

CHAPTER III

PERFORMANCE: TRANSFORMATION AND RECEPTION

Chapter I examined the emergence of Kūṭiyāṭṭam from the Sanskrit and Dravidian dramatic traditions. Chapter II discussed the training and techniques that prepare the student of Kūṭiyāṭṭam for his performance on the stage. Now Chapter III will consider the performance environment and the structure of the performance itself and how environment and structure encourage the transformation of the actor into the character he is portraying. It also includes speculations on possible parallels between Kūṭiyāṭṭam and certain ritual activities of the people of Kerala.

The special environment in which the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor performs his dramatic art has a significant influence on his experience. It is a unique space reserved, at least in the present day, exclusively for the production of Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam. It is a carefully built theatre inside the temple compound. Like other elements of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, it seems to represent an amalgamation of the tradition of the Nāṭyaśāstra and indigenous South Indian theatrical practice.

As we have seen in Chapter I there is no evidence that true drama was performed in South India until probably the tenth century. But by the time of a late commentary on the Cilappatikāram, written at least several hundred years later than the epic, there were many theatres in the South, public, palace and temple. According to the description in the commentaries, the public theatres on bazaar streets had decorated prosceniums, trap doors, back drops, parted curtains and doorways for

entrances and exits. Dance forms of many types and dramatic performances were played on relatively elaborate stages similar to those described in the Nāṭyaśāstra. But traditional Tamil and Kerala folk theatre has no elaborate spacial differentiation between audience and actor. Its performance environment is more in the spirit of the dramatic scenes on the battlefields of the Sangam literature: the performers and audience are on one level and the characters often intermingle with the spectators. Teyyam, Muṭiyetṭu, and until recently Kathakali, all folk dramas of Kerala, preserve the traditional staging practices. Teyyam is performed on the temple grounds in and among the spectators and only a tall bronze oil lamp separates Muṭiyetṭu and Kathakali performers from their audience, both remaining on the same level. However in the Kathakali tradition the "stage"--that area separated from the audience by the oil lamp--has symbolic significance:

The stage represents the world that has come into being in space by the primal act of the Creator. The thick blazing wick of the oil lamp set towards the stage and the thinner one facing the audience symbolize the sun and moon . . . There is no background for the stage, for life emerges from the dark unknown void and there can be no background to the sport of the gods which transcends time and space. In this endless process of the advent of gods and mythological heroes, there is only an un-veiling or falling off of the veils that obstruct. Therefore, the curtain is not fixed but held by human agency (two men hold it up) and it falls away the moment reality approaches.¹

Muṭiyetṭu is certainly an old form of ritual theatre, but there has been almost no study of it. It is enacted occasionally as a part of some festivals in Kāḷī temples or in front of specially consecrated places attached to some houses.² Its primary action is a ritual combat between the demon Darika and Kāḷī, who is sent by Śiva at the request of Nārada to destroy the demon. The performance space for

Muṭiyetṭu is prepared by an artist who creates an image of Bhadrakālī on the ground with colored powders according to strict rules. She is pictured having eight arms, each holding an object representing a different aspect of her power. Her breasts are heaps of rice, unhulled for her right breast and hulled for her left, covered with more colored powder.³ Offerings and songs are performed for the deity. Then the figure is carefully erased beginning with the right foot, until only the breasts remain.

Unlike these folk forms, Kūṭiyāṭṭam and Prabandham Kūttu are performed within a temple compound, most often in permanent theatres called kūttambalams which were built especially for the performances. Today there are about twelve temple theatres still standing in Kerala. All of these date after the sixteenth century, though it is certain that temple theatres existed before this time. The architecture of Kerala uses primarily short-lived building materials like wood and plaster.

In general the temple architecture of Kerala is less imposing than that of other parts of the South. There are no monuments on the gigantic scale of the larger temples of Tamilnadu.⁴ Rather the architecture blends with the surroundings and is always in human scale. As in the drama, the spaces for worship reflect gods that are not bigger than life but rather more carefully articulated and refined than ordinary humanity. Kerala architecture is simple and relatively unadorned:

Jones comments:

The distinctive character of Kerala traditional architecture, particularly of its temples, is its simplicity. One is immediately aware of large geometric shapes, low spacious bases with high pyramidal roofs nearly three times the height of their inter-

vening walls . . . the decoration of these surfaces seldom intrudes, so well does it fit these simple uncomplicated shapes Because the scale is so reduced by comparison to the temple architecture of Tamilnad and the shapes so simplified, intimate, familiar, one's concept of opulence and magnificence in temple architecture must be immediately adjusted. This is a very old architecture, an architecture of simple sufficiency, continually conservative, continually renewed down to the present century.⁵

The kūttambalam is one of the most refined and elegant examples of this architecture. It is designed to provide the Sanskrit drama with its most supportive environment, physically as well as symbolically.

The largest and best preserved kūttambalam is at Trichur in central Kerala. The theatre is located at the left of the main axis facing the temple, as is the usual practice. (See Plate II). The theatre building is 55' by 72'. (A much smaller kūttambalam at Guruvayor temple measures 26' by 34'. See Plate III). The kūttambalam has an enormous sloping roof covered with copper and surmounted by three golden finials. The stage inside the building is roofed separately and has an exquisite carved ceiling called the mandapa. The carvings depict Brahmā, the creator in Hindu mythology, surrounded by the gods of the eight directions, the dikpālas, who are evoked in the opening dance of the Cākyār. The stage itself is about 21' square (9½' square at Guruvayor). The audience enters the theatre from the south side; the outside western door opposite the stage is traditionally reserved for spectacular entrances, particularly the entrance of the demoness Śūrpaṅkhā after her nose and breasts have been cut off. A raised platform immediately in front of the stage was formerly reserved for the higher classes but is now used by all. The audience sits on the floor in two sections--women on the left facing the stage, men on the right. Two double doors on the upstage wall lead from the green room

located behind the stage, which serves as the dressing room for the actors. Between the doors is a place reserved for the instrumentalists. Beautifully carved and polychromed pillars surround the stage. As there are rarely more than two performers onstage at once, these pillars only infrequently create sight-line problems.

The Kerala stage pavillion has at least one parallel in the western tradition of theatre architecture. Many Elizabethan outdoor theatres had roofs over the stage to protect the actors and their costumes from rain. The upper reaches of this canopy, which was probably as high as the theatre structure itself and not within it as is that of the kūttambalam, was referred to as the "heavens" while the space beneath the traps of the stage floor was "hell." The stage itself was the world poised between heaven and hell. There is no real hell in Hindu mythology, but the heavens are certainly present in the form of the elaborate carvings of deities on the interior ceilings above the heads of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors.

Like the kūttambalam the theatre for the Japanese Nō drama has a roof over the playing area separate from the higher roof of the auditorium, and like the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage the Nō stage is mostly unadorned by scenery.

