Masks have been used almost universally to represent characters in theatrical performances. The mask as a dramatic device first emerged in Western civilization from the religious practices of ancient Greece. In the worship of Dionysus, god of fecundity and the harvest, the communicants’ attempt to impersonate the deity by donning goatskins and by imbibing wine eventually developed into the sophistication of masking. When a literature of worship appeared, a disguise, which consisted of a white linen mask hung over the face (a device supposedly initiated by Thespis, a 6th-century-BC poet who is credited with originating tragedy), enabled the leaders of the ceremony to make the god manifest. Thus symbolically identified, the communicant was inspired to speak in the first person, thereby giving birth to the art of drama.

Masks for festive occasions are still commonly used today. Ludicrous, grotesque, or superficially horrible, festival masks are usually conducive to good-natured license, release from inhibitions, and ribaldry. These include the Halloween, Mardi Gras, or “masked ball” variety. The disguise is assumed to create a momentary, amusing character, often resulting in humorous confusions, or to achieve anonymity for the prankster or ribald revealer. Throughout contemporary Europe and Latin America, masks are associated with folk festivals, especially those generated by seasonal changes or marking the beginning and end of the year. Among the most famous of the folk masks are the masks worn to symbolize the driving away of winter in parts of Austria and Switzerland. In Mexico and Guatemala, annual folk festivals employ masks for storytelling and caricature, such as for the Dance of the Old...
Men and the Dance of the Moors and the Christians. The Eskimo make masks with comic or satiric features that are worn at festivals of merrymaking, as do the Ibos of Nigeria (Henry Pernet (Author), Laura Grillo (Translator), 2006).

The No drama of Japan has remained a significant part of national life since its beginnings in the 14th century. No masks, of which there are about 125 named varieties, are rigidly traditional and are classified into five general types: old persons (male and female), gods, goddesses, devils, and goblins. The material of the No mask is wood with a coating of plaster, which is lacquered and gilded. Colours are traditional. White is used to characterize a corrupt ruler; red signifies a righteous man; a black mask is worn by the villain, who epitomizes violence and brutality. No masks are highly stylized and generally characterized. They are exquisitely carved by highly respected artists known as tenka-ichi, “the first under heaven.” Shades of feeling are portrayed with beautifully sublimated realism. When the masks are subtly moved by the player’s hand or body motion, their expression appears to change (Friedrich Perzynski (Author), Stanley Appelbaum (Editor) 2005).

2. MASKS AND MASK’S TRADITION IN INDIA

In India the use of masks is found in dance rituals, dramas, folk songs, temples, and different socio-cultural practices. In South India Face Painting Masks are worn by Kathakali, Teyyam, Koodiyattam. Theru – k - koothu and Kaniyan Koothu Performers to depict good and evil characters from Epics. Masks locate an important place in Religious Festival celebration such assuch as Durga Puja, Kulasekaranappattinam Muthuraman Dhashsera Festival (Thoothukkudi District of Tamil Nadu in India), Mysore Dhashsera Festival, Ram Navami, Sudalai Madan Kodai Festival and in so much of ritual festivals based on the agriculture in south Tamil Nadu.

In Kerala Folklore Museum there is so much rich & rare collection of wooden & bronze masks of varying type representing the period stretching from 17 to 18 Century. The cultural life of people who lived in the different historical period is revealed in these various masks of different shapes and designs. The origin of masks could be traced to ancient societies which employed human figures to symbolize deities. Masks are of God/Deity mask, Fantasy mask, Human mask and Animal mask. The God/Deity mask and the Fantasy mask represent the metaphysical and super human traits. Krishnattom, Kerala Kummattikali, Pachai Kaali – Pavala Kaali Aattam, Kilavan Kilavi Aattam, Pul Aattam, Simma Nadu Aattam, Karadi Aattam, Bommait Nadu Aattam, Naai Aattam, Aazhi Nadu Aattam, Pei Aattam are some of the Dance Art Forms used with masks (Subbiah M, 2013).

There are RITUAL MASKS originally belonging to Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal regions. Ritual masks are used to perform ritualistic acts in order to please deities going back to ancient times. Human Masks are found in some ritualistic acts of folk culture in India. The old lady who appears in Kummattikali-the Kerala folklore is a prime example of human masks employed in folk performances. Certain masks showing a comic expression might have been used in folk performances or to humour Kings. The function of comic mask is to provoke laughter among the audience through their poker faces (David Shulman (Editor), Deborah Thigajaran (Editor), 2006).

