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The Cultural Synthesis of Religion and Performing Arts: Exploring the Suvisi Vivarana Ritual in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja represents the convergence of religious devotion and artistic expression, weaving together sermons, singing, dancing, and offerings to create a profound and comprehensive religious experience within the Buddhist ritualistic tradition in Sri Lanka. It rooted in the historical accounts of the twenty-four Buddhas who prophesied the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. Among its artistic components, the Pantheru Dance plays a prominent role, symbolizing rhythmic harmony and reinforcing the spiritual connection of the participants. The objective of this research is to explore the Cultural Synthesis of Buddhist religious practices and Suvisi Vivarana Puja, with particular emphasis on the Pantheru Dance. The problem of this research lies in identifying the extent to which the Pantheru Dance plays a role in the Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja and how effectively it contributes to the preservation of Buddhist teachings and cultural heritage in Sri Lanka. The study utilized an ethnographic research methodology and employed inductive reasoning. Qualitative data were collected through participant observation and interviews with monks, dancers, and ritual performers. Additionally, textual analysis of Buddhist scriptures and historical documents was conducted. The findings underscore the significance of the Pantheru Dance, which not only enriches the ritual with its intricate movements and rhythmic expressions but also serves as a medium for venerating the Buddha's virtues. The Suvisi Vivarana Puja emerges as a vital vehicle for transmitting Buddhist teachings, preserving Sri Lankan artistic heritage, and fostering community engagement. The inclusion of Pantheru dance to the chanting of vivarana verses exemplifies the role of performance in conveying complex spiritual ideas to the general populace. This tradition serves as a medium for fostering deeper faith in the Buddha's teachings but also strengthens the connection between the Buddhist community and their religious heritage. This ritual helps to make profound Buddhist teachings more accessible and relatable to the devotees. The study highlights the need for further interdisciplinary research to preserve, document, and promote this rich and evolving heritage in a rapidly changing socio-cultural.

Key Words: Buddhist Teachings, Community Cohesion, Cultural Preservation, Pantheru Dance, Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja.

1. Introduction

Background/Context of the Study

The *Pantheru* Dance, a vital expression within the Kandyan dance tradition, holds a revered place in Sri Lanka's cultural and spiritual heritage. This dynamic performance integrates rhythmic movements, the manipulation of the *pantheruwa* (a traditional circular instrument with jingles), and deep ritualistic significance. In this dance, performers engage in intricate footwork and graceful hand gestures, all while maintaining a precise rhythm set by the *pantheruwa*. The dance is not only a physical art form but a means of spiritual expression, connecting the performer and audience with sacred rituals.

Central to the spiritual significance of the *Pantheru* Dance is its role in the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, a dance offering performed in honor of the twenty-four Buddhas. This sacred dance reflects both devotion and artistic mastery, offering an opportunity to honor the Buddha's teachings through movement. The *Pantheru* Dance within the context of this puja is a unique amalgamation of art and devotion, underscoring the profound cultural synthesis between Buddhism and traditional dance practices in Sri Lanka.

Despite its historical and religious importance, the intricate techniques and ritualistic nuances of the *Pantheru* Dance remain under-documented. This lack of comprehensive preservation threatens the transmission of this sacred art to future generations. This study aims to address the gap in research and documentation, focusing on how the *Pantheru* Dance contributes to the preservation of Buddhist teachings and Sri Lankan cultural heritage.

The Research Problem

The problem of this research is to investigate the role of Pantheru Dance in the Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja and to understand its contribution to the preservation of Buddhist teachings and Sri Lankan cultural heritage. Despite the long-standing tradition of the Pantheru Dance within Buddhist rituals, its specific function in the Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja and its impact on safeguarding cultural and religious values have not been thoroughly explored. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the dance's significance in the puja and its broader cultural implications.

Objectives of the Research

- Examine the techniques and movements integral to the *Pantheru* Dance in the context of the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*.
- Analyze the symbolic and ritualistic significance of this dance in Buddhist cultural practices.

Importance/Significance of the Study

The study is significant as it seeks to safeguard an essential aspect of Sri Lanka's intangible cultural heritage. By documenting and analyzing the *Pantheru* Dance in the ritual context of the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, the research not only highlights its artistic and spiritual dimensions but also ensures its continuity in a rapidly modernizing society. This work will serve as a critical resource for performers, educators, and researchers invested in the preservation and advancement of Kandyan dance traditions.

