancham Puram, Mancodu, Kulasegaram, Velliyavilai, Rajakkamangalam, Raman Puthur, Mullu Vilai, Soorangkudi and the other places of this district also we can see the masters and the peoples, who knows Nattu Adi Murai. There is a say that were ever the master belongs is not the matter but if we look in to the root we can easily find out that they or their masters came or learn from the masters of Vilavancode and Kalkulam Thaluk. Most of these places the masters are teaching in private places silently. But some were in schools also they are teaching Nattu Adi Murai. The interesting thing is that all these masters have uniqueness in their art form. Their forms, movements, style, techniques, names, and methods slightly or completely vary from each other.

Normally the masters of 'Nattu Adi Murai' won't teach this form very easily and it takes 12 to 18 years to learn. There was a hesitation among the master to share their whole knowledge of 'Nattu Adi Murai'. It could be because of many reasons. One is that they do not want to share with anybody rather they are interested to teach those who are dedicated to learn it by spending years with them. So a master want his pupil to come with passion and patience in learning as this practice requires plenty of time to learn. Generally, there are many things which master keep secrets and do not share with others easily, not even with their dear student sometimes. The other one is that someone should not misuse this form for hurt others or take revenge. This could be used only for defend or protect oneself from the attacks. So the masters use to

observe their students very keenly and once they got faith on the student then they teach the depth or the secrets. There is a need to know each other more deeply to share something profound.

The contemporary 'Nattu Adi Murai' techniques and the customs and traditions associated with it may be a composite of many patterns of skills. In order to trace the origin and historical development of 'Nattu Adi Murai', a research has to be done deep into the hoary past of the Dravidian civilization, where in they are twined and tangled the combat sport might be as old as man himself.

From the origin to the present, the Human life is a struggle; in this life struggle man do many things to protect him as defense. The primitive man lived in the forest like an animal and he fights against the animals to eat and live. Why because the fittest one will live and the weak one may disappear. That so for the existence man needs to fight. At this point of time he started to fight and start using the weapons like stone and wooden pieces which he got from the forest. Because of the weapons he got more power and strength to fight.

Then he wants to fight against the other group people for his survival. The development of human beings catch peroxide, life is a struggle. He fight so many times, for this he needs a form of fight and he made it from his hunting and fighting experiences, the games, and his daily life when fight at that time he moves his body and keep legs to front, back and sideways. This is the way he found and slowly

develops through his practice the movements and positions as well as the techniques and method of fight and using the stick and other weapons to escape or to attack. In the long practices he derived it as a form. Later period he included various weapons and his fighting form came to known as martial art forms.

Like this the form 'Nattu Adi Murai' was originated the place which has hills, forest seashore and river area of southern part of Tamil Nadu. 'Nattu Adi Murai' is very much related to the communities of these areas.

History of 'Nattu Adi Murai'

One of the important Aim of this project is to study the historical and sociological aspects of Nattu Adi Murai martial art, one can understand the reason for the extinct condition of this art. Presently, it has become an endangered art form due to the adverse effects of globalization in all its manifestations.

'Nattu Adi Murai' was originated in hundreds of years ago and traditionally it was teaches and practiced in Guru Shisya parampara (Master student teaching tradition) by this it came to one generation to the next and still it continuing and existing with the people. In the history of 'Nattu Adi Murai', we can say once upon a time it was the art form which everybody known in the Kanyakumari district, the research area which was known as in that time is Thiruvithankoor Samasthanam (kingdom).

Previous time our Tamil speaking areas was divided in to three kingdom like Chera Nadu, Chola Nadu and Pondiya Nadu, the Kanyakumari district is the boarder of Chera Nadu and Pondiya Nadu sometimes it was under the control of Pondiyas and part of their kingdom as well as sometimes it was under the control of Cheras and become part of their kingdom. As well as once it was under the control of Cholas too.