The absence of a curtain, the unvarying lighting before and during a performance, the great pine painted on the back wall, all suggest less a Western stage--shabby and bare until it takes on life from a play--than a church, itself an architectural masterpiece, but ready for the drama of the mass.⁶

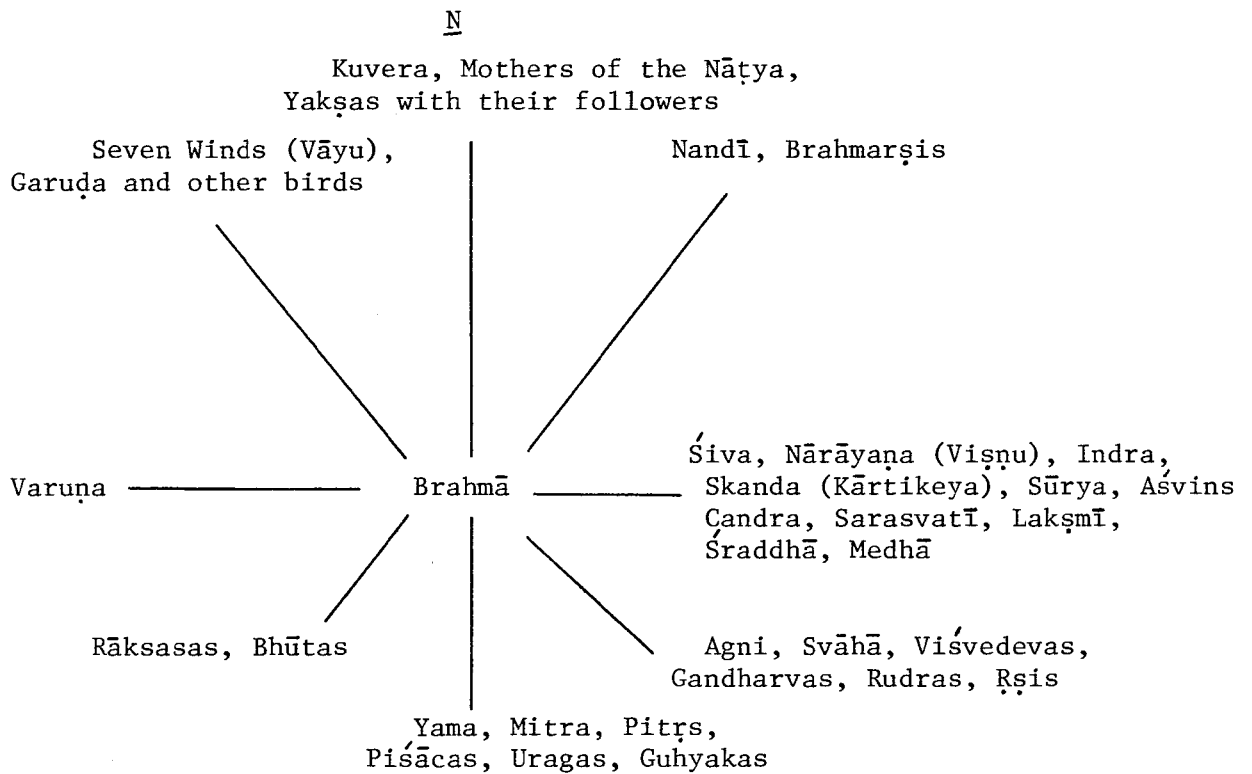
However, unlike the bright, unshadowed theatre of the Nō, the kūtumbalam is lit only by the light of a single oil lamp, and the floor and back wall of the stage are dark and undecorated. The effect of the space is

more like that of a cave. Light and shadows play among the gleaming lacquered pillars. The single light focuses attention on the central figure, and yet his technique allows him to create other characters on the stage with him in the imagination of the audience, and they can almost be seen lurking in the shadows behind the many pillars. Unlike the sparse rarified air of the Nō theatre, that of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is rich, sensuous, mysterious, even bizarre. And perhaps because the space is so intimate, the actor never seems isolated and alone as he often does in the Nō theatre and in the theatre of the Elizabethans.

The Elizabethan playhouse was blessed with a vast three-dimensional stage, so that the representation of space, reinforced by extremes of convention, came easily. A soliloquy was a statement about solitude, and, like an aside to the audience, also a joining of hands. An actor's march of thirty or more feet into the centre of the theatre produced a visual sensation equivalent to a physical encounter with the spectator.⁷

Except as Viḍūṣaka the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor never encounters the audience directly. Both he and the audience are under one vast roof, but the actor's space has its own roof where he creates a special world, protected by the guardians of the eight directions carved over his head.

The tradition of having guardians of the eight cardinal directions is an ancient one, dating first from Rgveda, X, 72.8 and the eight sons of Aditi mentioned there. They are also important to the conception of the vāstu puruṣa, the cosmic being who underlies the symbolic structure of the sacrifice and the physical construction of the Hindu temple.⁸ Concerning the actual gods assigned to the eight directions the various theatrical traditions are surprisingly consistent. The Nāṭyaśāstra assigns deities as follows, more being placed in the east and southeast, the directions considered to have the most power:



Paripāṭal, the Sangam anthology of songs to major deities, lists the guardians of the eight directions. Only one is assigned to each direction, but they are in all but one case among those listed by the Nāṭyaśāstra. They are from the east moving clockwise: Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti (a rākṣasa), Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubēra (Kuvera), Iśāna (one of the older names of Śiva). Nandin is the doorkeeper of Śiva, and in the Tamil tradition he has been replaced by Śiva himself. The Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition agrees precisely with that of the Sangam literature, though Kubēra is given another of his names--Vaiśravaṇa, the chief of evil beings as well as the god of riches. In the center of the maṇḍala on the ceiling of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage is the image of Brahmā, the creator, as is required by the Nāṭyaśāstra: "In the middle of this (maṇḍala) should be put Brahmā who has a lotus as his seat."⁹ The dikpālas are worshiped by the actor on the first day of the performance of any play of Kūṭiyāṭṭam as part of the concluding portion of

Nityakriyā.

The power of the directions are acknowledged in the everyday worship of the South Indian. The procedure for protecting oneself from possible bad influences is digbandha, which consists of ten snaps with the thumb and index finger of the right hand directed to the eight points of the compass and then above and below.¹⁰ The actor, engaged as he is in the imitation of heroes and gods, is considered especially vulnerable to the influence, both supportive and malefic, of spirits. Much of his activity, especially in his preparation for performance, is designed to enliven this influence and then to protect himself from possible harmful effects. The presence of the stage on the temple grounds, the special consecrated building in which he appears, and the carved images of deities which inhabit the ceiling over his head, all help to create a safe environment for the actor.

Near the southern entrance to the theatre at Trichur is an inscription placed there after the latest reconstruction in the nineteenth century. The second line refers to the importance of the theatre to Kūṭiyāṭṭam:

This castle, is it not like a playground of the Goddess of Prosperity; a lotus for the actors' beetle-like eyes; which destroys the pride of Trikuṭa (the triple-peaked mountain); it is even greater than the heavens.¹¹

Inspired by such a space, especially built for his performance, the actor prepares himself for his time on the stage with a series of preliminaries which will assure an honest performance of his role and secure protection from the possible harmful effects incurred by his particularly vulnerable inner state.

