

CHAPTER NO.IV

DANCE-FORMS OF THE CHRISTIANS IN KERALA

a) MĀRGAMKALI:

Mārgamklai is one of the ancient art-forms of Kerala practised by the Syrian Christians in general and Knānāya Syrian Christians in particular.⁽¹⁾ It is a folk-dance performed by men-folk mainly during the marriage celebration and church festivals and was a part of it. In Mārgamkali , religion, history, culture, customs, faith and art are beautifully moulded into one. The exact origin of it can not be traced. However, it is certain to have been in practice long before the Portuguese stepped into Kerala.⁽²⁾ The text and theme are the narration of the life of St.Thomas in relation to his work in Kerala described in 14 Pādās (stanzas). Mārgamkali was widely prevalent in Travancore and other surrounding areas. In the late 1950s and 1960s this art-form was almost extinct. But, thanks to the interest taken by the Christians of Kottayam diocese

and the Bishop, it was given a new lease of life. In the last few years there has been a lot of enthusiasm and revival. This shall be dealt with in detail at a later stage.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM MĀRGAMKALI:

Traditionally Mārgamkali included Vaṭṭakkali (group dance in circle) performed for a particular Ballad called Mārgamkali pāṭṭu (Mārgamkali song, the gist of of the song is given at a later stage in this chapter) by men-folk. In the 9th stanza, where the theme (Mārgamkali pāṭṭu) deals with the arrest of St. Thomas and his companion Avan, Parisumuttukali (sword and shield dance) was performed. (3)

Mārgam, the literal translation is 'way' or 'path' , kali means dance. In the olden days conversion to Islam and Christianity was called Mārgam Kūtuka or joining the way. Those who embraced a new faith were called Mārgakkār (converts), in other words those who joined the new way.

In the Ramban Pāṭṭu (4) which is a well-known song on the activities of St. Thomas in Kerala, the word Mārgam is used to denote the religion of Christ, the way of Christ or those who practised Christian faith. Dr. Chummar Choondal explaining the term "way" and its usage in the Christian Scriptures and its theological significance writes (5) "The word for 'way' in Hebrew is Derek which occurs 710 times in the Hebrew Bible. Besides the literal sense it has the meaning 'life in obedience to, in accordance with, God's law', but it never has the meaning 'Religious Sect' ". This special sense accrues to our term in the writings of Jewish sectarians, or in the so-called Qumran text.

By Qumran texts we mean the manuscripts in Hebrew and Aramaic belonging to a group of Jewish sectarians who had broken away from official Judaism and had fixed their abode in the area of Qumran in the region of the Dead Sea. In their writings the term derek is frequently

used and quite often the word also has a dualistic sense derived ultimately from the traditions of ancient Iran. The Qumran community's mode of life is the supreme way, the way leading to salvation, and in this sense derek becomes synonymous with religion.

In the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, generally known as the Septuagint ('the Version of the Seventy') derek is rendered hodos (fem.) and this is a term that is well attested by Greek tradition. In Homor hodos has three series of meanings: 1) way, path, track, passage, road, 2) going journey, voyage, course, 3) means of journeying or passage, facilities for a journey. These three meanings are familiar in the works of classical writers as well, but at the same time they also use the term metaphorically; hence such meanings as way or manner, way of doing or speaking, course of action, method, system etc. In the tradition of the Greeks, hodos is never religion as such.

The Jewish philosopher Philo has evolved a special concept of hodos: Judaism, with its law, is the basilike hodos; " the royal road"; here hodos is a way of life or religion.

In the New Testament hodos occurs 78 times and in several instances its meaning is the obvious one, but in the following passages the sense is the metaphorical one, i.e. "way of life, faith, religion, sect". Acts 9,2: Saul asked the high priest " for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem". 18,25: The Jew Apollos " had been instructed in the way of the Lord". 18,26: Priscilla and Aquila " took him and expounded to him the Way of God more accurately". 19,9: At Corinth, " some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of Way before the congregation" 19,23: At that time there arose no little stir concerning the way. 22,4 (Paul is speaking): "I persecuted this Way

to death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women". 24,14 (Paul): "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our father". 24,22: "But Felix (the Roman Governor), having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off..." In these passage the Way is the Christian faith or religion as distinct from Judaism.

Hence one could understand that dance and music became part and parcel of these Christians of Kerala, commonly known as St.Thomas Christians and the dance performed by them was called the Mārgamkali.

HISTORICAL BACK-GROUND:

The intermediate verses in the first stanza of Mārgamkali clearly mention about the settlement of Knānāya Christians in Kerala under the leadership of Thomas of Cāna and Bishop Joseph of Ouraha (Edessa) and their wish to hold on together. This song is also based on Acta Thomae

written by Burdusan of Ouraha in the 2nd century.

Dr.Chummar Choondal writes (6) the scholars differ in their opinions regarding the authorship of this work (mārgamkali). According to P.J.Thomas , the exact authorship of these songs has not been traced and the attribution of it to Itti Thomman Kathanar, a priest of Kallussery diocese in Kottayam is speculative and controversial. According to T.M.Chummar the Mārgamkali songs underwent a number of linguistic metamorphosis in text with the new trends that developed through the centuries. However, the remarks made by him do not seem to be sound. Since inherent poetic characteristics of folk songs are absent, it is to be conjectured that it is the work of an individual. Thomas Makkil is of the opinion that Anjilimuttal Itti Thomman Kathanar, Knānāya priest of the 17th century, has re-fashioned Mārgamkali to the present form. All available evidence warrants the attributing

of the authorship of the work to Itti Thomman Kathanar who was a revolutionary Knānāya clergyman.

There is every possibility that the Mārgamkali songs must have been written first in Syriac language and later must have been translated into Malayalam by the local artists to suit their group dance.

It is difficult to fix the period of the origin of Mārgamkali (dance). According to Thomman Lukko, one of the veterans of this art-forms, Mārgamkali was performed by those people who came to India with Thomas of Cana. This hypothesis could hold because the song Mārgamkali itself speaks for the existence of this art-form among the people. Secondly dance was part and parcel of the life of the people in India. Andrew Athappilly in a research article on the Pre-Portuguese Kerala Church Art writes, " the Church architecture of Pre-Portuguese period very clearly depicts how harmoniously the Hindu and

Christian religions worked together. There were no hard feelings in the name of religion and the Christians did not think it was necessary for them to hate their old religion- Hinduism. They only saw the Christian religion as a perfection of Hindu religion. Hence they did not hesitate to place Kāli on the side of Our Lady and Hanuman on the side of angels! Even keeping Ganapathi's statue in the Church was nothing against their practice of Christian religion. The Hindu on the other hand considered Christian religion a part of their own religion. That is why Our Lady is considered as the sister of Kāli . There are several Churches even today where the Hindus actively participate in the annual feast. The musicians in the Church, especially for the feasts were Hindus. It was only after the Synod of Diamper that this practice was slowly abandoned. The Church art and architecture and the form of worship all made the Hindu feel at home". (7)

A Church that was Christian in faith, Indian in

culture and East Syrian in its worship must have had dance as its form of artistic and religious expression. However, the dance must not have been in an uniformed way among all the Christians of the place. Each area must have composed their own songs though the form must have been similar.