This research argues that the *Pantheru* Dance, with its intricate blend of physical technique and spiritual devotion, epitomizes the unique cultural identity of Sri Lanka. Through a systematic study of its practices within the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, this research advocates for its preservation and revitalization, ensuring its enduring relevance in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

Literature Review.

Understanding *Pantheru* dance, singing, and drumming traditions in *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja* requires examining literary, historical, and archaeological sources. Key Sri Lankan chronicles, including *Mahavamsa*, *Dipavamsa*, *Thupavamsa*, *Culavamsa*, *Bodhivamsa*, *Saddharmalañkaraya*, and *Pujavaliya*, along with manuscripts, palm-leaf texts, and archaeological evidence such as paintings, sculptures, and carvings, provide valuable insights into the ritual and cultural context of *Pantheru* traditions.

The *Mahavamsa* (1959) and *Thupavamsa* (1958) describe musical instruments used in ceremonial contexts, helping situate *Pantheru* within Sri Lanka's historical soundscape. Texts like *Dalada Sirita* (1970) and *Pujavaliya* (1997) document rituals and narratives, including the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, directly related to *Pantheru* performances. The *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha* (1927) provides poetic compositions incorporated into *Pantheru* dance, especially those inspired by the Bodhisattva ideal.

Modern scholarship, including *Udarata Nætum Kalava* (1979), *Hela Gee Maga* (1916), *Kavikara Mañuwa* (2003), *Sinhala Narthana Kalava* (1993), and *Lakdiva Pærani Narthana Kalava* (2014) offers theoretical and practical insights into Kandyan dance, instrumental classifications, and *Pantheru*-related musical and poetic practices. Works like *Siri Dalada Urumaya* (2018) and *Abeyrathne* (2019) further elaborate on ritual performance and musical structures, while Coomaraswamy (1962) and foreign accounts, such as Knox (1992), provide contextual understanding of craft and ceremonial practices.

Despite the wealth of historical and modern sources, few studies have systematically analyzed the role of *Pantheru* Dance within the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja* and its contribution to preserving Buddhist teachings and Sri Lankan cultural heritage. This research addresses this gap by focusing on both the artistic techniques and the ritual significance of *Pantheru* Dance, thereby contributing to the preservation and revitalization of this unique cultural practice.

2. Methodology

Research Approach and data collection methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the *Pantheru* Dance as performed within the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*. The qualitative framework allows for an in-depth examination of the ritualistic, symbolic, and technical aspects of the dance, focusing on its cultural and spiritual significance. Inductive reasoning was applied, grounded in a subjectivist ontological perspective. An interpretivist approach was employed for analyzing the qualitative data.

The study adopted an ethnographic research methodology, relying on participant observation and interviews with monks, dancers, and ritual performers as the primary methods of data collection. A purposive sampling method was employed, with the researcher too serving as one of the resource persons, drawing on lifelong experience as an artist of the *Suvisi Vivarana Puja*. This role facilitated participant observation throughout the process, enabling the collection of accurate and insightful data.

Field observations were conducted during *Pantheru* Dance performances in ritual contexts in different areas of the country to document movements, techniques, and ritual elements. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with expert *Pantheru* dancers to understand their experiences, training methodologies, and perspectives on the dance's ritualistic aspects. Ritual practitioners and Buddhist clergy to gain insights into the spiritual significance of the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*. Historical texts, manuscripts, and other archival materials related to Kandyan dance and Buddhist rituals were analyzed to contextualize the *Pantheru* Dance within Sri Lanka's cultural heritage.

