

CHAPTER TWO
TRAINING AND TECHNIQUE

The Sanskrit drama used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam describes the exploits of gods, heroes, and demons--characters who have incredible mental and physical prowess. Manifesting such characters requires powerful techniques. It would be inappropriate to approach the creation of these superhuman characters from the limited point of view of the individual human being. In order to be truthful in such roles the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor must rely on the tradition of his art, which ennobles the wisdom of great seers and performers of the past who have understood how an individual actor can embody the perfection of the characters he is to portray. At the beginning his body and voice must be coerced to perform the highly stylized gestures and vocal patters of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. These physical movements hold the key to the inner life of the characters. Physical training ultimately gives way to emotional and spiritual insight.

The actor's medium is his physical body and the energy emanating from it. In the dramatic arts of India a disciplined body is a prerequisite for the actor. In Kerala until the recent advent of western drama there were no amateur actors. It was assumed that acting was a professional skill that required many years of arduous physical training. But the arts of India are also inextricably bound up with religion, and Indians expect their classical artists to express the deep emotional and spiritual aspects of human life. So it is vital that training shape the physical body into a vehicle for the representation and expression of the most profound and subtle of human experiences.

It is by achieving physical perfection of a certain type that the performer can develop and transmit spiritual perfection. Indian performing artists perceive a dynamic relationship between the "inner" and the "outer" in their work which is the most characteristic aspect of their training. This relationship is especially alive in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. As we shall see in this chapter, the outer training of the body, because of its nature and thoroughness, brings to life the inner psychology of both the character and the actor.

The interrelationship between inner and outer in the training of the actor has always been a topic of controversy. Plato urged potential inhabitants of his Republic to avoid the physical manifestation of heroes and heroines, whether sane or demented, because of the damage that it might inflict on their souls. Diderot's Paradoxe sur le comédien asserts that an actor gives his best performances when uninvolved in the emotions being portrayed. Great actors of the past have almost invariably been described as more "natural" than their predecessors, for they abandoned proved external forms for more inner directed ones. But the Stanislavski system, which purports to train the actor to experience the emotions of the character he is portraying while he is acting, has been the source of the greatest debate and misunderstanding. Especially during the early years of the Actor's Studio, when the excitement over Stanislavski's inner techniques was so great, professional actor training in America tended to concentrate on the development of these inner skills and ignore the thorough training of body and voice. Of course Stanislavski always understood the importance of physical training. His students studied dance, gymnastics, fencing, and voice from their first lessons.¹ Later in his life he began to

place even more attention on the physical aspect of "actions." He developed his Method of Physical Actions and abandoned his much-loved, long round-table discussions of the inner life of the characters at the beginning of rehearsals in favor of active improvisations based on the given circumstances and on the physical tasks required by the characters in the scene.² The Method of Physical Actions codified Stanislavski's belief that there is a vital and dynamic connection between the body and the mind that must be deeply experienced and then exploited to the fullest by the actor. Stanislavski on Opera, an account of his work at the very end of his life, testifies to Stanislavski's fascination with opera, the most highly stylized popular form of theatre in the West, and to his increasing emphasis on external processes. In spite of the consternation of many of the singers, Stanislavski insisted on long hours of physical exercise in order to release extraneous tension and increase expressivity. These physical exercises had to be done with a certain kind of mental attention in order to open up the channels of communication between the body and the mind: "You must learn how to rest your body, free your muscles and, at the same time, your psyche."

In all our exercises Stanislavski insisted on inner justification for whatever we were doing at a given moment. This applied as well to . . . the logic of speech as to physical exercises--fluid movements, dancing, fencing. He always determined that we prepare "given circumstances," some imaginative idea that we were to carry out during our work . . .

"I do not understand just what you are doing now," he would say, while watching our hand exercises. "If you are trying to make beautiful movements in space by using your softly curvaceous arms while your imaginations are fast asleep and you do not even know it, then what you are indulging in is empty form. Try to fill it up with something out of you imagination. Give each exercise some purpose of its own, combine everything you do with feelings with regard to the action."³

Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish director who, though he was never a student

of Stanislavski, has been his most creative disciple, based his "psycho-physical" exercises, in which deep associations are allowed to emerge from the unconscious by the repeated performance of simple movements, on Stanislavski's Method of Physical Actions, and on his own deep understanding of Jungian psychology. He insisted on an arduous regime of physical exercises. He demanded from his actors a body which was transparently responsive to the most subtle and the most intense psychological states.

Physical freedom can bring emotional openness; the release of tension in the body is directly related to the release of emotional stress. Upright people look it, not necessarily in the simplistic and codified sense that the medieval world understood (e.g., Richard III), but in a subtle, dynamic sense. Tensions are often hidden except from the most astute observers. Most people carry physical tension that they cannot see but which trained eyes and hands can sense and release. Stanislavski's rediscovery was re-discovered by many others in this century. In the last few years the awareness of the interrelationship between body and mind has caused a renaissance in the healing professions which has come to be called "holistic health."

The Christian tradition tended to deny the body or regard its physical and sexual needs as an evil tempter. Spiritual experiences were mental and were encouraged by actively ignoring the body. In the East, especially in India, the body has been glorified for its ability to reflect the spiritual, inner being of humankind. The body and the mind must be purified together. The Indians developed hatha yoga for the purpose of bringing about spiritual realization through physical

purification. Grotowski based many of his psycho-physical exercises on hatha yoga.

The rise of holistic health has begun to break down the dualism between mind and body that characterizes much of western philosophical and scientific thought. The objective world, including the body and the brain, has often been conceived of as separate from the subjective world of thoughts and feelings. In Indian thought there has never been a split between body and mind. Some Indian philosophy does posit a dualism in the universe, but not between body and mind. For example Sāṅkhya, the earliest of the six systems of Indian philosophy, whose elements have been incorporated into popular Buddhism and Hinduism, postulates both puruṣa 'spirit' and prakṛti 'nature' at the root of creation. But the mind, along with its thinking and feeling functions, belongs in the latter category which is a non-intelligent, material principle. The puruṣa oversees and animates prakṛti, but it is transcendental, beyond the individual mind. A human being by cleansing himself in body and mind may have a direct experience of the puruṣa, though it is in essence beyond body, mind, and emotions. After such an experience the individual may begin to visibly reflect the divine puruṣa. A god or hero may reflect puruṣa perfectly while a human individual can be only an imperfect mirror. However the actor in Kūṭiyā-ṭṭam engages himself in a process of purification and perfection of body and mind which allows him to express more faithfully his own divine nature, to be a more perfect mirror for puruṣa, and thus be able to portray gods and heroes more truthfully. It is a goal he actively pursues. His knowledge that almost complete purity of body and mind is possible and that such perfection brings with it miracles, visions, and

spiritual insights as well as more faithful representations of the divine beings he acts encourages him and motivates him on the arduous path of training. The Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor feels that he is most likely to achieve this purity by following, to the best of his ability, the tradition that has inspired his teachers.

The acting of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is entrusted to only two castes, the Cākyārs and the Nañnyārs.⁴ The Cākyārs take all the male roles. The Nañnyārs take most of the female roles and sing background music and recite verses which the Cākyār performs in gesture in certain parts of the performance. The Nambyār, who is the husband of the Nañnyār, plays the drum called mizhāvu, which is the primary instrumental accompaniment.

The term Cākyār is apparently derived from ślāgyar 'man of respect' or ślāgyavakkukar 'man of eloquent words.'⁵ Frequently the Cākyārs are said to originate from the traditional sūta or story-teller attached to the royal court. The sūta was generally the son of a Kṣatriya husband and a Brāhman wife, or a Kṣatriya wife and a Brāhman husband. Edgar Thurston in Castes and Tribes of Southern India reports that the Cākyārs

are recruited from girls born to a Nampūtiri woman found guilty of adultery after a date at which such adultery is found to have commenced and boys of similar origin who have been already invested with Punul (sacred thread). Boys who have not been invested with Punul when their mother was declared as adulteress join the Cākyār Nampyār who follow Marumakkattāyam (inheritance in the female line) and do not wear the sacred thread. Girls join wither caste indifferently. The Cākyār marries a Nañnyār but Cākyār Nampyār does not marry an Ilottama.⁶

Jones notes:

The Cākyārs readily admit to the tradition of the sūta as ancestor

of their line; however the tradition of the adoption of Brāhmaṇa children born out of wedlock or in violation of caste into their community is not readily agreed to.⁷

Rāman Cākyār, Madhva Cākyār, and Maṇimadhva Cākyār, three principal actors of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are all sons of a Nambūtiri Brāhman and an Ilottama, Cākyār woman, i.e., their fathers were not actors. The sons take the name Cākyār and their caste dharma to become Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors because these castes practice matrilineal descent, marumakkattāyam. Today their dharma is not binding, but many Cākyārs train for at least a short time. Nārāyaṇa Nambyār, the principal drummer who accompanied Rāman Cākyār and his students is the son of Maṇimadhva Cākyār and a Nañnyār. The Ambalavāsi, or temple assistant, group of castes to which the Cākyārs and the Nambyārs belong, are ranked ritually very high, and the "Cākyārs, who wear the sacred thread, are recognized as the upper strata of the temple service castes."⁸

There were originally eighteen families of Cākyārs in Kerala and seven or eight Nambyār families. Many have merged so that today there are no more than seven Cākyār families. In central Kerala there are three older principal actors who have trained or are training about five students to be actors. There are perhaps ten other Cākyārs who occasionally perform.⁹

The course of training for the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor is long and arduous, starting when the student is five or six and continuing into his early twenties. All training is in the gurukula system: the student never takes part in regular public education. The young boy first studies with a nearby relative, and then at eight or ten years he goes to live year-round with a master of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, his āśān 'teacher.' The

first years are spent in learning the fundamentals of Sanskrit and the recitation of ślokas. At the same time he is practicing physical exercises with eyes and body. The learning of Nityakriyā is usually begun at this stage. By age ten training begins in earnest. The boy lives with his āśān and sees his parents only a few times a year at special holidays. The boy attends his teacher's performances, sometimes performs small roles (usually walk-ons--e.g., holding back a furious Rāvaṇa), and memorizes Sanskrit literature of all types, especially the Campūs and Prabandhas he will quote in Kūttu and as the Viḍūṣaka. He learns major roles, beginning with those that involve extensive gesture and physical movement. He continues daily study of Sanskrit grammar. By seventeen or so he is ready to perform some major roles. That of Viḍūṣaka will be the last he learns. For this purpose he travels with a prominent Cākyār, listening to countless performances of Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam as well as continuing his study of Sanskrit and physical exercises. Finally by his early twenties he is on his own, starting to perform Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam in temples where his teacher acts. A fully-trained Cākyār today will probably act at most two or three complete performances of Kūṭiyāṭṭam a year, but he will have the opportunity to do Kūttu in many temple festivals. Madhva Cākyār of Irinjalakuda is the most active performer today. He acts almost daily throughout the festival season from March to May. During most of the rest of the year he is training students. Many Cākyār boys begin training and then drop out, for it is too demanding and the financial future too bleak.

Physical Exercise and Massage

The Nāṭyaśāstra does not include a complete description of the

training of the actor. There is however a brief reference to physical exercise:

One should perform exercise on the floor as well as in the air, and should have beforehand one's body massaged with the oil or with barley gruel.

The floor is the proper place for exercise. Hence one should resort to the floor, and stretching oneself over it one should take exercise.

For the strength of body one should take nasal medicine and get oneself purged, take oily food, juice of sugarcane and sherbet, for vitality is dependent on one's nourishment, and the exercise is dependent on vitality. Hence one should be careful about one's nourishment. When bowels are not cleansed and one is very tired, hungry, thirsty, has drunk too much, eaten too much, one should not take exercise. The wise teacher should give training in exercise to his pupil who has a graceful body and square breast and is not covered with garment.¹⁰

This directive seems to have been taken to heart by the teachers of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Exercise and massage and even purgation are very much a part of the training of the actor.

While the young Cākyār is beginning his studies of language and literature that form the intellectual foundation for his life as an actor in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, his physical training is begun innocently to develop physical skills and psychological traits that will be necessary for him as an actor. The physical goals are the same as they should be for any actor: stamina, flexibility, proper alignment of the spine, control and articulation of the extremities, strength, relaxation, and a sense of rhythm. The technical virtuosity required in performing roles in Kūṭiyāṭṭam directly motivates the actor toward achieving these physical abilities. A frequent problem in western training is to motivate the young actor to acquire physical skills. Except for the joy of these abilities for their own sake, he has little chance to demonstrate them fully in an ordinary production. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam practically everything

learned is used in performance and so the necessity of acquiring impressive skills is obvious.

The achievement of physical goals encourages the development of psychological traits that parallel them: mental stamina and an awareness of inner rhythm as well as courage, size, and daring. Concentration and emotional flexibility can result from physical exercises done with a proper state of mind.

Since about 1970 when Rāman Cākyār began to teach Kūṭiyāṭṭam at the Kerala Kalamandalam in Cheruthuruthy, the most famous school for Kathakaḷi actors, two Cākyār boys and one Nambūtiri have taken early morning exercises with the Kathakaḷi students there. Since they will be among the leading Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors in a few years it will not be out of place to describe these exercises. The early morning exercise and massage for Kathakaḷi is more strenuous than that for Kūṭiyāṭṭam, but actors of Kūṭiyāṭṭam have always received massage and have performed exercises before and after. Kathakaḷi warm-up exercises are derived from Kaḷarippayatt̃, the traditional system of martial arts that was developed or refined in medieval Kerala after the first Cēras.¹¹ The physical exercises are called meyyaRappaṭavu, literally 'removing obstacles from the body.' They are followed by kālsādhakam, practice in basic foot patterns of Kathakaḷi, and uzhiccil 'massage.'

The morning exercise routine is begun in June during the monsoon season at the start of the school year. The Kathakaḷi students continue the practice for about three months, but the Kūṭiyāṭṭam students by tradition only take uzhiccil for forty-one days. The routine is done everyday, including weekends. It is thought that daily practice

is vital for proper results and to prevent injury.

At 4 a.m. the morning bell rings and the students pile out of bed and over to the kalari 'practice room' for the morning exercise. At Kalamandalam the rooms are concrete buildings partly closed on three sides. The two ends have small windows high on the walls. One side wall is open along its length above a height of about five feet. The other side wall has a low railing and pillars holding up the roof but is otherwise open to the elements. Also in the kalari is a separate room in which the āsān resides.¹² A two-foot-high oil lamp placed in the middle of the main room provides the only illumination until the morning light pervades it at about 5:30. The students exchange their normal dress, which consists of jockey-type underwear and a two-and-a-half-foot wide white cloth called mundu wrapped around the waist, pleated in the front and tucked into itself, for a kacca, an eight-inch-wide cloth about seven feet long wrapped in a particular fashion in order to hold the genitals while keeping the buttocks free for massage.¹³

After the kacca is in place and tightened up, the students cover their bodies with oil. The oil prescribed for Kathakali uzhiccil is called vazhukk 'slippery' and consists of coconut oil, castor oil, and buffalo ghee mixed in equal proportions and spiced with ground fenugreek. This differs from the oil used in kalari payatt uzhiccil and that used in suka cikitsa 'pleasure massage' commonly performed in homes.¹⁴ Today plain sesame (gingely) oil is used at Kalamandalam because of the high cost of coconut oil and ghee.

Next the students do namaskāra 'bow' to the central oil lamp. The

rally more flexible and lithe than American bodies and the students are all quite young (from eight to sixteen years) so that their joints and ligaments are still malleable. Jumping into activity without physical preparation is a quality that Kathakaḷi actors (and, to a lesser extent, Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors) must cultivate, for in performance the actor appears on stage, sometimes immediately executing strenuous dance routines, after several hours of lying around in the dressing room being made-up and costumed. Rāvaṇa himself would certainly never warm up, so for the actor who becomes Rāvaṇa as soon as his make-up is complete, a warm-up would be completely inappropriate. These days forty jumps are thought to be enough, especially when the āśān is not present. Often he is not there and comes in later to administer massage, or has his older students give it and does not appear at all.¹⁷

Following the jumps a series of exercises are performed to limber and strengthen the body in preparation for kālsādhakam and uzhicciḷ. They were modified and standardized from a longer series of exercises by Pattikkantodi Ramunni Menon, who supervised the teaching at Kalamandalam in the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁸ A brief description of the exercises will be given here in order to show their nature. A detailed account of them is beyond the scope of this study. The exercises are combined into a unified routine and are connected by simple foot movements. They are performed rhythmically, but not to a beat.

The students form two lines on either side of the lamp, facing each other across the room and perform the following sequence:

- 1) Two namaskāras as described above.
- 2) A series of kicks with alternate legs, the foot touching the outstretched hand.
- 3) Kicks facing front, then back in which the leg swings through as the body turns.
- 4) 2 repeated.
- 5) Namaskāra.
- 6) From turned-out position (like second position plié of western ballet), hands held in the Sword and Shield pose of Kalarippayatt,¹⁹ the right knee bends to the side, the left leg kept stretched out, its foot flat on the floor. (The torso remains upright while the right knee does a deep bend to the side.) This gesture is repeated to both sides, four times each side.
- 7) From this position (right leg bent) the torso twists to the right, hands placed to either side of the knee. Then the torso swoops close to the ground on the inside of the leg ending with the back arched. Then the hands walk the torso left while the hips stay close to the floor and the gesture is repeated to the left.
- 8) With one leg bent, the other stretched straight as before, the torso circles around.
- 9) Second position stretches against the wall.
- 10) The torso and arms swing around in place.
- 11) Circlings of the whole body around a vertical axis coordinated with steps to the side so that the body faces alternately front and back while the torso swings.²⁰ (A difficult

movement!)

- 12) 10 is repeated.
- 13) Standing facing the other line across the lamp again, the arms swing in circles alternately and then together.
- 14) A series of jumping turns after which the legs are massaged with the hands.
- 15) With the legs in a very deep second position plié some weight taken onto the right hand placed on the floor behind the right foot, the torso circles back into a back bend while the left hand reaches across the face. Weight is caught by the left hand and the torso continues to circle to the front.
- 16) From squatting to backbend back to squatting.
- 17) Standing second position stretch--a bent leg pulled up with the hand by grabbing the foot and then the toe.
- 18) Travelling circles (11) repeated.
- 19) A series of backbends, forward and back flips, handstands, etc. These are done very quickly in a relatively careless way.

Next kālsādhakam 'foot practice' is begun. It is purposely strenuous so that the students work up a sweat in preparation for massage. There are four basic patterns practiced almost every day, but the first is the most important. It is usually continued for about thirty minutes until the first boys are taken aside for uzhiccil. Then other patterns are practiced for shorter periods. Each is accompanied by a spoken vāyttāri 'shout' which gives the rhythmic beat and encourages more complete involvement on the part of the student. The vāyttāri for the

first pattern is "dhi tta tta tta, dhi tta tta tta." It is in one of the basic rhythmic patterns of Kathakaḷi called campaṭatāla (eight even beats, mātras, per measure, tālavattam). The foot pattern begins in what might be called Kathakaḷi second position. This is like the second position of ballet except that the feet are turned inward so that the toes point straight front and the foot is rotated laterally so that the weight is taken onto the outside of the foot. The rotated position of the foot seems very awkward at first, but in my experience it is absolutely necessary to have the weight taken onto the outside of the foot when executing the stamping movements so characteristic of Kathakaḷi. It seems as though the impact of the foot against the floor when it is in this position is allowed to travel along the outside of the leg instead of directly through the knee, and thus injury to the knee is prevented. Another aspect of the Kathakaḷi second is that the students are expected to have 180 degree turnout. Uzhicci makes this possible for most students. From second position the right foot is raised to the left knee and then brought straight down with considerable force to the floor under the center of the body, the weight still on the outside of the foot. The impact is on "dhi." The left foot is then raised to the right knee and brought down into Parallel Position with the right foot. This impact is on the first "tta." Then the right foot is raised and stamped into second position of the next "tta." Then on "tta" again the left foot returns to its original position. The foot while in the air remains rotated inward at all times.²¹

This very simple foot pattern, basic to all of Kathakaḷi, is the theme for a set of rhythmic variation performed by each student. The pattern is begun in unison at a very slow tempo (about 45 beats per

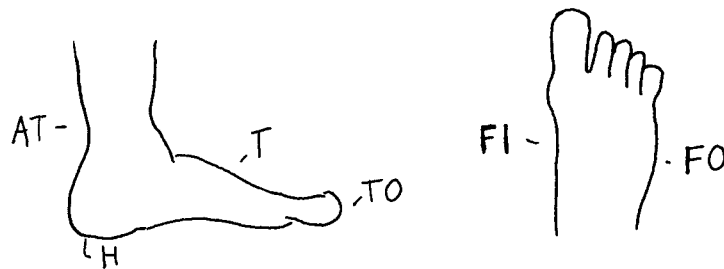
minute), the boys facing each other in two lines as before, thumbs tucked into their kaccas. The tempo is called first kāla 'tempo'. After this tempo is established the boy nearest the southeast corner of the kaḷari begins to take the pattern in double time (second kāla). After one full eight-beat tālavattam at second kāla, he will repeat the pattern in triple time (third kāla) and then in quadruple time (fourth kāla). Then he will go back to third kāla, to second kāla and finally to first kāla again. His full cycle, from first kāla to fourth kāla and back to first, will take six tālavattams. He will be executing eight stamps per beat in fourth kāla. In the meantime, at the point in his cycle when the first boy begins third kāla, the boy next to him in line will start second kāla and proceed through the same cycle. The third boy in line will follow suit, and so the cycle of patterns will continue around down to the end of the first line and up the other line. So, while the majority of the boys keep the basic beat, there will be one boy in every kāla all the time. When the cycles have taken their course back to the first boy, he usually picks up the basic tempo slightly. Eventually the basic beat reaches about 60 per minute which is about as fast as fourth kāla can be managed. This exercise continues for at least twenty minutes and is very exhausting, especially when proper form--the foot brought all the way up to the opposite knee between every stamp--is insisted upon. Then one or two boys are taken for uzhicil while the others continued kālsādhakam. Three other patterns are generally practiced at Kalamandalam in the early morning, though there are many more. They all consist of a combination of stamping or placing the foot down, raising the heel and putting it down, and kicks to the front. They are all done in the four kālas in

the same large pattern.