No clear description is found about the practice and the exact form of the existence of dance among the St. Thomas Christians in the early centuries. " The difficulty of studying the early history of Christianity in Kerala is increased by the fact that such sources for the history of Christianity in the region as did come down to modern times were burned to ashes after the Synod of Diamper in 1599. Therefore the Malabar Church has been left without authoritative documentation for the history of its ancient past. Our information concerning the early history of this Church must be derived from Syriac and Greek sources. These authors had no particular interest

in India, and therefore provide us with only scattered and disconnected fragments of evidence".⁽⁸⁾

Dr. Chummar Choondal in his research article on 'Folk Traditions of Kerala Christians writes:⁽⁹⁾" The ancient Christians of Kerala followed the tradition of Hindus almost in every respect, such as customs and manners, social organization, art and architecture, literature, cultural activities etc. During the Pre-Diamper period the Syrian Christians in common with the members of the various Hindu Castes, used to perform Kūttu, Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Mutiyēttu, Kriṣṇāṭṭam etc. on the occasion of marriage and other social festivities, but the decrees of the Diamper (1599) put an end to such practices on the plea of indecorum. But a number of Kalyāṇa Pāṭṭukal (marriage songs), Palli pāṭṭukal (songs related to the history of Church) Ramban Pāṭṭu, Mārgamkali pāṭṭu etc. which formed part of their cultural heritage still survive in some parts of Kerala.

Many a times in the Art-history , sculptures have been able to supply the needed information and insights into the unknown facts of the past and furnish us with the missing links of the development of art in a country or region. It is also true with regard to the early art-forms of the Christians in Kerala. There are very few sculptures still found connected with the Churches; most of them must have been destroyed after the Synod of Diamper (1599) as per the decrees of the Synod. The famous granite Cross of Kaduthuruthy (1) to a great extent explains the art-forms and the life of the Christians in the pre-Diamper era. According to the historical evidence, the construction work of Kaduthuruthy Valiapalli was completed in 1594 A.D. The granite cross in front of the Church was erected in 1597 and was blessed in 1599 by Alexis de Menezes, the Bishop of Goa⁽¹⁰⁾ and mentor of the Synod of Diamper. There are 8 sides for the basement of the cross where on two sides, the front and the left sides as we face the

Church, the dance sculptures are carved. Art-forms resembling Parisumuttukali and Mārgamkali can be seen respectively. Explaining the Granite Cross of Kaduthuruthy N.K.Jose writes:⁽¹¹⁾ " among the sculptures of Our Lady and the Child Jesus, at the foot of the Cross, there are also sculptures of hunting, dancing and war. What we may understand from this is that the things that inspired this imagination, during the period of these sculptures, were Christian Religion and along with that, war, hunting, dance etc. (Ādima Kerala Kraistavar)

The dance sculpture (2) on the left side as we face the cross and the church in the back-ground, suggests acrobatic and difficult movements. The figures are all male. The depth of the sculptures suggest that the movements of the dance must have been in a circle formation. The figure to the extreme right suggests the movement in which the present day Mārgamkali dancers perform- the Mukkani step resembles this. The second figure suggests

Irattivattam step (where the two consecutive leaps are taken in the air followed by landing on the floor with the knees bent in the front). The third and fourth figures are inter-locked in a circular shape. Both of them have their right leg bent and whereas the left leg is stretched in a half circular shape, each holding the feet of the other. The fourth figure rests on the right hand touching the floor and the third on its left leg. It looks at a distance like a perfect circle shaped by two human figures. From the depiction it looks that it must have been a very difficult and beautiful movement.

Though the stone cross was erected according to the historical documents in the year 1597 the art in the lower basement of the cross suggests a much earlier date." The Chaitya arch, one of the prominent Hindu Motifs found in the base of the stone cross helps us very much to determine the date. The Chaitya arch appears first with a human face inside it. This motif appears in the first stage of

temple architecture in the South. Ladkhan of the 5th century has this type of Chaitya arch. Kaduthuruthy (and several other) stone cross base has this arch with the head of an angel in it. (3) This Chaitya arch becomes more and more decorative in the later period and the face inside disappears and floral motifs come in. This is of a later development and we have this type of arch in abundance. Kadamattam baptismal font is a clear example".⁽¹²⁾

The life style of St.Thomas Christians must have taken many centuries to be able to be expressed in the sculptures. The dance sculptures in Kaduthuruthy is a clear indication that dance, especially Mārgamkali and Parisumuttukali must have been very much in practice among the Christians in the early centuries. But with the Synod of Diamper(1599), the artistic expression of the people must have literally been curbed and suppressed. During the 17th century the revolutionary priest Itti Thomman Kathanar must have edited and refashioned the Mārgamkali song and dance to the present

day form (14 stanzas). However, his efforts must not have been very successful due to the negative attitude of the Western Church, but at the same time it must have helped towards a definite shape and a form of Mārgamkali. Till the second half of 19th century the art-form was not very much in practice. However, it did exist here and there.

It was in the late 19th century according to the information gathered from the old Āsāns that the art-form was revived by Unni Āsān Kalarikal who had many disciples. Among them Indumoothil Kocheppu Āsānand his brother Indumoothil Kutty Āsān who in the early 20th century in turn had many disciples, among them Thomman Lukko of Kuvamallur, Thomman Uthupu Vattothoparampil of Kaduthuruthy, Kuruvilla Eringathuparampil of Eravaimangalam, Valiya Puthenpurayil Chummar of Neendoor, Thaiparampil Kuttappan Āsān of Mullassery are a few to be mentioned.

After the independence of India, Mārgamkali again

had a set-back and was on the verge of its extinct. But in the 1970s the Kottayam Diocese and the Knānāya Syrian Christians have taken pains to revive and popularise Mārgamkali under the leadership of Bishop Kunnassery of Kottayam, Dr.Vellian Jacob, Dr.Kollaparampil and ably guided and encouraged by the research conducted by Dr.Chummar Choondal on this above mentioned art-form.

THEME AND ITS IMPORTANCE:

The theme and song of Mārgamkali dance play an important role in understanding the significance of this art-form. The song is based on St.Thomas, the great Apostle of Jesus Christ who is said to have come to India in the year 52 A.D. In the Mārgamkali song there is an elaborate description of the arrival, work, his relation with the local people, difficulties and problems and finally his persecution and end have been incorporated in the 14 stanzas (pādās) of the song. The song throws

light into the historical, geographical and socio-political life of the people of Kerala in those times. Thomas Makkil (14) in an article has made a detailed analysis of the song Mārgamkali. Chummar Choondal (15) gives a substantial rendering of the dance songs so vital and indispensable to Mārgamkali: ' The theme is the dream of a beautiful mansion by Chozhan, probably a Chola King of Mylapore country, the sending of his Minister, Avan, to bring in a Master Architect, the bringing in of St.Thomas, the delight of the King on seeing a fine drawing by the Apostle, the collecting of innumerable materials, St.Thomas going away on Gospel work to Kerala and thence to Malacca and China, imprisoning of the Holy Man on his return by the irate King, the ailment and apparent death of the heir, his soul being taken by Angels to heaven where it beholds the fair mansion prepared for Chozhan and its return to life telling the King of the good tidings, the conversion of the Royal family and a multitude of followers, the lancing of the Saint by the Embrans who

are the priests of the temple and the taking of the body to Chinna Malai, now called the Little Mount.

This ancient song is made up of fourteen pādās or stanzas. As usual the song begins with a Vandanagītam or invocation. Though the opening lines may refer to Christian mayilvāhanam (rider on peacock likened to the sitter on the cherubim) Christ; the concluding portion distinctly calls upon St. Thomas to come, help and bless. The intermediate lines in the first stanza clearly indicate the venue, as well as the immigration of the Knānāya Christians; their colonization under the aegis of Thomas of Cana and Bishop Joseph of Ouraha (Edassa) and their jubilant wish to hold together for ever. It is based on Acta of Thomas written by Burdusan of Ouraha of 3rd century.

The second stanza describes the dream of Chozhan in which he saw a beautiful mansion. The Poet likens it to Solomon's temple. The King sends Avan with much money and

retinue to the West to engage a skillful architect. So he sails westward.

In the third stanza Avan prays to the Sea for all goodness to save him from its perils and grant him a bon voyage. Thus escaping the troubles of wind and weather, the party reaches Mahosa (The City) meaning Jerusalem, safe and sound. There our Lord appeared to him.