03. Findings/Results

The origins of dance and drumming art in Sri Lanka can be traced back to the 3rd century BCE. With the introduction of Buddhism to the island during this period, Buddhism became firmly established, thanks to the cordial relations between King Devanam Piyatissa and Emperor Ashoka of India. When Sanghamitta Theri brought the sacred Bodhi tree to Sri Lanka, eighteen castes also migrated to the island, marking a significant cultural exchange. This event led to widespread advancements in the country's political, economic, and religious spheres, as well as in various social and cultural sectors. The establishment of Buddhist temples and Devalas fostered the growth of Buddhist rituals and practices, including Sathsati (the seven weeks the Buddha spent immediately after attaining Enlightenment), Poya Hevisi (beating of drums and instruments since the dawn of the Poya day until the end of the day), Pirith Pinkam ('Pirih' in Sinhala means principally protection. Paritta suttas describe certain suttas or discourses the Buddha delivers that are regarded as affording protection.), Suvisi Vivaran, and Yugasan Bana (Yugasana refers to a specific ritual or practice in which two monks deliver a sermon or discourse together.), which gradually became integral to the cultural and spiritual life of the island (Panghananda, 2023).

History shows that when Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka, the people of the island practiced a variety of faiths and beliefs (BudhdhaDaththa, 1959). They worshipped natural elements such as the sun, moon, trees, stones, rocks, rivers, and fire. The lives of these early inhabitants were simple, and their needs were modest. For the uncertainties and challenges they faced in everyday life, they sought guidance and support from village-based religious practices. As a

result, these traditional beliefs were deeply ingrained in the community and strictly followed.

During the Pre-Buddhist period, when rural religious concepts were deeply rooted, the people were not inclined to embrace or comprehend a profound philosophical religion like Buddhism (Arachchi, 2024). For this reason, Buddhism was initially met with complete rejection. The people, with their primitive beliefs, struggled to understand that unlike village religions, which provided support for worldly needs, Buddhist philosophy offered profound guidance for spiritual and transcendental development.

Buddhist monks in the temples of that time had to make numerous efforts to guide the people towards embracing Buddhism, which was newly established in the country (Panghananda, 2023). It was challenging for the general populace to grasp the depth of Buddhist teachings. Recognizing that merely preaching the Dharma was insufficient, the monks introduced various Buddhist rituals such as Suvisi Vivarana, Dasaparamita, Yugasana Dharma Desha sermons, Sathsati, and Pansalisvas. The aim was to use these rituals as a means to convey the essence of Buddhist philosophy to the people, making it more accessible and relatable.

The life of this ritual (Suvisi Vivarana) practice revolves around the Panheru dance style. As a performance art that prominently features dance, singing, and drumming, this attracts the constant participation of Buddhist devotees, who gather around it with faith. As a performance art that prominently features dance, singing, and drumming, this attracts the constant participation of Buddhist devotees, who gather around it with faith. Therefore, it can be argued that the Suvisi Vivarana upholds the earlier-mentioned traditions, and this ritual holds significant historical value.

The term "Suvisi" literally means "twenty-four," while "Vivarana" refers to explaining, presenting, or foretelling something that will occur in the future (Liyanage, p. 1160). The Suvisi vivarana in Buddhism refers to declarations made by twenty-four previous Buddhas, who lived before the Great Bhadra Kalpa, predicting that they would attain Buddhahood in the future under the name of Gautama Buddha.

As described in the Poojavali, Gautama Bodhisattva, who dedicated 100,000 years to his quest for enlightenment, was once born as the ascetic Sumedha during the time of Dipankara Buddha. On that occasion, he lay down in a swamp, offering his body as a path for Dipankara Buddha to walk over (Soma, 2004, p. 62).

Gautama Bodhisattva received the vivarana (prophecy of future Buddhahood) from Dipankara Buddha and similar vivaranas from a total of twenty-four Buddhas. The Buddhas who granted these prophecies were: Dipankara, Kondañña, Mañgala, Sumana, Revata, Sobhita, Anomadassi, Paduma, Nārada, Padumuttara, Sumedha, Sujāta, Piyadassi, Atthadassi, Dhammadassi, Siddhattha, Tissa, Phussa, Vipassi, Sikhī, Vessabhū, Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa (Sell, Suvisi Vivaranaya, 2023).

From Dipankara Buddha to Kasyapa Buddha, the period during which the Bodhisattva received vivarana encompasses his birth, social status, and the charitable deeds that led to these prophetic declarations, all of which are integral to Buddhist philosophy. Over the span of the one hundred thousand Buddhas who descended into the world, the consistent vivarana from these twenty-four Buddhas represents a continuous narrative within Buddhist society. This journey reflects the Bodhisattva's unwavering efforts to attain the title of Samma Sambuddha.

