

## **1.16 TRAINING THE LOWER BODY': From Suzuki Method to alternative' Dandiharamba ' Paradigm**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A comparative, intercultural study of training the lower body in actor training processes in Asia and to develop an actor training system through 'Dandiharamba', a native Sri Lankan dancer training methodology to fulfill the contemporary actors' needs.

Training the performer's body, particularly the lower body has been significantly prominent in the dance and dance drama traditions from antiquity to the present in Asia. Kerala based India's elaborate dance -drama named *Kathakali* is unique in this respect. Training the performer's body and specially is lower body (including legs) is essential and integral part of the long years of training process.

Similar to this tradition a contemporary actor training system is invented by a theorist and a director called Tadashi Suzuki in Japan. This actor training system is unique in its nature as all the basic principles of the system have been derived and developed from the major theatrical practice of *No* and *Kabuki*. Today this method is known as *Suzuki Method* and it is widely accepted method of actor training in some of the universities and acting schools in the world.

Even though there are numerous actor training systems derived from Asian corporeal arts, most of them have been explored and deployed in non-Asian context. It is a pity to say that these knowledge and the practices have not been transferred or shared enough with the same region. For instance Suzuki method is widely known and accepted system of actor training in so called western societies than in Asian region. One of my intentions here is to develop a link within the region and allow the brain drain to flow within the same region.

In taking these as a spring board, I would like to develop a research project of formulating an actor training system, from old dancer training exercises called 'Dandiharamba' in Sri Lankan traditional Southern dance form or I would call it 'pole- exercises' very similar to the approach of the lower body training system of Suzuki Method. In Asian corporeal arts such as *Taichi*, *kalaripayattu* martial art or Sri Lankan dance training tradition are homogenous in one respect. I am of the view that all these corporal arts are entwined with one philosophical thread; that is the unbreakable connection between the performer's lower body and the floor; as Suzuki stated too '(...) that the ground and the human body are inseparable, as the latter is, in fact, part of the former' (Zarrilli, 2002). Therefore, apart from the embodiment of the different body technology and exercising a new actor training paradigm, my sole intention of this project is to unveil the underneath philosophy, its commonalities and trajectories of actor training systems within the region.