According to NATYASASHTRA, this type of humour is called Parastham, meaning gesturing. Bharatamuni, the ancient sage in his magnum oevre Natya shastram details the method used to make masks for theatrical performances. Some masks made of wood or metal were originally made for worshipping prominent persons after death in their villages. Animal masks are also made use of in folk & classical form of arts as well as in ritualistic performances.

ANIMAL MASKS are used in ritualistic performances as well as gaming in the past. The bronze mask of Panjurli is being a spirit of totemistic origin rooted in Southern Canara region of agricultural & forest land, Panjurli is worshipped both as a family deity and venerated by the public. The serpent figures are placed around the panjurli mask and it shows the gradation the deity. Panjurli belongs to the vegetable category among Bhootas. Pilichandi another spirit of totemistic origin is worshipped in the southern canara region of Karnataka, belongs to the non-vegetarian category among Bhootas. Pilichandi is specially invoked to ward off the menace posed by the Tiger & other wild animals to cattle and crops. Vishnumurthi is another Bhootha commonly found in Sothern Canara region. The origin of bhootha worship can be traced to worship of ancestors as ancient as the paleo-lithic age.

In Theyyam Performances FACE MASKS are generally used. There are several features common to both the Bhoota rituals of Karnataka & the Theyyams in Kerala. South Canara district of Karnataka and Kasargode and Kannur districts of Kerala retained the ritual festivals which were part of the rich cultural history of south India. Legends of many Theyyams are related to the people & places of Tulunadu and some of the Theyyams and Bhootas bear identical names with similar physical forms and stories associated with them. During hunting expeditions, men of yore used Animal masks to intimidate wild animals.

PAINTING OF FACIAL MASKS is based on the position of six head features such as the eye, eye-brows, nose, lips, cheeks and chin. The expressions shown by these masks are based on the special prominence given to each feature. The black colour on the facial mask denotes fear, White for the Sathvagunas, Blue for Santham, Red for Roudra expression and yellow stands for Divine aura. Skill and imaginative sweep of the artists who give shape to

Subbiah,
Masks and camouflaging,
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http://www.discovery.org.in/ija.htm

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these masks are reflected in their colours and designs. Here one can find masks used to decorate building structures in ancient times and which were called Mughavadas in Karnataka. We can see the remainder of natural lamination process on some of these face-masks. The sap extracted from the bark of pine tree and collected before sun rise is usually used for laminating the painted masks to retain their original appearance.

In Theru-koothu a traditional Theatre form of Tamilnadu, the performer face could be covered by colours with dots and lines. And they have used the colours with colour psychology as mentioned above. Moreover from the dots and the lines (Straight and Curve Lines) they create the character with symbolic expressions. Theru-koothu is a form one who give importance to costume and make-up. The performers of theru-koothu are merely changed their character as they have disguised and they lost their original face and character. They are not performed, they originally live with the characters, what they disguised.

**BODY PAINTING AND FACE PAINTING** is being practiced in Indian culture since ancient times. Men painted their bodies and faces for disguise when they went hunting. And after the hunting completed, they came with the animal and put it in the village centre, and they performed the past hunting event of them to the other peoples/relatives with animal masks. In this event one should camouflage as animal with wearing the animal head and covered his body with the animal fur also, the others imitate as hunters and they show how they performed the event of hunting.

Most probably face painting is a ritual in Indian villages in their religious festivities, dance and drama. Face painting is very much a part of Indian folk culture and tribal art even today. People are often seen getting their faces painted in different styles during temple festivities and religious events in India. Face painting is also an inherent part of the rich dance and drama culture of Indian life.

In Dussera festival of Kulasekaran pattinam Mutharamman Temple, who believing and worshiping the Folk Deity Mutharamman, they are disguised as God, Animal, Demon and their super hero characters through Body Painting and Face Painting and wandering in and around their villages and city with dancing and imitating as what they are disguised. This is an offering to the deity Mutharamman by their devotees every year in the time of Navarathiri Festival. Moreover they plead money from the people and shops with dancing and imitating at wandering and they give up the collected money to the growth of temple Mutharamman. It is a tremendous mass festival with an offering of disguising through Body painting and Face Painting and with covered Masks and Dresses in Southern Tamil Nadu.