The Chera king Marthanda varma's period it was under the control of him. And the kingdom was called Thiruvithankoor Samasthanam (kingdom). This was the period we can call as a Golden period of 'Nattu Adi Murai'. Why because in this period 'Nattu Adi Murai' was teached in the schools called Kalari, Kalari means the place witch used and practiced for 'Nattu Adi Murai'. At the time of Marthandavarma Mr. Ananthabathmanaban Nadar were the friend and the major general of the king. In his village 'Purankottoor' located in Kalkulam Thaluck has one Kalari'.

Ananthabathmanaban Nadar's 'Purankottoor Kalari' was the capital Kalari, under those 107 Kalaries was there. Here many of the great masters were teaches the peoples and the soldiers. From this many masters and brave's was learn and came.

So many years after the kingdom was went under the control of the upper caste communities called Brahmins and Nair and they oppressed the other communities. They destroyed the 108 Kalaries and kill many of the masters. In this period the oppressed peoples cannot allowed to wear the dress in their upper body and below part of the knee as well as they didn't allowed coming the public areas.

During this period so many masters were killed by the upper cast people. Some masters escape from their and they migrated the other parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. As well as this time and before or after this many people migrated to other areas to their work and some other reasons. Where ever the master's went there they teach these martial arts. Like this 'Nattu Adi Murai' was spread everywhere.

When the British came to rule India that time they banned the martial art activities and they didn't allow to teaching or learning this. But the masters who are all remained there; they teach to their children's and their relatives in secretly. They teach the night times in the nearest places of house, the hills and inside of the estates by secretly. Like this 'Nattu Adi Murai' came to the present and still it is existing. But many of the methods and techniques were done with the masters and now some of the remaining techniques was teaches by the masters in this areas.

Here we should understand an important matter, the masters who are all went to Tamil speaking areas they called this art form in the name of Silambam. As well as in Kerala they called this art form in the name of Kalari. This was the important turning point in the history of 'Nattu Adi Murai'.

Forms of 'Nattu Adi Murai'

Nattu Adi Murai is a vast martial art form which includes so many other forms methods and techniques in it. Such as,

1. Suvadur Murai (Empty hand fight form with certain foot works and movements)

2. Nedung kampu or Silampam (Long stick Fencing)
3. Siramam (Small stick Fencing)
4. Poottu & Thirappu murai (Locks & Opening methods)
5. Vel kampu (Spear Form)
6. Vettu Kaththi (Knife)
7. Surul Val (Sward)
8. Varmam (vital points)
9. Vaiththiyam (Medicine)
10. Manthiram or Manthreegam (Magic)

Suvadumurai (empty hand fight form) Silambam (long stick fencing), Siramam (small stick fencing), Kuru thadi or Katta kampu (short and thick stick), Vel Kmpu (spear) Maduvu or Sila (deer horn), Surul Pattai, Kadari, Kathi kuthu (knife thrust), Vaal veechu (sword play) are all closely related and can be called as a single group of this martial art form. In other words we can say that these form are the steps which a student will learn one by one and after years of dedicated practice he will master them all and reach the level of master.

1. Suvadumurai

Footsteps are called 'Suvadum' and the empty hand fight also called in the same name. Beginners are taught Footwork patterns and preliminary training with bare hands and they must master them before learning the other forms and techniques, patterns, and methods. Footworks are the key aspects of 'Nattu Adi Murai'. Traditionally, the masters first teach Kaaladi (Foot works) for a long time, and then proceed to Suvadum varisai which is also called Adi murai. The teaching of 'Suvadum'

Murai' trains oneself to get using our bare hands, leg and other part of body. Gradually, fighters study footwork to move precisely in conjunction with the hand and leg movements. The ultimate goal of the training is to defend against multiple armed opponents with empty hands.



Figure. Vettu (cutting) of Suvadumurai

In 'Nattu Adi Murai' the kaaladi (foot work or foot step) is the key in deriving power for the blows. Kaaladi teaches how to advance and retreat, to get in range of the opponent without losing our defense as well as it aids very much in hitting and

blocking. It also strengthens the body immensely enabling the person to receive blows (non-lethal) and still continue the combat. The whole body is used in 'Suvaduru murai' and has attacks with finger, palm, and edge of hands, first, wrist, elbow, shoulder, head, knees, foot, leg, toe, etc. are used to attack like punch, push, pull, cut, kick, This has many different types of evading an attack like, blocking, parrying, receiving, rotary parrying, hammering, attacking and blocking simultaneously and purely evading moves like sitting or kneeling, moving out, jumping high and so on.

