

Connection between Dance and Neuroscience: An Analysis through the Practice of Kandyan Dance

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This paper examines the connection between dance and neuroscience based on the experiences of Kandyan dance. Kandyan dance of Sri Lanka has been widely studied as an aesthetic expression and national cultural heritage. Its historical emergence and political role have also been studied. Analyzing Kandyan dance through neuroscience has not been done. This study is a basic attempt to understand the Kandyan dance through the concepts of body and movements in neuroscience. This is a qualitative study. Data comes from our experience as Kandyan dancers, personal reflections, observations, interviews with traditional dancers and bodily experiences. International research reports on brain activity tests, Physical-mental space tests, articles and books were referred to analyze data. Kandyan dance training and the role of the ritualist in dance rituals were analyzed. When grasping the connection between dance and neuroscience three concepts namely, perception, sensation, and emotions were useful. Richard Shusterman's aesthetics theory of the body was used to understand the neurological reflections of the body on culture and the culture on the body, particularly focusing on Kandyan dance. As a result of this study, a Sinhala language vocabulary and glossary was developed to analyze the connection between dance and neuroscience. Kandyan dance cannot be reduced to a physical activity. It is a connected activity of the body, movement and the culture. Because of their neurological system, Kandyan dancers are aware about the capacities and the limitations of their bodies at any given moment in the dance which they describe as "*pattiyā wenawā*" in Sinhala. Even when they are not dancing, dancers also feel that they are dancing in their bodies (*aenga ethulen natanawā*) while they are watching a dance. Concepts of neuroscience helps to explain experiences of Kandyan dancers' and the finding of this research can help future studies on Kandyan dance and neuroscience.

Keywords: Kandyan Dance, Perception, Sensation, Feelings, Neuroscience, Somaesthetics

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