

THE C.A.R. TRUST OF MEENAKSHIPATTI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

The C.A.R. (Children & Adolescents Reconstruction) Trust was founded by V. Erulan on July 12th, 2007 in Meenakshipatti (Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, India) to raise funds for its various programs that have been in operation for the past five years. Erulan and some ten associates have been working with approximately 300 children and adolescents in Meenakshipatti and neighboring villages to: 1) instill in them a zeal for academic learning; 2) help develop their bodies and minds; and 3) otherwise prepare them for productive roles in adulthood.

Among the programs presently offered are training in: 1) yoga (to promote health, longevity, and concentration, as well as to unify body and mind; 2) silambam (Tamil stick-fighting) and karate to build courage and self confidence; 3) drama and dance; 4) academic tuition; and 5) other mind-building activities.

All these offerings are provided free of charge and the teachers receive no financial remuneration for their services.

Those interested in sponsoring a child or otherwise help the CAR Trust realize its noble aims should contact

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PART TIME TRAINING IN THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINES ARE GIVEN IN

THE C.A.R. (CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS RECONSTRUCTION) TRUST

1	Bharathanatyam	13	Puli Attam
2	Kai Silambu Attam	14	Gymnastics
3	Silambattam	15	Karate
4	Karagaattam	16	Yoga
5	Foldance	17	Mayil Attam
6	Kolaattam	18	Kummi
7	Kavadi Aattam	19	Kali Attam,
8	Thappaattam	20	Bomma Attam or Puppet Show
9	Theru Koothu	21	Drawing
10	Devaraattam	22	Craft
11	Oyilattam	23	Computer
12	Snake Dance	24	Drama

The aim of this institution is to give cultural training and develop the art talents of the children in the age group of five to twenty five years. In these centres, part time training is given in Twenty four disciplines such as Bharathanatyam, Folkdance, Kummi, Mayil Attam, Kolaattam, Kavadi Aattam, Thappaattam, Theru Koothu, Devaraattam, Oyilattam, Snake Dance, Puli Attam , Karagaattam, Drama, Gymnastics, Karate, Yoga, Kai Silambu Attam , Silambattam Kali Attam, Bommai Attam or Puppet Show, Craft, Drawing and Computer.

AIMS OF CAR TRUST

Principal Objects: The objects for which the Trust is established are:

- i. To undertake social service activities and to provide facilities for the relief of the poor, irrespective of caste, creed, an social status.
- ii. To establish maintain and run a educational Institutions school for the students connected with the insitution so as to make a good citizen, conduct seminar programmes for the student and rural people for their welfare and personality development programmes.
- iii. To provide free education, note books, uniforms and scholarships for the socially and economically under privileged children's in schools and colleges.

- iv. To create interest on local sports and arts, martial arts, to defend them from social evils.
- v. To provide counseling center for the students of dropouts from the school to make re-admission caused due poverty and other reasons.
- vi. To help or financially assist children through sponsorship programmes.
- vii. To provide medical assistance to deserving by admitting them in the hospitals or help them to buy medicines or give proper guidance for the treatment of the diseases.
- viii. To assist the programmes towards women upliftment schemes.
- ix. To provide assistance towards schemes connected with self –employment training schemes, social education programmes etc.,
- x. To subscribe or give donations and financially or otherwise aid any other charity with similar objects.
- xi. To formulate and execute schemes and vocational training programmes to help the educated unemployed youth to make themselves better qualified.
- xii. To formulate and execute projects of self – employment for the educated/skilled unemployed.
- xiii. To raise funds for implementing the aims and objects of the trust.
- xiv. The aims and objects of the Trust and all the projects carried out in pursuance thereof are entirely based on social service to the public and not on any profit motive.
- xv. To raise funds from institutions and for this purpose to enter into agreements or arrangements.
- xvi. To receive and accept donations, grants and gifts from well wishers, supporters from within India and abroad.
- xvii. To employ workers for the attainment of objectives of the society.
- xviii. To buy, hold sell or dispose and alienate in any other manner, properties of movable or immovable.
- xix. The benefits of the Trust are open to all irrespective of caste, Religion, sex etc.,
- xx. The activities of the Trust shall be carried out only in India.
- xxi. The income and properties of the Trust shall be solely applied towards the aim and objectives afore said of which no portion shall be utilised for payments to the Trustees by way of profit, dividend, interest etc.,