The massage is similar to that described by Zarrilli in his Kaḷarippayatt̃ but there are striking differences especially in the position of the student on the floor. In Kathakaḷi uzhiccil special attention is placed on the opening of the legs at the hip joints. The massage received traditionally by Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors was probably closer to what Zarilli describes, but the students of Rāman Cākyār are receiving Kathakaḷi uzhiccil. Since this particular massage has not been described before in print, it seems worthwhile to do so here. It must be treated with more caution than Kaḷarippayatt̃ uzhiccil in order to prevent serious injury. Even in the kaḷari there are times when blood-curdling screams are emitted by a student whose masseuse has put some extra pressure into the hip joints. The massage is done daily for a long period and the movements change slightly during the period of uzhiccil, more pressure being applied toward the middle of the period and being gradually eased toward the end.

By the time the student is taken for massage he is usually sweating profusely, and the combination of oil and sweat makes his body very slippery. No additional oil is applied during the massage. At Kalamandalam, uzhiccil is performed with the student lying under a bamboo bar (supported by two posts) 4' 8" from the floor and 2' from the wall. The student lies on a straw mat placed over the concrete floor. Two doughnut-shaped pads about 15" in diameter and 2½" thick are placed under his knees to protect them and increase the turn out. Advanced students who are especially flexible often use two pads. The following key will be used to simplify descriptions of the foot movements of the

teacher-masseuse (designated M hereafter).



AT--Achilles tendon area, H--heel, T--top of foot, TO--toes,

FI--instep, FO--outside of foot

1. The student (S) lies face down, his feet flat against the wall, knees almost in line with the hips, torso up, head looking at the opposite wall. The weight of the torso is taken on the lower arms, which are placed sphinx-like--palms down, hands and forearms together.

2. Standing behind the bar facing the opposite wall, M adjusts pads under the knees by holding S's foot against the wall with AT and kicking the pad. Then M usually spreads S's knees apart, opening the hip joint.

3. M touches his hand to the top of S's head and then to his own head, acknowledging to S that he is going to begin the massage.

4. M circles the right hip in a clockwise direction using mostly FO of right foot. Then he moves down the leg to the foot, massages the foot back and forth, makes three clockwise circles on the calf and returns to the hip stroking the thigh. This movement is repeated.

5. M circles the hip moving his foot slightly onto the leg three times. On the first time around, the outside of the hip joint is massaged with AT. Numbers 4 and 5 are repeated on the left side with the left foot.

6. "Skater's Waltz" (my name): M moves in front of the bar, takes

it with his hands held behind his back and puts most of his weight on it. M places right foot on the lower back. With the right foot he circles the hip clockwise leading first with H and then moves back up the hip with FI. As the right foot begins to move to the right, the left foot is placed on the lower back and begins the same movement in the opposite direction. The two feet continue moving together around their respective buttocks about four times and end with AT in the outer hip joints. As the hips become more flexible more and more weight is used.

7. M pulls the hips back a bit toward the wall. The student lies face down, his left hand by his side, the right stretched over the head with the palm down. M stands on S's right side in front of the bar facing S. He circles the buttock three times counterclockwise and then pulls the foot back and forth in the lower back. He then presses FO into the lower back and with considerable weight moves the foot up toward the neck, then up the right arm to the hand. This move is repeated.

8. M repeats circular motion, then transfers his weight to his right foot on S's lower back. Holding onto the bar he leans his hips out away from the bar, pressing his weight into the lower back. Still facing the wall to S's left, he then walks in place on the lower back, transferring the weight from right to left feet, letting them slide along the lower back (about six steps). Then he brings his hips toward the bar, and walking in the same way he moves up the back to the neck. Then with the right foot only he strokes up the right arm.

9. Stepping close to the bar and facing the wall, M walks in place diagonally across the right hip starting where the hip joins the

leg and ending in the center of the lower back (six steps). Then he transfers the weight to the foot on the spine and walks along the spine about six times. Then he strokes up the arm again with the right foot.

10. M stands facing the wall over S's head, and S takes M's right AT with his right hand. M works back and forth across the arm with his left foot and then back up to the hand. In one gliding motion he moves down the arm from the hand and into the lower back. He returns by bringing his foot along the mat. This gesture is repeated twice. On the third time he transfers his weight to the left foot on S's upper back, grabs the bar, and moves his right foot along the same path so that both T0's are facing S's left. Then he lifts his left foot, points T0 in opposite direction and slides his left foot down into the lower back. This action he repeats several times. Then both feet are brought into the lower back and slid off on either side. 7, 8, 9, and 10 are then repeated to the other side.²³

11. S returns to the original sphinx position (see 1). M stands behind his head straddling S. With FI of right foot he works back and forth on the right side of the neck and then down the arm onto the hand. He circles the lower arm three times and circles the back counterclockwise pressing into the lower back with F0. This is repeated on the left side.

12. Skater's Waltz (6) is repeated with S in this position.

13. M walks right hip, then left hip as in 9. At the end the feet move apart along the legs to the knees.

14. Half Skater's Waltz--Same as Skater's Waltz but the feet start with the T0 along the hip line and end in the lower back. The feet then slide off on the sides.

15. S turns onto his back with legs and torso in same relationship as before--that is, the thighs are at 90 degrees to the torso, the lower legs are perpendicular to the wall and the feet are flat against the wall. The arms are straight out from the shoulders turned up 90 degrees at the elbows, palms up. M straddles chest, facing S's head. With his right foot he circles the chest three times and moves his foot up to the shoulder. Then M circles S's shoulder with S's help. As S moves his arm out, down and around, M moves his foot out, down and around and so circles the shoulder. Then M takes his foot along S's left arm. With H on the mat he pulls the foot off the arm slapping it on the mat. This movement is repeated up the arm.

16. S stretches arm out along the mat, palm up, and M moves his foot from the shoulder along the arm. This gesture is repeated after S turns palm down. 15 and 16 are repeated on the opposite side.

17. M takes right foot again around the chest, and then the neck and shoulder are massaged with AT first on the right and then the left. The foot is taken down the left side of the chest. These movements are repeated with M's left foot.

18. The right foot is taken down the sternum onto the stomach and along the lower ribs on right, left, and center. Only light pressure is applied.

19. Then for the first time M uses his hands. He runs his fingers through S's hair, then with the thumbs strokes along the eyebrows, under the eyebrow bones, and under the eyes. Then the fingers go down the nose, pull up along the cheeks and nose, stroke above the lips and under the lips, circle the cheeks, and pull up on the neck under the chin. Then the hands circle the chest and pull up under the ribs.

20. M stands behind the bar facing the opposite wall with the left ankle against S's right knee. (For advanced students M stands with his left foot on top of S's right knee, holding it against the mat.²⁴) With the right foot he strokes down the leg to the foot pressing gently on the knee to open out the legs. He massages the ankle, circles the lower leg and moves back to the crotch. This is repeated on the other side.

21. M circles the thigh three times clockwise on the right and then the left; he circles the thigh twice, repeats other side; circles once, repeats other side.

22. (This exercise is done only in the middle of the uzhiccil period or with advanced students.) M hangs onto the bar and stands on the thighs close to the crotch. He moves both feet out to the knees and back together again. This is repeated three times. Then the feet are allowed to slide off the knees. (For still more advanced students M puts his full weight on the knees while S sits up. This replaces 23.)

23. S puts the soles of his feet together and while M stands on his ankles or just below the knees, S sits up and turns side to side cracking his spine. Then M slides off his legs.

24. S slides back away from the wall so that his feet are under the bar, his legs straight, with feet about 18" apart. He leans back on his hands. M straddles S's left leg and using his right foot works back and forth on the thigh from the top of the leg to the knee (four times).²⁵ He circles the knee and slides down the lower leg. With H he turns S's foot over to the inside and holds it down with the left foot. With his right foot he circles the ankle, moves up the leg and down the under side of the leg using T. These movements are repeated

to the other side.

25. S puts his legs together, and M runs his right foot lightly along the tops of the legs. Then he stands on S's legs, facing S's right, with his left foot on the top of S's feet and the right foot just above the knee. S crosses his arms behind his back, lies down and then sits up, and turns side to side to crack his back again.²⁶

26. M brings his left foot above S's knees and still standing on his legs, turns to face S. Then he slides both feet off onto the mat.

27. S sits up, spreads his knees and sits on his heels facing M. He runs his hands down M's lower legs right then left, three times, massaging the calves and removing any excess oil.

The massage is over but the student immediately stands up and performs, quickly, a series of freely done exercises. These include jumps, full splits,²⁷ leg swings, arm circlings, circles of the upper body, circles into and out of a backbend, finally coming straight up to a standing position from a backbend. Then the student rejoins the lines doing kālsādhakam. When all the students have received uzhiccil, the morning exercise is complete. All students do namaskāram before they leave the kaḷari.

The whole of morning exercise lasts about two hours. At the end the students take cold showers. (The Old Kalamandalam was located near enough to the Bharatapuzha River so that the students could bathe in the river after uzhiccil--a more satisfying conclusion.) Then they have their breakfast, usually consisting of a simple rice gruel called kaññi served with ghee, clarified butter, which is thought to lubricate the body's joints and muscles.

The effect of these exercises on the students is profound. The beginning exercises shape a body that is flexible and resilient. The footwork develops strong legs as well as stamina and a sense of rhythm and placement. A game-like atmosphere invades the kaḷari when "dhi tta tta tta" is begun. Each student must take his turn, and the younger students are challenged to improve their form and increase their speed of execution by the older students who generally take the leading position in the lines and set the tempo for each round. At the fast tempo the younger students are pressed beyond their limit and fall behind, but the large pattern allows them to regain their composure and their breath on the slower kālas and prepare themselves for the next time through. The driving rhythm of ten or so pairs of feet sounding on the concrete floor and the chanting of vāyttāri makes it impossible to drop out; the energy is very high. There is pain in the feet and the hips and exhaustion in the muscles of the legs, but the pattern allows rest and recovery. The simple, absolutely steady rhythm created invades the body and mind; the countless repetitions of the exercise over many consecutive days increases stamina and endurance enormously. Steady improvement and the feeling of communion with fellow actors offsets pain and discomfort. Uzhicciḷ shapes the joints and tendons at the hip and is essential for proper stance. When it is begun before the students' bones and joints are fully formed, it results in perfect 180 degree turn-out and the uncanny ability to do a deep pli^é with the feet parallel but with the legs turned out almost completely to the sides. In addition to these obvious physical results, the personality of the future actor is shaped by the early morning program. The discipline of daily exercise is essential to his growth into a perfor-

mer. The pain of uzhicciḷ and kāḷsādhakam is often intense, and yet because of it he grows quickly in strength, stamina, and flexibility. This teaches him endurance of physical discomfort necessary for his days as a student and for his continued growth as a performer.

Uzhicciḷ is done during the monsoon season. Often the student must drag himself out of bed after a late-night class only to be greeted with pouring rain on his way to the kaḷari. Since the kaḷari is open to the elements from two sides, wind and rain often whip through the space. A strange and remote island is created in the center of the storm as soon as the exercises are started. The student shares the island with his fellow students all of whom are devoting their lives to the theatre. All his attention is riveted on the needs of his own body, but he knows those with him also share these needs. The student is driven to the limits of physical endurance, very much like a professional athlete, and yet his aim is not the best time or the winning point but the creation of a hero, god, or demon. His ultimate goal is subtle and complex, but the path to it is clearly marked and the foundation of mental and physical endurance and concentration that is laid in the early morning exercise session stands the student in good stead for success.

Uzhicciḷ ends with the first light of dawn. There is a tremendous feeling of exhilaration that comes when one greets the dawn with a body completely ready for any activity. The pores of the skin, opened by the profuse sweating in the kaḷari, are quickly closed with a cold shower. One is energized and ready for a day of training. Greeting the dawn after intense activity is a common feature of Kathakaḷi whose performances go on all night and whose concluding moments are often the

most violent and physical. The last play of the three presented in a typical Kathakaḷi performance describes the violent death of a demon. His blood is spilling as dawn is breaking.

Such intense exercises were not traditionally practiced by Kūṭiyāṭṭam students, but actors currently undergoing training at the Kathakaḷi Kalamandalam are receiving them. Raman Cakyar, who taught at Kalamandalam, said that his students were physically the best trained actors he had seen. Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors of the past have been known primarily either for their aṅgikābhinaya (physical and emotional expressivity) or their vācikābhinaya (verbal expression and wit). The young men who have recently completed their studies are especially expressive in their bodies, and they have grace and stamina due to their extensive physical training.

Eyes and Stance

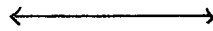
For Kūṭiyāṭṭam students at Kalamandalam uzhicciḷ begins in June and ends forty-one days later. After uzhicciḷ is complete, early morning classes continue until February, about a month before the end of the term, but they have a different purpose. They focus on stance, the chanting of ślokas, and the practice of eye exercises. The classes meet only on weekday mornings. (In the traditional gurukula system all training was daily, and there were no holidays during this period.) Again the lamp is set up in the middle of the floor of the kaḷari and the students face the lamp, sitting in a line, and begin the eye exercises.²⁸

The eye exercises are first taught by the āśān. He sits across from the student his right hand out, palm down, his first two fingers in a "v" position. The student focuses his eyes on the two fingers, one on each finger, while the āśān describes the patterns in the air. Even

when the student practices without the teacher, he is to keep his eyes focused at a particular point in space; he is not to move the pupils so far to the edges of the eye opening that they disappear.

These are the first patterns learned:

1) Side to side



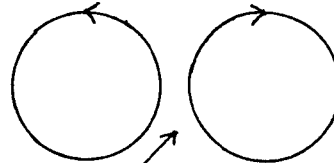
2) Half circle



3) Half circle



4) Circles ending at the top, then reversing



5) Diagonals in both directions



6) Figure eights in both directions



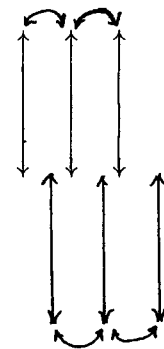
7) Up and down



Each pattern is done many times very slowly and then more and more rapidly until the maximum possible speed is reached. The student spends at least thirty minutes on the exercises each morning. To prepare for them, a small amount of ghee is rubbed around the eye sockets. Throughout the exercises the eyebrows and eyelids are kept lifted as high as possible. Blinking is discouraged, although the ghee gets into the eyes and often causes tearing.²⁹

Later on, probably in his second year, the student learns a second set of exercises to be added to the first. They are:


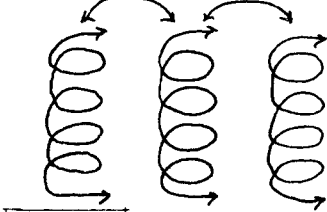
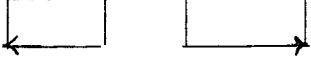
8) Pattern 7 repeated several times to the left, then center, then right, back to center, left, etc. The transitions between each are done by arching over the top.



9) The same as 8, but the transitions are taken at the bottom

10) A loop-the-loop from left to right and back again.



- 11) Several loop-the-loops 
- 12) Vertical loop-the-loops done to the left, center, and right 
- 13) A rectangle in both directions 

All of these patterns are used in performance in association with certain gestures. The eye exercises are regarded as the most important of any exercises that the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor does. They are to be performed every day of his creative life. (During uzhicci they are done at the beginning of the morning class.) The expressivity of the eyes that is developed over years of training is remarkable. This skill is exploited especially when the actor is called upon to describe places and events, e.g., the hermitage in śikhini śalabho, using only the eyes. The exercises are difficult to do well. They require intense concentration and yield considerable frustration, for progress is slow and difficult to gauge.

Because the eyes are trained to focus explicitly in space and because the eyelids achieve a natural openness, the actor's face seems intensely charged whenever he performs. With certain gestures the eyeballs twist and turn, leap and shake in response to the dynamics of the gestures or to the implied emotion. The effect is even more striking because, as in Kathakaḷi, the actor, as part of his make-up, places a seed of a type of eggplant, called cuntappūvu, in the eye which colors the white of the eye red.

Having completed the eye exercises in the early morning program, the student stands near one wall facing the opposite wall looking across the lighted lamp where he takes the basic Kūṭiyāṭṭam stance and chants ślokas. The normal position in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is somewhat different from that

of Kathakaḷi: the feet are turned out instead of turned in. Kathakaḷi probably developed the turned-in position from the basic position of Kūṭiyāṭṭam in order to take the extra strain on the knees and legs imposed by violent stamping.

In the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stance the heels are placed between two and two-and-a-half feet apart, and the feet are turned out along the line of the thighs. (The proper distance can be arrived at by starting from parallel position, then turning the feet out into first position by pivoting on the heels, then turning the heels out as far as possible by pivoting on the toes, and then again turning the toes out by pivoting on the heels.) The knees are bent so that the thighs are parallel to the floor, the legs turned out at the hip joint, the knees over the feet. The student is expected to have a 180 degree turn out, but it is never unduly forced: it is the automatic result of proper uzhicciḷ. The torso is held high with the chest open and extended. There is a tendency to let the hips tilt forward so that the lower back has a distinct curve. The extent of his curvature varies from student to student and, as far as I know, no attention is paid to the exact placement of the lower spine. Uzhicciḷ often encourages students, especially those who start after age 12, to achieve greater turnout by allowing the lower back to curve. But as most Kūṭiyāṭṭam students start training by age eight, it is not a problem for them. The student holds this basic body position throughout the hour-long period of chanting. He also holds his elbows out, placing his closed fists in front of his lower chest and rotates his hands from the wrists. This motion is kept up throughout the vocal practice. The young student quickly develops endurance, concentration, and patience.

From the basic stance the student chants a long stotram (devotional chant) and a few selected ślokas from the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertoire. The vocal style and technique will be described in the next section. The chanting is learned by rote. The āśān or his advanced students chant the verses in small sections, and the young student copies. The only peculiarity about the copying is that everyone involved takes a different pitch. Thus if two advanced students recite the verse, initially they will take different pitches. Then the young students will follow taking different pitches still. At Kalamandalam the advanced students generally kept a fourth apart, and once they had started their chants at that interval they would maintain it. Sometimes however, they would begin with a dissonant or atonal interval and still keep the same interval throughout the recitation. The student must fend for himself.³⁰

Following the recitation of these verses, the student completes his morning program with a few simple exercises including the swinging of one and both arms and a series of jumps up and down the length of the kaḷari. Again, the session ends at dawn. The next year the training begins again in June with forty-one days uzhiccil followed by this early morning program. This pattern of morning classes continues for at least six years.

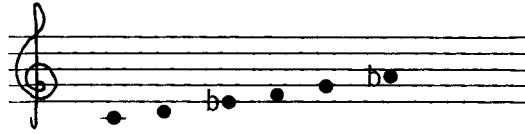
Voice

Much vocal training in the West in the last decade has taken a turn away from the traditional attention to diction and placement to the development of relaxation in the organs of vocal production to allow the "natural" voice to emerge.³¹ There is nothing "natural" about the voice in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The quality of the vocal production or the ease

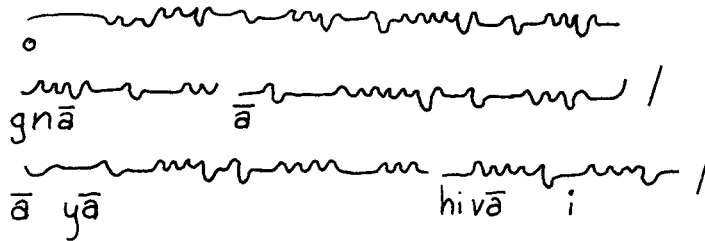
with which it is produced is rarely an issue in the training of the voice. The beginning actor concentrates on learning the melodic patterns for the Sanskrit and Prākṛit ślokas in the plays. He learns by repeating his teachers and gradually adopts the vocal quality required for the proper presentation of the verses. The melodic patterns used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam are peculiar to it. In style they fall somewhere between the Sāmavedic chant of the Nambūtiris and South Indian vocal music. Next to Vedic chanting, Kūṭiyāṭṭam recitation is probably the oldest melodic tradition extant in South India. A comparison between the two will be undertaken here.