The fourth stanza records the ensuing dialogue between the two and the maron (Lord) promises an architect within quarter of an hour.

In the fifth stanza our Lord describes the skill of the promised architect in various arts. Meanwhile Angels carry the twin born one in the guise of an artisan from Ruha (Edessa) through the air and he stands before the other who holds the world in his left hand.

The sixth stanza notes the delight of Avan on the

new arrival and his intuitive feeling that he is an expert in architecture. Avan prays for farewell, and our Lord imparts a farewell message to St. Thomas. But the latter feels perturbed on seeing the outlandish party and falls prostrate, mourning, at the feet of the Master.

The seventh stanza describes the mourning of St. Thomas and the grounds thereof. He recounts the various difficulties and obstacles in the Hindu land. Firstly he describes the terrain, full of jungles with a lot of serpents. Then he complains that the people are not humane, the parents have no affection towards their children and the children have no love for parents, evidently alluding to the matriarchal family system. The custom of wedding the deceased virgin is referred to, as also cremation (there was an ancient custom among the Malayalam Brahmins that if a virgin died unwedded, the marriage ceremony must still be performed, even to the extent of consumation. Abbe Dubois attests to this). This apostle then refers to

certain other aspects of society, ending in a protestation that while apostles in twos are sent to other countries, he is sent to India alone.

The eighth stanza begins with the famous consoling reply of the Lord " think not that thou art alone. I am with thee wherever thou goest. Be not worried that they are not men in the Hindu land. All classes of mankind are evil doing animals, I will direct your words, looks and thoughts. Be not perturbed; thy thinking is all my thinking. I am now going to sell you. Completing the seven words of sale, I am giving the chit". Avan tenderly contemplating the great ancient one, paid a heavy sum and received the chit. The Lord of all the three worlds, handed the cash to Thomas and spoke tender words to his heart's content and bid affectionate farewell. Avan and St.Thomas set sail and they reached the seat of Chozhan. The King was pleased at the coming and was enraptured at the drawing made by St.Thomas of the mansion and ordered Avan to supply whatever

the architect wanted. St.Thomas gave to the needy all the cash that was given to him. Admonishing that no body should be pestered in the matter of collecting the materials, he left the place saying that he would return within a year with the necessary tools.

The ninth is the longest stanza. It begins with a description of the activities of the King and the ministers by way of preparation. St.Thomas passes beyond Chozha's Kingdom preaching the gospel. He attends the marriage feast of the daughter of Paul, evidently a Jew in Cranganore. Offended at his giving blessing, some one slapped him on the cheek. A tiger did bite off his right hand, a dog managed to bring it to the Holy man who thereupon restored it to the owner. At this Paul and his people received baptism. Then he repaired to Malaca and China. To keep his word he returned to Mylapore. After some time he came to Mallyankara near Cranganore and preached the gospel, erected a cross and ordained two worthy persons. Thereafter

he started South preaching at Quilon, Niranam, Chayal, Kokamangalam, Kottaykkal, and Palayur and erected crosses there. In his absense Chozhan's people became frenzied and spoke many evil words about Thomas. The King became angry and sent for him far and wide. St.Thomas was at last brought before the King. Without losing his temper the King talked business. He said that time was long past, that all wealth had been expended on stone and timber, that the shape of things had not yet appeared, that not even the foundation had been laid. To this St.Thomas besought him to hear him patiently. " Instead of a house of stone and timber, a house of gold most beautiful and most soul-satisfying is built for you in heaven". At this the King was struck dumb. A little later he roared like a lion and ordered Thomas to be imprisoned along with Avan.

The tenth stanza describes the utter despondancy of Chozhan. Profoundly disconsolate, he calls in his brother. The King confessed that his reign is a failure, that his

brother shall reign instead. The brother felt sad. He became ill. Woeful imaginings made him worse day by day. The Angels then took his soul to heaven, where he saw the mansion inscribed to the name of Chozhan; he was delighted beyond measure.

The eleventh stanza describes the return of the soul to its abode of flesh while preparation was going on for cremation. The body stirred and then arose. The brother respectfully approached the King and embracing him described his experience. Being fully satisfied they went to the prison, falling prostrate and begging forgiveness and set the Holy man free.

The twelfth stanza describes the gossips, murmurings of the common folk as to what should be done to the squanderer of the Kingdom's wealth. Some suggested forthwith execution, others banishment. They did not know the imprisonment and the strange manner of liberation. But the Apostle was honourably seated in the midst of the

Royal household, receiving the gospel. Thereupon expatiating on the gospel tidings of great joy, Chozhan, brother, Avan and many others received baptism in the name of God.

The thirteenth stanza relates the rapid progress of Christianity. Once in the course of his journey he passed by a grove temple dedicated to the Goddess Kālī. He was identified and surrounded. The Apostle refused and threatened destruction of the temple by fire, in case they persisted. The priests took up the challenge. Thereupon filling his eyes with concentrated soulfire and looking fixedly at the idol, Mar Thomman willed that the temple be burnt with fire. Fire broke out and the temple was in flames and Kālī came to the feet of the Holy man in the guise of a dog. A priest who escaped the flames jumped forward with a lance and inflicted a mortal wound in the heart of the Saint.

The concluding stanza relates how by the order of the Author of all goodwill, angels hasten to the scene and

carry him to the Little Mount. In the midst of celestial symphonies they carry his holy spirit to the white throne of God.

TECHNIQUE AND TRAINING:

The Mārgamkali has a technique of its own and the training is given by the Āsāns (Gurus) in the Kalari . Kalari is very much connected with the performing arts of Kerala especially the martial arts. It is a thatched shed where the training is given to the disciples by the Gurus. Mārgamkali is a vigorous dance where we find Tandava style of dance.

Accepting the Disciples:

On an auspicious day new students are accepted by the Āsān for imparting training. The disciples give Gurudaksina to the master in a beetle leaf. There is no fixed amount of money. Then the disciple touches the feet of the Guru who places his right hand on the head of the students' and

accepts him as his disciple. The training is imparted usually in the night.

THE METHODOLOGY:

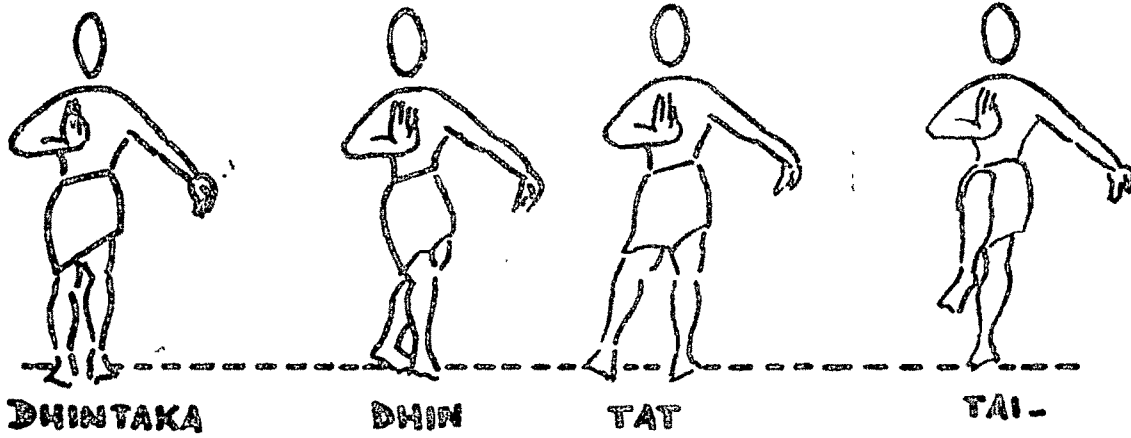
The primary training is to get the rhythm into the understanding of the student. This is done by way of making the student strike their feet alternatively in a simple common rhythm. In the second stage dance proper and singing is taught simultaneously. First, the Āsān sings and demonstrates, then all the students repeat and perform the movement done by the Āsān. Once the dance is learnt together with the song, the dance goes on though the singing is done alternatively by the Āsān in solo and the disciples in chorus. It is already mentioned elsewhere there are 14 Pādās (stanzas) in the Mārgamkali. The students learn these stanzas one after the other. It takes a minimum of 3 months and maximum of one year to learn thoroughly for a talented and interested student.