The event celebrates Lord Bodhisattva's receipt of the definitive vivarana from the twenty-four Buddhas, foretelling his future as Gautama Buddha. To honor these twenty-six Buddhas, various rituals, including singing, music, and dancing, are performed alongside offerings of flowers, candles, lamps, and incense. This celebration is further enriched by the fusion of Sri Lankan Buddhist arts known as Suvisi Vivarana, creating a vibrant expression of devotion and cultural heritage. The event centers on the theme of Lord Bodhisattva receiving definitive vivarana from twenty-four Buddhas, predicting his future enlightenment as Gautama Buddha. In honor of the twenty-seven Buddhas, various pujas are conducted, including singing, music, and dance, accompanied by offerings of flowers, Deheth, lamps, and incense sticks. These Buddhist rituals, performed with singing, instrumental music, and dance, are a unique fusion of Sri Lankan Buddhist arts, collectively known as Suvisi Vivarana.

Suvisi Vivarana is also known as Shanti Dayaka Pooja Karma due to the merit generated during its performance. The singing, music, and dance elements within the Suvisi Vivarana are designed to deepen devotion not only to the Buddha but also to the Buddhist Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha). This distinctive blend of Sri Lankan singing, music, and dance is a hallmark of the Suvisi Vivarana, showcasing its unique cultural and devotional significance.

The most prominent feature of Suvisi Vivarana is its emphasis on the art of singing (Sell, Suvisi Vivaranaya, 2023). In Suvisi Vivarana, chants are crafted around various Buddhist themes, including the attributes of the Suvisi Buddhas, the sacred trees that aided in their enlightenment, the actions that led to the granting of vivarana, the entourage and groups of Rahaths, the new Arahath qualities of the Buddhas, the Dethis Maha Purusha Lakshana (Physical characteristics of the Buddha), the Maha Bodhi Wandanaya (It is a Sri Lankan event that is associated with the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi), the Pirinivan Mangalya (Lord Buddha's death Ceremony). These chants are designed to offer guidance for leading a virtuous worldly life. To align with these Buddhist themes and enhance the intensity of the singing, a delicate and refined musical accompaniment is incorporated, creating a harmonious blend that enriches the overall devotional experience.

Dance plays a vital role in Suvisi Vivarana, deeply interwoven with the overall performance. This integration ensures that the dance enhances the presentation without overshadowing or compromising the underlying themes of the ritual. The village temple serves as the central focal point of the Suvisi Vivarana ritual (Seelawamsha, Suvisi Viaranaya, 2023). The primary reason for this is that this sacrificial ritual is a form of Buddhist art that originated from and is deeply rooted in Buddhist concepts.

The Suvisi Vivarana dance is an extensive liturgical performance that traditionally spans seven days. However, depending on the duration chosen, the dance can be adjusted to shorter periods, such as two or three days. In a two-day version, twelve vivarana (commentaries) are presented each day, while in a three-day version, eight commentaries are performed daily (Bandara, 2023). The program is specifically tailored based on the number of days, ensuring that the ritual maintains its structure and significance throughout the event.

During the event, a commentary sermon is delivered by the presiding monk specifically for the relevant vivarana. There are a total of twenty-four vivarana sermons, each corresponding to a dance ritual.

Following each sermon, the dancers perform in the traditional *Pantheru* dance style, accompanied by the singing of the respective *vivarana* verses.

The *Suvisi Vivarana* sermon can be delivered in great detail, allowing for an extensive exploration of its themes and teachings (Podinilame, 2023). Given its direct connection to Buddhism, it is reasonable to consider that the *Suvisi Vivarana* was established upon Buddhist principles. On the day of the *Suvisi Vivarana*, only the specific Buddhas receiving the relevant commentaries are highlighted. The date for the *Vivarana* is determined by the temple authorities and artisans. Typically, the event takes place in a specially constructed shed on the temple grounds, a Dharma Hall, or a theater. In contrast to other *Shanti Karma* practices of the Upland tradition, which are performed for various specific reasons, the *Suvisi Vivarana* does not have a particular purpose tied to its performance. Instead, it fosters a strong bond between the temple and the Buddhist community, reinforcing the spiritual connection through this unique ritual.