There are many different traditions of reciting the Vedas in India. All over India the Rgveda is most often chanted on three pitches. There is a basic middle pitch and then syllables which receive accents in the text are marked in recitation by placing the previous syllable at a lower pitch (a major second below) and the following syllable at a higher pitch (a minor second above).³² In Nambūtiri recitation of the Rgveda the pattern is changed in certain cases and the pitches are much less obvious. Due to a controlled tremulo used throughout, the higher or lower pitches are reached for only a moment.³³ This tremulo is even more apparent in Nambūtiri recitation of the Sāmaveda.

For the most part the Sāmaveda utilizes the text of the Rgveda adapted to various melodies called sāmans. The Tamil Sāmaveda recitation is quite melodic. In one recorded example of the opening hymn of the Sāmaveda, the chant approximates a scale which has six tones encompassing an augmented fifth:³⁹



The Nambūtiri recitation of Sāmaveda, like theirs of the Rgveda, seems much more subtle than that of the Tamils. The majority of the gānas, the songs adapted from the verses, are recited on a single tone³⁵ with a controlled tremulo around this pitch. Staal in his Nambūdiri Veda Recitation notes that by comparison with the Tamil recitation where the melodic pattern is the most important aspect of the song, time and rhythm are more significant for the Nambūtiris. Staal gives an example in which, out of 41 syllables, 21 are held for three seconds or more (the average being about eight seconds) and four are held for 18 seconds. It is on these held syllables that the tremulo, or kampa, is particularly employed. Staal has given notations for a brief example from the opening hymn:³⁶



He states that the variation of pitch in the waverings seem to be "roughly constant in all the recordings, being about a major tone [second] above and a minor third below."³⁷ Other tones are used only infrequently.³⁸

Kūṭiyāṭṭam chanting is like Nambūtiri Sāmaveda recitation in that complex patterns of tremulo are employed at certain places in the verse. In the use of melody, however, it more closely resembles the

Tamil Veda recitation, for a series of pitches are used. In Sāmaveda chanting there is no known meaning relationship between the melody and the text. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam different melodic patterns, called svaras by the Cākyārs, are associated with particular situations or emotional states.³⁹

In Kūṭiyāṭṭam there are twenty svaras. Several traditional verses name them and describe their use. The svaras are: muddan, śrīkanṭhi, tonṭa, ārttan, indalam, muralīndalam, velādhūli, dānam, tarkkan, vīratarkkan, korakkuruññi (korakkuriññi), paurāli (porāli), puranīr, duḥkagāndhāram, ceṭi pañcama (ceṭi pañcamadāna), srīkāmara, kaiśiki (kaisikī), ghaṭṭantari, antari.⁴⁰ Particular uses for each svara are prescribed in traditional verses. These are quoted and translated by Rajagopalan in his article "Music in Kutiyattam," and they will not be reproduced in full here. The most frequently heard of the svaras and their uses are: indalam, often assumed by vehement heroes like Arjuna⁴¹ and sometimes by other heroic characters like Lakṣmaṇa; vīratarkkan, used for vīra 'heroic' rasa; tarkkan, used in anger; velādhūli, used to show fear; ārttan, for love (e.g., when Dhanañjaya describes Subhadrā); and śrīkanṭhi, which expresses devotion (bhakti) in hymns and at the end of an act. Certain svaras have specialized applications, like muddan, which is used when a demon is in love, or korakkuruññi, which is the normal svara for monkeys (like Hunūmān and Sugrīva). Duḥkagāndhāram expresses the sorrowful (śoka) sentiment, and puranīr is used when the rainy season is described.⁴² At first hearing the svaras may seem monotonous and difficult to distinguish from one another, but at the hands of the master of Kūṭiyāṭṭam they are powerfully evocative and provide an intensely effective way of presenting

a verse. Many syllables seem to be repeated on a single tone, creating a chant-like effect, but upon analysis there is actually considerable tonal variety.

There is also considerable variety in the performances of a single verse among the various Cākyārs practicing today, even among those who had the same teacher. It would seem that, though the method of chanting is carefully handed down from teacher to student, individual variations are not discouraged as long as they come within an acceptable range. Over the years there must have been significant changes in the details of presentation. Since the Kūṭiyāṭṭam orchestra has no reliable melodic instrument and no tonal notation exists, there is no check on individual variation.

In order to determine how different Cākyārs sing the same śloka, the author made recordings in the field of the three principal performing Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors (all over fifty years of age) chanting the verse Śailāya From "Śūrpaṇakhāṅka", Act II of Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi. In the play the verse is recited by Srī Rāma in indalam svara. The performances by the three Cākyārs are notated on the following page. The translation is:

When I heard that Pañcavatī was frequented by the rākṣasas who resemble mountains in size, and groups of clouds in color, my mind became filled with overflowing enthusiasm; by now the same Pañcavatī puts on the much familiar beauty of a garden. O Princess! Mountains, forests and the ocean contain things which capture the imagination only of a distant hearer.

The transcription necessarily uses an eclectic notation: heavy vertical marks indicate breathing pauses. Actual pitches closest to those of the tempered scale have been indicated so that the tunes may be played out on the piano. The wavy marks occurring after some notes show the pattern of ornamentation or vibrato that is taken on these tones, though only a

Madhva Cākyār

śai lā yā mi bhi | ram bu vā ha ni va ha | cchā yai | stri yā mā | ca raiḥ |
 G B B/B B A# C# C# C# C# C# C# C# C# C# B C# C# C# B
 - 4 3 1 2 1 1 2 1 - - 1 2 5 - 2 3 - 4

se vyā | pañ ca va ṭī ti | me | ma ti ra bhū | du dve | la | kau tū ha lā | |
 B C G C C C C/B C/G C B C C C C C C G C C/B
 - 5 1 1 1 4 1 4 1 1 1 4 1 7 1 1 2 1 4 5

se yaṃ | de vi | ci ro ci tā | mu pa na ya | tyu | dyā na | yo gyāṃ | śri yaṃ | |
 D C C C D D D C# D D D C C C C C C
 7 6 4 3 1 3 1 4 1 - - - 1 4 1 1 4 1 5

śro tur | vi sma ya nī ya | va stu | vi ṣa yāḥ | śai lā ṭa vī | sa ga rāḥ | |
 G/C C G C C C C C C C C C C C# C# B
 3 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 - - 5 - 2 1 8 2 1 4 5

Manimadhva Cākyār

śai lā yā mi bhi | ram bu vā ha ni va ha | cchā yai | stri yā mā | ca raiḥ |
 C D# F F F F F F F F F F F F G G G F
 1 3 5 1 2 4 - 3 - - - - 4 - 3 2 - 4

se vyā | pañ ca va ṭī ti | me | ma ti ra bhū | du dve | la | kau tū ha lā | |
 F F C F F F F F C C C C C C C D# D# F# F# E
 - 3 - - - 2 1 2 - - - 3 - 8 1 1 2 - 4 3

se yaṃ | de vi | ci ro ci tā | mu pa na ya | tyu | dyā na | yo gyāṃ | śri yaṃ | |
 F A F# F C# F# F# F# C# G# G# G# C# G# G# G# G# F
 - 3 4 2 - - - 3 - - - 1 - 4 - - 3 - 4

śro tur | vi sma ya nī ya | va stu | vi ṣa yāḥ | śai lā ṭa vī | sā ga rāḥ | |
 C# F# F# F# F# F# F# C# F F F C# F# F# F# F# F# E
 1 2 - - - 2 - - - - - 4 - 3 - 9 - 3 3

Rāman Cākyār

śai lā yā mi bhi | ram bu vā ha ni va ha | cchā yai | stri yā mā | ca raiḥ |
 C C F F F F F F F F F G G F G G F
 - 5 5 1 1 3 - 4 - - - 1 4 3 - 1 2 - 4

se vyā | pañ ca va ṭī ti | me | ma ti | ra bhū | du dve | la | kau tū ha lā | |
 C G C G G G G G G G D G G G E E E G G F
 1 5 - - - 5 1 4 - 1 - 3 - 8 1 - 2 1 3 3

se yaṃ | de vi | ci ro ci tā | mu pa na ya | tyu | dyā na | yo gyāṃ | śri yaṃ | |
 F A# G G D G G G C G G G F A# A# A# A# A G
 1 3 4 1 - 4 - 4 1 1 1 1 - 3 - - 3 - 4

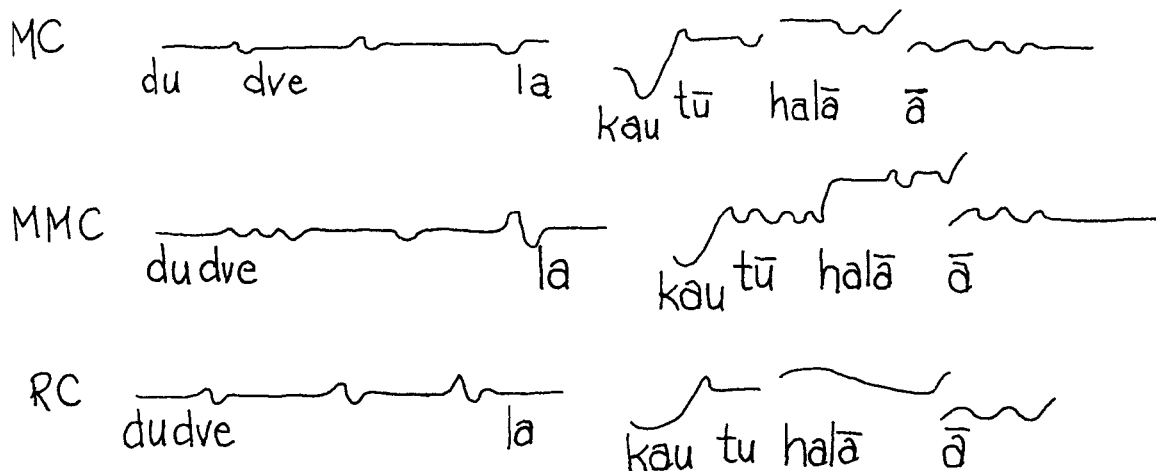
śro tur | vi sma ya nī ya | va stu | vi ṣa yāḥ | śai la ṭa vī | sa ga rāḥ | |
 G G C G G G G C G G G G E A A A F A A G
 3 1 1 - - 4 - - - - - 3 - 3 1 9 2 1 3 3

very simplified indication of the actual pattern can be given in this space. Notes not so marked are held approximately at one pitch, although there is considerable variety among the Cākyārs as to the steadiness of the tone. The numbers refer to the approximate number of "beats" that the tone is held. I have chosen 96 beats per minute as a convenient tempo for counting the length of the syllables. (Of course the Cākyārs do not keep a beat, either by tapping their toes or by holding a rhythm internally.) A dash instead of a number indicates that that syllable is held for less than one beat.

In all the readings, the first and third padams (quarter verses) have a similar pattern, while the second and fourth have slightly different patterns. Ornaments appear at the ends of a line and at one or two points within the line, always on long word-final syllables. Held notes occur on the same syllables in each performance. There is a tendency to raise the pitch in the third line by a half step or a whole step. However many variations may also be noted, and the effect of each is different. Maṇimadhva Cākyār (MMC) and Rāman Cākyār (RC) begin at the same pitch while Madhva Cākyār (MC) takes a lower pitch. (As noted before, student and teacher usually take different pitches when reciting together, so pitch is certainly not a primary concern.) MC has a lower, covered tone, producing the sound with less energy. (I recorded him after a performance of Kūttu, and he was tired. He said that the production of his voice would be much more animated in performance.) In tone, his voice is low and tremulous, and the pitches could only be approximately notated--he uses a tone closer to speaking. MMC employs the tremulo on many more notes. It is very difficult to notate precisely. The effect of his recitation is closer to that of

Sāmaveda chanting. Of the three, RC has the most singing tone. Notes are held more firmly on pitch, and the ornamentation is more precise. His tone quality is the most nasal of the three. MMC takes the whole verse at a faster tempo and speeds up the short syllables so that his delivery has a more definite rhythm. He also takes far fewer breaths. The others take all his breath points, but add more. Apparently, exact breathing patterns are not prescribed.

There is some variation in ornamentation as well, although the basic patterns are similar. Following the model in Staal for recording vibrato in Sāmaveda chanting, I have compared the patterns of ornamentation at the end of the second line of this verse:



The patterns are similar in some respects to those of the Sāmaveda, but unlike Sāmaveda there are changes of pitch and breaks within a single ornamented syllable. Again there is more kampa in MMC's delivery, and the effect is more Vedic. RC uses a glottal stop on the third tremulo in "dve" not found in the others. He also descends in pitch slightly on "halā." This has a beautiful effect not found in the others.⁴³

RC's chanting of one other śloka will be notated here in order to

indicate the tonal and ornamental pattern of a different svara.

It is the first śloka from "Bālivadhama," Act I of Abhiṣekanāṭakam.

It is in tarkkan svara. Again Srī Rāma is the character responsible for the verse, but here he is angry, ready to slay the evil Bāli for Sogrīva:

Today I will quickly make your enemy fall to the ground
his body pierced, chopped and shattered by my arrows.
O King! Abandon your fear and stay close to me.
Today you shall indeed see Bāli killed on the battlefield.

It is recited as follows:

mat - sāyakā - bhi - ha - ta -	bhi - nna -	vi - kī - rṇa - de - haṃ		
E	G G# ABC C	C C C C ~ C	G# C C C	C# ~ D —
-	2 1 5 - - -	2 1 - - -	- - -	5
śa - trum - ta - vā - dya	sa - ha - sā	bhu - vi	pā - ta - yā - mi	
G# D ~	C# C# C# C#	G# ~	C# C# C# ~ C# C#	D ~
-	2 - 2 1 - -	5 - -	- - -	5
rā - jan	bha - yam	tya - ja	mam ā - pi	sa - mī - pa - var - tī
F	A# ~ B	C - C# ~ A	C# ~ G# C# C#	G# C# ~ C# C# C# ~
-	3 - 4 -	1 - 2 1 -	1 - -	5
ḍṛ - ṣṭhas	tva - yā - dya	sa - ma - re	ni - ha - taḥ	sa bā - li
G# D	D C# C#	G# C# ~	C# C# C# C#	C# C# D ~
-	1 - 2 1 -	- - 6 - -	1 - -	5

The pitch is very high throughout, and the glissando at the beginning of padas one and three has an especially energizing effect. The pattern of pitches is simpler than in indalam, and the ornamentation is confined mostly to the ends of the lines and to one syllable of padas two and four.

Dance, music, and drama have always been closely associated in India, and so a major portion of the Nāṭyaśāstra is given over to an elaborate theoretical and practical discussion of music, both vocal and instrumental. Much of its terminology is still obscure, but it seems to distinguish notes (svaras), intervals (śrutis), three basic scales (grāmas) each with seven modes (mūrchanās), jātis (melody types?) and dhruvās (songs). The jātis were connected with particular sentiments and may parallel the svaras of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The dhruvās were used when songs were called for in the text of plays, for background music to accompany the entrance and exits of characters, for calming the audience after a highly charged scene, when a character was "captured... attacked with illness or...dead or in a swoon" or in a state of "anxiety, weariness, depression and despair" or even "adjusting or fixing up clothes and ornaments, and in covering any one of the faults in acting."⁴⁴ Songs do not appear in Kūṭiyāṭṭam in these contexts, though drumming does accompany the appearance of a character. The only "background" music is the rhythmic accompaniment to the actors' movements.

Though there are many details concerning vocal representation in the Nāṭyaśāstra tradition, most of the text of the play seems to have been recited more naturally than in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. In recitation there are to be "seven notes (svaras), three voice registers, four ways of uttering notes (varṇas) two ways of intonation (kāku), six alaṅkāras, and six limbs (aṅga)."⁴⁰ The seven notes are the notes of the major scale and each is associated with particular sentiments. For example the dominant and subdominant are to be used in the comic and erotic sentiments while the mediant and leading tones are to be used in the pathetic sentiment. There is no knowing what Bharata might mean here. The four accents are

the three tones used in Ṛgveda recitation plus the kampita or quivering accent so evident in Nambūtiri recitation and in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

The voice registers differentiated are the chest, the throat and the head:

In calling one who is at a distance, notes proceeding from the head register should be used; but, for calling one who is not at a great distance, notes from the throat register are to be used, while for a person who is by one's side, notes from the chest will be proper.

At the time of recitation, a sentence begun with notes from the chest should be raised to notes of the head register, and at its close it should be brought down to notes of the throat.⁴⁶

The use of registers is further delineated in the discussion of alañkāra 'modes of delivery': high, excited, grave, low, fast, and slow. A high delivery is associated with the head register, a low note from the chest register, and fast and slow from the throat. Though he did not give the information as a matter of course, when questioned RC acknowledged that distinctions were made between the three voice registers in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The vīratarkkan and tarkkan svaras, associated with the heroic and furious sentiments utilize the head register, while velādhūli and ārttan, used for fear and when pining for a loved one, utilize the chest tone and a lower pitch. However the voice is most often placed in the throat. In fact a kind of friction in the throat is encouraged so that the tone is not clear but throaty and harsh. During a long performance this tension often produces hoarseness in the voice. No relaxation exercises are given to take care of this tension. Of course the small theaters almost always employed in Kūṭiyāṭṭam performances require minimal projection. Still in the more energetic svaras the voice must be very loud, and in such cases the harshness of

tone is quite striking.

It can be seen from the above discussion that though a great deal of variety in delivery was encouraged and certain emotional states were associated with particular vocal variables in the Nāṭyaśāstra tradition, there seems to have been no precise way in which particular verses were to be presented. In this respect, as in several others, Kūṭiyāṭṭam is much more codified than the art of drama outlined by the Nāṭyaśāstra. In the Kramadīpikas of the Cākyārs the svara of each śloka is given, and the proper tones and ornamentations to be taken on every word is learned by the student from his teacher. The actor's freedom to shape the tone and rhythm of his verses is limited, and yet as we have seen, striking variations are possible within this form.

Tolan and his followers developed a style of vocal presentation which solidly supports the actor's creation of character--heightening the heroic qualities and boldly asserting the emotional states. The style lies on the border-line between speaking and singing, maintaining an air of believability in spite of elaborate stylization. It is closely modeled on the Samaveda recitation of the Nambūtiri Brāhmins, yet it partakes of melodic interest in order to hold the attention of the common man. Basically the vocal patterns are simple and they are limited in number, yet they can encompass all the varieties of metrical structure and mood found in the verses of any play in the repertoire. In learning them the actor is forced to develop a sense of pitch, rhythm, tonal quality and placement; he also learns to be forthright and direct in his vocal delivery. The style is effective in performance and in training the actor for all the speaking he will do in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

Face and Emotion

This section will discuss the Kūṭiyāṭṭam exercises for the face and their relationship to the theory of emotional expression in the drama as put forth in the Nāṭyaśāstra. At 8 a.m. after the early morning class and breakfast, the student returns to the kaḷari for his regular morning class. The Kūṭiyāṭṭam students practice exercises for the eyes (if they have not already done them in the early morning) and the face, learn Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertory, and have a Sanskrit lesson. The class concludes at 12 o'clock, lunchtime. The basic exercises for the face are simple to describe. First the student rapidly raises and lowers the eyebrows; then keeping the eyebrows raised, he rapidly raises and lowers the lower eyelids and the muscles of the upper cheek. Then he alternately smiles and relaxes, then lowers and relaxes the corners of his mouth. While one part of the face is being exercised, the rest of the face is kept relaxed. Each gesture is repeated for three or four minutes. All these movements of the face are actually used by the actor in performance.