During the course of the field work and interviews, it was told by the Āsāns that there are 14 Pādās or steps. But on a closer observance one could find that these 14 pādās are 14 pieces dance choreography and the basic steps. The basic steps in Mārgamkali are called cuvatu . There are 5 basic steps in Mārgamkali:

1. Thintaka thintat tai: Strike the right foot in the Sama Pāda position keeping the left hand in Dola hasta and the right hand in Ardhachandra position in front of the chest. With a slight move to the right strike the left leg behind the right on the second beat and on the third beat strike the left leg again and lift the right in the front. The 4th beat will be silent giving the typical pose of Mārgamkali.

2. Mukkani: This step is set to the 7-beat rhythm. Here two triangles are formed in executing this particular step. The hands are kept in the similar position as the first step. The dancers stand keeping almost a 4" space between the two feet. On the first beat the right foot

BASIC STEPS OF MĀRGAMKALĪ



1.

DHINTAKA DHINTAT TAI
 TAI TAITA TAIYA TAI KARGU
 TĀHA TAIYAT TAI KARGU
 DHARIKITA TIMRUTAT TAITA KARGU
 TATTHŌM TAKATŌM DHIGITAKA TĀHATA
 TAI TAI TANGU THINA THADIGINATHOM
 TAT THŌM TAKATOM DHIGITAKA TĀHATA
 TANGU THINA THADIGINATHOM
 TANGU THINA THADIGINATHOM.

2. STEP.NO. 2. MUKKANAI

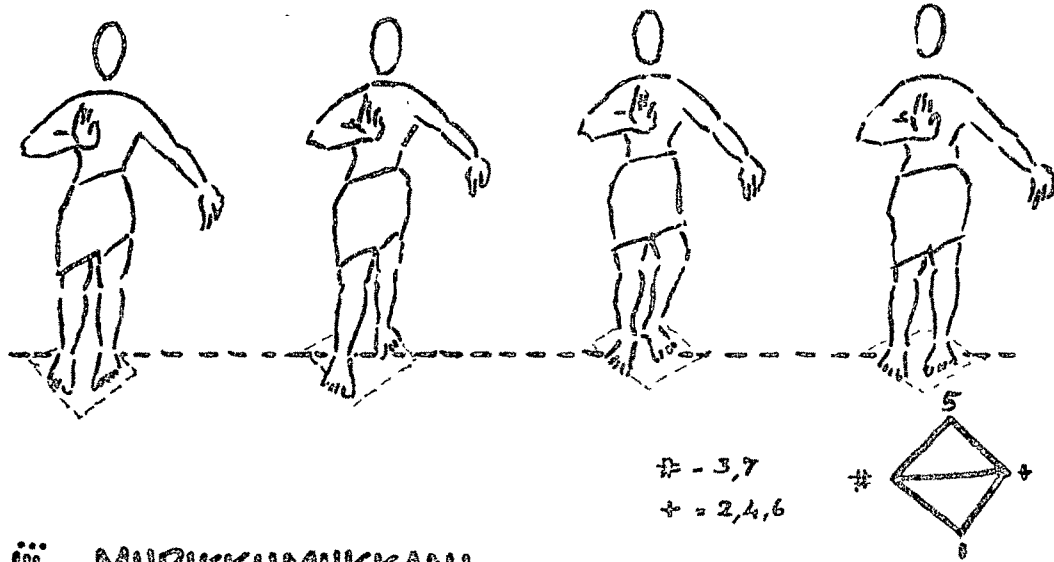
THON DHIN DHĀ DHIN DHAIKAITOM TAKARGU
 TAT TOM TAKATŌM DHIKITAKA TĀHATA TAI TAI
 TANGU THINNA THADIGINATOM TAT THŌM
 TAKATHŌM TANGU THINNA THADIGINATHOM.

is stamped to the front, the left foot is stamped in the same place, for the 3rd and 4th beat right and left foot is stamped in the original place 3'-4' then the right foot is stamped behind the left on the 5th beat, 6th beat by the left foot and on the 7th beat the right foot comes to its original place. After this, the same is repeated on the left side.

3. Murukku Mukkani: When Mukkani is performed in double speed or faster tempo, it is called Murukku Mukkani.

4. Irattivattam: (Double Round)

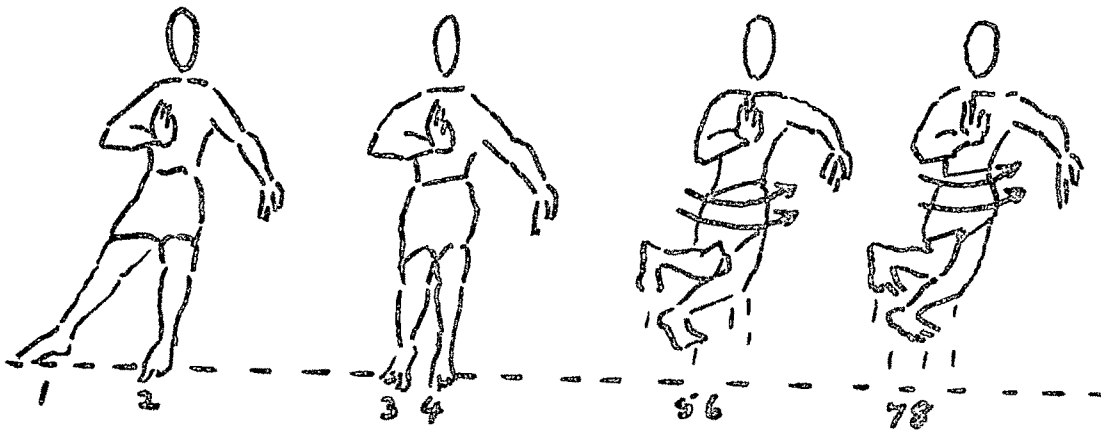
Stand in the typical Mārgankali posture for the first beat, strike the right foot to the right, the second beat by the left in the same place. For the 5th and 6th beats the dancer takes the first leap in the air and for the 7th and 8th beats he takes the second leap in the air and the same movement is repeated by starting on the left side.



iii. MURIKKUMUKKANI.

WHEN MUKKANI IS PERFORMED
IN DOUBLE SPEED OR FASTER SPEED,
THEN IT IS CALLED MURIKKUMUKKANI.

iv. IRATTIVATTOM

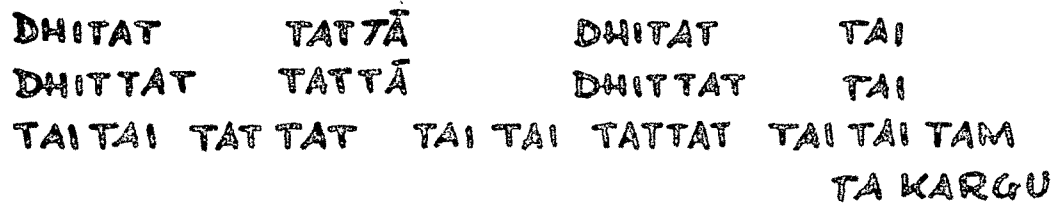


DHIT TAI IDA DDAI DHON TAI IDA -
DHIT TAI IDA DHON DHON TAI IDA
TAT THOM TAKA THOM DHIGITAKA
TAHATA TAI TAI TANGU DHINNA
TADIGINATHAM TAHATA TANGU DHINNA
TADIGINATHAM DHINNA TADIGINATHAM.