The primary purpose of conducting the *Suvisi Vivarana* commentary is to cultivate and deepen devotion towards the concept of *Theruvana* (the Triple Gem) (Seelawamsha, *Suvisi Vivarana*, 2023). The purpose of conducting the *Suvisi Vivarana* ceremony, centered around the temple, is to garner support for the temple's future development projects. It is a devotional song and dance ritual in which all participants come together to celebrate and praise the merits for the growth of the *Sasana* (Buddhist monastic community). By highlighting the incomparable virtues of the twenty-four *Suvisi* Buddhas, the ritual inspires and uplifts the hearts of the devotees, strengthening their faith in Buddhism. Listening to the *Vivarana* sermons provides the audience with valuable insights into the Buddha's character and virtues that may not be widely known. This process is considered a significant blessing for the Buddhist community, as it deepens their understanding and devotion. On *Suvisi Vivarana* Day, the necessary commentaries are shared among all Buddhist participants, allowing the community to gather and engage collectively. The contributors, with sincere hearts, embrace these teachings, reflecting the strong faith rooted in the Buddhist mindset. Additionally, a small market auction is often held during the *Suvisi Vivarana* event. The funds collected from these auctions, contributed by the faithful, are used for temple maintenance and restoration projects. This practice not only supports the temple economically but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility and collective effort within the Buddhist community.

The Order of the *Suvisi Vivarana* Dance and Ritual Sacrifice

The *Suvisi Vivarana* dance is an elaborate and sacred performance that integrates traditional dance with a series of ritual sacrifices. This ceremony follows a structured sequence, combining artistic expression with deep spiritual significance. The order typically involves reciting *Vivarana* commentaries for each of the twenty-four Buddhas, interspersed with ritual offerings such as flowers, incense, and lamps. The performance begins with invocations, followed by the singing of hymns and verses dedicated to the virtues of the Buddhas. Each commentary sermon is delivered by a monk, focusing on the specific qualities and past deeds of a particular Buddha. Following each sermon, dancers perform the *Pantheru* dance, embodying the themes of the commentary through expressive movements, music, and rhythmic drumming. Throughout the ceremony, offerings are made by the participants as acts of devotion and reverence. The sequence of dances and offerings creates a powerful spiritual atmosphere, aiming to inspire devotion, gather

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merit, and foster a sense of community among the Buddhist attendees.

***Bodhi Pujawa* (Bodhi Tree Worship)**

Bodhi symbolizes omniscience, representing the ultimate wisdom attained by the Buddha. The term *Puja* means tribute or offering. Thus, *Bodhi Puja* is the act of paying homage to this Omniscient Wisdom or the *Samma Sambuddha*. Before commencing a *Suvisi Vivarana* (the commentary of the 24 Buddhas), a *Bodhi Puja* is performed to honor this noble intention, reflecting deep reverence and respect for the enlightened wisdom of the Buddha.

Bodhi Pujawa is a deeply revered Buddhist ritual centered around the worship of the Bodhi tree, under which Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha. This sacred practice is rooted in devotion, gratitude, and the aspiration for spiritual growth. It involves a series of offerings, prayers, and chants made at the base of the Bodhi tree, symbolizing the seekers' respect and homage to the Buddha's enlightenment.

Ritual Elements of *Bodhi Pujawa*:

- Preparation: The ritual site is cleaned and adorned with flowers, oil lamps (*Pahan*), incense sticks, and colorful flags. Devotees gather around the Bodhi tree, often decorating its trunk with vibrant cloths.
- Offerings: Participants bring various offerings, including flowers, fruits, rice, water, and oil lamps, which are placed around the tree as a sign of respect. The act of offering is believed to generate merit and cleanse one's mind of impurities.
- Chanting and Prayers: The ceremony usually begins with the chanting of *Pirith* (protective verses) and *Gatha* (stanzas) dedicated to the Bodhi tree and the Buddha. The *Jayamangala Gatha* and *Bodhi Vandana* are often recited, praising the tree for its role in the Buddha's journey to enlightenment.
- Water Pouring (*Gilanpasa*): A key component is the ritual of water pouring, symbolizing the wish for the well-being of all beings. This act is a prayer for the fulfillment of one's aspirations and the purification of negative karma.
- Lighting of Lamps: Devotees light oil lamps and candles, which are placed at the base of the Bodhi tree. The light represents the dispelling of ignorance and the illumination of wisdom, signifying the Buddha's teachings.
- Circumambulation: Devotees walk around the Bodhi tree in a clockwise direction, a practice known as *Pradakshina*. This act symbolizes reverence and the internalization of the Buddha's teachings.