Make-up and Costume

The mind has an impulse to balk at the onset of any specific important and complex task. It is a natural impulse, for the mind needs rest after a long period of concentration before undertaking such an effort. Jung has said that creativity is enhanced if one practices

the willed introversion of a creative mind, which, retreating before its own problem and inwardly collecting its forces, dips at least for a moment into the source of life, in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother for the completion of its work. The result is a fountain of youth and new fertility.¹²

Such a practice is vital for the actor, yet it is a need that is rarely acknowledged in the western theatre. One observation which led Stanislavski to the creation of his system was of the relatively peculiar behavior of Salvini, the actor more admired by Stanislavski than any other. When playing Othello he would arrive at the theatre three hours early, even though he had played the part hundreds of times and had spent ten years in its preparation.

On the day of a performance he was excited from the very morning, ate very little, and after dinner retired into solitude and received no guests. The performance would begin at eight o'clock, but Salvini was in the theatre at five . . . He went to his dressing room, removed his overcoat, and began to wander about the stage. If any one approached him he would talk a little, then leave his companion, sink into thought, stand in silence, and then lock himself in his dressing room. After a while he would issue in his bathrobe or a make-up coat, and after wandering about the stage and trying his voice on some phrase, or rehearsing a gesture or a series of movements necessary for his role, he would again retire to his dressing room, put the Moorish make-up on his face and glue his mustaches and beard. Having changed himself not only outwardly but inwardly he would walk out on the stage again.¹³

He would repeat this process until his transformation into the character of Othello was complete: "He crept into the skin and body of Othello with the aid of some important preparatory toilet of his own artistic

soul and body."¹⁴ He compares the "home-grown" star of his own theatre who arrives five minutes before curtain to the great relief of his worried fellows and dons his make-up and costume just in time to go on:

In order to prepare something in your soul for three hours, it is necessary to have that something, and the home-grown star has nothing but his talents. He comes to the theatre with a costume in his suitcase, but without any spiritual baggage whatsoever. What can he do in his dressing room from five to eight? Smoke? Tell droll tales? That is done much better in the restaurants.¹⁵

Like everything else in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the preparation for going on stage is not left to chance or to the whim of the actor. The process of making-up and costuming the actor takes three to four hours of careful, quiet work performed in the austere atmosphere of the green-room located directly behind the stage. Periods of time demanding the skill of the performer as make-up artist and intense concentration on the visage of the character he is creating alternate with long periods of rest where other make-up artists work on the face of the reclining actor whose mind naturally settles on the role that he is to perform.

The process of making-up itself begins when the actor takes up ghee on the ring finger of his right hand and spots the forehead, the nose, the chin, and the two cheeks with it. Next a cloth band is tied around the head just below the hairline on the forehead while mental obeisance is paid to the actor's teachers. Then the ghee is spread out while certain mantras are recited. With this ritual the actor begins the process of transformning himself into the character he is to portray. After making-up is begun the Kūṭiyāṭṭam must be performed; there is no turning back. The actor believes that from this time on he is protected--"Even if there is some pollution after this time the actor

will not be effected by it."¹⁶

Using a small mirror, the actor then draws the outline of the make-up appropriate for his character on his face, delineating the areas of different color which will be filled in later. (See Plate XIb). The make-up itself is mixed freshly for each performance by the actor or a make-up assistant. (See Plate XIa). Green, red, black, and white are the only colors required, and these are prepared in mortars from ghee, rice powder, charcoal powder, manayola (a yellow powder which is mixed with bluing to make green), vermilion (mercuric sulfide) or zinc oxide for the bright red, and kumkum powder, a make-up used daily by Indian women for the red circle on the forehead and the line in their hair part (if married). The make-up is applied with ribs taken from palm leaves. After the basic outline is drawn by the actor, the make-up artist takes over while the actor lies on his back, resting or even sleeping. During this time the cutti, or white beard-like structure used in the make-up of most roles, is attached to the face. (See Plates XII and XIIIa). Originally these beards were made of built-up layers of rice paste (rice powder mixed with lime and water), a process that took several hours itself. Now drawing paper is cut into appropriate shapes and attached to the face in several layers with rice paste.¹⁷

After the beard is attached the assistant, or the actor himself, will fill in areas of the face with color and bring the make-up nearly to completion. The make-up for each character is specified by tradition, but subtle variations are allowed depending on the shape of the face of the actor. The exact shapes are carefully designed, and the

proper effect is difficult to achieve. Minutely small variations in the placement of a line can create alarmingly different effects. The whole process takes two hours or more.

With make-up complete the actor is helped into his costume of many layers and much ornament. (See Plate XIIb). Then he checks his make-up in a mirror and makes small additions or corrections as he sees fit. His final act of preparation is to place the headpiece or crown on his head. (See Plate XIVa). This physically and symbolically marks his transformation into character. He generally does not speak to others after this. He concentrates on the role or observes himself in a mirror, allowing his inner state to reflect what he sees before him. The paint and paper on his face and the layers of cloth and gold on his body have obliterated most remnants of his own unadorned features. It is relatively easy for him to accept himself as a completely different being.

In many ways the preparation for performance of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor resembles that of the Nō actor:

The actor spends half a lifetime disciplining himself in the minute details of the rules and conventions of his art. On the day of a performance he prepares himself for what he has to do by arriving early at the theatre in order to have time for quiet concentration on the task at hand. The concentration continues through the slow ceremonial of his dressing while he focuses on the details of his costume and particularly on his mask. Once garbed for the role he enters the mirror room and gazes at his image which may, for example be the image of Komachi. He concentrates on the "isness" of Komachi and her state of being and then on the "tone" and "feel" of the audience. Finally he withholds his entrance until the expectancy of the audience is at its finest edge.¹⁸

The Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor, too, is enjoined to focus on the "isness" of the role, that is the rasa, or basic emotional state of the character,

throughout the day of the performance. The make-up, which varies according to the rasa of the character, reinforces the actor's concentration on rasa. However, unlike Nō, the elaborate make-up of Kūṭiyāṭṭam forces the actor to be at the theatre early, imposes upon him a relatively long period of emotional preparation.

One intriguing aspect of the actor's inner state as he prepares for, especially, his first performance of a role is the complete absence of any dress rehearsal: the actor never rehearses in make-up and costume. He is not even permitted to wear the elaborate headdress, which weighs up to ten pounds for certain characters, until performance. Such a practice would be disastrous in Western theatre where the critics come opening night expecting perfection, but in Kūṭiyāṭṭam the young student is gradually introduced to the art of performance, taking on longer and more demanding roles as he develops as an actor. He has a lifetime of performance of each role he takes on, and he is not expected to be perfect his first time out. The psychological benefit gained from withholding make-up and costume until performance before an audience is considerable. If the physical elements of character are to be of greatest significance in creating the actor's total belief in his character, then such elements should be present only when the audience is there to support his transformation. The rush of adrenalin which comes naturally when any actor is about to perform is linked inextricably to putting on the make-up and costume of the character. The actor is primed for a powerful experience, and so it is very likely to happen. If it does, then for the actor costume and make-up may seem to take on the power to transform not only his looks, but also his psyche. The attitude of the audience, the nature of the physical score

of the drama, and the preliminaries on stage all support this process, as we shall see in the next sections.