5. Kacca Pādam: Here the dancer goes forward by striking the heel (Natt) of the right foot on the first beat and bringing back the same and striking in Tattu (full sole of the foot). The right hand is kept in Ardhachandra in front of the chest and left in Dola hasta to the side (for detailed movements of the basic steps, refer the diagram on the following pages).

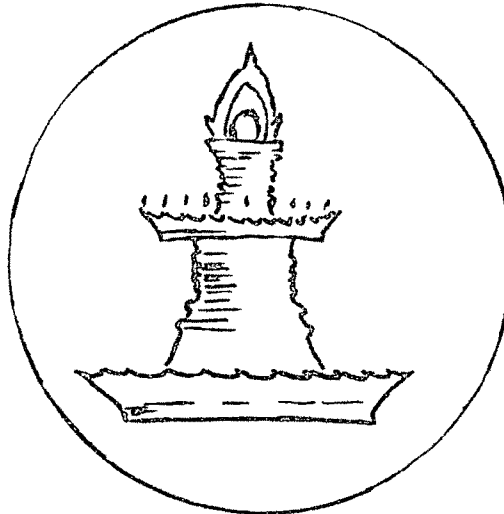
Simple and appropriate gestures are used according to the broad meaning of the song. There is no word to word interpretation of the song in gesture-language by the performers.

There are also the ending syllables which they commonly call Kalāsams. In places like Tamil Nadu it is called Muktāya. Kalāsams suggest that a particular choreographic piece of dance or a particular stanza (pāda) is to be ended. There are many Kalāsams. If the Guru is very innovative he can have 14 Kalāsams corresponding to the 14 stanzas of the Mārgamkali song. However, they use a



TAT THŌM TAKATHŌM DIGITAKA TAHATA
THANGU DHINNA THADIGHINATHOM TANGU
DHINNA THADIGINATHAM THADIGINATHAM.

NILAVILAKKU - TRADITIONAL LAMP



•

1 2 3 4
Tak kita kita taki Dharikita kita taki

(1)

1 2 1 2
Takit tongom To Inga Thadinginathom
(o) (o)

iv) 1 2 3 4
Dhi thi Taiyam Tat ta
(1)

1 2 1 2
Dhigu thi Taiyam Tat ta
(o) (o)

1 2 3 4
Dhi Taihai Dhigu Taihai
(1)

1 2 1 2
Dhit tai Itta Dhitta Thimurtat Tai
(o) (o)

v) 1 2 3 4
Dhi Tam Dhit Dhit Tam
(1)

1 2 1 2
Dhi Tam Dhit Dhit Tam Kargu
(o) (o)

1 2 3 4
Dhit Dhit Tam Kargu Dhit Dhit Tam Kargu
(1)

1 2 1 2
Dhit tat That tat Dhita Dhigitat Tai
(o) (o)

BASIC POSTURES:

In Mārgamkali there are many postures executed at various parts of the dance sequence. However, two basic postures can be noticed which are very important and frequently used in the choreography of this art-form.

PRARAMBHA STHĀNA (Beginning Posture)

Every pādā (stanza) and its corresponding choreographic pattern begins with the posture where the dancers stand erect in Sama Pāda (standing with two feet alike) leaving a gap of 4-5 inches of space between the feet. They keep their hands in dōla hasta (Pataka hasta is placed on the thigh). The head is also held in Sama (level)

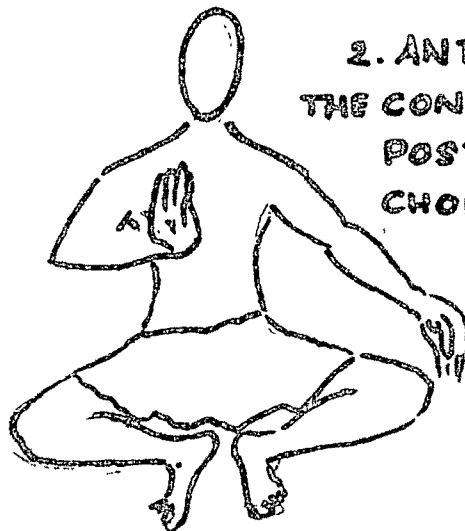
ANTHIMA STHĀNA (Concluding Posture)

The concluding of a choreographic pattern in all the pādās is ended with a still posture. (4) In this the dancer after a small leap in the air lands on the front portion of his feet in Murumandi (complete sitting posture).

BASIC POSTURES OF MARGAMKALI



1. PRARAMBHA STĀNAM
BEGINNING POSTURE OF
A CHOREOGRAPHIC
PATTERN.



2. ANTIMA STĀNAM.
THE CONCLUDING OR LAST
POSTURE OF A
CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN.

The knees are placed 45° to the centre which enables them to sit in a comfortable way. The right hand is placed in front of the chest in Ardhachandra hasta (half moon) keeping the palm facing outward. The left hand is held to the left side to the shoulder level. At the end of every Kalāsam the dancer executes this posture. Whatever be the choreographic composition the Beginning (Prarambha) and the Concluding (Anthima) postures are always the same in all places.

ARANGĒTRAM:

After a period of learning which is minimum three months , a student performs in the public. The parents and relations of the boy take great pride in making the function a grand one. Usually an expensive gift is given to the Āsān, it may vary from a Dhōti to a gold ring. Otherwise the gift given by students is as per their wishes and capacity.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

The performance of Mārgamkali usually takes place during the celebration of marriage or Church festivals. At times it is also performed on special occasions like Christening day of a baby in the family etc. The venue of the performance is in the court-yard of the Church or in the Pantal of the wedding party. At a prescribed time Āsān comes along with the young Mārgamkali dancers to the house of the wedding party. He is given a traditional warm welcome by the head of the family. Then the preparation for the dance begins.

In the centre of the performing place the traditional lamp with 12 wicks is placed by the head of the family or a respectable person on a stool or a raised small platform. The Āsān comes forward and lights the 12 wicks of the traditional lamp and stands by the side of the burning lamp. At this each Mārgamkali dancer comes forward, touches the flames of the traditional lamp and touches with

same hands his own chest and forehead. After this he goes and touches the feet of the Āsān (5) and the Guru blesses him placing his hand on the head of the disciple. Now all the 12 dancers and Guru in the centre get ready for the performance.

VANDANAGĪTAM:

As usual the performance starts with the Vandanagītam or invocation song. The Āsān recites the lines and the dancers repeat the same in chorus. Here all of them stand in a circle facing the lamp in the centre (6). After the first stanza , they start clapping the hands. In some places like Chamakala they stand in the same place and in other places like Eravaimangalam they walk in rhythm towards the right, keeping circle formation around the lamp (7). With a Kalāsam the Vandanagītam is concluded.

After the Vandanagītam, the performers again stand in the Prārambha Stāna and begin the next stanza.

The choreography will defer from stanza to stanza and from teacher to teacher, but the style and format remains the same. The Āsān while composing, uses the basic 5 steps according to his imagination and vision. The stanzas are usually sung in three speed (Kālam) pattern using the same choreography and steps. Normally the choreography begins with the first step (8) (thinthaka thintha tai) and is continued as per the composition of each Āsān(9,10,11)

MANGALAM:

The last song is usually sung by standing in folded hands around the lit lamp. The text is normally about the particular Church where the dance takes place. After this each dancer touches the flame and feet of the Āsān and pays homage to both. The whole performance is concluded in a devotional spirit.