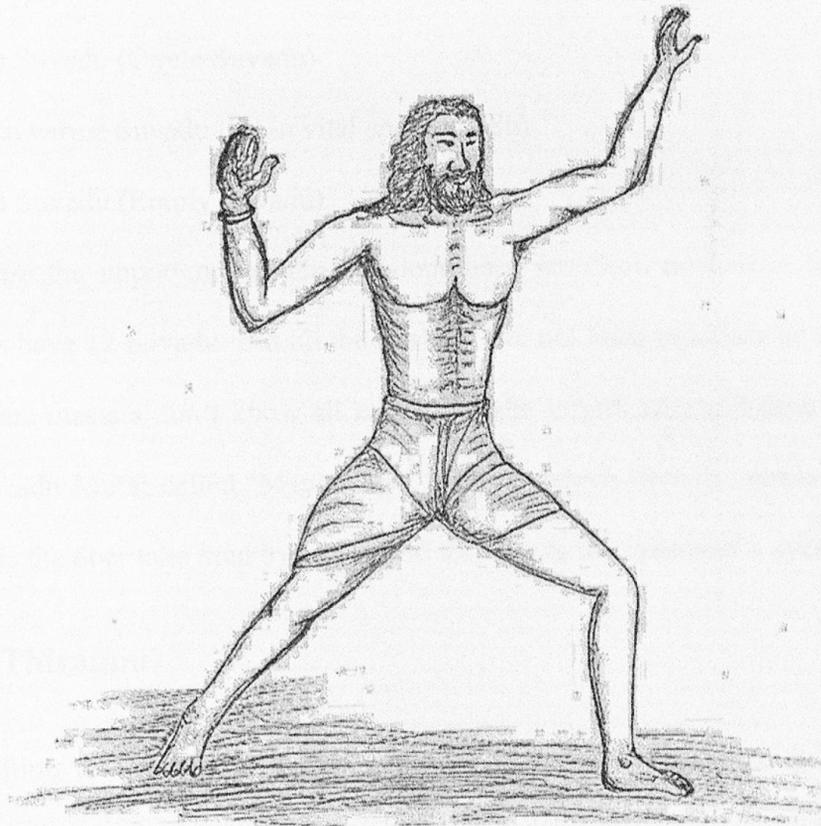


Figure. Block and hit movement of Suvaduru

There are various types of 'Suvadu murai' among the masters and the same type of Suvadu is also vary among the masters. The various divisions and sub divisions of Suvadu murai are given below.

1. Vanakka Suvadu (Salutation Suvadu)
2. Nilai Suvadu or Ottai Suvadu (Permanent or Single step Suvadu)
3. Pirivu Suvadu (Split Suvadu)
4. Thullu muri Suvadu (Jump and split Suvadu)
5. Chee Nadi Suvadu
6. Vatta Suvadu (Circle Suvadu)
7. Thattu varma Suvadu (hit in vital spot Suvadu)
8. Kaali Suvadu (Empty Suvadu)

These are the important Suvadu divisions been practiced now days. Each of these divisions have 12 Suvadu. But all the twelves' are not been practiced or thought now days. Some masters don't know all but some who knows may not show it out. There is a Suvadu Murai called 'Mannu Vari Suvadu' which literally means taking mud and in this the doer take mud by sitting and throw it to the opponent's eyes.

2. Pootu & Thirappu

In addition to the blows 'Suvadu murai' has a vast variety of grappling methods called Poottu (locks). A fighter must always be careful while wielding his hands or legs or he will be grappled and cannot able to move himself or the body

parts. The locks can be disabled by the counters or openings for these locks are called Thirappu. But the counters must be used before the lock gets finished. In addition 'Suvadumurai' also has many different types of evading an attack like, blocking, parrying, receiving, rotary parrying, hammering, locks, sliding (attacking and blocking simultaneously) and purely evading moves like sitting or kneeling, moving out, jumping high and so on.