Bodhi Pujawa is performed to seek blessings for health, peace, and prosperity. It is also an expression of gratitude for the Buddha's teachings, which offer guidance towards overcoming suffering. The ritual serves as a meditative practice, helping participants cultivate mindfulness, compassion, and a deeper connection to the Buddha's enlightenment.

In Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition, *Bodhi Pujawa* is often held during full moon days (Poya days), special religious occasions, or as part of a thanksgiving ritual for fulfilling vows or receiving blessings. The

ceremony brings the community together in a shared act of devotion, reinforcing their faith and spiritual practice.

After the Bodhi Puja, many temples hold an auction of various market goods as part of the tradition. The most prominent item in these auctions is the Flower vase (*Mal Wattiya*), which often takes center stage and draws considerable attention from the devotees.

- ***Suvisi Vivarana Pujawa***

From the era of *Dipankara* Buddha to *Kasyapa* Buddha, a sacred act of devotion is performed for the *Suvisi* Buddhas. This ritual is often regarded as a profound and powerful peace offering, embodying deep spiritual significance and reverence.

Devotees present offerings for the *Suvisi* Buddhas, including incense sticks, flowers, Oil lamps, and *Atapirikara*. These offerings are carried in a solemn procession, accompanied by the rhythmic melodies of *Hevise* music, to the Commentary Pavilion, where they are ceremoniously placed (Rupasinghe, 1986, p. 108).

Offerings to the Buddha are made under the guidance of the monk. Following the presentation of the *Atapirikara*, the dancers perform the *Nruthya Puja*, a devotional dance that praises the Lord Buddha. Through graceful movements and poetic songs, they recount the Buddha's dedication and perseverance in realizing the Dhamma (Kumara, 2023).

- ***Suvisi Vivarana Sermon***

The *Suvisi Vivarana* Sermon is a significant component of the *Suvisi Vivarana* ritual. Delivered by a learned monk, the sermon reflects on the profound qualities and virtues of the twenty-four Buddhas, from *Dipankara* Buddha to *Kasyapa* Buddha, who gave their prophetic declarations about *Gautama* Buddha.

This sermon explores the moral and spiritual significance of each Buddha's *vivarana* (prophecy) and their role in the Bodhisattva's journey toward enlightenment. The discourse is designed not only to impart knowledge but also to deepen the devotion and faith of the devotees in the teachings of the Buddha.

The sermon is often paired with the artistic elements of the ritual, such as singing and dance performances, which further enhance the spiritual experience and connect the audience emotionally to the Buddhist philosophy.

- **Role of Pantheru Dance in *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Pujawa***

The *Pantheru* Dance plays a crucial role in the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, a sacred ritualistic dance performed in honor of the twenty-four Buddhas in Sri Lanka. This dance is an integral part of the Puja, which combines devotion, ritual, and artistic expression. The *Pantheru* Dance, with its unique rhythm and movement, is performed as a spiritual offering, aligning the performer's body and mind with the sacred teachings of Buddhism.

In the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, the *Pantheru* Dance is not merely a physical performance but a form of meditation that embodies devotion to the Buddha. The dancer's movements, synchronized with the sound of the *pantheruwa* (a circular instrument with jingles), represent a connection between the human realm and the divine. The intricate steps and symbolic gestures

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convey messages of respect, enlightenment, and the transmission of Buddhist teachings.

The dance's rhythm, synchronized with the beat of the *pantheruwa*, mirrors the cosmic order, symbolizing harmony between the material and spiritual worlds. Through the *Pantheru* Dance, the performer embodies the spiritual essence of the Buddha's teachings, with each movement representing elements of Buddhist philosophy, such as mindfulness, balance, and enlightenment.