In Mārgamkali performance there are only 12 performers denoting the twelve Apostles of Christ. The flame having

12 wicks also spells out the same idea. The Āsān is to be considered as the representative of Christ. The lamp lit in the centre is like a pivot holding the 12 together and 12 performers dance in the circle drawing strength from Jesus, the lamp. Whatever movements or steps these dancers perform, their eyes are always directed towards the lamp.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS:

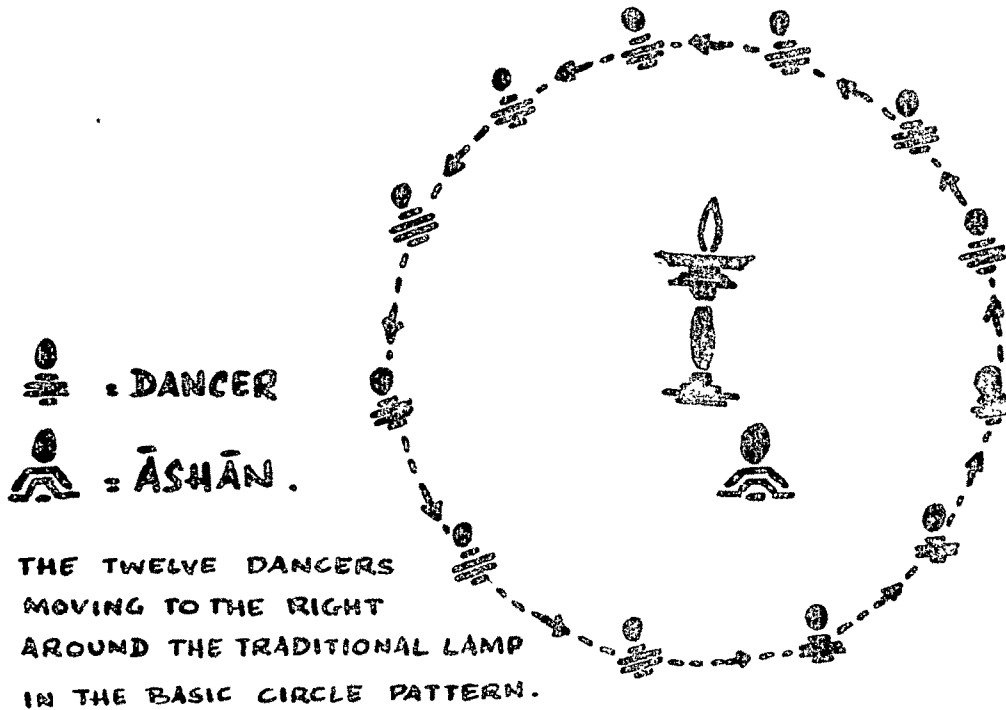
The basic choreography is developed around the circle formation. The lamp in the centre is kept as the connecting point for all the dancers. They never show their back to the lamp. When they jump, which is very common and frequent, they always land on the ground facing the lamp. A few striking choreographic patterns can be observed in the line-drawings given in the adjoining pages.

MUSIC:

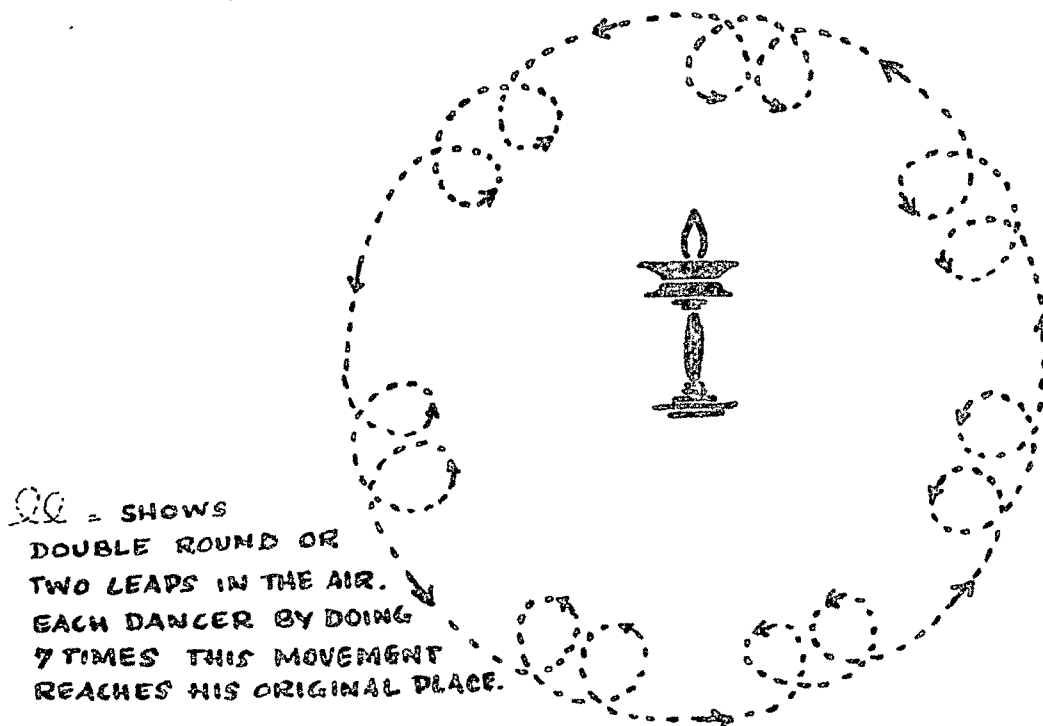
Mārgamkali music has a special characteristic of its own. A well-known folklorist of Kerala Dr. Chummar Choondal

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS OF MARGAMKALI.

VARIATION . NO.1



VARIATION NO. 2.



writes:⁽¹⁶⁾ " Mārgamkali Pāṭṭu was composed in popular metric pattern namely Kākali, Unakākali, Misrakākali etc. But the composition of the songs do not strictly conform to the rules of these metrical patterns". Further he says " the music of Mārgamkali songs is akin to that of the chanting of Syrian liturgy. No musical instruments were used for providing accompaniment. The mode of chanting Syriac liturgy was adapted to Mārgamkali songs presumably because the songs were rendered by the Syrian Church choirs".

The melodies are composed in three to four notes only. According to Prof.C.V.Chandrasekhar⁽¹⁷⁾, it resembles the music of Sāmagāna style or Sāma chanting of the South. It is also very close to the music of the Toda tribes of Nilgiris (Tamilnadu), a tribe which still keeps its ancient art-forms and customs. Dr.Jacob Vellian⁽¹⁸⁾ is of the opinion that "the spirit and melody of Mārgamkali, basically is in Dravidian tunes with a touch of Syrian chants. The initial and concluding invocation for divine

help separately in these songs also suggest its close resemblance to Vedic chants". In the recent years new trends of music and songs have crept into the Mārgamkali dance style. The music such as Vancippāṭṭu has been introduced in the villages of Mallussery, Onamthuruthu etc. At times the Mangalagānam is also sung in the Kummi style.⁽¹⁹⁾

LYRICS:

It is said that lyrics originally might have been composed in Syriac language and later translated into Malayalam. This is possible because the St. Thomas Christians had Syriac as their liturgical language and Mārgamkali is very much connected with their spiritual father St. Thomas and their faith. It is also possible since the Christians of that time adapted to the local culture and customs, like having Pancavādyam for the Church and other celebrations etc, the Mārgamkali Pāṭṭu must have been originally composed in Malayalam itself. Whatever be the

case, the present day song has many Syriac liturgical words like Sliha (Cross) ,Mālākha (angel),Mahōsa (city) Māmōdīsa(baptism) ,Maran (Lord), Misha(Jesus) etc. However, Persian and Portuguese words are not seen in the text. Interestingly , there are many peculiar words and its usage has been utilised effectively in the text of the Mārgamkali song. " Those words might possibly have been borrowed from the Tamil language because Mārgamkali has close affinity with the Cindu kind of song composition, which was popular in Tamil language during the period".(20)

DRESS:

The dress used for the Mārgamkali is very simple. In the olden days they had only two white pieces of clothes on their body. Muntu is long piece of white cloth tied around the waist. They tie it in such a way that inspite of vigorous and fast movements it remains as if it is a stitched costume. Tōrtt is a long white towel tied to their head. Usually there is a scapular or a cross worn around

the neck. These days many of them have introduced sleeveless banyans in addition to the above mentioned dress.