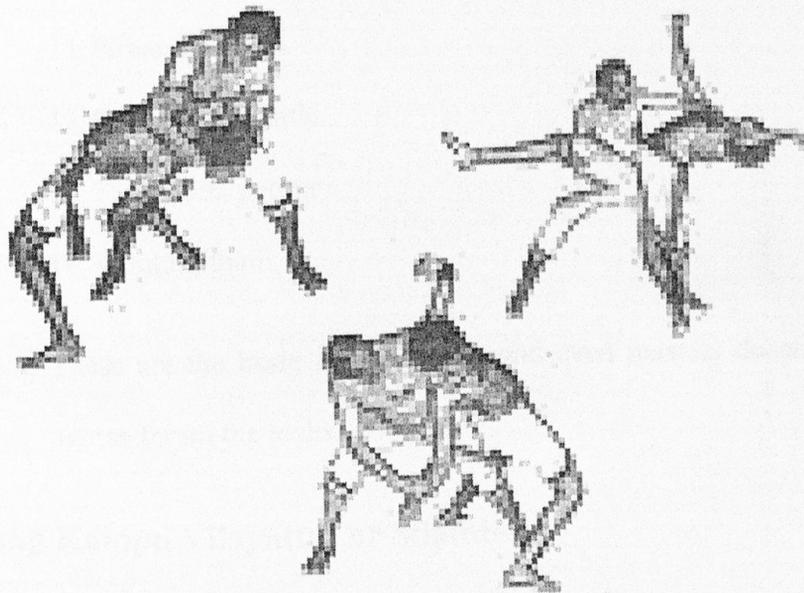


Figure. Poottu (Lock)

There are more than 48 'Pootu' methods such as,

1. Malaththik kappara
2. Kamaththik kappara
3. Aaru kol

4. Sangu thiri
5. Kurukkuthhaspa
6. Kurukku murichan
7. Kazhuthtu murichan
8. Kaakkatta kana
9. Poomi patthan
10. Vaanam patthan
11. Piraanthamukki
12. Kadukkan kalatthi
13. Thuthikkai poottu
14. Kalutthu thalli,

These are the basic lock methods and even masters doesn't know the names for all the locks.

3. 'Nedung Kampu Vilayattu' or Silambam

'Nedung Kampu Vilayattu' or Silambam is one of the important form in 'Nattu Adi Murai'. It is a weapon based form which is practice in all over Tamil Nadu and also practiced by the Tamil communities living countries in the world like Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore and the states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh etc. Even we can see some portion of this form in the traditional martial art form Kalaripayattu, which is existed in the neighboring state Kerala.

After the art spread to the Malay world, "Silambam" came to refer to the art as well as the weapon. The word Silambam refers to the bamboo stick which is one of the weapon used in 'Nattu Adi Murai', and because of the usage of the stick this form is known as 'Nedung Kampu Vilayattu' it means long stick game and also we can say staff fencing. 'Silambam' denotes an elastic can bamboo uniform in cross section from end to end, having a length a little less than that of the height of the performer wielding it.

The stick has played, and still continues to play, a prominent part in the civilization of mankind. Royalty wield it is a symbol of its status. Old man or the old people use it for walking with surer footing. The conductor of the orchestra and the band master wield it to mark the pattern and rhythm of the music produced by artistes; the shepherd wield it to control his flock and protect them from the wild animals, the man trading the hilly paths used it to find balance. The boat man in the shallow water handles it to drive his boat by thrusting it against the bottom or sides of the back water or canals, the gypsies used it to control unruly wild life. The sagacious villagers make use of the stick to gauge the depth of ford as he crosses it. It provides a means of recreation and exercise for many in the form of staff dance.