Masks are besides coupled with the Folk Ritual Festivals in Tamil Nadu, such as Madurai - Vellaloore Ezhai Kaathamman Madhukkudameduthal Festival, Chathirappatti Kaliyamman Vaigasp Pongal Festival, T.Kallupatti Poomariamman Koli Chithiraip Pongal Festival and Kaili and Sudalai Maadan Deity’s Temple Festivals (Tamil Nadu, India). In those Festivals the Masks are as a part of the Festival Ritual. Without Masks the Festival/Ritual has not pleased. The Devotees or the Performers are wearing Masks and they perform the Offering or Performance in front of the Deity at the Temple. God/Deity’s Masks, Animal Masks, Human Masks, Imaginative Masks are have on in those festivals. The People who wore Masks, through this offering they have given thanks to their Deities for their past and future Agriculture growth, Disease Curing, Economic Growth and other life achievements.

The **HEADGEAR AND OTHER ORNAMENTAL DECORATIONS** are an important part of various art forms of Kerala and TamilNadu. It is ornamental in Kathakali, Thira, Yakshagana, Theru-k-koothu, Mayilattam, Poikkalkudhirai Aatam, Kaali Aatam, Pragalatha Natakam and Hanuman Aatam. Theyyam headgears are spectacular in sheer size and appearance and tall headgears give a touch of the supernatural. Thira is a beautiful headgear made from the root of Jack Fruit tree. Thira is the symbol of Goddess Kali. Poothanum and Thira is a ritualistic art form found in north Kerala. It is usually performed once or twice a year to cleanse the entire village of evil spirits. By this art form tribal class people are expressing their gratitude to the goddess in the harvest season. The Poothan and the Thira with their concomitant bells and anklets are synonymous with serene & unsullied villages that have long ceased to be a reality in Kerala. In earlier time Kathakali head rest is made from Jack Wood and is treated in medicinal water to reduce the weight is also exhibited here.

In Teru-k-koothu of Tamil Nadu and Yakshanagana of Karnataka and Veedi Bhagavatham of Andhra Pradesh, the head gears for the characters decorated by the coloured glass pieces and colours and made from the Jack fruit tree. There are different types of head gears depends upon the characters, it may be short or tall. Moreover they wear the ornaments and dress materials like Maar Padakkam (Chest Ornament), Kaadhu Kattai (Ear Ornament), Paavadai, etc., The body of the theru-k-koothu performer is full of covered with Dresses and Ornaments and Face is covered by Face Painting.

### 3. BACKGROUND AND FUNCTIONS OF MASKS IN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

While it is perfectly fine to enjoy masks from many cultures as rich, colorful works of art, one can gain a deeper understanding by considering how masks are used in a particular culture and the meanings that the tradition-bearers bring to them.
In general, masks have two important social functions:
(1) they provide a disguise for the wearer and
(2) they allow the wearer to assume the identity, at least temporarily, of some other person or being.

An individual in clown makeup, for example, is allowed in most societies to behave in ways that would otherwise be deemed inappropriate or offensive. This is certainly entertaining to the viewers, but it also highlights and presumably conveys something about the boundaries of what is appropriate in that particular society.

Traditionally, masks are often worn at dangerous times of "border-crossing" -- what anthropologists call periods of "liminality" -- such as funerals or the planting and nurturing of spring crops. Not unexpectedly, these are also times when the spirits are in closest contact with the people. In religious rituals during these times, the person wearing the mask often becomes the spirit being represented, or at least serves as a medium through which the spirit is allowed to communicate with the people.

Of course, masks can also serve as simple enhancements to story-telling, as a way for actors to "disappear" into the roles they are playing (Japanese Noh masks, for example). Yet even this use of masks can be more complicated than one might suppose: at one time, for instance, Korean masked dance troupe ritualistically burned their masks after they had been used, suggesting that an element of religious tradition had carried over to the stage. And in the festival of Kulasekaranpattinam (Tamil Nadu) Dussera, after completing the Disguising offering by the devotees, they put the masks and dresses to the fire and in the sea water. The Mask Making Society of Panar - a traditional community is making the masks and dresses for this Kulasekaranpattinam Mutharamman Dussera Festival every year and their livelihood growth is also based on this festival and temple arts only.