Preliminaries for Performance

As the actors complete their make-up, the audience enters the theatre and is entertained by a series of preliminaries to the performance. They begin with a musical overture during which the musicians display their skills and the audience is gradually taken from the ordinary world of everyday affairs to the extraordinary world which is to be created in the theatre. At the same time the energy of the music begins to lift the actors from the meditative state inspired by the slow, careful, quiet preparation in the green room to the energetic state required for performance. But the primary function of the preliminaries is to purify the stage, the actors, and the musicians, and to offer the Kūṭiyāṭṭam to the deities of the temple. They are performed, as is all of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, with an awareness of the sacred purposes to which the ritual activities are directed and yet with a casualness and detachment that comes when movements have been repeated many, many times. There is an ease to the ritual actions that can occur only when generation upon generation in the same family have done the same movements with the same intent, said the same words with the same inflections, and worshiped the same gods in the same way. The actions themselves, independent of the performers, become empowered with tremendous energy gathered over the centuries. The sensitivity to this energy is nowhere in the world more fully alive than in Kerala, a country which has been, at least until very recent times, intensely and purposefully bound to tradition. It is here that the Nambūtiri Brāhmins have retained more of the ancient Vedic ritual than have any other of

the Brāhmans of India and so have acknowledged the power that resides in such ritual actions. The sensitivity to the power of traditional ritual action is alive in every Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor.

The stage for Kūṭiyāṭṭam is almost bare. Downcenter there is a four-foot-high oil lamp of traditional Kerala design which provides the only illumination. The only furniture used is a small stool, pīṭham for sitting and standing on. Upstage are two slatted boxes called kūttapasthana holding the drums called mizhāvus, the primary musical accompaniment for Kūṭiyāṭṭam.²⁰ All these objects remain permanently on the stage to be used only in performances of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. (See Plate Ib).

The stage decoration is the same for every play. It consists of cut banana trees with bunches of fruits placed near the pillars holding the stage canopy, leaves of coconut palms, bunches of coconuts, and a full measure of rice, a niRapaRa, about two-and-a-half gallons. (The stage at Trichur also has Christmas-tree lights hung across the ceiling of the stage at the front, but this is not traditional!)

The preliminaries begin with the filling and lighting of the lamp. When the temple can afford it, the lamp burns coconut oil, and its burning imparts a heavy sweet smell to the air. Three wicks are laid in its bowl, and it is filled with oil from a bucket which sits near the lamp. As the performance progresses the oil supply is replenished from this bucket by one of the curtain holders. The fire for lighting the wicks is brought from a lamp burning inside the temple near the shrine. Two of the wicks burn facing the stage and one faces the audience. The light from the lamp is usually sufficient for easy viewing of the per-

formers.²¹

Then aṣṭamaṅgalya 'eight auspicious things' are placed near the lamp. These are ari 'rice,' vellari 'cucumber,' vetṭila 'betel leaves,' aṭayka 'arecanut,' vālkannāti 'mirror,' kannappūvu 'Indian Laburnum' (cassia fistula), grantha 'book' (of palm leaves), and svarna 'gold.' These same items would be found in a Kerala home on Viśu, or New Year's morning, for they are the first things the family members are to see upon awakening that day. The whole year is thought to be auspicious if the eight auspicious things are the first sight of the New Year.²²

Next the principal Nambyār begins drumming on one of the mizhāvus, accompanied by the Nañnyār playing kuzhittālam, the cymbals. This drumming is called goṣṭhi or mizhāvu oṅcapetutti. In the latter section of goṣṭhi the Nañnyār recites akkitta koṭṭuka, songs invoking the gods Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī and Śiva.²³ The Nambyār then comes forward and summarizes in Malayālam the plot of the play to be enacted. His summary is called the Nambyārute Tamil. He then goes into the green room and returns with sacred water with which he sprinkles the stage. His actions are called araññutali 'cleaning the stage.' After this he recites the Ālāmasloka, a Sanskrit verse which introduces the story. The verse does not appear in the text of the play, but replaces the nāndī verse of the original. The actual prologue of the Sanskrit play, in which the Sūtradhāra 'company director' appears to introduce the play, is never performed.

After his araññutali, the Nambyār returns to his drum to accompany the Nañnyār, who recites additional verses to introduce the char-

acter who is about to appear. Her verses are also known as akkitta, and they correspond to the dhruvā verses which are part of the preliminaries for the entrance of a character in Nāṭyaśāstra. The akkitta verses do not appear in the text of the play, but the Cākyārs have them in their stage manuals. They are said to be part of the material supplied by Tolan when he reformed the Kerala stage.

After this overture to the drama a series of actions begin which are designed to arouse the audience's expectation for the appearance of the hero of the play. Two men walk on stage dressed in ordinary temple clothes--the cloth called mundu wrapped around their waists. They hold the curtain, usually red, between them, just upstage of the lamp. It will always be held there to mark the appearance of important characters. Now the full orchestra begins to play, and to the accompaniment of its driving rhythm the actor enters through one of the green-room doors and stands behind the curtain. There he performs, out of sight of the audience and facing the mizhāvus, the opening steps of the Nityakriyā, called cavittuka, or muRayit kriyā, in this context.²⁴

Kathakali also begins with a long preparatory drum solo and, though it is no longer danced during performance, a training piece used to be danced behind the curtain before the appearance of any character on stage. Bharata Iyer describes the psychological basis for this practice:

In this endless process of the advent of gods and mythological heroes, there is only an un-veiling or falling off of the veils that obstruct vision. Therefore, the curtain is not fixed but held up by human agency . . . and it falls away the moment reality approaches. The musical prelude with rhythmical drumming and singing symbolizes the development of sound into language. Light, life and letters having been manifested, prayers are offered to the gods and the gurus (teachers). The next stage in the struc-

ture of the play is Purappad (literally going forth), signifying the grand pageant of life on earth.²⁵

Such an invisible performance may strike the Western reader as odd, but it is very much in keeping with the way in which both the Indian performer and audience perceive their responsibility.

For the performer the dance behind the curtain is the culmination of the process of moving from the world of his everyday life into the world of the character he is to portray. It is the offering of his performance to the deities of the stage, a series of simple, traditional, and very old ritualized movements which put the performer in touch with his tradition. Every actor of Kūṭiyāṭṭam has danced cavittuka before every appearance from behind the curtain. The steps flex the body and the soul and ease the performer from his dressing room onto the stage. He faces the drummers, his co-workers on the stage, acknowledging their presence and their sanctity in shaping the performance that is to follow. Through the beat of the drum flows the energy of the performance; the gods in the drum, bequeathed by the Sangam poets writing more than 1500 years ago, are still very much alive in the Cākyārs' consciousness, for he experiences their power everytime he acts Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

In the audience a sense of expectation is aroused. The curtain conceals some activity, and soon the hero is to appear. The Viḍūṣaka has no such hidden dance before his entrance. He appears unbidden, perhaps with a few words from the green room. He is close to the people, he operates always within their grasp, knowledge and vision, but the heroes of the drama work in mysterious ways, like the gods themselves, often hidden from the understanding of the common man. Thus

it is appropriate that they begin their approach to the audience unseen, unacknowledged, unknown.