After some time practicing these exercises, the student is taught to do the facial gestures associated with the nine rasas. In them the whole face and the eyes express the primary emotional states recognized by Indian dramatic theory. Rasa is usually translated 'sentiment,' but it is an inadequate translation, and so the Sanskrit term will be employed here. Very generally, rasa refers to the emotional effect of the drama on the audience. The nine rasas each correspond to a primary emotional state (sthāyibhāva). The rasas and their corresponding sthāyibhāvas are:

<u>rasa</u>	<u>sthāyibhāva</u>
erotic (<u>śrīṅgāra</u>)	love (<u>rati</u>)
comic (<u>hāsyā</u>)	mirth (<u>hāsa</u>)
pathetic (<u>karuṇa</u>)	sorrow (<u>śoka</u>)
furious (<u>raudrā</u>)	anger (<u>krodha</u>)
heroic (<u>vīra</u>)	energy (<u>utsāha</u>)
fearful (<u>bhayānaka</u>)	terror (<u>bhaya</u>)
odious (<u>bībhatsa</u>)	disgust (<u>jugupsā</u>)
marvelous (<u>adbhuta</u>)	astonishment (<u>vismaya</u>)
peaceful (<u>sānta</u>)	calmness (<u>sama</u>)

Plates IV-VIII picture the facial expressions of the primary emotional states as they are performed in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Although the term rasa is used to refer to the gestures of the face, technically it is the sthāyibhāva that is demonstrated. In order to show the range possible in the presentation of the gestures, two Cākyārs, MMC and RC, are pictured in each rasa, MMC on the left, RC on the right. The gestures themselves are animated and they cannot be fully shown in still photos, but an attempt has been made to capture the gesture in its most characteristic stage. I hope that a brief description of each will suffice to make the way of performing the gesture clear.⁴⁷

Śrīṅgāra is shown with the mouth in a slightly quivering smile, the eyebrows moving rapidly up and down, the eyelids held quite open and the eyes glancing to the right and left side. Hāsyā rasa is performed as if in reaction to a bad joke. The edges of the mouth are turned down and the head is cocked slightly to one side. It is often used by the Viḍūṣaka. Karuṇa rasa starts with a rolling of the eyes up and over. Then they are held looking down, the eyelids partly closed, while the corners of the mouth vibrate downward. Raudra rasa is perhaps the most impressive. For it the eyebrows are held up very high, the whole head is taken straight back at the neck, the eyes are opened very wide, and there is a violent quivering of the lower lids. Vīra

rasa is almost the same except that the lower lids remain still. For bhayānaka the whole body collapses in fear, the shoulders hunch up, the lips are pulled in, the corners of the mouth are turned down slightly, the eyebrows are lowered, and the eyes move rapidly from one side to the other as the head turns slightly from side to side. In bībhatsa the corners of the mouth are turned down violently, and the whole face reacts as if smelling something putrid. In adbhuta the eyes open wide, the eyebrows raise, the mouth forms a slight smile, and the whole body is slightly drawn up. Śānta rasa is an expression of yogic quietude. The features are all relaxed, the eyelids slightly closed. This rasa does not appear in the Nāṭyaśāstra. It was a later addition to the list and is rarely used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

The origin of these facial expressions is not known. Kathakaḷi students practice almost identical patterns.⁴³ Writers on Kathakaḷi have claimed that they come from Kūṭiyāṭṭam, but RC denies any great antiquity for them. He says, in fact, that as exercises they were probably borrowed from Kathakaḷi.

In performance the facial expressions occur in their purest form when the curtain is removed for a character's first appearance. Then the actor spends some minutes in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stance showing the sthāyibhāva of the character. Sometimes, as in the case of Nityakriyā, the emotion is a variation or combination of the original nine. In Nityakriyā, the Sūtradhāra appears and stands for sometime expressing his devotion to the audience and to the deities to whom he will dedicate his performance. Devotion (bhakti) is treated as a variation of śṛṅgāra rasa. The cupped hands are held, palms up, in front of the

body as if offering something. The face expresses śṛṅgāra but the movements are muted and the eyes are held straight front rather than to the side. An angry character sometimes peers over the curtain several times before he enters. When he finally appears full length on stage he may, as does Rāvaṇa in "Toraṇayuddha," have to be restrained by other actors who also hold torches. He may then leave and re-enter the stage several times, each time crossing downstage center to show the rasa for anger with his face. Sugrīva, when he appears in "Bāli-vadha," first stands and shows his devotion to Rāma. Then he breaks into a series of comical gestures, e.g. scratching under his arms, to show that he is a monkey. This standing and showing the basic emotional state of the character seems to replace the entrance song that is mentioned in the Nāṭyaśāstra. Its purpose is the same.

Besides their use at the entrance of a character, specific facial gestures accompany many of the mudras regardless of the context in which they occur. Whenever "killing" is shown, the face expresses anger; whenever "king" is shown, the face expresses heroism; etc.

To a great extent the facial expression in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is codified and controlled. Yet if this were entirely the case and the actor used only set external means of emotional expression, the performance would quickly become dull. In fact the actor is expected to fill the highly stylized facial gestures with inner life. The exercises are only tools for its creation. The powerful interplay between external expression and inner emotion is fully understood by the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor. The basis of this understanding can be found in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

The Nāṭyaśāstra develops a complete theory of the expression of

emotion and its source in the imaginary circumstances of the play. This theory has been thoroughly described by others, and only a brief outline is given here.⁴⁹ It is based on the principle that in the human psyche certain emotional states (bhāva) are primary or durable (sthāyi) and others are secondary, complementary, or transitional (vyabhicāri). The primary emotional states, when mixed with the complementary states, give rise to rasa, as staple foods when mixed with vegetables and spices give rise to food that is tasty. (Rasa also means 'taste.')⁵⁰ The Nāṭyaśāstra lists thirty-three complementary emotional states (vyabhicāribhāva): discouragement, weakness, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, anxiety, distraction, recollection, contentment, shame, inconstancy, joy, agitation, stupor, arrogance, despair, impatience, sleep, epilepsy, dreaming, awakening, indignation, dissimulation, cruelty, assurance, sickness, insanity, death, fright, and deliberation.⁵¹ These secondary emotional states are those which give rise to the primary ones and also appear as a result of them. Thus love, a primary state, may be accompanied by secondary ones: love may yield joy in the presence of the beloved, but in his or her absence it may bring despondency, anxiety, recollection of former happiness, impatience, and dreaming. Actually there is a verse in the Nāṭyaśāstra (VII, 108) which states that all forty-nine bhāvas (primary, secondary, and visceral) except indolence, cruelty, and disgust are applicable to the erotic sentiment in the Sanskrit drama.

The other principle components of the Nāṭyaśāstra system of emotional expressivity are the vibhāva and the anubhāva. Vibhava is that which brings about the emotional state of the character, the cause or

determinant of it. For example the sthāyibhāva of fear has as possible vibhāvas: "acts offending one's superiors or the king, roaming in a forest, seeing an elephant or a snake, staying in an empty house, rebuke from one's superiors, a dark rainy night, hearing the hooting of owls or the cry of animals that go out at night, and the like."⁵² These are called "given circumstances" in the Stanislavski system. They involve both environmental and interpersonal circumstances. It is clear that the importance of given circumstances in affecting a character's behavior on the stage was clearly understood even from the earliest times in the Indian theatre.

The anubhāvas 'manifestations' or 'consequents' are the physical expressions of the emotional states. They are shown using four kinds of abhinaya 'histrionic representation': gestures, or physical movements of the different parts of the body (āṅgikābhinaya); words (vācīkābhinaya); costume and make-up (ahāryābhinaya); and visceral reaction (sāttvikābhinaya). Āṅgikābhinaya includes all physical movements of the different parts of the body. The elaborate gestures of the hands are the most important aspect and they will be considered separately in the next section. Sāttvikābhinaya is the expression of sāttvikabhāva, the involuntary physical reaction to strong inner emotional states. Its theory constitutes one of the most interesting aspects of the Nāṭyaśāstra. Eight sāttvika states are listed: perspiration, paralysis, trembling, weeping, change of color, horripilation, (i.e., the hair standing on end), change of voice, and fainting.⁵³ Apparently the actor is expected to be able to manifest these effects at will.

The Sattva is accomplished by concentration of the mind. Its nature (which includes) horripilation, tears, loss of color and the like, cannot be mimicked by an absent-minded man. The Sattva is desired in a play because of its imitating human nature. If the question is, "is there any example in support of this view?" then it may be said that in theatrical practice, situations of happiness as well as misery should so purely accord with the Sattva behind them that they may appear to be realistic.⁵⁴

The subtle physical gestures involved in sāttvikābhinaya are considered to be the most important conveyance of emotion. Their relation to the inner state of the actor will be taken up in Chapter III.

In the Nāṭyaśāstra each of the forty-nine emotional states is described in terms of its given circumstances and its manifestations. For example, bhaya 'fear,' which had the hooting of owls and the like for its vibhāvas, has the following anubhāvas: "shedding tears, lamentation, bewailing, change of colour, loss of voice, looseness of limbs, falling on the ground, crying, deep breathing, paralysis, insanity, death and the like."⁵⁵ Note that these anubhāvas include expression by gesture (looseness of limbs), voice (bewailing and loss of voice), and sāttvika (change of color). Sometimes the descriptions provided in the Nāṭyaśāstra seem simplistic and general; other times they reveal considerable subtlety. For example, the anubhāvas of anger are described as follows:

Anger is of five kinds, viz., anger caused by enemies, superior persons, lovers, servants, and feigned anger.

On this point there are traditional Āryās:

One should show anger against control by the enemy with knitting of eyebrows, fierce look, bitten lips, hands clasping each other, and with threatening arms, shoulder and chest.

One should show anger against control by superiors with slightly downcast eyes, wiping off slight perspiration and not expressing any violent movement.

One should show one's anger to the beloved woman by a very slight movement (of the body), by shedding tears, and knitting eyebrows and with sidelong glances and throbbing lips.

Anger to one's servants should be represented on the stage

by means of threat, rebuke, dilated eyes and by casting angry looks of various kinds.

Anger which is shown with a view to the realization of an ulterior motive and which mostly betrays marks of effort, is called feigned anger, and it . . . (moves between) two Sentiments.⁵⁶

Among the Cākyārs, some have studied the Nāṭyaśāstra and others have not, but they all acknowledge the general lines of the system presented above. However, while the Nāṭyaśāstra offers many suggestions for the presentation of emotion it does not impose choreography of the body and face and voice to the extent that Kūṭiyāṭṭam does.

The reader might wonder why one, only a few emotional states achieve primary status and two, whether the practice of the facial gestures associated with these few emotions will allow the actor a complete range of emotional expression. The NS gives no satisfactory explanation for the choice of certain emotions as primary ones. It resorts to the following metaphors:

Just as among persons having the same characteristics and similar hands, feet, and belly . . . some due to their birth, manners, learning and skill in arts and crafts become leaders while others, endowed with an inferior intellect become their attendants, in a similar manner, Determinants, Consequents and Complementary Psychological States become dependent on the Durable Psychological States. Being the shelter (of others) the Durable Psychological States become masters . . . there is a traditional Śloka:

Just as a king is superior to other men, and the [guru] is superior to his disciples, so the Durable Psychological States are superior to the other Psychological States.⁵⁶

To answer the second question the author can draw only on his own experience with the facial gestures and on his experience with a practice in western acting which seems very different but has essentially the same purpose. In the traditional study of the Method (i.e., the American version of the Stanislavki system developed by Lee Strasberg and others) the technique of affective memory is often used to increase the

emotional flexibility and expression of the actor. Affective memory is an inner technique. The actor mentally recreates the sensorial environment of a personal event from his past associated with a strong emotion. With eyes closed he remembers what he saw, heard, tasted, touched, and smelled at the time. This technique, if patiently and precisely done, will allow the actor to recreate the emotion that he had at that time. Emotions repeatedly recalled in this way are easily available to the actor. Teachers of the Method say that it is necessary for the actor to practice this technique for only a few basic emotions: love, anger, fear, and sorrow, for example, in order to have the emotional material needed for any role. "A few basic emotions put into different given circumstances yield all the others."⁵⁷

The performance of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam facial gestures also brings on inner emotion--weakly at first, but with repetition, quickly and powerfully. If the emotion does not seem to be coming after some practice, then the student is asked to add powerful given circumstances in order to stir up latent emotion.⁵⁸ The teacher knows that he cannot force the student to become emotionally involved. The young actor is expected to mature slowly. He has a whole life in the theatre before him: he performs a relatively small number of roles countless times, and his inner emotional involvement deepens with each performance. Through the exercises of the face he is led quickly to a kind of emotional expressivity that is stylized, yet truthful enough to encourage a powerful inner life and to provide channels for subtle emotional expression, the sāttvikābhinaya. Photos in plates XIX and XX show the student Kalamandalam Rāman Cākyār performing the part of Rāvaṇa in "Torāṇayuddham." In spite of make-up so elaborate that it would seem to mask emotional

expression, an incredible variety of physical expressions come through even in still photos. In the passage being acted, Rāvaṇa, the demon king of Laṅkā and the villain of the Rāmāyaṇa, is describing his love for Sītā and boasting of his abilities to capture Hanūmān, the monkey who is destroying his garden. (This part of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is described and analyzed in the section "Kūṭiyāṭṭam Itself" below.)

As is the case with the vocal presentation of verses, there are significant differences among the living Cākyārs concerning their way of performing the nine rasas. MMC, on the left in Plates IV-VIII, uses highly stylized, intense, and energetic facial abhinaya. The eyes bug out, and the neck is held taut. His emphasis is on the technical production of the gesture, and he performs with obvious, intense concentration. Watching him one is in awe of his technical virtuosity. RC pictured on the right performs much more quietly. His face seems to be a direct expression of his inner emotion. One easily experiences the emotion being presented and tends to forget that the gestures are stylized at all. They seem a natural expression of an inner state.⁵⁹

Since many individual hand gestures have facial gestures associated with them, in the performance of Kūṭiyāṭṭam there are compelling moment to moment changes in the actor's emotional expression. Almost every word presented will take on a different emotional connotation. In a fine actor, the character and basic given circumstances never get lost in spite of these changes. It is as if the character is telling a fascinating story, acting out each word as he speaks it, retaining its significance in the context of the verse but also giving it an independent emotional value. Such an effect is possible because of the elaborate gesture language that is one of the most characteristic features

of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The details of this language will be the subject of the next section.

Hasta--The Language of the Hands

In its use of the hands (hasta) Kūṭiyāṭṭam completely departs from the realm of traditional western theatre. The movements of the actors' hands are precisely controlled and codified; every gesture is determined by the words of the text. Except in the role of Viḍūṣaka, personal gestures are never permitted. Instead the actor uses a language of gesture which, like the hand language of the deaf, is capable of communicating ideas and stories without the use of words. There are about 500 signs in this gesture language. Into these signs all the texts of Kūṭiyāṭṭam can be translated. Of course there are many more than 500 words in Sanskrit and so concepts and ideas must be simplified. No one could retranslate a gestural presentation into Sanskrit and come out with the exact text signed. Subtleties of verbal expression are lost, but the losses are more than made up for by the richness of physical expression which results.

Since the time of Horace, there have been attempts in the West to create a language of gesture for actors. The first modern work in English on this subject was the Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand, and Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric by John Bulwer written in 1644.⁶¹ It is a "thorough and systematic treatise on the movements of the hands and fingers first, in relation to natural significations, and then in relation to artistic usage in public address."⁶² Bulwer was the first to picture the position of fingers and hands in "chirograms." His work influenced the more famous Chironomia of Gil-

bert Austin (1806). Unlike Austin, who examined all the movements of the speaker, Bulwer confined himself to the gestures of the hand, and he eloquently argued that of the trio voice, face, and hand, the gestures of the hand are the most expressive. At the same time he praised the significance of non-verbal communication ("body language") that has recently received scientific attention.

For, whereas nature assigns to each motion of the mind its proper gesture, countenance, and tone whereby it is significantly expressed, this grace of gesture is conceived to be the most elegant and expressive virtue of the three . . . for that those elegant conceptions that enrich the pregnant mind, incite the mind by some stratagem of wit, to find out apt and fit expressions; and while she labors to be free in pouring out her hidden treasures, she imprints upon the body the active hints of her most generous conceits, darting her rays into the body, as light hath its emanation from the sun; which eloquent impressions, a kind of speech most consonant to the mind, are in the moving of the hand so neatly wrought and emphatically produced that the hand many times seems to have conceived the thought.⁶³

Bulwer's Chirologia was an analysis of the meaning of natural gestures observed in everyday communication, gestures which often betray the character of the speaker or point to the underlying emotion of the speaker's words. As we shall see, this kind of expression has its counterpart in the sāttvikābhinaya of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor. Bulwer's Chironomia was a manual for orators describing the meaning and import of gestures useful for moving an audience. Stanislavski, in An Actor Prepares, condemns the conscious use of these sorts of gestures as being far too general to reveal subtleties of character in interesting ways. In fact he notes that even the most untrained actor involuntarily adopts stereotyped gestures when on the stage. Therefore he insists that actors become aware of such gestures and use them only where they reveal the inner life of the character. Kūṭiyāṭṭam permits almost no gestures that a character would naturally perform in his given

circumstances. Its gesture language translates the text of the role into visual images. When the actor is speaking, his gestures translate his words, and when the actor is not speaking his gestures present ideas, images, events, and given circumstances which support and extend the meaning of the text. Gestures are almost never used to show the emotion of the character. Even when a word in the text indicates the emotion of the character, for example when the hasta for grief is shown by a character who is mourning, there is the sense that what is shown with the hands is the language of the role, not a demonstration of the emotion of the character. The physical expression of emotion is most often left to facial gesture and to sāttvikābhinaya: it is through the subtle expressions of the face and the energy and attitude with which hand gestures are shown that the emotion comes through.

The treatment of gesture in the NŚ is startlingly elaborate and detailed. In addition to 24 gestures of the single hand, 13 gestures of combined hands, and 30 "dance-hands," the NŚ enumerates gestures of the head (13), eyes (36), eyeballs (9), eyelids (9), eyebrow (7), nose (6), cheeks (6), lower lip (6), chin (7), mouth (6), color of the face (4), neck (9), arms (10), breast (5), sides (5), belly (3), waist (5), thigh (5), calf (5), and feet (5). The NŚ lists 32 movements of the single foot, 6 standing postures and 20 simple dance steps called manḍalas. Then there are the gaits appropriate for different characters and their sitting and lying postures (almost one hundred positions and gaits in all). Finally there are the 108 karanas, or basic movement patterns using both hands and feet. These form the foundation for the South Indian dance called Bharatanāṭyam still performed today. All the gestures are briefly described though unfortunately not all the descrip-

tions are clear enough for reconstruction. Examples of their possible uses are also given.⁶⁴ In spite of the elaborate vocabulary of gesture, it does not seem as if the actor in the NS' tradition used as codified a gesture language as does the Cākyār. In the chapter devoted to voice Bharata states:

Keeping the eyes fixed in the direction in which the two hands move one should make the Verbal Representations by observing proper pauses indicating meaning.

In the Heroic and Furious (Sentiments) the hands are mostly occupied with weapons, in the Odious they are bent due to contempt, in the comic they are to point to (something), in the Pathetic they are to hang down, and in the marvellous they are to remain motionless due to surprise.⁶⁵

Of the primary emotional states this leaves only fear, when the hands would not seem to need to be very active, and love where the hands . . . well, all the gestures could not be reserved for the erotic sentiment. On the other hand Kūṭiyāṭṭam does not have the elaborate vocabulary of the NS', especially for gestures other than those of the hands.⁶⁶

For its hastas Kūṭiyāṭṭam does not follow the NS' but bases its gesture language on an anonymous work of unknown date called Hastala-kṣaṇadīpika (HLD) 'Elucidation of the Signs of the Hand.'⁶⁷ HLD lists 24 gestures of the hands and the words that can be signed by one or both hands using that gesture, and then lists certain words that can be shown with the two hands in different hastas. The names of the hastas are: patāka, mudrākhyā (mudrā), kaṭaka, muṣṭi, kartarīmukha, śukatunḍa, kapithaka, haṃsapaksa, śikhara, haṃsāsya, añjali, ardhaçandra, mukura bhramara, sūcīmukha, pallava, tripatāka, mṛgaśīrṣa, sarpaśira, vardhamānaka, araḷa, ūrnanābha, mukuḷa, and kaṭakāmukha. They are pictured on the following page. Nineteen of their names appear in the NS' as single



patāka



mudrākhya



kataka



muṣṭi



kartarīmukha



śuketuṇḍa



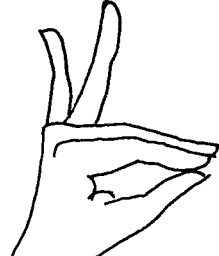
kapithaka



haṃsapakṣa



śikhara



haṃśāsya



añjali



ardhaçandra



mukura



bhramara



sūcīmukha



pallava



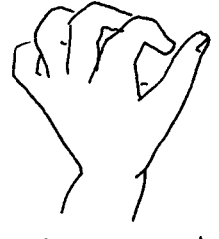
triptāka



mṛgaśīrṣa



sarpaśīra



vardhamānaka



arāḷa



ūrnanābha



mukuḷa



katakāmka

hand gestures and one (añjali) appears as a gesture of the combined hands. However, the names associated with particular gestures are not always the same as those used in the NŚ and in Bharatanāṭyam today. For example NŚ defines patāka as: "fingers extended and close against one another, and the thumb bent."⁶⁸ In Kūṭiyāṭṭam's patāka the thumb is held out away from the palm in the plane of the palm and the ring finger is bent. The gesture NŚ calls patāka is called tripatāka in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The HLD is also used by Kathakālī actors. Most of the gestures used in Kathakālī are the same or similar as those used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, but the effect is different because gestures in Kathakālī are broader and often involve movements of the whole body. The gestures of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are to be contained within the space of the outstretched elbows of the raised arms. The hands should not go outside the range of the vision of the erect head.⁶⁹

Indians are naturally expressive with their hands, and many of the hastas have been derived from natural gestures that have specific meanings. "Go away" is a pointed finger moving away from the body. "Come here" is done with the open palm (haṃsapakṣa), palm facing out, low and in front of the body; it is the common Indian gesture for expressing this meaning. Other hastas are descriptive: "doorway" is shown with patāka hands outlining the shape of a doorway. "Fish," "lion," and other animals are shown in ways that make it obvious what they are. "Noon" is shown by having the hands describe the path of the sun and stop at the apex, while a half circle of the hands indicates "day." Gestures for emotions are especially evocative, as they are accompanied with the appropriate facial gestures. "Love" involves quivering hands, while "sorrow" is shown with a wringing movement of the closed

hands. "Fear" is two patāka hands held about six inches apart in front of the stomach, palms together, quivering. Other gestures are strongly evocative: "killing" is shown in front of the body, the hands held at chest height. The left hand in a fist is palm down, the right hand, palm up, is placed on top of it. The right hand rotates quickly from the wrist behind the left and ends underneath the left. In the process it changes from its original tripatāka to patāka. The hand gesture is accompanied by raudra rasa on the face (i.e., violent quivering of the lower eyelids). Most hastas are not so obvious. The spectator who desires to understand Kūṭiyāṭṭam completely must either learn them from an actor or know Sanskrit well enough to associate the gestures with the words and then attend enough performances to be able to understand the gestures without the words in order to follow those passages where the actor does not speak.