EXPONENTS:

Most of the Mārgamkali Āsāns are from the Knānāya Christian community. The art-form is also mainly practised by them. Till recently, Mārgamkali troupes were found in places such as Kottayam, Changanacherry, Thodupuzha, Vaikom, Shertallai, Thiruvalla etc. At present, performances are conducted in the villages of Kottayam district, like Kaduthuruthy, Uzhavur, Chungam, Neendur, Onanthuruthu, Udayamperur etc. In the district of Alleppey, places like Kannamali, Chellanam, Pallithodu, Thaikkal, Mararikulam, Kalavur, Chambakkulam etc. have the performance.

During the field-work some of the Āsāns who are actively involved in training the youngsters were interviewed and their work was observed. Marangattil Thomman Lukko of Kovamallur , aged 72 years gives training in Mārgamkali at various places like Chamakala (12), Arunnoottimangalam,

Cherpunkal and Kumaron. He is considered to be one of the foremost veterans in this above-mentioned art-field. He learnt under Indumoothil Kutty Āsān and Indumoothil Kocheppu Āsān from Manjoor. Lukko Āsān has regular Kalari at Onamthuruthu under the auspices of St. Stephen's Yuvajana Samajam. P.J. Joseph Āsān from Chamakal assists Lukko Āsān with his singing. P.J. Joseph Āsān who learnt from Mathai Mudiparambil from Neendur is one of the few expert singers of Purātana Pāttukal .

Thomman Uthuppu Vattothuparambil (13) from Kaduthuruthy also has many students. During the field work he was found teaching small children (14). He is the first one to introduce lady-performers into Mārgamkali. In Moolamattom he has a troupe of girls who learn from him. Rev. Tharackal from Neendur and Francis Placky from Kothamangalam are his disciples , who teach Mārgamkali in their respective areas. Uthuppu Āsān also learnt from Indumoothil Kocheppu Āsān and Indumoothil Kutty Āsān from Manjoor.

Kuruvilla Erigattuparambil (15) from Eravaimangalam, learnt Mārgamkali from Mathai Poothekary from Manjoor, one of the disciples of Indumoothil Kutty Āsān from Manjoor and Thadipuzha Thoma from Kallala. Kuruvilla Āsān is assisted by M.J. Joseph Manimalapuram from Eravaimangalam. St.Mary's Mārgamkali Yōgam (troupe) is a performing troupe sponsored by the Eravaimangalam church.

There are some more Āsāns who also give regular training, namely Thaiparambil Kuttappan Āsān from Mallussery, Valia Puthanpurayil Chummar from Neendur and a few more who are not very well known. At present one finds youngsters taking a lot of interest in learning this art-form. The old Āsāns are very keen on popularising Mārgamkali and handing over their experience and knowledge to the youngsters' generation. This trend is to a great extent supported by the Kottayam Bishop Kunnassery and the Knānāya Community of Christians.

REFERENCES

1. Before the coming of the Portuguese to Kerala there were two traditions regarding the growth and development of Christianity in Kerala. i) The Apostolic tradition of St. Thomas Christians. In the year 52 A.D. St. Thomas came to Malyankara near Cranganore in Kerala, preached to the natives and converted many people. These were called Vatakkumbhāgam or Northists because their settlement was in the north of the city. ii) Colonial tradition of Thomas Cana. In the year 345 A.D. Thomas of Cana, a merchant from Jerusalem came with 72 families, a few priests, deacons and a certain Bishop Joseph of Urha and settled down in the Southern part of Cranganore city and they were rightly called Southists or Tekkumbhāgam in vernacular. However, both were called St. Thomas Christians. At present Mārgamkali is mostly performed by the Knānāya Syrian Christians who belong to the Kottayam Diocese.

2. Vasco da Gama left Lisbon on 7th June 1497 and after his voyage around Cape of Good Hope landed at Kapad near Calicut on the Malabar coast on the 14th May 1498.
3. Information gathered from one of the Mārgamkali Āsāns (teacher) Thomman Uthuppu, Vattothuparambil, Neezhōor Post, Kaduthuruthy, Kottayam.
4. For details A.W.Mundadan. Traditions of the Apostle of St.Thomas (Bangalore: 1970) pp. 60-61
5. Chummar Choondal, Studies in Folklore of Kerala (College Book House, Trivandrum, 1978) pp. 58-59
6. For particulars refer: Chummar Choondal, Christian Folk Songs , Kerala Folklore Academy, (Trichur 1981) page 49.
7. Christian Heritage of Kerala Edited by K.John , Pub.George Veliparambil, (Cochin 1981) pp-80-81
8. Ibid , p.1
9. Ibid, p.111
10. For particulars refer: Mathew Cherusseril, Kaduthuruthy Valiyapalli, Knānāyarute Mātrudēvālayam , (Kottayam

- 1982) p.
11. Ibid, page 61
 12. Op.cit. Christian Heritage of Kerala, page 80
 13. For particulars refer Chummar Choondal, Studies in Folklore of Kerala , page 55
 14. Thomas Makil, Mārgamkali, Tiruhādaya Māsika, December Special Number, Kottayam 1953
 15. Chummar Choondal, Christian Folk Songs, Pub.Kerala Folklore Academy (Trichur,1983) pp.45-48
 16. Op.cit. Studies in Folklore of Kerala ,pp.53-54
 17. Prof.C.V.Chandrasekhar, at present is the Dean of the Faculty of Performing Arts and Head of the Dept. of Dance, M.S.University. He is well-versed both in Carnatic and Hindustani Music.
 18. Dr.Jacob Vellian is a professor of Liturgy and Music, St.Thomas Pontifical Institute for Oriental Studies, Kottayam.
 19. For particulars: Chummar Choondal, Mārgamkali ,

(Kottayam 1973) pp.49-56

20. Op.cit. Studies in Folklore of Kerala, p.53

LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED OR CONSULTED

INSTITUTE AFFILIATIONS ARE INDICATED WHERE RELEVANT

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Role/Designation</u>
1.Thomman Lukka Marangattil	Neendur	Āsān
2.Kuttiyāsān Enthummothil	"	"
3.Joseph P.T.Palathadathil	Manjoor	"
4.Kuruvilla Erikattuprambil	Eravamangalam	"
5.Ouseph Joseph Manimalapurathu	"	"
6.Thomman Uthuppu Vattothuprambil	Kaduthuruthy	"
7.Dr.Jacob Vellian	Kottayam	Professor (Musicologist)
8.Dr.Chummar Choondal	Trichur	Secretary, Kerala Folklore Academy, Eminent Folk- lorist and research Scholar.

b) PARISUMUTTUKALI:

The meaning of Parisumuttukali can be derived by analysing the word itself which is the combination of three words: Parisu = Sword, muttu = Shield and kali = Play (dance). This is one of the folk-dances of Kerala, martial in nature and is performed by skillful manipulations of sword and shield by the dancers. During the performance one can see the striking of swords and shields against each other by the players. Each dancer is skilled in the use of the sword and shield, keeping to the tune of song and rhythmic movements in different patterns and forms. The main principle is attack and defence by the dancers.

Kerala, a land known for its diverse cultural forms, also offers a wide variety in the martial arts. These dance-forms are common among all the three main religious communities in Kerala, i.e. Hindus, Muslims and Christians, although called by different names.