At the completion of this dance behind the curtain, the actor turns, the curtain is removed, and the character appears to the audience standing in a wide stance (a deep plié in second position) or seated on the stool. He expresses through eyes, facial gestures, and other subtle physical movements his sthāyibhāva, his emotional state at the beginning of the play. His eyes and face are alive with a picturesque, stylized rendition of the emotion he is to explore in the course of the performance. He is like an icon, an object of pure devotion for the believing spectators, alive with the wonderful appearance of his make-up and costume, so like the traditional realization of the gods and heroes in the painting of medieval Kerala.²⁶

The sense that a character is born or reborn by means of the actor at this moment of the performance suggests a source for the practice of hiding the actor behind a curtain before his appearance. The rites of the Vedic sacrifice are often interpreted as a series of rebirths of the sacrificer. For example Brāhmans and others who take initiation are called twice-born, meaning that in addition to their physical birth they are born to the spiritual life of the soul when they receive initiation. Suggestive of this symbolic interpretation of the appearance of the actor are portions of the complex sacrifice performed at the consecration of a king, a sacrifice which would have especial relevance to the heroic kings and princes of the drama.

The king carefully prepares himself for the sacrifice: "After a preliminary oblation the sacrificer bathes and stays in a hut, dressed

in a black antelope's skin, sitting on another skin near the fire, with head covered in silence, fasting to the point of exhaustion, and sleeping at night on the ground."²⁷ This rite is regarded as a mimicry of his time in the womb. Later the king is dressed in four special garments, and each dressing is accompanied by a spoken formula: a tārpya garment by "Thou art the amnion of the royal power;" a second garment by "Thou art the chorion of the royal power;" an upper cloth by "Thou art the womb of the royal power;" and a turban by "Thou art the umbilical cord of the royal power."²⁸ These special clothes are removed after the unction with the formula: "Thou art Indra's place of birth, supporting man." For removing this clothing an antelope horn is used instead of the hands, for it is either too polluted or too powerful to touch.²⁹ The tārpya has the symbolic purpose of allowing the sacrificer to die and be reborn: "Donning the tārpya the royal sacrificer dies and enters the maternal womb; taking it off afterwards he is literally born out of the sacrifice."³⁰ This kind of symbolic thinking, common in the language and interpretation of the sacrifice, must certainly have had its influence on a drama which was avidly supported by kings who had experienced these rites and by Brāhmans who performed them. Thus the curtain that hides the performer from the audience might be seen as a kind of embryonic covering hiding the movements of the fetal actor who is heard and felt, but not seen, and who is reborn as the character of the drama being presented. The long gestation of the actor in the dark confines of the green room (like the time of the sacrificer in his small hut) is followed by a series of rhythmic, noisy activities onstage which culminate in the sudden appearance of the character, sprung from the mind and heart of the author and embodied in

the physical presence of the actor.

The Structure of the Score

The character who appears when the curtain is lowered is the main character of the act being performed. If the hero of the play appears first, as is usually the case, he performs puRappātu--in a series of gestures he will describe the immediate given circumstances, recite in gesture the first words that he speaks in the text, elaborate on the first verse in the play, and dance the final portion of Nityakriyā, offering the play to the gods. If the first act is being performed, the Sutradhāra is the first character to appear. He will perform Sthāpanā Sūtradhāra PuRappātu. (Sthāpanā is the name given the prologue of a Sanskrit drama.) To the accompaniment of the orchestra he will welcome the audience in gesture language, recite and act one verse (the first verse of Bhāsa's Bālacarita), dance while the Nañnyār sings devotional songs, and finally with gesture and dance offer the play to the gods.

In Chapter II it was argued that the major focus of the puRappātu is the character's inner emotional state and its source in the immediate given circumstances. Emotions are given primary attention from the opening moments when the actor appears from behind the curtain showing the sthāyibhāva of his character, to the closing moments when the actor exalts the gods which are perceived as the source of his power as an actor. Throughout, the performance of puRappātu is designed to inspire devotion both in the actor and in the audience.

To inspire devotion by offering to the gods is also the primary purpose of the most common ritual ceremony of the Hindu--the pūjā. The

pūjā as a form of worship arose later than the Vedic sacrifice, and it continues to be the principal act of worship of the Hindu. Though this ritual ceremony is performed daily in most temples in India, individuals may also do pūjās in their homes as a part of daily worship. In Kerala during the period when Kūṭiyāṭṭam was being developed, around the tenth century, both the ritual and pūjā were active forms of worship. However the pūjā was a rite available to all castes of Hindus, while the sacrifice was reserved for the elite.

Among the Vedic rituals, in addition to the elaborate public, or śrauta, rituals like that at the consecration of a king discussed above, there were simpler, daily, home rituals. The pūjā more closely resembles this home, or grhya, ritual. However, instead of offering oblations in a fire to invisible beings as in the Vedic sacrifice, in the pūjā a series of courtesies is extended to a specific god represented by a statue, picture, or other object, almost as if it were an honored guest.

In the grhya ritual of the Āryans the term pūjā is used to refer to procedures for honoring Brāhman guests in homes. The modern pūjā is also a "hospitality" ritual directed to a deity:

The ritual from start to finish is a sequence of acts of service or respect. Though the specific acts vary with the circumstances of the ritual or the ritual tradition being followed, the usual complete sequence includes invocation of the deity, offering him or her a seat, offering water for washing the feet, water for washing the hands, and water for sipping, bathing the image, offering a fresh garment, offering a sacred thread, anointing the image with unguents or sandalwood paste, offering flowers, offering incense, offering lighted lamp, offering food or a gift, making obeisance to the deity, pradakṣiṇa ("clockwise circumambulation of the deity"), verses of praise, and bidding the deity farewell.³¹

An example of a typical temple worship schedule will show the extent to

which devotees go to treat a block of metal or stone as if it were a human being and will illuminate the Hindu attitude toward the actor-as-god.