It may be that the use of gesture language in the drama was in part inspired by the Brāhmins' use of mudras in the learning of the Vedas. An elaborate set of hand gestures is used by the Nambūtiris when teaching the Rgveda. They indicate the sounds of certain syllables whose exact nature might otherwise not be clear. J. F. Staal has described 25 mudras used for this purpose by Nambūtiri Rgvedins.⁷⁰ Some of these mudras are identical to the hastas used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Kathakaḷi, but they are used for an entirely different purpose. They stand for sounds rather than words and ideas. A different set of hand gestures is used by the Sāmavedins. They are more complex than the Rgvedic mudras and are used primarily to aid in remembering the svaras of the Sāmaveda.⁶⁵ No system of gestures associated with sounds or musical values is used in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. However there are gestures which

indicate certain grammatical elements in the verses. One hasta is used for the instrumental or dative case, another ablative or genitive, another locative, and another vocative. The imperative mood of verbs is also signed.

The use of hastas in Kūṭiyāṭṭam serves many functions. As a training tool, it brings the hands of the actor alive and molds hands that are expressive, charged with energy. The hands are the most articulate limbs of the body. Certain hand gestures have deep symbolic value in Indian religion and art. The language of the hands is the spoken word made visible. Every word in the Sanskrit text of the play is fused with a physical gesture. Every gesture is alive with meaning and association. Each word is both a vocal and a physical entity for the actor. There is an oft-quoted verse in the Indian theatrical tradition describing the relationship between gesture and inner life:

yato hastas tato dr̥ṣṭir yato dr̥ṣṭis tato manah /
yato manas tato bhāvar yato bhāvas tato rasaḥ //

Literally:

Where the hand, there the glance; where the glance, there the mind (and heart); where the mind, there the feeling, where the feeling, there the rasa.

The actor is to charge each gesture with an image in the mind. RC comments on the use of gesture: "When you show the hasta for lion, contemplate and recall in your mind the character and nature of lion, then the bhāva becomes manifest and the necessary rasa shines clear."⁷²

Visualization is an important adjunct to the performance of the hasta. The whole body, responsive and flexible from physical exercise and massage and emotionally alive from the practice of facial rasas, responds to the visualization of the word.

The use of gesture language allows the actor to elaborate on his text without adding any new spoken words. Only the Viḍūṣaka speaks words not in the text of the play. Other characters extend verses and comment on their situations through the use of gesture. At times mime is used to describe situations. The Cākyār is an excellent mime because of the training of his face, hands, and body. For example an elaborate mime is used in paṭapuRappāṭu to show an heroic or demonic character's preparation for battle. Textual elaboration with gesture is one of the most typical features of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. RC has described this practice:

Abhinaya is born out of and developed from literature. However the art of abhinaya is in the habit of often leaving its mother, the literature, at home. It then soars high in the heavens, performs feats of wonder, and finally returns home to the mother text.⁷³

Another major effect of the gesture language is that it translates the complex vocabulary and syntax of Sanskrit into an easily learned vocabulary of a little over 500 signs. Sanskrit is a language especially rich in synonyms, and the gestures reduce its vocabulary to a manageable size. The beginning student learns the Sanskrit of the plays more easily as he learns the gesture with it. The audience member who knows the gesture language has a simultaneous translation of the Sanskrit of the plays which might otherwise elude him. The fact that Kūṭiyāṭṭam makes Sanskrit more accessible to the non-scholar is a point in favor of the theory that the development of Kūṭiyāṭṭam was encouraged by the Nambūtiri community in order to increase the knowledge of Sanskrit and foster an appreciation of the Āryan tradition among non-Āryan countrymen.

Because there are extensive sections of a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance without spoken words, the orchestra is given considerable space to perform. When words are spoken the orchestra is silent, but when the actor uses gestures alone, the expert drummer follows every movement of the actor with his sound. A discussion of the effect of the drumming on the performance of the actor will be taken up in the next section.

Drumming (Rhythm)

Stanislavski deeply felt the importance of rhythm, tempo, and melodic form in the actor's art. Inner tempo-rhythm was a keystone of his system, yet it is the part of his system that is least understood by his American followers. Stanislavski was trained in the musical theatre and was a singer himself, early aspiring to be an opera performer. He returned to opera in his last years, when his system was most fully developed, to put his ideas to work with future singing actors. These students understood the importance he placed on musical form. He often expressed his jealousy of the singers of opera, whose composers gave them all of the "how" in their melodic line and in the orchestral subtext, while actors in drama had to find the "how" for themselves.

The best sketches which Stanislavski proposed were the ones done to the accompaniment of music, so that the students could listen to the rhythm and the character of the music and give their improvisations a definite content and exact form as suggested by the music. The musician who improvised the music for the sketches knew, of course, the content of the plot and how to develop the course of action; he was also able to introduce meaning into what was being done, together with the most varied nuances, by his use of both rhythm and musical form. The actor then had to be delicately sensitive to these musical hints and he also had the job of introducing his own improvisations, moving in faithful conjunction with what he was hearing.

"From the instant the music begins you are completely in its

power. Your nerves, blood, heartbeat must all be in accord with the rhythm proposed by this music. Yet to seize this rhythm, live with it, let it permeate your whole being, is no easy matter."⁷⁴

It was pointed out in the discussion of Kūṭiyāṭṭam recitation that the Indian theatre has always been intimately connected with music. The NS implies that every performance should have instrumental accompaniment. In the texts of one of the early bhāṇas the Viṭa emphasizes the strangeness of something by comparing it to a drama without a drum. All of the classical forms of folk theatre in India today employ music. It is so much a part of what an Indian expects in his theatre that practically all of the enormous number of films that are made in India today are musicals.

The full Kūṭiyāṭṭam orchestra consists of two mizhāvus, an iṭekka, a kuRuṅkuzhal, kuzhittālam, and śaṅkha. The iṭekka is a small hour-glass shaped drum held next to the left hip by a strap going over the left shoulder. The tension on the drum head can be increased by pressing down on it with the left hand against the pull of the strap. As a result the iṭekka has a range of more than an octave. The drum is played with a small stick held in the right hand. In Kathakalī this drum replaces the centa when a female character is dancing, and it is used in pañcavādyā, the traditional temple music of Kerala. The kuRuṅkuzhal is also used in temple music. It is a double-reed instrument, similar to the shawm of Europe or the shenai of North India.⁷⁵ The kuzhittālam are small cymbals used by the Naiṅyār to keep the basic rhythm. The śaṅkha is a conch-shell with the end cut off which is blown for auspicious effect when important characters appear. Conches are often blown in temple festivities.

The mizhāvu is a three-and-a-half foot high copper pot whose narrow opening is covered with calf-skin and tied with rope before each performance. (See Plate Xb). Two are used, one establishing and maintaining the basic rhythm, the other following and accenting the movements of the performers. They are placed upstage center in slatted boxes and the drummers sit behind them on a high stool often built into the box. (See Plate Ib). The mizhāvus dominate the orchestral sound making rhythmic patterns the most important musical element in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Their sound is very loud and reverberates in the acoustically live theatre. These drums are thought to have appeared to the disciples of Bharata in a dream as the proper instruments for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.⁷⁶ The mizhāvus are left in the theatre. They are subject to the same initiation rites as a Hindu boy would receive. Students must practice on a small wooden drum called a mizhāvu kutti 'baby mizhāvu,' which has the same sized head as the copper adult. (See Plate Xa). The mizhāvu itself is played only for performances. The drum is said to be "a confirmed bachelor (nitya brahmā cari), who studies Rigveda constantly and meditates on the Nadabrahama with Pranava (OM)."⁷⁷ It is used only for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

The sound of the full orchestra is intense, rebounding around the walls of the kūttambalam. Its main function is to shape the energy of the gesturing performer. The rhythmic sound follows the throwing of his eyes, the movements of his hands and fingers, and his dance through space. The vocabulary of rhythms is somewhat small, but within the framework structured for him the Kūṭiyāṭṭam drummer is a consummate improviser and his playing is a powerful stimulus to the creativity and energy of the actor. His drumming treads a fine line between that of a

primitive ritual and the classical drumming used to accompany South Indian vocal music. It is controlled and yet irresistible and pervasive. The mizhāvu is a large unwieldy instrument with very little inherent tonal variety, but it can be a remarkable tool in the hands of experts. The anaṅku that the South Indians believed resided in drums is quite palpable in the music of a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam drumming employs six basic tālas 'meters': ekatāla (4 mātras, i.e. 4 beats per measure), dhruvatāla (14 mātras), tripuṭatāla (7 mātras), campatāla (10 mātras), campatatāla (8 mātras), and aṭanta-tāla (14 mātras). Certain svaras are associated with certain tālas. These are listed in Rajagopalan's article and need not be repeated here.⁷⁸ Tripuṭa, the 7 beat meter, is especially popular, and its irregular, driving rhythm is very compelling. It appears in three different forms according to its tempo. Ekatāla is perhaps the most commonly used. Certain items, like Nityakriyā, use a rhythmic structure which does not have a basic beat. The vāyttāri, rhythmically recited words, give the musical structure.

At Kalamandalam the student drummers also have early morning classes where they practice drumming in the various tālas and rhythmic patterns. They continue their practice during the regular morning class time while the Kūṭiyāṭṭam students learn repertoire, and they then join the Cākyārs for Sanskrit. One day, after the student actor has perfected the movements of a role, the drummer is invited to his class. The effect of his drumming is this: the gesture and characterization of the actor suddenly come to life because his every movement is supported by the sound of the drum. The basic emotion of the verse is reflected in the tempo and rhythm of the drumming, and the shape of the

verse is fashioned by the rhythmic phrasing of the drummer. The drummer, if he is good, takes on a good deal of responsibility for the projection of the emotion of the role. The actor is free to take off, energized by the sound which surges through his limbs.⁷⁹

Nityakriyā--The Training Piece

The first complete item of repertoire learned by the Kūṭiyāṭṭam student is Nityakriyā 'daily practice.' The word kriyā 'doing' or 'practice' can also connote a religious rite or ceremony, and indeed Nityakriyā not only provides a basic vocabulary of Kūṭiyāṭṭam movement and mime to be practiced daily by the student, but also it is a religious ceremony in which the actor dedicates his dancing to Hindu deities. Nityakriyā is called Sūtradhāra PuRappātu when all of it is acted as the first day of a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance. Major portions of it are done during the puRappātu of any character. Nityakriyā incorporates almost all the basic foot movements of Kūṭiyāṭṭam as well as the recitation of a devotional verse in one of the most common svaras. Its conclusion is a spectacular combination of hasta and dance which is challenging and exciting for the young actor. Nityakriyā is the first piece the Cākyār performs before an audience, usually in his second or third year of training. It may last from 45 minutes to 1½ hours depending on the histrionic capabilities of the performer: the more skilled the longer.

The major sections of the Nityakriyā and their characteristics will be outlined here. The opening section, maRayitkriyā, is a brief dance (about four minutes) performed behind the curtain, the actor facing the upstage drums, his back to the audience and unseen by them. It

may be the oldest item in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertory. It has a kind of primitive simplicity and charm which is very intriguing. The movements, bare and repetitive, are done mostly with the hands, but the gestures do not correspond to any hastas of known meaning. However certain dynamics which often energize the hand movements of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are very apparent, e.g., when an elaborate mudra is quickly changed or an articulated hand is suddenly relaxed. The foot movements in MaRayitkriyā are basic, e.g. a change of weight from one foot to the other, a crossing of one foot behind the other, or a slap of the heel on the ground. No meaning is assigned to the dance by the Cākyārs, but the dance gestures do have a devotional quality. Perhaps this section is a salutation to the gods and to the instrumentalists or to the gods in the instruments. The dance follows the rhythmic pattern of the drum, and so the dancer must learn the vāyttāri in order to remember the rhythm of the dance. It does not have a regular beat but rather a complex of rhythms difficult to notate in a Western system but relatively easy to follow when speaking the words. The drummer must also learn the dance and visualize it as he plays to aid his memory.

At the end of this dance sequence the actor turns toward the audience. The curtain, which has been held by two people throughout the opening sequence, is removed and the dancer is revealed. For some time he stands, his hands held in front of him, the right hand in the left palm, while his face and eyes express bhakti 'devotion,' the sthāyibhāva of Nityakriyā. (In Plate IXb the student Nārāyaṇa Cākyār is practicing this portion of Nityakriyā in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam kaḷari at Kalamandalam.) Then he performs a brief series of movements called pañca pada vinyāsam. They are simple jumps in place and movements forward and back. Finally

he throws his hands up as if he were scattering flowers, kneels to the floor and tilts his head back and forth rhythmically.

Then the actor stands in place, and in gesture language presents his own simple given circumstances: "I woke up early this morning, washed, and then prepared myself for coming to the theatre." His "coming" he demonstrates in a series of dance steps in a square pattern. Then he greets his audience, acknowledging the learned Brāhmans and scholars that are present, and shows his respect for them. Built into the first moments of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance is a recognition of the audience and their knowledge and position by the actor. The Brāhmans are treated with reverence as befits their position as the leaders of Āryan society and patrons of the drama. The actor as company director calls them the masters of the three worlds (i.e., all of creation) and calls on Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) to protect them.

To bless the audience the Cākyār recites this verse in praise of four incarnations of Viṣṇu:

He who in the Kr̥ta Age came as Nārāyaṇa, white as milk or a conch
shell,
Who in the Tretā Age as Viṣṇu surrounded by golden light covered
the three worlds in three steps,
Who as Rāma, dark like sacred grass, slayed Rāvaṇa in the Dvāpara
Age,
And who came in the Age of Kali as Dāmodara, dark as mascara,
May He always protect you.

This verse is the maṅgala śloka of Bālacaritam of Bhāsa which otherwise has no place in the repertoire of Kūṭiyāṭṭam today. To stop the drumming so that the verse may be recited, the Cākyār performs kott-velakki, a pattern of circular steps and a jump back, ending with the right hand being tossed back toward the drummer. The actor uses this sign anytime the drum is playing and he wants to stop it in order to

speak. Then the actor sings the verse (in indalam svāra) and at the same time signs its meaning. At its conclusion the drumming begins again without signal, and the actor signs the verse without words. Finally the last two words of the verse ("May he protect you.") are given with both gesture and voice and repeated with gesture alone.⁸⁰ The performance time for this verse would be five minutes or longer.

Next in Nityakriyā the actor performs an elaborate pure dance called Kitinda, after the vāyttāri of the first movements. Floor pattern is the most interesting aspect of this dance, though the hands are always articulate as well. It is quite long (twenty minutes or more) and culminates in a series of 64 jumps done to the eight directions, each of which is sacred to a particular deity. The deities themselves will be evoked in gestures during the last section of Nityakriyā. During Kitinda the Naññyār sings the only true song in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. She sings it from stage right where she has been sitting throughout Nityakriyā keeping time with the kuzhittālam. The invocational verses she sings are called Mutiyakkitta.⁸¹ As before elaborate rhythmic patterns on the mizhāvu are maintained throughout Kitinda, and so the dancers are forced to learn the rhythm of the steps by memorizing the vāyttāri. The Naññyār sings while the drum is playing.

In the next section of Nityakriyā, called Keśādipadam 'From the Head to the Feet,' the actor describes in gesture language both Śiva and his consort Pārvatī from head to foot. As mentioned in Chapter I such descriptions are found in Tamil devotional literature. The tāla for this passage, which is done to a regular beat, is tripuṭa (7 mā-tras) and throughout it the actor repeats a pattern of stepping--four small steps forward and four back.

Next the actor in gesture language offers his dance performance to the gods of the eight directions (dikpālas). He starts by facing east and then, to a four beat, eight measure pattern accompanied by simple movements of the feet, he presents toward each direction a sentence in gesture which is the same except for the name of the god for that direction: "I face this direction and offer these flowers and my dance to _____." The gods of the eight directions, beginning toward the east and proceeding clockwise, are Indra, Agni, Yama, NiRirthi, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera), and Śiva. Then the actor turns to the audience and repeats the sentence signing the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Garuḍa, and finally Śaṅkhacakram 'conch and discus,' the divine weapons of Viṣṇu. These gestures are all done precisely to the rhythmic beat of the drum. Finally the actor executes to a 3/4 beat a series of sideways jumps describing a "Z" pattern on the floor while naming in gesture the inhabitants of each of the three worlds to which he offers his dance. He finishes by falling prone on the floor to express his complete devotion to the gods. This last sequence is strenuous and demands intense concentration, for the elaborate series of arm and hand movements must be independent of the energetic sideways jumping of the feet. Also the face must actively express the sort of devotion or fear that each creature inspires. Here, as in other parts of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertoire, the character-actor and his hands seem to be in two different worlds: the hands are objectified, not belonging to the character but rather expressing the object of the character's interest. The character's reaction to these objects which he is signing are seen in the face and in the body. In Nityakriyā the character is the actor

himself expressing his belief in the sacredness of his dancing. When he shows the features of Śiva, the patron deity of the actor whose dance symbolizes the sacred dance of the universe, and Pārvatī, who symbolizes the energy (śakti) which brings the dance to life, he is not to try to imagine himself as being these deities but rather to show his devotion and admiration for their features which he is describing.⁸²

In Nityakriyā most of the technical elements of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam style come together: hand gestures, dance movements, facial expression, vocal recitation, movement to the rhythm of the drum, the singing of the Naññyār, and an attitude of devotion which is central to the actor's psychology. It is a complete physical and vocal workout for the actor, appropriate in length and content for daily practice, and moreover, major sections of it appear exactly or in slightly altered form in every performance. The first section is used for the first entrance of any major character; and the last half, from Kitinda on, is performed in the puRappātu of any character. Only the central section, which relates specifically to the Sūtradhāra and his given circumstances is confined to Nityakriyā and the Sūtradhāra PuRappātu, but its structure is typical of the puRappātus of other characters. The last section of Nityakriyā builds the stamina and concentration of the actor and helps him to gain coordination of the upper and lower body and to isolate the movements of the hands and face and eyes from the feet and legs. Tremendous energy is required. The mind literally dances from one to the other until the whole becomes habitual through innumerable repetitions.

Purappātu--The Character Enters

The next step for the young actor is to learn the puRappātus 'entrances' of several major characters. The dhruvā songs provided an introduction to characters in the traditional Sanskrit dramas described by the NS. Kūṭiyāṭṭam extends this portion of the drama taking two days or more, two to four hours per day to introduce each major character. Srī Rāma PuRappātu from "Bālivadhā," Act II of Abhiṣekanāṭakam, (discussed in Chapter I) is one of the first entrances learned by the student. In the text, the act opens as follows:

(Then Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanūmān enter.)

Rāma: Sugrīva! Come here!

Today I will quickly make your enemy fall to the ground
his body pierced, chopped, and shattered by my arrows.
O King, abandon your fear and stay close to me.
Today you shall indeed see Bāli killed on the battlefield.⁸³

The method of chanting this verse has been notated above in the section on Voice. A summary and translation of the text of the Āṭṭaparakāra for Srī Rāma PuRappātu will be given here. The first stage directions tell the actor to finish his make-up, have the lamp lighted on stage, have offerings made and the Nambyār sprinkle water on the stage. Then the ālāmaśloka for this act is recited by the Nambyār:

Rāma, after making alliance with Sugrīva and throwing up the body of the demon [Dundubhi] with his toe, put confidence in his friend Sugrīva by cutting down in a trice with a single arrow the seven śāla trees. Then Rāma killed the powerful Bāli, the feuding brother of Sugrīva. May that Rāma also protect you.