Furthermore, the *Pantheru* Dance in the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja* serves as a ritual act that preserves Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. It is a unique blend of dance and ritual, where the artistic expression becomes a medium for sustaining Buddhist teachings and reinforcing the connection between tradition, culture, and spirituality.

1. Discussion

The discussion examines the findings in relation to the objectives of the study, providing insights into the technical, ritualistic, and cultural dimensions of the *Pantheru* Dance as performed within the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*.

The *Pantheru* Dance demonstrates a unique combination of strength, rhythm, and agility, reflecting the precision and discipline characteristic of Kandyan dance traditions. The intricate footwork and dynamic circular movements are not merely performative but are deeply rooted in symbolic gestures that align with the Buddhist cosmological framework. These technicalities emphasize the physical rigor required to maintain the integrity of the performance while preserving its spiritual essence.

The integration of the *Pantheru* Dance within the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja* highlights its role as a sacred offering rather than a mere artistic expression. The performance embodies the qualities of devotion, reverence, and spiritual alignment as it recreates events from the Buddha's life that are key elements of the *Suvisi* commentary. The rhythmic strikes of the *pantheru* (metallic instrument) create a meditative ambiance, symbolizing the harmonization of physical, mental, and spiritual realms.

The study reveals that the *Pantheru* Dance serves as a bridge between Sri Lanka's artistic heritage and its Buddhist ritualistic practices. However, the preservation of this dance form faces challenges, including modernization, diminishing traditional knowledge, and the lack of proper documentation. The ritual context of the dance underscores its importance as a living heritage, necessitating targeted efforts for conservation through education, documentation, and institutional support.

Objective 1: To analyze the technical aspects of the *Pantheru* Dance

The study highlights the precision, rhythm, and symbolic gestures as core components of the dance, underscoring its complexity and depth.

Objective 2: To explore the ritualistic role of the dance in the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*

Findings affirm that the *Pantheru* Dance is integral to the *Suvisi Vivarana Nruthya Puja*, serving both as a spiritual offering and a method of connecting performers and spectators to Buddhist teachings.

The study identifies key challenges such as diminishing traditional expertise and recommends initiatives like integrating *Pantheru* Dance studies into academic curricula and fostering community-led conservation efforts.

The findings suggest potential areas for further research, including comparative studies of ritual dances in other Buddhist traditions and the application of contemporary media to document and promote endangered dance forms. This discussion reinforces the importance of the *Pantheru* Dance as a cultural and spiritual artifact, emphasizing the need for continued scholarly and cultural engagement to ensure its preservation for future generations.

2. Conclusion

The *Suvisi Vivarana* ritual represents a profound integration of Buddhist philosophy and Sri Lankan performing arts, reflecting the cultural synthesis that took place during the early introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. This ritual, rooted in the unique blend of singing, music, dance, and drumming, has evolved into a vibrant and spiritually enriching expression of devotion. By combining ancient Buddhist teachings with the artistic traditions of the island, the *Suvisi Vivarana* serves not only as a medium for fostering deeper faith in the Buddha's teachings but also as a significant cultural and artistic celebration that strengthens the connection between the Buddhist community and their religious heritage.

The ritual's multifaceted nature, from the *Pantheru* dance to the chanting of *vivarana* verses, exemplifies the role of performance in conveying complex spiritual ideas to the general populace. Through its emphasis on collective participation, the *Suvisi Vivarana* reinforces the importance of community engagement in the preservation of Buddhist values and traditions. The use of art forms such as music and dance within a religious context further demonstrates how the performing arts can bridge the gap between spiritual enlightenment and cultural expression, making profound Buddhist teachings more accessible and relatable to the devotees.

Moreover, the ritual's significance extends beyond spiritual benefits; it plays a vital role in the socio-economic and cultural life of Sri Lanka. By facilitating temple development through collective contributions and fostering a sense of shared responsibility, the *Suvisi Vivarana* reinforces the unity of the Buddhist community. In this way, it stands as a living testament to the enduring relevance of

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traditional rituals in contemporary society, continuing to inspire devotion, unity, and cultural preservation. As such, the *Suvisi Vivarana* ritual is a cornerstone in the cultural and spiritual fabric of Sri Lankan Buddhism, embodying the harmonious coexistence of religion and the arts.

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