The temple at Guruvayor is devoted to Kṛṣṇa. The deity of the temple is known as Guruvayor appan 'lord of Guruvayor' and is honored by five major pūjās every day: two pūjās in the early morning, a later morning pūjā, a midday pūjā, and a night pūjā. The ritual day begins at 3 a.m. for darśana 'seeing' the idol. The figure of the deity is made of a rare black stone and is about eighteen inches high. It stands in a small enclosure called the garbhagrha 'womb-house.' Flowers and garlands used in worship the previous day still cover the statue. After some time these adornments are removed, and the deity is bathed in oil and water, and rice is offered to it. Then the priests wash the idol with soap root and water and adorn it with garlands and ornaments. A red cloth is wrapped around the waist to make the idol resemble the child Kṛṣṇa. Then priests perform the first two pūjās behind closed curtains. Afterward, to the accompaniment of music and chanting, a gold replica of the idol is taken in procession on an elephant around the inner walkways of the temple while priests make offerings to the dikpālas of the temple. At 3:30 there are anointings of the deity with milk. Special offerings of coconuts, fruit, and rose water paid for by the devotees are made at the morning pūjā. At the midday pūjā food is offered, and then the Brāhmins of the temple as well as guests are fed. After lunch the temple closes until five in the evening. There is another procession to re-open the temple, and ārati, an offering of lighted lamps, is performed at dusk with the deity specially decked and exposed to worshipers: "The inner prakara is

filled with eager, fervent worshipers. It is as if all Guruvayor throbs with devotion. The ringing of bells, the beating of drums and the clash of cymbals, the sound of horns and pipes and above all the full-throated cries 'Narayana, Narayana' filling the air create Vaikuntha on earth."³² After the evening pūjā at 8 p.m. the idol is again taken in procession. The temple is closed about 10 p.m. These ceremonies are performed every day, and this popular temple is almost always crowded with hundreds of people during darśana of the ikon, thousands or tens of thousands on festival days. The devotees participate by paying for food or flowers which are offered to the deity by the priests or by paying for special āratis or even for a performance of Kṛṣṇāttam, a dance drama given only at this temple as a devotional act for the deity. If Kṛṣṇāttam is to be enacted, the performance begins after the closing of the temple at 10 p.m. and continues until the opening ceremonies at 3 a.m. Marriages and certain Vedic rites, like the first feeding of the infant, are also frequently performed at the temple. Devotees also receive prasādam, small bits of food which have been offered to the deity. A devotee's typical pattern of worship is to bathe in the temple tank or otherwise cleanse himself to prepare for worship and then to circumambulate the temple grounds saying prayers before the various shrines. Many go to Guruvayor for the cure of disease and make offerings expecting miracles in return. Apparently healings are frequent, for the temple is one of the richest in India, and more and more people from all over India come to receive the blessings and experience the power of this holy place. It is one of the most popular Hindu temples.

So we see that the form of religion which the majority of Indians have practiced over the past thousand years is a kind of devotion (called bhakti) which encourages the belief that even inanimate objects in the form of deities can take on divine energy by being worshiped and treated with respect. Is it any wonder that the actor, who dresses up as the divine hero or deity and appears from behind a curtain much as the temple deity clad in all his raiment is revealed when the doors of the sanctum sanctorum are thrown open, is treated with respect, honor, and devotion. Imagine the effect on an actor of spectators eager to believe that if they give themselves over to the actor's fantasy then they may receive a spark of divine energy within themselves, an audience watching every move of the actor for a confirmation of shared belief in the divinity and power of the character being portrayed. Such is the sense of power the audience feels in the presence of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor and the power the actor feels in return.

Not only the heroes but also the demons are objects of devotion. For the demon in Indian mythology represents those obstacles which provide opportunities for spiritual advancement, foils which urge the hero on to more and more convincing expressions of his own heroic nature. They represent for the devotee those obstacles in his individual body and psyche which stand in the way of spiritual growth. Symbols for these obstacles are worshiped with as much devotion as those which represent the ideals of enlightenment and freedom at the end of the spiritual journey. The demonic and the heroic are inextricably intertwined, and both must exist. Just as the bud must be destroyed in order to produce the rose, without the demon there would be no hero, without ignorance there would be no awakening into the truth of freedom. All

life, in the popular Hindu view of it, is the divine sport of the creator. He brings the world to life out of loneliness, and challenges man to find freedom and return to oneness with him.

The path of devotion to this state of freedom is the path of the emotions. The heart goes out to God, be that god Viṣṇu or one of his many incarnations, Śiva in one of his many aspects, or his divine consort, or some other deity. These gods are merely points of focus for the human mind which longs eventually for union with God and ultimately with the abstract Absolute which underlies all of creation. For this purpose the heart must be alive. It is one of the major goals of the drama to bring the heart and emotions to life.

For the actor, the puRappātu is the vehicle on which to flex emotional muscles by coming to grips with the basic emotional states of the role. It provides the opportunity to establish him, as character and performer, as a devotional object for the spectators. He first stands for several minutes presenting the character as if an icon for contemplation by the spectators. Then as the actor moves with music he expresses in gesture the inner state of the hero. Music aids in the emotional perception of the actor's meaning, and the gesture language of Kūṭiyāṭṭam carries meaning and emotional content at the same time. Especially for those fluent in the gesture language, it carries the word and feeling together more clearly and precisely than the spoken word alone. The effect of this unrealistic, heightened presentation of meaning and emotion may allow the spectator to release himself more fully into the unique and rarified atmosphere of the play. At the same time, the extraordinary skill of the performer can never be ignored.

One's admiration embraces not only the character who fulfills life's aspirations, but also the actor who has spent his life perfecting his demanding and complex art. Grotowski has said that the actor must dazzle the audience with his technique, and then its awe will support the actor in his effort. In the highly stylized art of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the audience is drawn to the actor both by his portrayal and by his technique. Ideally the two are welded into one whole. The intermingling of devotion and virtuosity has its simplest expression in the final section of puRappātu--all the most spectacular elements of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam technique come together: singing, fast drumming, elaborate footwork, and signing by the actor, yet at the same time the content of the actor's signs acknowledge his own devotion to the deities that protect the stage.

As has been shown in Chapter II, the nirvahaṇa, which follows the puRappātu in the performance, concentrates on the series of actions that have given rise to the situation at the beginning of the drama rather than on the inner life of the character which is the focus of puRappātu. The process of recounting these events both backwards and forwards in time is one indication of the attention given to action in this phase of the performance. In it the actor becomes a storyteller, acting out what his character and other characters have done before the act started. Since the actor uses his hands and body rather than his voice to relate these events, he must concentrate, more than in other parts of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam, on the physical aspects of the presentation. Thus both in content and in form, physical activity is the primary concern of nirvahaṇa. This focus on activity--the external aspects of the given circumstances--suggests an affinity of this section of Kūṭiyāṭṭam with the Vedic sacrifice itself. This affinity

will be explored in the following few pages.