Unique Nature of Silambam

Almost all cultures have some forms of stick fighting. But what is unique in Silambam is the nature of Silambam combat itself. Most stick fighting style grip the

stick in the center using poker grip (both hands facing down), Silambam prefers hammer grip (main hand facing down behind the weak hand which faces up).

The strong hand grips the stick about a distance hand's width and thumb's length from the end of the stick and the weak hand is a thumb's length away from the strong hand. Actually the weak hand is just touching the stick and it is just for guiding the movement of the stick. Silambam stresses ambidexterity (use of both hands) and besides the preferred hammer grip there are other ways of gripping the staff.

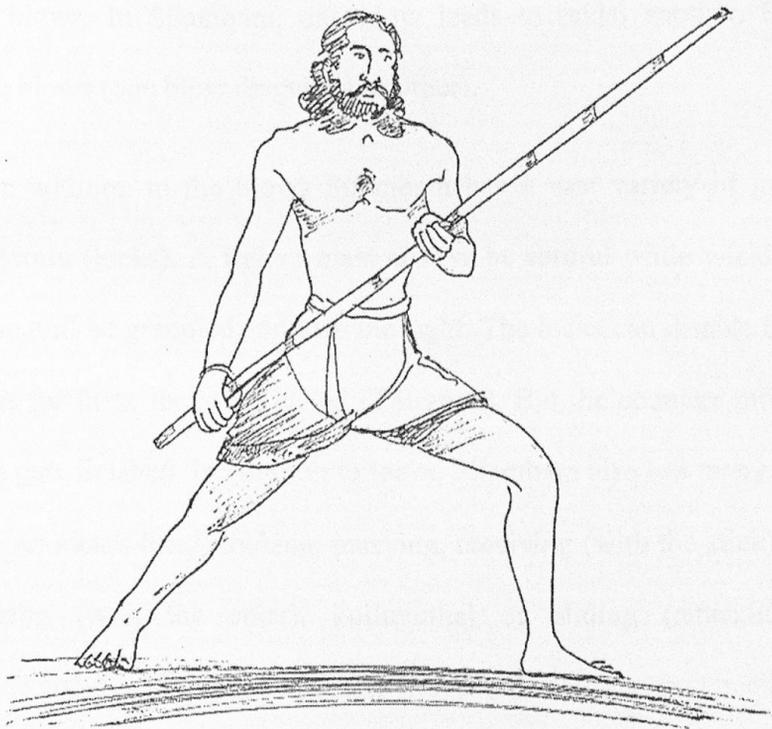


Figure. 6. Silambam stand

When facing man to man a fighter held his/her stick in front of the body stretching his arms three quarters full. From there he/her starts all his attacks by the sheer movement of the wrist. In fact most of the Silambam blows are derived from wrist movement. Wrist is the key component of Silambam. The bow gets speed from the wrist and power from the body through kaaladi (foot work or footsteps).

Since the stick is held in front, Silambam strikes are telegraphic, that is, the Silambam fighter does not intend to hide his intentions from the opponent. He/she beats the opponent by sheer speed, overwhelming him/her with continuous non-stop rain of blows. In Silambam, one blow leads to (aids) another. Besides there are cheating blows (one blow disguised as other).

In addition to the blows Silambam has a vast variety of grappling methods called Poottu (locks). A fighter must always be careful while wielding his/her sticks or he/she will be grappled and lose the fight. The locks can be disabled by the counters or openings for these locks are called (Thirappu). But the counters must be used before the lock gets finished. In addition to locks, Silambam also has many different types of evading an attack like, blocking, parrying, receiving (with the stick), rotary parrying, hammering (with the stick), kolluvuthal or sliding (attacking and blocking simultaneously) and purely evading moves like sitting or kneeling, moving out, jumping high and so on.

A person who is trained in other staff martial arts but not in Silambam will find it very difficult to match against the Silmbam fighter because of the unique nature of Silambam. The speed of Silambam is unparalleled; some serious research is needed on this topic. Because of the way the stick is held and the relatively thin diameter of the stick blows to the groin are very frequent and difficult to block.