- xxii. To do all acts and things that are necessary, incidental or conducive to the carrying out of the objectives of the society effectively on non-profit making basis and re-invest and income for the extension of the programmes related to the above said objectives.
- To promote general health education (formal and informal) for all age groups through good nutrition, exercises like aerobics /anaerobic, positive thinking, proper rest, so that they may be free from ailments.
 - To work for Social change and to build strong Indian nation.
 - To organize / participate various seminars, conferences, sports activities
 - Endeavour to make documentations of rare collections
 - To work for communal harmony, humanity and peace making service.
 - Our Trainers and Institute members awarded many 1st Prizes **in the State, National and South Asian Level and International Sports (Best Physique and Silambam) and Cultural Competitions.**

YOGA

- Male or Female from the age of 5 can join as a member in “CAR TRUST “Yoga centre.
- We train Yogasanas for stretching
- Train Yoga pranayama for healthy living (body and mind).
- Train meditation to get relax from mental stress, mental distraction, distress etc..
- Giving treatment Yoga for several diseases.
- Train students to participate in the District, State, National level Yoga competitions.

SILAMBAM

- Male or Female students from the age of 5 can learn the art Silambam.
- Simashan prouds to tell that our Silambam students have participated and secured many awards and medals in District, State, National and World Silambam competitions.
- Regarding cultural programmes our Silambam students were participated in various festivals, functions, cultural fete in and around the state and country.
- To View Basic Silambam Training Techniques.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT SILAMBAM

The use of Quarter-Staff (Stick) in fighting and recreation seems to have been in existence in some form or the other in almost all countries of the world in all times. However, the mode and style of play vary from state to state.

In India, stick handling techniques are called Silambam. Silambam is an old Martial and Folk art practice. It has been very popular for centuries. Since this art originated in Tamilnadu (One of the states in India), we can find so much of evidence in Tamil literatures like Purananoru, Agasthiar Kambu Suthiram and some other minor literary pieces. Silambam is considered as one of the 64 arts of ancient period, thereby we say it is the mother of all martial arts with unique techniques and practices. In Sangam era, the kings who ruled Dravidanadu greatly patronized this combative art. It was used during warfare.

In modern times, Silambam has three types. They are as follows:-

1. Silambam for SELF DEFENCE from enemies and wild animals.
2. Silambam for DEMONSTRATION or RECREATION during Festivals, important occasions etc.,
3. Silambam in SPORT. Unlike other sports activities, Silambam is performed with certain rules and regulations.

ADVANTAGES OF SILAMBAM TRAINING

The wielding of Silambam has developed into a highly sophisticated art with numerous skills. Therapeutic effects, developing strength, health and promoting alertness are attained in the practice of Silambam.

TAMIL NADU

Folk dances of particular region in India have both regional autonomy and features that are common to other parts of India – while the ecology, environment and agricultural functions give distinctiveness; legend, myth and literature unite them to other parts. The dances have survived through many centuries of Indian History and have provided continuity to the Indian tradition that is not stagnant, as it is constantly adapting itself to new conditions and assimilating influences. Pliability and flexibility is of the essence: scope for self-expression, improvisation is the secret of their survival.

Tamil Nadu developed the art of entertainment to its pristine heights at early age. Nadakam (Drama) has roots in the rural folk theatre like Therukoothu. Majority of these dances are still thriving in Tamil Nadu today.

The more celebrated forms of village folk dances are:

KAI SILAMBU ATTAM

This dance is performed in temples during Amman festivals or Navaratri festival. The dancers wear ankle-bells and hold anklets or silambu in their hands, which make noise when shaken. They perform various stepping styles jumps. The dance is in praise of all female deities; the most preferred being the powerful angry goddess - Kali or Durga.

SILAMBATTAM

Kol silambam or fighting with a long stick and even with swords is a martial art from the days of Tamil Kings. Fights were characterized by moves of self defense, practice of skillful methods of approaching the opponent, overpowering and subduing him, and finally teaching him a lesson, all to put an end to violence. A violent fighting art has metamorphosed into a non-violent form of folk dance, adding stepping styles following the measure of time. It also teaches the performer The methods of the self-defense in modern day world.