Though the sacrifice (yaज्ञा) may have begun as an act of homage to the divinities of the cult, as the sacrifice grew more elaborate, it was perceived as having its own power. In later stages it becomes: "a consecration, a movement from the profane to sacred, which deifies not only the 'victim' but the mortal personality who pays for the ceremony, and even possibly external objects. The victim effects the communication between the profane and the sacred."³³ The sacrifice, usually a supplication and never a thank offering, was a series of power-filled actions performed for a particular result--magical acts which depended on certain correspondences between the action of the sacrifice and the result desired:

Mimetic or imitative magic relies on the establishment of identities between the controlling ritual and the natural phenomena to be controlled. A ritual order is created that parallels and simulates the natural order by means of physical, symbolic, or verbal replicas and imitative acts. Ritual operations anticipate a corresponding result in the natural world, brought about by the power of the ritual and the accuracy of established identities.³⁴

To perform the sacrifice meant to control the universe, for the sacrifice was equated with reality: the speech, sound, and activity of the sacrifice had direct correspondence with the physical reality which was to be influenced. Sanskrit, the language of the sacrifice, was perceived as the sonic form of objects to which its sounds referred. That is, Sanskrit expressed in speech form the inherent physical vibrations of objects and actions. Perhaps the possibility of this correspondence can be suggested by a simple example: agni, which is the first word of the RgVeda and which stands for both the sacrificial fire into which the offerings are made and the god who conducts these offerings to the other gods, agni when spoken begins with the sound a,

in which the mouth and throat are most open, allowing the freest channel for sound from the vocal cords. Then the sound is stopped momentarily in the throat by g. Then the tongue rolls forward allowing the sound to emerge again, this time from the front of the mouth with the vowel i. At the same time the lips are left relaxed, not participating in the sound. It is produced without obvious external changes in the face. When speaking the word agni the sound as energy moves forward in the mouth in two stages, just as the offering is made into the fire and then is received by the gods in the form of energy--light and heat.³⁵

The physical elements of the sacrifice correspond to parts of the cosmic man, the puruṣa: "The cosmos, the world of nature, human society, and the sacrifice are seen as parallel orders of reality of equal antiquity and permanence."³⁶ Thus a series of correspondences are set up relating these things, very much as the so-called Elizabethan world view sets up an elaborate series of correspondences between the worlds of man, nature, and heaven. As the Elizabethan world view was a rich mine of metaphor for the Renaissance poets and philosophers, so the world view of the Vedic sacrifice can be seen as a significant informing principle for the verse and drama of the Indians.

The structure of this system was an elaborate set of identities and correspondences binding together the cosmos, the sacrifice, and man. The sacrificial ritual was the central and unifying factor in this system. It provided both the conceptual tools by which man could understand the universe and the practical means by which he could control it.³⁷

The correspondences led, in the later form of the sacrifices, to imitative acts in which some scholars have seen the germs of the drama.

In the Mahāvratā, an Āryan and a Śūdra dispute over a round white skin

and a Brāhman student and a courtesan engage in coarse abuse of each other, and "in the older form of the ritual we actually find that sexual union as a fertility rite is permitted, though later taste dismissed the practice as undesirable."³⁸ In the horse sacrifice, the tārpya covers the mimicry of copulation between the queen and the slaughtered. More typically in the ritual the "imitation" takes the form of simple actions by the priest or yajamāna which take on significance and power far beyond the simple nature of the action itself. Thus in the Rājasūya the king simply raises his arms for his anointing, but the given circumstances of the act have cosmic implications:

The scene of the unction is a replica of the universe: the king standing in the center and stretching his arms to the sky impersonates...the cosmic pillar; round him the officiants are standing and confer on him his new body from the four points of the compass. The raising of the arms of the king may therefore be interpreted as the cosmogonic act of raising the axis mundi; and so we see the king, when receiving the unction, standing erect with raised arms on the throne, as the personification of the cosmic pillar resting on the navel of the earth (the throne) and reaching up to the sky.³⁹

After the unction the king mounts a chariot and makes a mimic raid on a herd of cows. The raid, as other mimicry in Vedic ritual, is not meant to represent ordinary reality accurately, but to have extraordinary power because of the spacial and temporal environment in which it is performed. Each point in the ritual raid is marked by a mantra. Thus the sacrificer takes bow and arrow and shoots the arrows at a Kṣatriya saying: "The purpose has been fulfilled." He then makes the chariot turn to the right with, "I (may be united) with Indra's power." And when the sacrificer pulls up his chariot in the midst of his relatives' cows he says, "We have reached through the mind," and he touches a cow's head with the tip of his bow. Finally he drives around the place of sacrifice and says, "Being united with thee, O Indra,

O quickly conquering, may we not go asunder, through loss of brahman. Standing on the chariot, bolt in hand, dost thou keep the reins of the good steeds."⁴⁰ In the ritual, the actions are never precise imitations but stand removed from their realistic counterparts; the normal inner emotional state connected with the action is no longer a part of it. Thus the king is not to feel fear or even heroism as he approaches his Kṣatriya enemy or the cows which he is to raid, nor is he to feel exaltation on conquering this herd. He raises his arms in order to stand as the conductor of energy from the cosmos to the earth. It is not how he feels at this time that is significant but the fact that he performs this action in an environment which allows it to take on cosmic significance. In all the Vedic ritual it is the proper performance of the ritual actions that is important. The mind and emotions are not to be involved in the mundane reality of these gestures, but rather in their cosmic significances. The subjective attitude of the sacrificer is of appalling insignificance compared to the proper performance of the actions. Thus one Atharvaveda priest is present only to watch for errors in performance so that such errors, which would cause the invalidation of the sacrifice, can be immediately expiated--by other ritual actions.

Thus in the sacrifice, the accuracy of mimicry is not its reality, but rather its proper performance. It is not whether an outside observer would believe that cattle are actually being raided; in fact an uninformed spectator would probably not know that a raid was being imitated. Rather it is the cosmic perception of this act--its reality on a different plane--that is important.

The Indian drama moves away from this Vedic, ritual view of action-- yet, like the Veda, the perception of nirvahana requires special knowledge of the language unique to its form, and its mimicry does not so much try to copy reality as to follow, with amazing accuracy, the model which has been taught the student by his teacher. Though there are many mimetic actions in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, they are as highly stylized as is appropriate to their cosmic significance, and their proper performance is more important than their "reality" to an ignorant observer. They are watched by critics, their teachers and connoisseurs in their audience, who attest to their accuracy and criticize them mercilessly for error. In the Nāṭyaśāstra all performances are to be judged by professional critics who keep track of any errors in the gestures or speech of the actors according to prescribed rules. In Cilappatikāram, Mātavi's dance had to be "perfect and scientifically correct" in order for her to receive a "green leaf garland and 1008 kalanjus of gold."