Versatility of Silambam

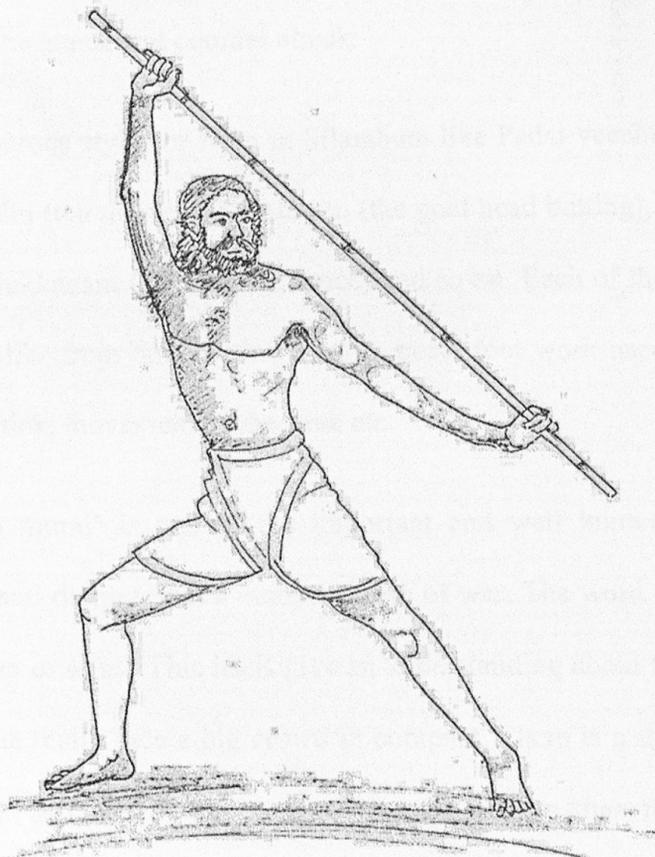


Figure. 7. Silambam block

Besides its uniqueness Silambam is vast. For example Silambam not only uses hammer grip but poker grip and ice pick grip as well. Some blocks and hits are performed using poker grip. Ice pick grip is used in single hand attacks. The stick is held like a walking stick and just hand gets inverted using the wrist.

Against multiple attackers Silambam practitioners do not held out their sticks as they do in man to man combat. Instead they use pose. There are numerous poses in Silambam (snake, tiger, eagle and so on). Using poses makes difficult for the opponents to predict the attack and counter attack.

There are numerous styles or form in Silambam like Padai veechu, Nagam-16 (cobra-16), Kalla patthu (ten thieves), Kidamuttu (the goat head butting), Kuravanchi, Kalyana varisai, Thulukkanam (Turkish sequence) and so on. Each of these sub sects is unique and may differ from one another in grip, pose, foot work used, method of attack, length of the stick, movement of the stick etc.

'Padai veechu murai' is one of the important and well known among the masters of Kanyakumari district. It is a compact form of war. The word 'Padai' gives the meaning of solders or army. This itself give an understanding about this form and the masters of this can really face a big crowd in compact. There is a say that if two masters stay together as close as the back touch each other's then they can face thousand army. 'In Padai veechu murai' there are twelve forms or sub sequences.

'Kuravanchi' and 'Kalyana varisai' are the form for performing in front of audience. They have beautiful moves includes double stic.

Much of the vast techniques and styles in Silambam have been lost due to various invasions of the Tamil Nadu, especially the British. The use of guns means the stick has lost much of its combat superiority. Also, the British who ruled for nearly 200 years completely banned the art.

Silambam was patronized by the ancient Chola, Chera and Pandya kings of South India during the Sangam period. It has been extensively used by Maravar pada of Thiruvithancore army.

4. Vel Kampu (Spear)

When the student reaches the final stage in the stick forms, the stick gets sharpened at one end. But the spear form vary from the stick form in the moves and attacks. Hit with the spear or injecting the sharp end to the body of the opponents is the target for most of the attacks. The ultimate goal of the training is to defend against multiple armed opponents. There are 42 sequences of it can see now. Needless of the use of this weapon reduced the practice of it so most of the master left it even teaching it too.