KARAGAATTAM

Karagam is a folk dance with musical accompaniment, performed balancing a pot on the head. Traditionally, the villagers in praise of the rain goddess Mari Amman and River Goddess, Gangai Amman, performed this dance with literature with water pots balanced on their heads. In Sangam literature, it is mentioned as 'Kudakoothu'. This dance has two divisions - one, Aatta Karagam and the other 'Sakthi Karagam'. More often it is danced with decorated pots on the head and is known as 'Aatta Karagam' and symbolizes joy and merriment. The former is performed only in temples, while the latter is mainly for entertainment. This is one of the more popular rural dances of today. Earlier it was performed only with the Neiyandi Melam but now it also includes songs.

Karagams were once performed for *mulaipari* ceremony when the dancer carried a pot of sprouted grains on his/her head and danced, balancing it through intricate steps and body/arm movements. Today, the pots have transformed from mud pots to bronzeware and even stainless steel in modern times. The pots are decorated with a cone of flower arrangements, topped by a paper parrot. The parrot rotates as the dancer swings along. This dance is very popular all over Tamil Nadu, though its birthplace is said to be Thanjavur. Most artistes hail from Thanjavur, Pudukottai, Ramanathapuram, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Pattukottai and Salem. This dance most is often a solo or a duet. Both male and female performers participate in this. Acrobatics similar to circus are included – such as dancing on a rolling block of wood, up and down a ladder, Threading a needle while bending backwards and so on.

KUMMI

Kummi is one of the most important and ancient forms of village dances of Tamil Nadu. It originated when there were no musical instruments, with the participants clapping their hands to keep time. Women perform this; many varieties of Kummi, such as, Poonthatti Kummi, Deepa Kummi, Kulavai Kummi, Kadir Kummi, Mulaipari Kummi, etc. are known. The women stand in a circle and dance clapping their hands rhythmically to songs with catching tunes. This dance is usually performed during temple festivals, Pongal – the harvest festival, family functions like the one to celebrate the coming of age of the girl-child, etc. The first line of the song is sung by the leading lady, which the others repeat.

MAYIL ATTAM

This is done by girls dressed as peacocks, resplendent with peacock feathers and a glittering head-dress complete with a beak. This beak can be opened and closed with the help of a thread tied to it, and manipulated from within dress. Other similar dances are, Kaalai Attam (dressed as a bull), Karadi Attam (dressed as a bear) and Aali Aattam (dressed as a demon) that are performed in the villages during village get-togethers. Vedala Aattam is performed wearing a mask depicting demons.

KOLAATTAM

Kolaattam is an ancient village art. This is mentioned in Kanchipuram as 'Cheivaikiyar Kolattam', which proves its antiquity. Women only perform this, with two sticks held in each hand, beaten to make a rhythmic noise. Pinnal Kolaattam is danced with ropes that the women hold in their hands, the other of which are tied to a tall pole. With planned steps, the women skip over each other, which forms intricate lace-like patterns in the ropes. As colored ropes are used, this lace looks extremely attractive. Again, they unravel this lace reversing the dance steps. This is performed for ten days, starting with the Amavasi or Newmoon night after Deepavali.

OYIL KUMMI

This is an ancient folk dance form popular in Trichy, Salem, Dharmapuri, Coimbatore and Periyar Districts. No other musical instruments are used in this dance except the ankle-bells. Men only perform this dance, during temple festivals. Stories and episodes centering on Murugan and Valli are depicted in the songs. As one of the rare folk art forms of ancient Tamil nadu, the Telugu speaking people of the northern districts are practising this now.

KAVADI AATTAM

The ancient Tamils when they went on pilgrimage carried the offerings to the gods' tied on the either end of the long stick, which was balanced on the shoulders. In order to lessen the boredom

of the long travel they used to sing and dance about the gods. Kavadi Aattam has its origin in this practice. Special songs were created to be sung while carrying the Kavadi Sindhu. Only men perform this dance. It is done by balancing a pole with pots fixed on either end, filled with milk or coconut water. The poles are made from Purasai or Teak wood. On top, bamboo strips are bent like a half-moon, covered with saffron cloth and further decorated on the sides with peacock feathers. This is mainly a religious dance, performed in worship of Lord Murugan, the second Son of Siva. Pambai and Naiyandi Melam accompany the dance.