Nirvahana and puRappātu together prepare the audience and actor for the central offering of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the performance of the act itself. As has been suggested in Chapter II, the puRappātu and nirvahana prime the audience for the experience of the play just as the yajamāna is primed for the ritual, for example the consecration of the king, by a series of preparatory rites. And while the puRappātu focuses more on the inner life of the character, the nirvahana focuses on the sequence of events which have led the character to the present situation. But the presence of puRappātu and nirvahana also signal a major change in the structure of the drama relative to that laid down by the tenets of the Nāṭyaśāstra. Kūṭiyāṭṭam emphasizes certain aspects of

the theory of drama, especially those relating to the individual characters' emotional states and their physical presentation of themselves, while de-emphasizing the story of the drama. As we have seen, the plot structure of the Sanskrit drama parallels in some respects the structure of the Vedic sacrifice, i.e., the action proceeds in five stages leading to the attainment of a particular end: desire, effort, obstruction, continuation, and conclusion. In Kūṭiyāṭṭam this flow of action is severely disturbed by excursions into philosophical, intellectual, and especially emotional issues suggested by the action and the speech. Kūṭiyāṭṭam de-emphasizes the sequence of action in the plays, the particular central desire of the hero and actions leading to its fulfillment, and instead emphasizes actions and ideas which detail and explain the particular inner state of the hero. Within the performance itself, the main character's first appearance in the play is so carefully prepared that the sweep of the action of the play is lost. Rather the vision of the audience is refined, centered. A small window exposing only this central character is slowly cleaned for perfect viewing. The Nāṭyaśāstra suggests the importance of given circumstances (vibhāva) which give rise to each inner emotional state in the preparation of the actor; Kūṭiyāṭṭam plays out these given circumstances. An elaborate foundation is built so that the inner structure of the character's motivations can be clearly seen through the facade of his activities in the text. The protracted concern for the hero's inner state lures the audience into sympathy with him.

This change which Kūṭiyāṭṭam imposes on the structure of the Sanskrit drama just might reflect the development of the pūjā as a major form of temple worship. The ritual emphasizes action and its cor-

rect performance with little direct regard for the inner state of the worshiper. The pūjā emphasizes the subjective state of the worshiper his devotion toward the deity for whom the pūjā is being performed. The audience of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is better able to perceive the inner life of the hero which encourages their sympathy and devotion than it is to follow the sequence of actions which reflect the Vedic sacrifice.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam also supplements the Sanskrit drama with vast amounts of new material for the Viḍūṣaka, so that his part becomes, in plays where he appears, larger than any other. It is because every Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor must play the clown that he must develop his intellectual faculties to the utmost, for the part of Viḍūṣaka requires extensive verbal commentaries and verbal improvisations not only on the words, ideas, and emotions of the roles in the drama, but also on political, religious, and social issues suggested by the plays. The educational aspect of the theatre, so important to the divine originator of drama in his definition of it in the Nāṭyaśāstra, finds a strong representative in the Viḍūṣaka of the Kerala theatre. He speaks pointedly to the audience with wit and charm directing its attention to the implications of other characters' words and deeds for both individual and society. He is a stand-up comic who also happens to teach Sanskrit.

Since the actor must play both Viḍūṣaka and, in some other performance, the heroic character who shares the stage with the Viḍūṣaka and receives his wry comments and barbed humor, he must approach his art from two opposed directions, the first physical and emotional, and the second intellectual and objective. As the actor of heroic roles he must practice intense control of body, voice, and emotional expression. He must understand and feel deeply the emotional states of the

characters and eventually come to find a devotional relationship to them--indeed, he must worship the characters he plays, much as a devotee worships the idol of the temple. Yet as the actor of the Viḍūṣaka, he must approach these roles from the point of view of the skeptic, picking, analyzing, and mining the moments of the play for their possible comic value in order to interpret and even ridicule the heroic characters in front of the audience. On the one hand he must be the entertainer that the people of the Sanskrit epics were so fond of before the advent of true drama--the clown/bard who sang, danced, and told stories at festivals where all kinds of amusements were to be found, and who might have been a useful spy for the king. On the other hand the Kūṭiyāṭṭam actor-as-hero possesses power and is regarded with awe, like the drummers, musicians, and dancers of the Sangam age. The energy emanating from these performers in their special place, the kūttambalam, is palpable.

These two aspects of the actor are significantly intertwined in the traditional, though probably apocryphal, account of the origin of the Cākyār caste. A Cākyār is said to be born a bastard son of a Brāhman woman and a lower caste man. This man then acts in a drama in which the most profound truths of the Hindu religion mix with some of the most lewd discussions permitted in public in India on the stage even today. There is a delightful mixture of the secular and the religious in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. One would have to turn to the Second Shepherds' Play in English to find a similar intermingling of the sacred and the profane in Western drama. The secular and religious pull against each other almost as if in a tug-of-war. Religious, devotional impulses of the drama pull one way, elevating the heroic

characters to objects of devotion, stylized and aloof from the audience, deifying them far beyond the intention of the original play. Secular, comic impulses pull the play the other direction making the characters more down-to-earth, more topical, lusty, and even ridiculous, causing them to be the objects of curiosity and thought. The original play gets torn to pieces in the tug-of-war, leaving little of the original story and actions intact. The special role the Viḍūṣaka takes in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is the inspiration for this turmoil.

Various devices that alter and extend the main body of the play have been discussed in Chapters I and II. Moments are unreasonably augmented while the through-line-of-action is sacrificed; motivations and the inner life of the characters are made transparent at the expense of the efficient use of stage time and suspense. Though monologues and asides are common in the Sanskrit drama (e.g., in the scene between Rāvana and Sītā which Hanūmān overhears, discussed in Chapter I, all three characters have asides directly to the audience), in Kūṭiyāṭṭam they are much more frequent and sometimes very extensive. The Viḍūṣaka interpolates lengthy asides having little to do with the action of the play. Other characters, though they do not, like the Viḍūṣaka, improvise directly to the audience, have lengthy monologues performed in gesture language using the text as a point of departure. The desire to educate and amuse beyond the possibilities provided by the text is often a primary stimulus for accretion; the structure and content of Sangam literature had significant effects on the performance of the actual texts of Sanskrit drama in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.

It was suggested in Chapter I that the form of drama called the bhāṇa, the one-act monologue by the viṭa, might have been so popular

in the South because of the dramatic monologue form that the Sangam poems take. These long descriptions of everyday life of vagabonds in the city are very like the long discourses of the Viḍūṣaka in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. The popular style of the vita may have influenced the architects of Kūṭiyāṭṭam to adapt his popular monologues for their own purposes. Complex analogies and intricate patterns of suggestion were encouraged in the Sangam literature because of the "landscapes" adopted by the poets. Hart has suggested that the inner life in these poems influenced Sanskrit writings, especially the plays. It is natural that when Sanskrit was being adapted for use in the land of the Sangam poets that suggestion would become even more important. For example, when Kulaśēkhara is demonstrating the drama to Tolan, his principal concern is that the metaphorical implications and inner life of the text, that is its suggestions, be emphasized in the acting. Kūṭiyāṭṭam style makes the word visible, spells out the elements of suggestion, acts out the inner emotional state implied by the poetry, and draws attention to the details of the verse by the extensive elaboration of one or two elements and through parodies of it by the Viḍūṣaka.

Regardless of the act being presented, the end of the play is the same: the main character dances to the accompaniment of devotional verses and then extinguishes and re-lights the lamp. Every act of a drama performed in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, whether its conclusion is joyous, tragic, uncertain, or incomplete, ends with a dance of devotion. These actions re-emphasize the ritual and religious purpose of the presentation. The tug-of-war between the secular and the religious ends in a triumph for the religious. The ability of drama to summon, control, and transform power is symbolized by a final gesture to the gods of the stage:

the lamp is extinguished to signal the end of the act, but it is relighted to show that the divine energy kindled by the play can be rekindled in the hearts and minds of the spectators.