Next the actor playing Rāma is instructed as follows:

Have the curtain (yavanikā) held and the drum played. Srī Rāma should wear bark, upper garment (uttarīya) and lower garment (poynakha). Enter with bow and arrow in the hands. Behind the curtain perform the first part of Nityakriyā (muRayit). Sprinkle water on the face. Take the bow and turn toward the audience. Imagine Sugrīva, Hanūmān, and Lakṣmaṇa doing puRappātu with you. Have the curtain removed. Show pleasure (prasannadāpattit);

then show heroism (vīrarasam) and energy (utsāham). Look at the bow and arrow. Putting them back, step back, and imagine your followers to be there. Stand and show love [for them]. Feel compassion.

Then Rāma is to act the following in gesture without speaking:

Rāma: Oh! How happy I am! Why is that? I am in the land at the side of the Mālyavan Mountain. With Lakṣmaṇa I am searching for Sītā.

Now we are walking along.

Coming now is Sugrīva with Hanūmān. Sugrīva approaches and we make friends with each other.

Along with Sugrīva, Hanūmān and Lakṣmaṇa, I go toward the city of Kiṣkinda.

We are now going along the road.

(Then turn as if you are at the left of Rāma and take the role of Sugrīva.)

Sugrīva: O my Lord, look at this huge skeleton. This once was the demon Dundubhi which my elder brother Bāli slew. When he had killed him he wrapped him with a golden chain and threw him far away. His body flew to this place and is lying here still.

(Show obeisance to Rāma. Face front and act as if listening to what Sugrīva is saying.)

Rāma: Even now Sugrīva is still afraid of Bāli. He did not believe my words that I would easily slay Bāli. So I will do this. (Kick the skeleton far away.) With the toe of my foot I kick and throw the skeleton.

Now again we are going toward Kiṣkinda

(Turn to the right)

Sugrīva: O my Lord, look at these seven trees. Once when Bāli was especially angry at me he struck these seven trees. But not one leaf on them fell down.

(Show obeisance and turn front. Listen to Sugrīva and look at him.)

Rāma: Sugrīva still does not believe what I say. Therefore I will cut these trees down. (Shoot an arrow.) The seven trees are cut with a single arrow and they fall. Now Sugrīva begins to have some courage. (Stand as Rāma.)

In order to make Sugrīva happy, I will speak this way to him.

(Then walk around and stop the drumming (kottvelaki).

Speak [for the first time] and gesture

"Sugrīvan ita itaḥ." ('Sugrīva, come here.')

(Then show the meaning of these words, then show the meaning of the śloka "Matsyakābhīhata" [without words].)

Here is the meaning of the śloka as it is to be given in gesture:

O King of the Monkeys, Sugrīva! Since you are standing in my presence, abandon your fear. For what reason do I say this? The body of your enemy, Bāli, I will wound with my arrow, and he will quickly fall to the ground. Thus his wrong-doing will be avenged. You will soon see Bāli lying dead on the battle ground.

Then the actor is instructed:

(Stop the drumming and repeat "Sugrīvan ita itaḥ." Then from Kitinda do the rest of Nityakriyā.)

The text hardly gives an adequate idea of the performance which consists almost entirely of gesture and mime accompanied by drumming. The words are signed through as written (in the Malayāḷam text of course) but plenty of time is taken to show the relationship between Sugrīva and Rāma as well as make graphic the spectacular kicking of the skeleton and the cutting of the trees. Rāma remains quite aloof from it all, as befits his heroic nature, and the fear and uncertainty of Sugrīva is shown, but very subtly. The polite and admiring relationship between the two characters and the attempt by Rāma to make Sugrīva believe in his prowess is clearly presented. The signing of the verse is accompanied by a sudden rush of activity. All the basic body movements used while gesturing (iḷakiyāṭṭam) are found in this verse. These include steps forward and back while signing, leaps straight backward onto the left foot while raising the right turned-out foot and leg in front to waist height, small shuffling steps in a clockwise half-circle from down-stage to up-stage while signing, and leaps down-left and down-right followed by deep side lunges.

In spite of the intensity of the delivery of the verse and of the end portion of the puRappāṭu, when the inhabitants of the three worlds

are named, the overall pace is slow. The words here translated, which take a couple of minutes to speak, would take at least forty-five minutes to sign, though the length would vary somewhat according to the Cākyār's perception of the patience and erudition of his audience. The whole evening performance, including preliminaries and the final portion of Nityakriyā would probably last more than two hours.

Note that the actor playing Rāma also takes on the role of his partner Sugrīva. On the third day of "Bālivadham," after the completion of Rāma's nirvahāṇa (see next section), the actor playing Sugrīva will appear and give his puRappāṭu and subsequently his nirvahāṇa. After these four days of preliminaries, on the fifth day the actual staging of the act will begin and be completed. The actor frequently takes on the roles of the other characters in the scene when speaking in gesture, even when that character is actually present on stage. Expression in gesture of the thoughts, sensations and feelings of the major characters, their inner monologue, takes up a major portion of the playing time of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. On the other hand, the minor characters are slighted. They appear only after the lengthy preliminaries have been completed. Generally they only speak and sign the words of the text, without elaboration. Today this is a convenient practice, for there are few actors and even fewer actresses, so the secondary roles sometimes have to be taken by incompletely trained students. But the motivation for this practice is deeper than whatever practical needs it may serve today. Central to the Indian aesthetic theory is the audience's identification with the hero of the play. An understanding of the circumstances and motivation of the hero encourages identification with the hero, who then provides moral, ethical, and spiritual lessons for

the spectator. The performance of the inner monologue of the hero greatly aids in this process.

The content of the puRappātu is drawn from earlier acts of the play, if appropriate, or from sources outside the play. Since "Bālivadha" is the first act of the play from which it is taken, the given circumstances of the hero must be taken from outside sources. The given circumstances come from the Rāmāyana by way of the Rāmāyana Campū well known to the Cākyārs. Rāma's basic circumstances, that he is looking for Sītā who has been captured by Rāvaṇa are barely mentioned. Because his story is well known to all Indians, there is no need of further elaboration. The gestures do mention specific given circumstances--the place, Rāma's companions and his destination, how he meets Sugrīva, and what happened along the road to Kiṣkinda. What would seem to be the most crucial point of information, that Sugrīva has asked Rāma to kill Bāli, his brother, is not signed. The only reason given in the Āṭṭaparakāra for Rāma's action is that he is Sugrīva's friend. Rather than on such external events, the puRappātu concentrates on the emotional motivation--Rāma's attempt to give Sugrīva courage. Of course the audience would know of Sugrīva's request, but still it is obvious that the author of the Āṭṭaparakāra was more concerned with Sugrīva's emotional uncertainty, for it is this which causes Rāma to feel the need to recite the first śloka, rather than the events which have led up to it. It is Rāma and Sugrīva's inner emotional states that are most important in Kūṭiyāṭṭam puRappātu. With the verse Rāma achieves the final victory over Sugrīva's fear. The audience is allowed to see that though Rāma is outwardly cheerful toward Sugrīva he is inwardly concerned and very sensitive to his real feelings. Sugrīva

brings up the incident of Dundubhi to remind Rāma of Bāli's strength, and the incident of the trees to show the extent of Bāli's anger toward him. In both cases Rāma sees the fear behind these apparently idle remarks and takes the opportunity to reassert his prowess and instill courage in Sugrīva. Later Sugrīva will challenge Bāli to a fight to the finish while Rāma looks on ready to kill Bāli when Sugrīva falters. Srī Rāma's puRappāṭu has deepened the audience's sympathy and understanding for both characters, greatly enhancing the play.

A formal characteristic to be noted in this puRappāṭu, and common to them all, is that the actual śloka that provides the focus of the gesture text is not spoken on the first day but only signed in a slightly altered form. As a result a certain suspense is created for the second day's performance of Rāma's nirvahana.

Nirvahana

Nirvahana of the hero begins on the day following the puRappāṭu. Nirvahana is a narration of events that have occurred to the character before his entrance. The actor usually sits on a stool as if telling a story, but he speaks only with his hands, his face, and his eyes. He performs one verse in gesture language and usually elaborates or comments on it while the orchestra accompanies him. Then the Nañnyār, sitting on the floor stage right, chants the verse on which the performance has been based. Obviously the audience's understanding of this portion of Kūṭiyāṭṭam depends entirely on their familiarity with Sanskrit and the gestural language of the comments and elaborations. During nirvahana the actor can concentrate entirely on the physical performance, and so his emotional expression is allowed full play while the audience and the actor relive the past history of the character.

The verses for nirvahaṇa are mostly drawn from the Campūs and Prabandhas that were prepared by Cākyārs for use here and in Kūttu. If the act being performed is not the first, then the verses will also be drawn from previous acts of the play. The meaning of the gestures to be performed are written in a continuous narrative in the Āṭṭaparakāra texts.

In the Nāṭyaśāstra the word nirvahaṇa is applied to the last stage of the dramatic action, the denouement. More generally, however, the word means "that which is finished," and in Kūṭiyāṭṭam it is used in this sense to refer to what has already happened before the action of the play begins. Nirvahaṇa extends and elaborates the given circumstances that have been suggested by the puRappātu. All characters who have a puRappātu will also have a nirvahaṇa. The nirvahaṇa may take one day, as in the case of Rāma and Sugrīva in "Bālivadhama," or be much longer. "Aṅgulīyaṅka," Act VI of Āścaryacūdāmaṇi lasts up to forty-one days in performance, and much of this time is used for an elaborate nirvahaṇa of the only character, Hanūmān.

Generally the nirvahaṇa begins with anukrama, a recounting of events backwards by a series of questions from the point at which the action of the act begins to an earlier time. Then in samkṣepa even earlier events are recounted forward to the same point in time. Then, after this introduction, nirvahaṇa proper begins at the place in the story where both anukrama and samkṣepa ended. Here is the anukrama of "Bālivadhama." It is signed without speech by the actor in the costume of Rāma to the accompaniment of drumming.

In what way did Srī Rāma, great in the Solar Dynasty, speak to Sugrīva after he cut down the seven trees? Before that, how did Srī Rāma lift and throw up with his big toe Dundubhi's skeleton?

Before that, how did Srī Rāma go forth with Sugrīva and the others in order to kill Bāli? Before that, how did Srī Rāma make an alliance with Sugrīva? Before that, how did Srī Rāma meet Hanūmān as he and Lakṣmaṇa were searching for Sītā? Before that, how did Srī Rāma save the soul of Śabarī after she had killed Kabandha? Before that, how did Srī Rāma meet Jaṭāyu? Before that, how did Srī Rāma, greiving over the loss of Sītā, go with Lakṣmaṇa in search of her?

The saṃkṣepa is:

Thus long ago, after pursuing the golden deer and killing Mārīca, knowing that this deer was a deception (māyā) of his, Rāma went to the hermitage meeting Lakṣmaṇa on the way. There he did not see Sītā Devī and because of that, he grieved with Lakṣmaṇa and went wandering in search of her.

Note that though this introduction is narrated from Rāma's point of view, it is presented in the third person. (The Malayāḷam is somewhat more ambiguous in this respect than the English translation would indicate, still the actor usually refers to "Rāma" and not "I" unless he is quoting Rāma's words.) As the nirvahaṇa proper begins the actor continues to sign in the third person or in the person of the various characters to which he refers. Thus the actor, in the costume of the hero, becomes hero-as-storyteller, acting out for the audience in gestures the events that have led up to the beginning of the scene to be played. For example, after the saṃkṣepa Rāma continues his nirvahaṇa by signing the following:

At that time, while roaming in the forest, Srī Rāma spoke thus:
O Sītā, my wife, why is it that your moon-like face does not shine.
Not seeing you brings sorrow to me and makes me afraid of my
enemies. Why are you hiding yourself? Are you enjoying my
sorrow and fear?

After each gestural text, the Āṭṭaparakāra indicates the Sanskrit śloka that has been thus signed, and the Naññyār sings this śloka while the actor either gestures its meaning along with the Sanskrit words or just listens to the Naññyār reciting. The actor never speaks these

words because they do not come from the text of the act which is being performed.⁸⁴ Rāma continues his nirvahana by telling of subsequent events leading up to his meeting with Sugrīva. He asks the trees, the deer and the Godāvarī River the whereabouts of Sītā but gets no reply. Then he sees a pool of blood, and thinks that it is Sītā's, but soon after he discovers the wounded and dying Jaṭāyu. This huge bird has tried to prevent Rāvaṇa from abducting Sītā by attacking Rāvaṇa's chariot, but he has failed: "Both that goddess for whom you are searching and my life have been stolen by Rāvaṇa." Jaṭāyu dies. Rāma burns his body on a funeral pyre, and then listens to the comments of the gods as the soul of the bird flies up to heaven. In listening to the gods the actor employs a technique that is often used in nirvahana when it would be inappropriate or inconvenient to act out other characters. He takes a pose as if listening to the character, repeats the words he is supposed to hear, and then questions that character asking, "Is that what you said?"

Next Rāma relates his encounters with Kabandha--the demon tries to devour Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, but the heroes cut his hands and he dies--and Śabarī--after being blessed by Rāma she sets herself on fire, for she knows her soul will ascend to heaven because of his blessing. Then the brothers encounter Hanūmān, who explains Sugrīva's plight and requests Rāma to make an alliance. Rāma goes and meets Sugrīva, and the Nañyār sings the oath of allegiance that they swear to each other. Rāma promises to kill Bāli and make Sugrīva the king of the monkeys. Sugrīva in turn swears to bring back Sītā to Rāma. His speech is reported by Rāma without the actor taking on Sugrīva's character:

(Then listening.) "O Lord, I will bring you back your Sītā, your dear wife, no matter where she is, either in the underworld or in the heavens." Is this what you say?

Then they all set off together, and the events that have already been described in the puRappātu are signed again in somewhat different form. This time a Sanskrit verse follows the description of each event. Finally Rāma is ready to recite the first śloka of the text of the play, the one that was gestured without words on the previous day. This day Rāma recites and signs the śloka, then gives its meaning in gesture, and then again recites it. (RC eliminates the last repetition.) Then he repeats "Sugrīva, ita itaḥ," and the nirvahana is finished.

This is the general pattern of nirvahana. The given circumstances presented in puRappātu are more thoroughly explored, and Sanskrit verses are sung and signed relating events in the character's life previous to the beginning of the act. Because the actor does not speak until the very end of the day's performance, he can concentrate on the gestures and the story that they tell. There is ample opportunity for display of his histrionic powers. Both he and the audience are taken into the world of the character to explore and recall the circumstances of the character's life. The student actor in learning both puRappātu and nirvahana is forced to become acutely aware of the given circumstances which have led up to the situation at the beginning of the act. Thus his understanding of the inner life of the character is made much deeper and more lively. The author(s) of the Āṭṭaparakāras seem to have sensed the need for deep understanding of the motivating forces of the characters and so required the actors to act out their given circumstances based on texts drawn from other sources.

A more elaborate and poetic nirvahana introduces the "Śūrpaṅkhāṅka," Act II of Āścaryacūdāmaṇiḥ. A complete translation of the Āṭṭaparakāra for this nirvahana is given in the Appendix. It will be summarized and discussed here. Again Rāma is the hero. The events of this act just precede those of "Bālivadhāṃ." The story concerns the demoness Śūrpaṅkhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa. Disguised as a beautiful woman, she presses her love to Rāma, but he refuses and she turns to Lakṣmaṇa. He also rejects her, and she tries both again. Finally in complete frustration she changes into her demonic form, and carries Lakṣmaṇa off into the sky with her. She has, however, not reckoned on his skill with a sword. She quickly loses nose, ears, and (in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam version) breasts to his savage cuts. Screaming she flees to her brother Rāvaṇa to show him the damage she has suffered. In the third act of the play Rāvaṇa retaliates by abducting Sītā. The second act begins with the śloka "Śailāyāmibhi," which was quoted and analyzed musically in the section on Kūṭiyāṭṭam recitation as an example of indalam svara. It expresses the quiet appreciation that Rāma and Sītā feel for the beauty and calm of the forest when compared to the spectacular reports that they had heard of it before they arrived. The mood of the śloka is in sharp contrast to the violence that comes later in the scene, but underneath Rāma's calm exterior is the concern he feels for his father and mother whom he has had to leave behind. This concern is the focus of his puRappāṭu on the first day's performance of this act. As in "Bālivadhāṃ" the puRappāṭu sets up the emotional life underlying the śloka while the nirvahana recounts the events that lead up to it. Śūrpaṅkhāṅka Nirvahana quotes all the ślokas from Act I of Āścaryacūdāmaṇiḥ as well as some additional

material in order to fill out the given circumstances of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and to a lesser extent Sītā. The nirvahana requires two days to perform. On the first day only the first śloka from the first act is presented:

Lakṣmaṇa: I drive away the frightful animals loitering in the outskirts of the forest by a mere stringing of the bow; I erect a hut by means of leaves. I make a cushion with the petals of flowers; I build seats with long, bent canes; and I sprinkle the earth with drops of water, fragrant with the pollen of lotus flowers.

After anukrama and samkṣepa Rāma begins nirvahana proper with Sītā on his lap. He instructs Lakṣmaṇa to build a hut for them in the forest. The actor becomes Lakṣmaṇa, subdues the wild elephants, and constructs the hut, all in mime.

The presentation of Lakṣmaṇa's bout with the animals is richly detailed, and though long and slow, it can be fascinating because of the histrionic skill of the actor:

The elephants were standing waving their ears when they heard the sound of the bow string. They were frightened and ran away in the manner of elephants. When the lions, who were tearing open the foreheads of the elephants and drinking blood, heard the sound of the bow string, they ran away in terror. (Show the gaits of lions, tigers, and deer. All get frightened and run away in their particular gaits.)

This brief mudra text may take thirty minutes or more to perform when mime is added. The description of the forest animals' response to the sound of the bow string has been adapted into a set piece in the repertoire of Kathakalī. It is used for example in the second scene of Kalyānasaugandhika, where Bhīma goes into the forest to search for a flower for his beloved.⁸⁵ It has been noted in Chapter I that the representation of animals, popular in both Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Kathakalī, may have a source in the diversions of the caṭṭars. The building and preparation of the hut is also mimed in great detail. Finally the

śloka is recited and signed, and the second day's performance comes to an end.

On the third day much more ground is covered. Lakṣmaṇa sets out to tell his elder brother that the hut is ready. Then the actor changes into Śūrpaṅakhā by tucking up a part of his lower garment in the manner of women in Kerala and walking in the gait of a rakṣasī "demoness." She spies Rāma and falls in love with him. Several traditional verses are sung and signed to describe Rāma's appearance and character. By taking a female stance she "disguises" herself as a beautiful damsel and approaches Rāma. Then the actor, repeatedly changing from Śūrpaṅakhā to Rāma acts out his conversation with her. Rāma, who in this play is more loving and sensitive, less haughty and violent than in Abhiṣekanāṭakam, has eyes only for Sītā. When Śūrpaṅakhā approaches him, he gallantly suggests his virgin brother as an alternative. The actor then takes the role of Lakṣmaṇa on his way to see Rāma. He sees the disguised Śūrpaṅakhā and is aroused by her beauty. For showing his reaction to her there is a typical sequence called pañcāṅga 'five limbs,' in which the actor's hands become arrows of Kāma (Cupid) and shoot him. Finally after many blows he falls to the floor in a swoon. (The swoon, in this case by Rāvana describing his love for Sītā, is the last of the sequence pictured in Plate XX.) But Lakṣmaṇa regards his sensations as inappropriate for the proper attendance to his duty to guard Rāma and Sītā, and so he sends her off, thinking it strange for the forest to house so beautiful a woman. It is as if a "swan, drinking nectar from a golden lotus, were seen in the midst of the ocean." This section of nirvahaṇa, and all that follow, are taken directly from

Act I of the play. The verses are all sung by the Naññyār and signed by the actor and just enough material is given between, in gesture alone, to preserve the continuity. Only one verse is placed out of its order in Act I. After dismissing Śūrpaṅkhā, Lakṣmaṇa goes to Rāma and Sītā, and together the three of them head for the hut which Lakṣmaṇa has built, all the while talking of events that have led Rāma to his banishment in the forest. On this walk, further exposition of the play is presented.

Finally they arrive at the hut. Rāma sits again with Sītā in his lap and signs the last śloka of Act I: "O beautiful Sītā, loosen your blouse which is covered with dust. How is that blouse? It moves with your breathing, and your breath is drying out your lips." With this sensual suggestion of Sītā's weariness after their journey to the hut the nirvaḥaṇa ends. (Student Nārāyaṇa Cākyār is rehearsing this śloka in Plate IXa.)