POIKKAL KUDIRAI AATTAM

This is the Dummy Horse Dance where the dancer bears the dummy figure of a horse's body on his/her hips. This is made of light-weighted materials and the cloth at the sides swings to and fro covering the legs of the dancer. The dancer dons wooden legs that sound like the hooves of the horse. The dancer brandishes either a sword or a whip. This folk dance needs much training and skill. This dance is accompanied by Neiyandi Melam or Band music. This is connected to the worship of Ayyanar, prevails mainly around Thanjavur.

THAPPAATTAM

Thappu is the name of a percussion instrument. The subtle form of dance accompanied by captivating music, is an ancient rural folk art that has gained in recent times.

BOMMAI ATTAM OR PUPPET SHOW

Puppet shows are held during festivals and fairs in village and temples. Many different kinds of puppets are used for this show - cloth, wood, leather, etc. They are manipulated through strings or wires. The persons stand behind a screen and the puppets are held in front. The stories enacted in the puppet shows are from puranas, epics and folklore. These shows are very entertaining and hold both adults and children enthralled for many hours.

THERU KOOTHU

Normally conducted during village festivals during the months of Panguni and Aadi. This is performed in a junction of three or four streets; in open air, the place being lit by gas lights. A wooden bench is set up to seat the singers and the musical troupe. Here, make-up and costumes are considered of prime importance. Only men take part; the female roles also played by them. The performance consists of story-telling, dialogue rendering, songs and dance, all performed by the artistes. Thus the artiste should have a very good performing ability, being an all-rounder. The stories are taken from Puranas, epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata, and also local folklore. The play starts in the late evening and gets over only during the small hours of the nights. The performance is so captivating that the audience are spellbound unaware of the long

hours. Theru Koothu is more popular in the northern districts of Tamilnadu. The Koothu can be categorized as Nattu Koothu, including Vali Koothu, Kuravai Koothu etc. Samaya Koothu dealing with religious topics, Pei Koothu including Thunangai Koothu and Porkala Koothu dealing with martial events.

DEVARAATTAM

Devarattam is a pure folk dance still preserved by the descendents of Veerapandiya Kattabomman dynasty at Kodangipatti of Madurai District. It was actually performed once a year near the temple and that too restricted to that community alone. Folklore research scholars have found that Devarattam is a combination of ancient 'muntherkuruvai' and 'pintherkuruvai' of the ancient Tamil Kings. It was performed in front of and at the chariot on the victorious return of the King and his army from battlefield. Sometimes even the king and his marshals would dance on the chariot deck. The soldiers and female dancers would form in lines and dance behind the chariot.

Today, this dance does not have any songs but only danced to the beat of Urumi Melam, Thappu Melam and sometimes, a long flute. The dancers hold a kerchief in each hand and swing them as they dance. The person leading the dance wears false beard and a mask decorated with shells that look like teeth. He dances the first step, which others follow.

OYILATTAM

Oyil means beauty. This dance is hence the dance of beauty. Traditionally, only men dance it. Ten years ago women also began to participate. This dance is prevalent in the south districts and Kongu Nadu in particular. First a few people will stand in a row and start dancing with rhythmic steps with musical accompaniment. Intricate steps are used in martial arts, such as Silambattam. Then gradually the row will become longer as the new comers and guests all join and dance along, as they like. The dancers wear ankle-bells. Normally, the dance is performed with the accompaniment of musical instruments and songs. It is performed near the temples or public places in the morning and evening hours, at times even till midnight. Styles of Oyilattam differ from place to place.

SNAKE DANCE

Yet another specialty of the southern region is the snake dance, which arises from the popularity of the snake as a protective divinity, safeguarding the health and happiness of the rural folk. Usually danced by young girls dressed in a tight-fitting costume designed like the snakeskin. The dancer simulates the movements of the snake, writhing and creeping, at times making quick biting movements with head and hands. The raised hands held together look like the hood of a snake.

PULI ATTAM

Puli Attam is performed by young men with painted bodies in colours yellow and black, complete with fangs, head gear with ears, paws with claws and long tail, simulating the prancing, pouncing tiger in every ferocious move. Wildly beating drums add frenzy to the performance. Sometimes, a goat is tied and brought along with the dancers, who pretend to pounce on it and kill it. This dance is regularly performed during temple festivals, drawing large crowds.