5. Siramam

‘Siramam’ is also a form of fight with stick but in this they use two sticks each in the length of a hand which is approximately two and half feet. Some called it as ‘Arai Mar Siramam’ which means from fingertip to middle of the chest. The sticks for ‘Siramam’ is taken only from the middle stump of a plant the branches of the plants should not be used for it because of it’s strength and shape. The uniqueness of this form is lies in the application and the sound or syllable which they produce by mouth while practicing. And all the attacks in this is aimed to the Varmas (vital spots).

There are twelve forms or sub sequences in it and the happiest thing is that all these are available but does not mean that all the masters knows all these. Master Nanappan from Palappallam is teaching all the twelve forms to his disciples. There are three styles in it known from the village name it belongs and from here it spread to other places.1. Naduvoor karai, 2. Nalukettu, 3. Samivilai are the three styles in it. Samivilai Siramam is also called as Samivazhi Siramam.

6. Vettu kaththi

Vettu kaththi is the knife used to cut trees which is the weapon used in this form. This form has various method of attacks and defense. The defense is the important part in this form which includes blocks, locking methods, and has many different types of evading an attack like, blocking, parrying, receiving, rotary parrying, hammering, attacking and blocking simultaneously and purely evading

moves like sitting or kneeling, moving out, jumping high and so on. The evading moves or methods called as 'Olivu' which means hiding or escaping.

7. Varmak Kalai or Varma Vitthai

The expert in this field knows 'Varmak kalai' (art of pressure points/vital spot) and knows where to strike anywhere in the body to produce fatal or crippling effects by the least use of power. In a man-to-man combat an expert would just slide his stick to opponents' wrist many times during combat. The opponent in the heat of battle may not notice this and feels sudden pain in his wrist and throws the stick automatically without knowing what hit him/her. When two experts match against each other one may challenge the other that he will hit his big toe. Hitting the big toe can produce crippling effects on the fighter making him/her abandon the combat. This is called "Solli adithal" (challenging and successfully hitting) and this phrase is often used in Tamil movies most often by the leading characters in different contexts like "challenging and successfully revenging".

In unguarded moments, there are some special ways of getting out of a fight situation by using one hands or a piece of cloth or a rage. Locks and blows are in vogue attacks on the nervous system by paralyses the opponent. Various types of blows with different effects are, therefore, practiced to perfection.

Varma points are the specific places along the body surface where the application of the pressure or insertion of needles will affect the flow of vital energy

or Prana along a complex system of subtle channels called Nadis. There are about 350 therapeutic Varma points within our body and there are 108 lithe Cal points in the body, the injury to some of these can lead to instant death. Learning or Teaching and practicing Varmam is the final stage of this martial art form. The student who is dedicated and spend lot of years to learn all the other forms and got the faith or trust of the master will be thought the Varmam and the applications of it. There is a say that until unless the master touch the Varmam and shows one cannot learn it.