This nirvaḥaṇa essentially repeats the first act of the play, adding certain scenes, like the first meeting of Rāma and Śūrpaṅkhā, which are only mentioned in the text. In structure it begins with the first śloka of the text of Act I, then adds several verses from other sources, then returns to the text of the first act. The actor who plays the hero is acting out "in his own words," in the language of gesture, his given circumstances and the incidents which have been merely reported to him by other characters in the play. Superficially the nirvaḥaṇa seems to be necessary so that the audience will know the events of the previous act in order to understand the present one. But a program note or a brief introduction would accomplish that purpose. This nirvaḥaṇa does much more. It takes the audience and the

actor slowly and deliberately into the world of the play.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam Itself--Acting the Play

Kūṭiyāṭṭam proper is the 'combined acting' of two or more characters on the stage. It is traditionally restricted to no more than three days of a complete Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance. Certain characteristics of Kūṭiyāṭṭam proper will now be discussed. First however, it will be good to examine briefly styles of performance of the Sanskrit drama that just preceded the advent of Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

It is clear from the commentaries on the plays of Kulaśēkhara, which were written by a Brāhman expert in dramatic art after the king himself had demonstrated the proper mode of acting, that an elaborate tradition of gesturing was in use in Kerala at the time the plays were written. Unfortunately these commentaries are not yet published. The only published account of them appears in Unni's book on Kulaśēkhara. However, it is obvious from his description of the commentaries that, though the character of the Viḍūṣaka was not fully developed and that the performance was not as strictly codified as it is today, in the performances of verses and in the entrances of the characters the drama of Kulaśēkhara's time was very like that of present-day Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

For example, the actor is sometimes to take the role of characters referred to in a verse, even when by so doing he undermines the reality of the situation. One particularly vivid example occurs in the commentary on Tapatīsamvarana. The king, pining for his lost love, is too weak to stand:

The king who is lying on the back should depict the idea of the verse through the movement of the eyes in such a way as to evoke aesthetic pleasure in the elite spectators. If he is unable to do this he may use a pillow to raise his head and use one of his

tired hands to enact the moods thereby satisfying the learned critics. Then still remaining supine he should assume the role of the heroine and act appropriately. Thus having depicted the meaning of the verse the king should lie as if he is in a swoon.⁸⁶

When the horripilation of the heroine is mentioned by the hero, the actor is to take her role and show her in the ecstasy of love. Certain situations which are barely mentioned in the play are to be enacted in detail in performance. Unni notes the instance of an interlude in Tapatīsamvarāṇa where maids report that the Sun God has "decided to give Tapatī in marriage to Saṃvarāṇa since he is convinced that the king is the fittest person in all the three worlds to win the hand of his daughter." In the commentary the king, realizing that his daughter is ready for marriage, consults experts, and one by one eliminates gods (who are his blood relations) and kings of the Solar Race (also relations and thus unsuitable as a husband for his daughter). Finally Saṃvarāṇa, a king of the Lunar Dynasty is selected as a possibility. The Sun forsees problems of Saṃvarāṇa's reign (which actually come up later in the play), but he decides his daughter should marry the king anyway. Because Saṃvarāṇa is already married, the Sun visits the king in a dream to tell him that his present wife is sure to be barren and so he must take another. It is on the night after the dream that Act I of the play begins. The commentaries suggest that circumstances outside the play and details of scenes which motivate the action of the characters or the outcome of the play are to be presented in performance. It is not clear from Unni's account just how these kinds of elaborations of the text are to be acted.

Purappāṭu and nirvahāṇa of Kūṭiyāṭṭam apparently have their origin in the pūrvasambandha of the commentaries. Unni describes the

pūrvasambandha as follows:

Almost every character who appears for the first time in the play is well introduced narrating the various important incidents in their life.... The actor donning the particular role must inform the audience of his story up to the moment by the expressive gestures of his eyes (sic.) In other words he is not expected to make any verbal narration.... The commentaries supply the relevant details that are to be enacted in the case of each character. For instance the circumstances which compelled Arjuna to resort to a pilgrimage are narrated while introducing him on the stage.... All this information is represented through gestures before the story proper is enacted.⁸⁷

Then he summarizes the pūrvasambandha of Arjuna in Subhadrā-dhanañjaya.

Unni also points out how important it is for Kulaśēkhara that the suggested sense of the verse be brought out. Saṃvaraṇa describes the dream which the Sun God has sent to him in the following verse:

The orb of the sun (arka) appeared before my eyes drying up the dew drops (tuhina) and the bees who had escaped from an opening lotus on the lake came up humming.⁸⁸

The suggested sense that the actor must convey is: "I came across a beautiful maiden in my dream, who by her birth belongs to a worthy line."

The commentator states that the word tuhina in the context stands for the first wife of the king and the word arka is used here to mean the sun as well as a wife. To prove his point he quotes from an anonymous lexicon that the latter word is found used in these meanings.⁸⁹

During the performance of the actual text Kūṭiyāṭṭam concentrates on enlivening and detailing the suggested sense of the verse. The learned Cākyār not only acts the role but also serves the audience as a scholar and commentator who loves to explain all the possibly obscure points of the verse. He takes details from other texts that bring a passing moment of the play to life. He supplies textual commentary on the play for the studios in the audience. He even acts out parallel

situations involving other characters. He is a scholar of Sanskrit literature and the arts who not only acts the characters of the play but also supplies footnotes and commentary on the characters and their situation. The Cākyār's motivation for dwelling so heavily on the inner action of the play may derive from the Southern tradition and its concern with the inner life of the verse and the word, a concern that also influenced Sanskrit dramatic poets but which was never emphasized by them to the extent that it is in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. His scholarly attitude toward the play was no doubt a result of the presence of the learned Āryan elite at his performances. Certainly both these aspects of the performance of drama in the South were well developed by the time of Kulaśēkhara.

Now a few illustrations of the manner of presenting Sanskrit verses in Kūṭiyāṭṭam will be given. The general outline of the process has been sketched in Chapter I. Here the discussion will be limited to some typical examples. A verse or prose sentence can be performed sitting (irunnāṭṭam), standing in place in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam second position (patiññāṭṭam) or moving in space (ilakiyaṭṭam). "Śailāyā" from "Śūrpaṅkhāṅka" is performed sitting. The verse "Śaṅkhakṣīravapu" recited in Nityakriyā is done standing. "Matsāyaka" from "Bālivadham" is recited while moving in space. Occasionally the words of a minor character are recited by an actor covered with a red cloth so that he or she will not have to make up and costume for a brief appearance. This practice is termed mūṭiccoluka. Traditionally the Sanskrit is presented four times. The first time the verse or sentence is given with word and gesture. This is collikkāṭṭuka. Then the same is given without recitation, collātekkāṭṭuka. Then the collikkāṭṭuka is repeated.

(This is the repetition that has been eliminated by RC and his students.) Then if the Sanskrit is a complex verse the words are repeated in syntactical order. This is anvaya. In this repetition some words or phrases may receive additional treatment. Occasionally there are variations in this pattern. For example certain verses are first presented with the eyes only and afterward signed with the hastas. "Śikhiniśalabho" is an example of this practice.

A famous śloka in Subhadrādhanañjaya mentioned in Chapter I will be taken as an example of the kind of elaboration typical of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The śloka is recited on the tenth day of Kūṭiyāṭṭam just after Subhadrā falls into Dhanañjaya's arms:

Who is she with eyes shining like a black kuvalaya flower that is
forever moving,
with eye-lids that have been made more beautiful because mascara
has been applied?
Her eyes, quivering with fear, have untied my heart which
Subhadrā had tied and sealed.
Her face, because of the fragrance emitted from it,
is always followed by bees
who mistake it for a beautiful flower and follow it
to drink the nectar.⁹⁰

The acting of the verse takes up to two hours. Its svara is ārttan. It is one of the ślokas often recited at the early morning practice sessions. Its tempo is particularly slow, and its kampa very complex. When the syntactical order is taken up, elaborations are presented which are somewhat simplistic, but charming. For "Who is she?" Arjuna asks in gesture, "What sort of a girl is she? What is her name? Who is her father? Who is her mother? What is her family?" etc., finally concluding, "Why should I worry about all these questions? Let her be by anybody." The longest section explains the word añjanasnigdham, '(eye-lids that have been made more) beautiful because mascara has been

applied.'

To explain the significance of this one word the actor begins to stage a story. He assumes the attitude of the heroine, and calls her attendants, "Friends, come here, and decorate me." Then he assumes the attitude of the attendants one by one, looks at the heroine and begins to decorate her. One unties her hair-knot, spreads the hair, makes it smooth with her hands, uses scented hair oil, and ties the hair into a knot, putting on a jasmine garland over it. The curls are kept in their proper place. Another places a tilaka mark on her forehead; yet another puts on her ear a beautiful ear-ornament. Another paints her lips with red lac-dye; yet another comes to her and places the ornaments round her neck. Similarly she is decorated with bangles, rings, anklets, etc. She is also helped to put on her dress beautifully. Every now and then the attendants make comments about the beauty of the heroine, and of the things used for decoration. When everything is over, one looks at her from head to foot, and shows that she is not fully satisfied. There is something wrong, some deficiency. She thinks about it for some time. Suddenly she understands it. She has forgotten to apply collyrium to her eyes. Immediately that is also done properly. She is perfect, for her eyes are now añjanasnigdha.⁹¹

Such step-by-step descriptions of physical detail are popular in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. For example it is also found in Keśādipadam of Nityakriyā. Here it can be tedious or charming, depending on the skill of the actor in characterizing Subhadrā's attendants, (In performances I have seen the Cākyār has acted two attendants only but has them discuss, in gesture, what is missing.), and on the drummer's ability to give shape to the gestures. The fact that the actor is a male (and of course in the costume of a male character) who takes on the roles of women in the scene also adds charm. After the first moments, Subhadrā herself is never acted, only her attendants and their reaction to her refinement and beauty. In this passage the appearance of Subhadrā is left to the imagination of the audience. One is struck by the enormous amount of time that is given over to the exploration of a simple idea. Kūṭiyāṭṭam is the drama of an elite with considerable amounts of time at its disposal. As the speed of the industrial age

invades the south of India, Kūṭiyāṭṭam seems more and more luxurious.

The purpose of the elaborations in Kūṭiyāṭṭam must be to allow a full and rich experience of one moment in time. A word, a sound is allowed to reverberate so that all its connotations can spring to life in the minds and hearts of the spectators. An especially simple and illustrative example of this comes from Sugrīva PuRappātu of

"Bālivadhāṃ." Sugrīva addresses Rāma as "Deva," 'god,' 'lord.'

Kunjūni Raja notes, "The term is derived from the root div which means 'to desire,' 'to rejoice,' and 'to have splendour.' All these different meanings are shown through gestures while addressing Rāma."⁹²

Stanislavski repeatedly prompted his students to recognize the potential power of a single word:

Take as an example the word "love." To a foreigner it is only a strange combination of letters. It is an empty sound because it is devoid of all inner connotations which quicken the heart. But let feelings, thoughts, imagination give life to the empty sound and an entirely different attitude is produced, the word becomes significant. The sound 'I love' acquires the power to fire a man with passion and change the course of his whole life.⁹³

In Kūṭiyāṭṭam the actor takes the time to act out some of the thoughts and feelings inspired by a word during the course of the performance.

Stanislavski also stressed the vital part the characters' subtext plays in the creation of a role:

It is the manifest, the inwardly felt expression of a human being in a part, which flows uninterruptedly beneath the words of the text, giving them life and a basis for existing. The subtext is a web of innumerable, varied inner patterns inside a play and a part, woven from magic ifs, given circumstances, all sorts of figments of the imagination, inner movements, objects of attention, smaller and greater truths and a belief in them, adaptations, adjustments and other similar elements. It is the subtext that makes us say the words we do in a play.⁹⁴

In Kūṭiyāṭṭam the subtext is made manifest. Substance is given to the "feelings, thoughts, imagination" so that the word resonates, and both

the actor and the audience are tuned to the inner life of the text. They become more sensitive listeners. They experience the depth of the moment.

The super-super objective of the actor in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, that is, what he desires from his acting, is to experience fully the presence of his own personal deity, his īṣṭadevata in his life. His purpose in acting is to sing the glory of God through his art. But his goal is always sought in the moment. His complete experience of the moment will reveal the deity who resides inside, in his own mind and heart. And so the moment is allowed to expand, to be experienced in all its fullness. To move quickly through a verse or a scene is opposed to this objective.

For the most part *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* avoids direct confrontation between characters onstage. The beginning of "Torāṇayuddha," Act III of Abhiṣekanāṭakam provides a good example of the kind of interaction that typically does occur between two characters. Here is the text of the scene:

(Śāṅkukarṇa, an attendant of Rāvaṇa, enters.)

Śāṅkukarṇa--Hello! Who is guarding the Golden-Arched Gateway?

(The female gate-keeper, Vijayā, enters.)

Vijayā--Sir, it is I, Vijayā. What may I do for you?

Śāṅkukarṇa--O Vijayā, run, run to His Majesty, the Lord of Laṅkā, and tell him that the Aśoka Garden is almost destroyed. For

That Aśoka Garden, (so dear) that even Mandodarī, our lord's queen, though fond of adornment, does not pick a bud for love (of it); (so delicate) that even the cooling southern breeze is afraid to blow; (so pure) because the plants are never handled, that garden belonging to Indra's foe (Rāvaṇa) is being destroyed. (1)

Please tell him this!

Vijayā--Noble sir! Never has a person (like myself) who waits on the king seen such fear as this. How has it happened?

Śaṅkukarṇa--Lady! This is an urgent matter. Please go and tell him at once.

Vijayā--Sir, I am going. (She exits.)

Śaṅkukarṇa--Oh! The great king of Laṅkā is coming this way.

He comes, with ferocious eyes like white lotuses.
He comes surrounded by blazing golden torches, full of fury.
He rushes forward in haste as if he were the sun
preparing to end the present epoch. (2)

(Then Rāvaṇa enters, as described.)

Rāvaṇa--How, how! Hello you who are giving out the news! I'm listening. Speak at once. What fearless creature, courting death, has so rudely abused me by destroying the garden? (3)

Śaṅkukarṇa (approaching)--Victory to the great king! It is a strange monkey, coming unnoticed, who has violently trampled the Aśoka Garden.

Rāvaṇa (with contempt)--How? By a monkey you say? Quickly catch him and bring him here.

Śaṅkukarṇa--As the great king commands! (He exits.)

Rāvaṇa--Well, well

If the gods have done this sweet thing to me,
who in battle creates terror in all the three worlds,
then let those nectar-eaters enjoy
the fruit of their insolence, and quickly! (4)

The scene begins with intense emotion--Śaṅkukarṇa is horrified at Hanūmān's attack of the garden. He fears possible repercussions from Rāvaṇa. Even the calm and slightly insolent Vijayā becomes excited. The furious Rāvaṇa makes a powerful entrance "as described." Later he boasts of his prowess and heroism. The major bhāvas of the scene are bhaya 'fear,' raudra 'anger' and utsāha 'energy.' Vijayā's function is decidedly minor in the scene, though her initial calm contrasts nicely to Śaṅkukarṇa's terror. She wears the costume typically worn by all the female characters in Kūṭiyāṭṭam (see Plate XVIa). It is the most

realistic of all Kūṭiyāṭṭam dress. Her conical cap is called uṣṇiṣa and is adorned with a silver garland. Her face is lightened with caylilyam. Śaṅkukarṇa is a pacca 'green' character with a peculiar headdress reserved from him and some other secondary characters. The pacca make-up is used for the heroic characters or, as in this case, characters who are basically good even though not heroic (see Plate XVIIb). Other types of make-up are used for boastful or evil characters. Rāvaṇa, for example, is one of the few katti 'knife' roles in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The name katti refers to the knife-like shape above the eyebrows. His make-up also has red features (see Plates XIX, XX). In their face painting these two types, the pacca and the katti are almost indistinguishable from their Kathakaḷi counterparts, but the headdress and costume are distinctly different. Hanūmān however has a marvelous furry make-up and costume entirely unique to Kūṭiyāṭṭam (see Plate XVIb).

Śaṅkukarṇa's vocal delivery in this scene is unusual and interesting. He performs his collikkattuka twice. The first time, his hands grasp his crown, and he shakes, physically and vocally, with fear, his voice barely audible. The second time he seems to come out of character. He gestures and recites the verse clearly and audibly. Both times are without drumming. Then, as usual, drumming begins, and he does collātekkattuka, a whole sentence or verse being repeated with gesture only. When reciting a verse the words are also given in prose order and gestured, and certain parts are amplified. For instance the first verse, whose syntax is relatively complex, is re-recited in this order:

maṇḍodarī yasyām pallavān na lumpati--'in which Maṇḍodarī does
not pick a bud,'
priyaṁḍanāpi--'although fond of adornment,'

snehāt--'for love,'
vījanto malayāvilā yasyam bayāt na vijanti--'in which out of fear
 the cooling Malaya (southern) breeze does not blow,'
seyam sakraripor aśokavanikā bhagneti vigñapyatām--'that Aśoka
 Garden of Indra's foe is destroyed. Please report.

Students of Sanskrit poetry must usually place a verse in prose order in order to translate it. In a typical verse modifiers and modified are often widely separated in order to fulfill metrical and poetic requirements, and so word groups must be searched out and reordered. In his anvaya the actor does this for the spectator. He signs the word groups in prose order and so provides, at the same time, a visual translation of their meaning. Then he comments on their significance where appropriate. In Śaṅkukaṛṇa's verse the words "Indra's foe" in the last line brings up circumstances which have led to Rāvaṇa's present situation. Śaṅkukaṛṇa enacts how Rāvaṇa became Indra's foe when he attacked Indra's palace and brought heavenly plants back from his pleasure gardens. Rāvaṇa's defilement of heaven aroused Indra's anger and prompted Viṣṇu to incarnate himself as Rāma in order to bring about the destruction of the demon. So this incident is a significant antecedent to Hanūmān's rampage in Rāvaṇa's garden. The poet chose the epithet "Indra's foe" for Rāvaṇa in his verse. A commentator might point out in his notes, or a knowledgeable reader might remember, that the poet, in calling Rāvaṇa "Indra's foe" suggests this incident. Hanūmān by destroying Rāvaṇa's garden brings just retribution. Hanūmān's pillage presages the destruction of Rāvaṇa himself. This detail would certainly elude the spectator in an ordinary performance of the play. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam the actor capitalizes on such details in order to expand the awareness of the spectator and allow a sensitive appreciation of the poetic refinement of the verse. Also a deeper

understanding of Rāvaṇa's character is fostered by enacting given circumstances which have led to the present situation. During this long digression the female actress stands aside or even leaves the stage. After the extended presentation of verse one, she returns and the scene moves straight on through the conversation of the two characters (though each sentence is presented twice). The second verse, in vīratarkka svara, is not appreciably extended. Its subject is the impending appearance of Rāvaṇa, and to delay it much longer would be dramatically ineffective.

The entrance of Rāvaṇa, his praveṣam, is, indeed, "as described." His cries are heard off-stage for some time, and his entrance is ferocious and energetic. He enters not once, but several times, running along alternate diagonals, ending each time just upstage of the lamps (see Plates XVIIa and XIXa). It is almost as if he is getting closer and closer each time he enters. He is flanked by two boys carrying lit torches. His first verse is not extended except for the first line which is repeated while Śaṅkukaṇṇa shakes in fear saying, "Jayatu," 'victory' (see Plate XVIIIa). This is the first real interaction between two characters in the play, and its effect is stunning. Śaṅkukaṇṇa repeats "Jayatu" several times until Rāvaṇa gets impatient and mocks his wavering tone. He delivers "Go and get him," with decisive authority. Śaṅkukaṇṇa in response speaks "As the great king commands " without any of the faltering tone of his earlier lines. This moment is an intriguing revelation of Śaṅkukaṇṇa's character which is certainly not implied by the script, but which is quite effective on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage. In his earlier scene with Vijayā, Śaṅkukaṇṇa speaks first with such fear that he is completely inaudible

and indiscernable, then the actor speaks up and interprets the line giving its Sanskrit the "honor" it deserves, making it clear and precise. It seems a formal device in this earlier scene. But in the exchange with Rāvaṇa this formal device is used to enliven the relationship between Rāvaṇa and Śaṅkukaṛṇa. By mocking his fearful tone, Rāvaṇa seems to make Śaṅkukaṛṇa aware of its ridiculousness and so gives him the courage to carry out his order effectively. And we see that what seemed merely a formal device in the earlier scene was in fact an expression of Śaṅkukaṛṇa's latent strength and heroism.

After Śaṅkukaṛṇa exits, Rāvaṇa, alone, acts verse four. This is given an extensive elaboration. (It is the verse pictured in Plates XIX and XX.) During the verse Rāvaṇa performs a set piece called patapuRappātu 'preparation for battle,' which is a common feature of Kūṭiyāṭṭam and has been adopted by Kathakaḷi. Rāvaṇa prepares to do battle with the gods that he imagines are attacking his garden, and then goes after them, describing, always in gesture and mime, his stabbing and shooting of them, their cries and struggles, and finally their fall to the ground. By the end of his "war" he has strewn the battlefield with their corpses. PatapuRappātu shows the extent of Rāvaṇa's hybris, setting him up for his failure to keep Hanūmān a prisoner.