4. THE ROLE OF THE SPECTATOR

It is as consecrated objects imbued with supernatural power that masks are viewed by the spectators or participants at ceremonials where their presence is required. Whatever their specific identity may be, the masks usually refer back to early times, when their initial appearance occurred. This basic aspect of the mask is understood at least in essence by everyone. A paramount role of the mask is to give a sense of continuity between the present and the beginnings of time, a sense that is of vital importance for the integration of a culture with no written history.

Psychologically the spectators become associated with the past through the spirit power of the mask, and this often leads the participants to a state of complete absorption or near-frenzy. This is not, however, a consistent reaction to masked ceremonials. That depends on the character whose presence the mask represents.

In some cases, the spirit or supernatural being depicted is viewed with rejoicing and almost a familiarity, which leads to gaiety that has a cathartic aspect. Even so, the mask has a spirit content that is respected and revered, even if it is not showing a being with malignant potential. All of these forms have spirit and magical qualities and are thus esteemed as agents for the accomplishing of superhuman acts.

Some masks, however, do represent malignant, evil, or potentially harmful spirits. These are often used to keep a required balance of power or a traditional social and political relationship of inherited positions within a culture. The characters depicted are also prescribed by tradition and enact roles to achieve the desired ends.

The drama involving these masks is often associated with secret societies, especially in Africa, where the greatest range of mask forms and functions can be observed. These forms are often used in very restricted performances, where only select persons can view them. This is also true in other areas where masks are used, such as in Oceania, the Americas, and even in some of the folk mask rites still performed in Europe.

5. MEANING AND AESTHETIC RESPONSE

On the basis of present knowledge, it would appear that there is not or has not been any set response or reaction by any one of the three groups involved with the mask: the artist, the wearer, the spectator. There is, however, a reaction of a very particular kind common to every culture, a response such as awe, delight and pleasure, fear and even terror: these are as traditionally determined as the forms and costumes of the masks themselves. This is a learned and inherent pattern of conduct for each culture.

Masks, therefore, that have a closely comparable appearance in several unrelated groups in quite different parts of the world often have totally dissimilar meanings and functions. It is thus practically impossible to determine either the meaning or use of a mask by its appearance alone. For example, some masks in Africa, as well as in Oceania and East Asia, have such a grotesque or frightening appearance as to lead one to suspect that they represent evil spirits with an intent to terrorize the spectators; actually they may have the opposite character and function. The significance of masks can be determined only by reference to accounts or personal observations of the masks in the setting of their own culture.

The aesthetic effects of masks, on the other hand, since they derive from the forms and their disposition within the design, can readily be evaluated as art objects. But this evaluation is based on elements very different from
those appraised within the mask’s own culture. This is partly because the total artistic qualities of a mask derive both from its exterior forms and from its meaning and function within its cultural context.

There exist, however, in all cultures criteria for determining the quality of objects as art. These criteria differ from one culture to another, and they may be known only from investigations carried out within the varying cultures.

6. PRESERVATION AND COLLECTING

The preservation or disposal of masks is often decreed by tradition. Many masks and often their form and function are passed down through clans, families, special societies, or from individual to individual. They are usually spiritually reactivated or aesthetically restored by repainting and redecorating, without destroying the basic form and symbolism. In many instances, however, the mask is used only for one ceremony or occasion and then is discarded or destroyed, sometimes by burning.

The collecting of masks has largely been of recent origin. Not until the late 19th and early 20th century was they seriously appreciated as art objects or studied as cultural artefacts. Most masks have been obtained through archaeological excavations or in field expeditions, that is, in their place of origin.

7. CONCLUSION

Indian Society is constructing with Culture, Performances, Beliefs and Customs. But in the contemporary world so many distractions are obtained in our Indian Culture and we have lost our originality and Identity also. Because of the society was manipulated by the third rated culture which was decisively injected by the out forces. Moreover we have lost all our traditional seeds and foods and we to plead the foods and seeds from other countries for our livelihood development. So, we the Academicians, Folklore Researchers, Students are should aware of our culture, performances, indigenous arts and our traditional things whichever may be. And this is one of the ways to document our culture and it will be vital information to our future society.

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