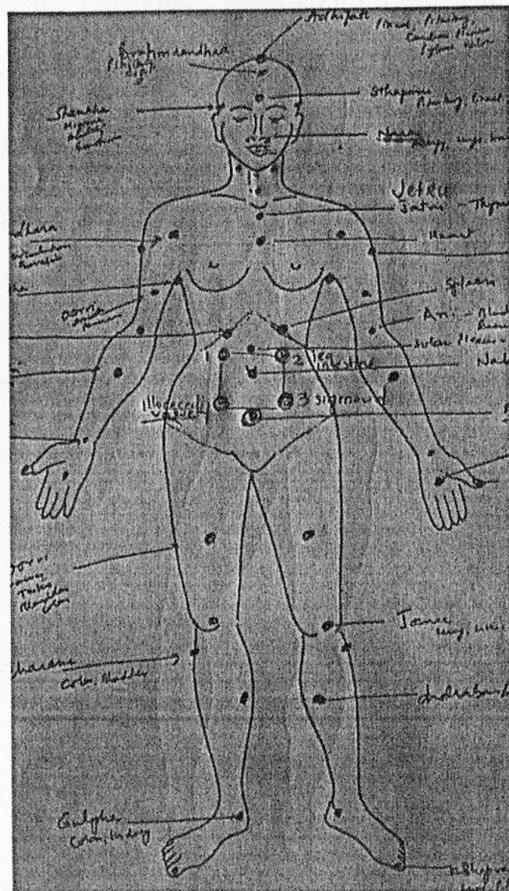


Figure. Varma points

The masters use to say that the 'Jeevan' or 'Pranan' (sole) is moving inside the body in a circular way which is very much connected with nature especially with the moon. On the full moon day the 'Jeevan' used to stay on the spot which is on top of the head. This spot is called as 'Ucchi Varamam' or 'Konda Varamam' from here 'Jeevan' used to move towards the thumb finger of the foot and reach on the black moon day. It is a fifteen days circle from head to foot and again from food to head. On this journey each of the day the 'Jeevan' stays in a particular Varamam and these Varma points are called as 'Uir Nilai'. Attacking on the 'Uir Nilai' is the dangerous thing which leads to death immediately. The great masters know the spots exactly and they use this Varma spots not only to defeat the enemy also to save someone who got hit and paralyzed. 'Varma Adi' means pressure points attacks. It in itself has many divisions.

1. Thodu Varamam
2. Padu Varamam
3. Thattu Varamam
4. Choondu Varamam
5. Nokku Varamam

Thodu Varamam

Thodu varman means attacking by touching the points with some pressure. There are 96 Thodu varmas in the body.

Padu Varmam

Choondu Varmam means attacking by pointing the varmas with particular intension. There are 12 Varmams were called as Padu Varmam. This 12 are death points.

Nokku Varmam

Nokku varma is the attack by looking. Psychological powers invoked by using certain mantras was used to fight against the enemy witch fall under the category of the Nokku Varmam and Choondu Varmam, through which they could transfer subtle powers through their index finger and eyes pointing it to the major Varmams, through which enemy can be made motionless, was mastered in the past is now totally ignored because of its tough practices. It was considered as the ultimate in martial deface and was very secretive.

8. Manthiram or Manthreegam (Magic)

After a long practice and dedication the masters of this Martial art forms use to reach the final level which is called 'Manthiram' or 'Manthreegam'. It is the most difficult level which can even kill the practitioner. One who reach this level will acquire certain magical power by focusing and meditating. This power is mostly used by masters for healing the diseases. He will be undefeatable and have power enough

to do things without doing any physical effort. The fact is that it is not an easy thing to reach this level and difficult to find a master who have such power.

The masters of Martial art forms of Tamil Nadu are insulated themselves. The main streams of the social institution and they are not also ready to handover to the future generation. They also thought very selective items for the students in order to retain their status as masters forever. This is the saddest point in the history of Martial Arts.

Whatever we have now in the traditional Martial art forms are almost lesser known level and lot of palm leaves manuscripts of Martial arts are almost vanished from the community of Martial Artists. Now no one is unable to read the palm leaves manuscripts. Then writing of the palm leaves manuscripts is just like an alpha and Omega to them. Without knowing the values of it people burned or buried it with the master after his death.

Traditional Martial art makes the more body flexible and fit. It makes the practitioner more active and alert when practiced continuously. It also makes the mind sharp and active as well as creative too. Nattu Adi Murai martial art has unique aesthetic qualities which we can utilize in theatre activities, especially for actor's training and it is most worthy of a comprehensive study that has hardly been carried out. Nattu Adi Murai exercises and other combat methods involve the usage of different body parts like eyes, hands, legs, hip, and head. This can help the actors to

enrich their body energy, flexibility, balance, movements and rhythm, and also help to man oeuvre on the stage at the time of performance.

This martial art form is vast and it is a time-taking project to study, understand and cover up the whole thing which need more time, effort, dedication, passion and support