Most demons in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Rāvaṇa among them, are not realistically presented nor are they particularly horrifying. Instead they are oversized and impressive and very popular with audiences. The demoness Śūrpaṅakhā is an unusual exception. She is played by an actor rather than an actress. Krishnan Nambudripad describes his/her make-up:

Powdered charcoal is mixed with ghee and is smeared well on the face and all parts of the body. On the forehead, the nose, the chin and the cheeks, marks are made with powdered rice like a spear (śūla). On the head nonnannam pullu (a kind of grass) is placed erect so as to make an impression of unruly hair. A vāśikam (headdress) and a garland made of bones...are also worn. On the ears are two rings made of rough material.... Artificial breasts are made of leather or any rough material. A skirt made of white small pieces of cloth hangs down. On the two legs are worn cilanka made of silver.... Artificial nails are put on all fingers.⁹⁵

The cutting of the breasts, nose, and ears of this impressive figure is staged realistically. Blood oozes from the nose and breasts. Such gruesome scenes have been adopted by Kathakaḷi.

It must be clear by now that Kūṭiyāṭṭam is basically presentational and that there is a minimum of interplay between characters. Even when many characters people the stage, as in the latter scenes of "Torāṇayuddham" (see Plate XVIIb), there is a sense that each character inhabits his own world and relates more to the audience than to the other characters. Thus the intellectual accouterments of the Stanislavski system--i.e., objective and actions--which are based on the theory that desire and opposition to desire are central to human motivation, do not function actively in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Desire and the fruits of desire are often looked upon as inappropriate concerns in later, post-Vedic Indian philosophical writing. The "enlightened" man, one who has acquired mokṣa 'freedom', no longer desires. He is fulfilled and his needs are satisfied without recourse to desire. He perceives no obstacles in his path. In a subtle way this philosophy pervades Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The actor's concentration is primarily focused on the inner state of the hero and the presentation of that state to the audience and only occasionally on the obstacles presented by the other characters or the obstacles he himself puts in the way of his

attainment of some objective by way of the other characters. The traditional model of scenic action presented by the NŚ, and perhaps influenced by the Vedic sacrifice--ārambha, prayatna, prāpti-sambhava, niyatāpti, and phalāgama is not in evidence. Since only one act of a drama is presented at a time, the overall movement of the play is lost except insofar as each act mirrors the overall pattern. No last act of any play is now represented in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertoire, and so a performance usually ends inconclusively or even tragically. "Bālivadhama" ends with the death of Bāli, "Toraṇayuddha" ends with the conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa completely unresolved, "Śūrpaṇakhāṅka" ends with the demoness' threat of retribution, the little one-act farce Mattavilāsa is currently only played to the end of the first verse of the play, the story not even begun. So the "plays" of Kūṭiyāṭṭam often conclude with conflict unresolved and sometimes seem to have a rather modern tone. Focus is thrown onto the inner life of the characters and away from the action itself. For some plays just this change of focus is an improvement over the original. Abhiṣekanāṭakam seems simplistic or melodramatic to most modern readers; "Bālivadhama," Act I of Abhiṣeka presented independently, has considerably more refinement and richness.

The hero of Indian drama, though he engages fully in action and is presented with conflicts and tests of his ability far beyond those of the ordinary person, approaches situations of potential conflict with inner equanimity and distance, for he is in touch with his own changing reality. Though he may experience anger, love, joy, even occasionally fear, he will not lose his inner stability. The actor can suggest this same inner experience because he is the master of his

technique. He can show anger with great effectiveness and also experience anger while he is showing it, but because of the refinement of his physical technique and the attention which it requires, the actor always treads the fine line between involvement in the emotions and feelings of the character and the presentation of these emotions without particular feeling. The miraculous technique of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor keeps him somewhat aloof from the character. His frequent acting-out of other characters while playing a role also helps him remain alive to, and at the same time objective toward, his inner state. This discussion of the special inner state of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor will be continued in Chapter III.

Vidūṣaka--Comedian and Scholar

A thorough study of the Vidūṣaka is not within the scope of this paper. He not only makes a major contribution to Kūṭiyāṭṭam, but also in his Kūttu has significantly influenced Kerala arts, literature, politics, and religion. This section will suggest some of the reasons for his popularity in Kerala and discuss the value learning the role of Vidūṣaka has in training the actor in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

The Vidūṣaka is the last role that the young actor learns. He cautiously performs it after at least eight or ten years of training. As Vidūṣaka he plays the jester of the Sanskrit plays and also performs Kūttu. In Kūttu he is a storyteller, drawing on a vast store of anecdote, both traditional and contemporary, in order to bring to life for a modern audience the stories of Hindu literature. His contribution to a typical Kūṭiyāṭṭam play in which he appears has been described in Chapter I. The student learns the basic text for the Vidūṣaka's role

in a play from its Āṭṭaparakāra, and then he improvises around this text adding his own stories and references to current events. Even comments on the comings and goings of the audience may be incorporated into his improvisation. The student spends innumerable hours listening to his āśān in performance, copying his jokes and ideas, adding his own, and then practicing in front of an audience himself, working off their reactions. In this role he is very much like a stand-up comic. He succeeds or fails according to the laughter or silence of his listeners.

In the Sankrit drama, the Viḍūṣaka was a popular, stock character. He was a close friend to the king, sensitive to his emotional needs, giving him support when needed. He was always a Brāhman, but a decidedly inferior member of that varna. He was usually a glutton and his primary aim in life was to fill his stomach, though his adventures with the king rarely allowed him to feel completely satisfied on this point.

The NS briefly refers to the Viḍūṣaka in its last chapters when it lists the features of the various character types:

The Jester (Viḍūṣaka) should be dwarfish, should possess big teeth, and be nunch-backed, double-tongued, bald-headed, and tawny eyed.⁹⁶

In the dramas of Kūṭiyāṭṭam where he appears he is not so grotesque as this passage suggests, though he can certainly be "doubled-tongued."

The plays which have a Viḍūṣaka are those in which love is the primary emotion. So he does not appear in any of the acts of the heroic plays such as Abhiṣekanāṭaka or Āścaryacūdāmaṇi. Today one is most likely to see him in Act I of Subhadrādhanañjaya, which has been described in Chapter I.

Clowning has long been popular in Kerala. There is a game that was, until a short time ago, frequently played in Kerala called Ezhā-mutti-puRappātu 'The Appearance of the Seven Hags.' It has been described as follows:

A number of people, and generally each of them is a good actor in some particular character, sit around a lighted lamp after dinner. Some sort of musical instrument is sounded and one from amongst the party sings a song which is a riddle and asks another member to answer the riddle. If the person questioned fails to answer, the questioner asks him to act the part of any character with or without proper costume. Immediately he begins to act what he has been ordered. When this is over, the procedure is repeated and the part that the player is called upon to act varies from that of a drunkard to that of the love-sick Rāvaṇa pleading to Sītā, care being always taken to see that each person is called upon to play only that character which he can act almost to perfection.⁹⁷

Chaitanya says that the riddles are based on puns: it would be like asking someone to name a leaf or a nut and getting the answers "fly-leaf" or "doughnut." He also gives an example of the song of a drunkard:

Listen, you, born to God knows whom,
Bitten by the maddest mad dog!
Aren't you the hubby
Of that wench, Kalyani?
When you emptied the frothing tankard
And sprawled in a stupor
Didn't the dogs come and lick your lips?⁹⁸

The participants might caricature the manners of the different castes, from Nambūtiri, the highest, to Kurava, the lowest.

Yātrakaḷi was described briefly in Chapter I. It was a Nambūtiri entertainment which included proto-dramatic events. After the feast and before the display of arms which climaxed the celebration, comic verses were recited, some of which were in praise of the various dishes that had been served. This may be the source for the Viḍūṣaka's asana

puruṣārtha or it may be that these entertainments were influenced by Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Next the Nambūtiris danced in abandon, mimicking their lower-caste fellow Keralites who engaged in devil dancing.

The highlight of the comedy is the dramatic entry of a character named Kaimal, a typical name of Nairs of the baronial class. He breaks into the assembly violently and silences all the singers by the simple expedient of slapping his hand across their mouths. He unrolls his pedigree and claims absolute power in his realm. But he is soon shown to be no better than a clown.⁹⁹

This is the sort of verse that Kaimal recites:

The Marar girl had a secret love,
A monkey from the hills with a yard-long tail.
When her Brahmin hubby peeped through the door
The monkey jumped and bit off his nose.¹⁰⁰

--Inane humor follows the big feast, but this is much like some of the Viḍūṣaka's trifles. Yet, it is especially by mastering the role of the Viḍūṣaka both in the drama and in Kūṭtu, that the Cākyār becomes a consummate scholar of Sanskrit art and literature. He "tries to entertain and enlighten the audience with profound scholarship and brilliant exposition," and at the same time make them laugh.

No topic under the sun is taboo to him. He is a friend, philosopher and guide to society, and he brings to bear upon his highly dramatic exposition, erudition, elegance of style and a heightened sense of wit and humour.¹⁰¹

Through hints and suggestions he draws parallels between present-day and classical Indian society, and he effectively criticizes those elements in society he feels are going astray. Bharatha Iyer, in his excellent book on Kathakalī praises the Viḍūṣaka in Kūṭiyāṭṭam:

. . . his approach is . . . that of a consummate cartoonist. Wit, humour and sarcasm are some of the sharp missiles which he uses; they are backed by the extraordinary power of his acting and the very lively words he employs. The audience is gripped, entertained and moved to giggles and laughter. Social evils, the grievances

of the people, the man who transgresses the moral law and propriety, the despot and villain, even the literary bore and the unskilled poet are subjected to his close examination and unsparing criticism.¹⁰²

For humorous purposes he jumbles Sanskrit and Malayāḷam. Parodies of Sanskrit verses are given in a Malayāḷam-Sanskrit mixture, and even Sanskrit suffixes are added to Malayāḷam stems.¹⁰³

Grammar meant little to him and the essential difference between the two linguistic families he conveniently, if not consciously, lost sight of. And while making this grotesque pattern of words and stanzas he might not have thought that he was paving the way for the creation of a new dynamic literary movement. His attempt was mainly in the field of language and his primary interest was the creation of transient humour through sounds and words.¹⁰⁴

It is unlikely that the Viḍūṣaka was unconscious or that "grammar" meant little to him." He made a conscious effort to intermingle Sanskrit and Malayāḷam and thus bring Sanskrit vocabulary and syntax into the spoken language of the people of Kerala. His language was the source of the serious literary movement Maṇipravāḷam, but his verses were comic. Nair draws a parallel between Maṇipravāḷam and Macaronic Latin, a mixture of Latin and some modern language. He gives the following example, a description of a kitchen from "Daniel V. Dishclout" in the law pleadings of G. Steevens:

Camera necessaria pro usus cookare; cum sauce pannis, stewpannis, scullero, dressero, Coalholo, Stovis, smock jacko: pro rostandum, boilandum, fryandum et plum-pudding mixandum . . .¹⁰⁵

The Viḍūṣaka's mixed-language verses in Kūṭiyāṭṭam have a somewhat similar effect. By using it he provides an easy access to Sanskrit grammatical forms, and the few Sanskrit words used become clear to non-Sanskrits because of their Malayāḷam context. In addition, of course, he speaks in plain Malayāḷam and translates, parodies, and comments on what

is said by the other characters in Sanskrit. Also he is quick to quote Sanskrit verses from other works where they are relevant, or even irrelevant, in order to make a point or get a laugh, and so he familiarizes the audience with popular Sanskrit ślokas.

To play Viḍūṣaka the actor must have memorized an enormous number of verses. For this purpose he learns by heart many Sanskrit works, especially the Campūs, editions of the major Indian epics prepared just for this purpose. Aided by the Āṭṭaparakāras that are provided him, he develops comic routines based on his knowledge of the characters and their situations. Training for the role of Viḍūṣaka rounds out the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor. It teaches him to improvise, think on his feet, follow his impulses, and creatively explore the motivations and situations of the characters in order to come up with material. It greatly aids his personalization of the other roles he will play. Since he must relate the situation in the play to current events, parallels between the character's life and his own life become readily apparent. He is a clown with a precise and meaningful civic function--he must correct evils and injustices in his community. His acting serves a political purpose which it otherwise would not have. The actor contributes to Kerala society. As the Viḍūṣaka the actor must learn tact. He is expected to clothe his criticisms with such wit that no one should take offense. Caccu Cākyār, a teacher of both Painkulum Rāman Cākyār and Ammannur Madhva Cākyār, was said to be one of the best recent performers, especially noted for his vācīkābhinaya.

The sharpness of his tongue was so intense that very few dared to sit in front of him while performing Kūttu. Though his tongue was sharp his wits were so pleasing that even his victims would not feel any illwill towards the Cākyār but only laugh at his jokes.¹⁰⁶

It might not be out of place here to relate a story told of one very famous early Cākyār in order to illustrate the concern with literature and the special combination of seriousness and wit characteristic of the Cākyār community. Kūttanceri Iravi Cākyār was a good friend of Melpattur Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiri, the poet and author whose works include a devotional poem in Sanskrit to the deity of the famous temple at Guruvayor. (This is one of the richest and most active temples of India. Frequent performances of Kūttu and occasional performances of Kūṭiyāṭṭam are held in the kūttambalam there.) Once, the Cākyār was performing Prabandham Kūttu on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa, and he was explaining how Śūrpaṅakhā ran to her brother Rāvaṇa to tell him the news that her ears and nose had been cut off by Lakṣmaṇa. The Cākyār ended the performance that day by mistakenly saying that Śūrpaṅakhā told Rāvaṇa about the tragic incident without using any nasal sounds. He could not compose it himself, so he sought out his friend Bhattatiri and told him of his blunder. Immediately Bhattatiri composed the Niranunāsika Prabandham, in which there are no nasal sounds. The next day the audience was eagerly awaiting the performance of the Cākyār to see if he could manage his promised feat. Iravi Cākyār had memorized the Prabandham well and the performance was received with great delight. Bhattatiri, who was in the audience, was also pleased, for the Cākyār had improvised a brilliant interpretation of a part of his text. The poet had been forced to use a feminine ending on a normally masculine word, for the masculine word bhujan (accusative case of 'hand') contained a nasal sound. The Cākyār took advantage of this and explained the sentence in which it occurred as "It is a great pity that your hands which have done great deeds in the past have now lost all

masculinity."

Many stories are current about the histrionic and verbal skills of the Cākyār actors, but this one certainly illustrates his position in society as a secondary creator of much skill, dedication, honesty, and wit.

A Life in the Theatre

Perhaps the single most important feature of the training of the actor in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is that he receives no other education. His thoughts and actions from age eight onward, perhaps even before, revolve around the learning of his art. His vocabulary, his games, his sport, and his thinking are completely shaped by the discipline, both physical and intellectual, that is required of him. The training of Painkulum Rāman Cākyār might be taken as a typical example of the actor's dedication to dramatic art. His father, Bhaskaram Nambudiripad, was not a Cākyār, but a Brāhman. RC became a Cākyār because his mother was an Ilottama, Srī Devī Ilottama. Her brother was an actor and became RC's āśān. He had no brothers, only a sister, and so there were no other actors in his family. In 1915, when RC was five, there were seven or eight adult acting Cākyārs, and there were fifteen full Kūṭiyāṭṭam performances every year and many performances of Kūttu. Now there are three or four actors. At that time three or four stories were done which are no longer done--including parts of Svapnavāsavadattā, Madyamavyāyoga, and Dūtavākya, all plays attributed to Bhāsa.

At age five RC began to study writing and basic Sanskrit from a Tulu Brāhman and from Isvara Varriar, a member of another of the temple servant castes. By age five he was beginning to study Kūṭiyāṭṭam

from Kitangur Rāman Cākyār, his uncle. He was also trained by an older student, his cousin Nārāyaṇa Cākyār.

From ages five to ten he spent two hours daily in the early morning practicing recitation, eye exercises, simple body exercises, Nityakriyā, and Hanūmān PuRappātu from "Aṅgulīyaṅkam." He lived at home, and he had classes alone without other students. After age ten he went to Kattanoor to the house of his uncle Rāman. There he studied Sanskrit with Rama Pisharoti, learning the Rāmāyaṇa Campū, parts of Kālidāsa, and etc. He studied all of "Aṅgulīyaṅkam," which in its course recounts in gesture the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa and many other stories. He also learned more repertoire, including Mattavilāsa, but concentrated primarily on the middling roles like Lakṣmaṇa. During this time and later at Irinjalakuda, he took, for each of six years, 41 days of uzhiccil. He trained the year round; there were no summer holidays. He lived with his āśān, watching him perform, and occasionally took a small role in his performances. He also studied with two other Cākyārs, Nilakantha and Narayana, who were no longer acting.

From age fifteen to seventeen he returned to Painkulam and studied Sanskrit śāstras and poetry with Paramesvara Nambudiripad. At age seventeen and for seven years thereafter, he worked with the most famous Cākyār of the day, Paramesvara (Cacu) Cākyār of the Ammanour family, who was particularly noted for his Viḍūṣaka. He stayed for three months of the year at the āśān's place, took three years of uzhiccil, worked on major roles, and then travelled with Cacu, listening to how he talked. In the last two years of training Ammanour Madhva Cakyar (MC) joined him. Though they were students together, MC was considera-

bly jealous of the skills of RC. MC has said that he continued with the study of Kūṭiyāṭṭam because he wanted to better Rāman Cākyār.¹⁰⁷ By that time RC was performing frequently, and after age twenty-four he was on his own.

The training of a Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor is a long and arduous process, and the regards are mostly artistic and spiritual. There is little hope of making more than enough money barely to live. As Rāman Cākyār said, "Many began, but only a few continued." In such a life of complete immersion in a few roles perfection is expected to come, but come slowly. There is no hurry, and except for a few artificial moments (like the "final exam" which all students are expected to take each year at Kalamandalam) the training is relaxed and the discipline is imposed gently, though firmly. As the form is so highly stylized, young students can focus almost entirely on getting the movements and vocal patterns right--this occupies their minds completely. There is practically no talk of the psychology of character; the psychology and emotion of the role is expected to sneak up on the student during the many aspects of the training which indirectly encourage emotional understanding. RC has said: "Too much attention to psychology when young encourages experimentation and distracts from proper learning. Understanding the psychology of the characters only comes with maturity."¹⁰⁸ Later on the āśān, seeing the student in performance, may comment on mistakes and initiate discussion of the motivations of the characters, but by then the characters are so thoroughly explored by the learning of nirvahaṇa, Vidūṣaka Prabandha, etc., that the discussion will concern very subtle points.

In a life so totally involved in the theatre, every event that occurs to the actor is interpreted in terms of the characters he has come to know intimately. The newspaper is read for the material it presents for use in Kūttu, love and marriage are seen in the light of the ideal presented by the characters enacted. Western actors have also been encouraged to "Know that everything you do and learn in your life dovetails into something you can use in acting."¹⁰⁹ But like other things in Kūṭiyāṭṭam this merger of life and art is complete and automatic because of total involvement. One might think that the Cākyār would become shallow or one-sided as a result. But he is not, for his art has so many facets--it is physical, emotional, cultural, political, spiritual, and light-hearted, all at once. It is complete. There is a freshness and liveliness about the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor which is not always present in professional actors in the West, who, for some reason, sometimes have an air of soiled laundry. Whether the lightness of the Cākyār comes from the ease and care with which he approaches his art, the uplifting content of all the plays he performs, or his complete devotion to his art, no one could say. It is probably all these things and more which might distinguish the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor from his western colleague.

The training of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor is built into his performance. In learning the roles which he is to perform in his lifetime, he is forced to pick up qualities of body, mind and heart which are necessary for truthful acting. Though Kūṭiyāṭṭam is highly stylized, emotional fullness emerges from the actor in performance because of these elements of his training. The major components of his education are as follows:

1. Tradition. The actor is called, because of his birth, to be an actor. He is following his dharma and is supported by a long and living tradition.
2. Massage and arduous physical exercise in the early morning. His body is made limber and receptive.
3. Thorough exercise of the organs and limbs. Hands, eyes and face are made expressive. This is not left to "nature."
4. Patterned dynamic exercises of the legs and feet in kālsādhakam and complex combined movements of hands and feet in Nitya-kriyā to build concentration and stamina.
5. Training of the voice to express emotional states. The actor has a heightened awareness of subtle vocal patterns. Some svaras encourage the use of different resonators, a big range, and projection.
6. Inner life. PuRappātu and nirvahana teach him the importance of images, inner monologue, and given circumstances to the projection of character.
7. Rhythm. Movement done rhythmically sensitizes the actor to the relationship between rhythm and emotion. Rhythmical drumming gives the actor energy for a dynamic performance.
8. Perception of subtext. Through gesture language the connotation of words, feelings and thoughts are made visible.
9. Thinking in the moment. By improvising and making comic routines out of situations and characters in the play his thinking about the roles is enlivened.
10. All studies support his theatrical career. All his knowledge is structured from the point of view of his creation of

character.

11. All training is part of the repertoire. Every element of the training is important for it must be memorized for use in performance.

12. Commitment and conviction. The trained actor had both a political and religious function in society.

It was due to the genius of the mythical "Tolan" and his followers, whoever created this system of training and performance, that it has provided so rich a theatrical experience for so many people, both actors and audience, for so many years. In the next chapter the philosophical foundation of the experience of the actor and the audience in performance will be explored.