Parisumuttukali of the Christians has a relation to

the "Kalari" and the martial arts of the other religious communities of Kerala. Kalari has been derived from the Sanskrit Khallorika, which means a military training ground. " An institution which once prevailed all over Kerala, is the Kalari which served the martial needs of the land in the early days, training the youth in the arts of defence and offence through a course of well-planned and carefully regulated system of physical practices and exercises". (1)

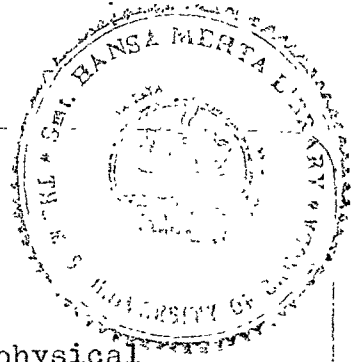
The impact of Kalari was " not only in the realm of physical culture, its influence was equally strong on the educational and religious aspects of social life in Kerala, for every dēsam or locality had its Kalari and every Kalari had associated with it a Pāthasāla , or school imparting primary education to the boys and girls of the locality. It is thus the Kalari , as an institution, that has been ultimately responsible for the high literacy of the people, a literacy which Kerala has maintained to

this day. Not only is the Kalari a temple of learning, it is also a temple of religious worship, with a cult and ritual of its own, sacred to the Kalari Paradēvata, as Bhagavati is known in her role as the guardian deity presiding over every Kalari". (2)

Among the Hindu community there are many forms of this martial art being practized, i.e. Vēlakali, Kontoti, Kayyankali, Ōccirakali etc. However, " among the martial plays Vēlakali of Travancore stands prominent. Designed to keep alive the practice of military tactics in times of peace, Vēlakali now survives as a mock fight on occasions of festivals in temples..... The fight staged is the battle of Kurukshetra, between the Pandavas and the Kouravas. At Trivandrum, during the Pangun festival, Vēlakalikkars assemble from various taluks, and Mathur Pannikker commands the battalion and leads the attack on the Pandavas, who are represented by gigantic wooden images erected for the occasion in front of Sri Padmanabha

Swamy temple. The Pandavas being the victors, the Kouravas at the end of the offensive , retreat in a stampede up the temple steps. The players also give exhibitions of single combats. Two of the young warriors step to the front, and to the tune of music perform feats with the swords and shield and display their skill in fencing. They then retire and fall into line. Another pair take the field and go through similar exercises. The performance of Vēlakali is repeated every day of the festival and provides entertainment to the crowds of sightseers and worshippers". (3)

Vēlakali is an attempt to synthesise the epic stories (Pandavas and Kouravas) with the martial arts of the medieval period, commemorating the past stories of the fighting heroes. It is also integrated with their religious practices by the very fact that they perform it during the temple feasts and in the temple premises enacting the Mahabharata scenes where the good wins over the evil.



Here, martial arts are not just limited to the physical life of man but are taken into the spiritual realm as well.

KONTOTI:

Kontoti is prevalent in the region of Travancore. The play begins with the two parties standing opposite each other at a distance, ready for the fight. A player from one party walks into the fighting arena with a small ball and another player from the opposite party comes into the arena to fight for the ball. When one of them is defeated, another member from the defeated party challenges the player who has the control of the ball. The party which gains the ball last is declared 'successful.'

KAYYĀNKALI:

Kayyānkali is performed just like Kontoti. However, when the opponents come to the arena they come to blows. Blows and counter blows, fists and counter-fists are the mode of the fight. The elbow serves as shield and the

right arm as the weapon of attack.

ŌCCIRAKALI:

Ōccirakali is similar to Vēlakali with the difference that there are two opposing parties fighting each other with sword and shield. The three types of martial arts mentioned above are mainly for exhibition of skill, entertainment and social purposes, but Vēlakali is mainly a religious art-form.

PARICAKALI:

Paricakali is a folk-play entertaining in character, found among the Mappilas of the Northern part of Malabar. Mappilas are Muslims. " It is played under the direction of a gurukkal or teacher who trains the boys in Kalari in a covered shed erected for the purpose. The boys, gaudily dressed, holding short staves of uniform length in one hand, and small light red coloured straw board shield in the other, move merrily round each striking the

staff against that of his neighbour, and soon tread a lively measure with varying poses and movements of the body, steadily accelerating the speed, while the preceptor taking his stand in the centre of the group gives the directions of the poses and movements in a sharp and loud voice, ringing above the din of the clash of the sticks, and the rhythmic noise of the beating of the shields. Each play lasts for almost half an hour. A group of such boys all of the same size in their uniform Kacca or loin cloth secured by the leather belts, bare body and a red kerchief tied over their skull caps, with stick and shield in their hands, make a striking display and a sight which is most impressive. Though the training is always inside the Kalari, performances are held outside and public shows are commonly given on occasions of festivities such as marriage ceremonies within the community, when the players are engaged to give special displays". (4)

Historically, the martial arts of the Hindus existed

in India long before it was incorporated into the life of the Muslims and Christians.

PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE CHRISTIANS:

Among the Christians of Kerala , Parisumuttukali is found in varied forms and styles in different communities and denominations with striking similarities and peculiarities. During the recent field-work, Parisumuttukali was found in three different Christian denominations and communities, i.e.

- i) Parisumuttukali of the Syrian⁽⁵⁾ Christians,
- ii) Parisumuttukali of the Latin Christians and
- iii) Parisumuttukali of the Orthodox Jacobite Christians.

In the following pages efforts have been made to research and discuss the Parisumuttukali of the Christians in Kerala with special reference to these communities.

PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE SYRIAN CHRISTIANS:

Historically Parisumuttukali of the Syrian Christians has been the part and parcel of Māngamkali. It was learned

and performed together with Mārgamkali in which the life of St. Thomas in relation to his activities in Kerala and finally his death was described in 14 Pādās (stanzas).

In the stanzas (9th) where the arrest of St. Thomas and his companion Avan was to be danced, they used sword and shield to make the dance very dramatic and effective.

However, at times Parisumuttukali was also danced for a few songs which narrated the construction of a particular church etc.

The famous granite cross of Kaduthuruthy demonstrates the existence of this art form among the Syrian Christians and its co-existence of Parisumuttukali with Mārgamkali. There are 8 sides for the basement of this cross. The dance sculpture of Mārgamkali is on the left side as one faces the cross and the church in the back-ground. On the front side of the basement, the carving of Parisumuttukali (16) is found. Four male figures in pairs are clearly seen facing each other, holding swords and shields in their

right and left hands respectively.

The origin, development, initiation ceremony of the disciples, training system, and mode of performance are same as Mārgamkali . However, with regard to the technique and choreographic patterns there are a few peculiarities. Some of the steps are typically characteristic of other Parisumuttukali art-forms like that of the Jacobite Syrian Christians and Latin Christians.

The Suji Irupu (one of the steps) of the Syrian Christians is same as the Suji Covadu of the Jacobite Christians and Latin Christians where the dancer leaps into the air and lands on Murumandi on the right leg and stretches out the left leg holding sword and shield in a defensive posture. The step Cādi Irupu is similar to Irunnucāttam of the Jacobite Christians where the dancers while sitting in Murumandi, jump in the same posture towards and away from the traditional lamp which is placed in the centre around which they dance.

CHOREOGRAPHY:

The steps and choreographic patterns described in Mārgamkali, are also found in Parisumuttukali. Besides these, there are a few specific patterns which are peculiar to this art-form. Parisumuttukali usually starts by holding the shield in the left hand extended towards the centre and the sword in a striking position above the head level of the dancers. They move in a circle pattern around the traditional lamp (17). In the second phase they pair up and strike their shields against each others (18). In the third phase defending themselves with the shield they strike their swords against the opponents swords (19). Then, performing a few vigorous steps and leaps in the air, they move towards the centre in Murumandi (20) and retreat in the standing posture with a slight bend at the waist (21).

The movements are very martial in nature. In Mārgamkali, the movements are clock-wise, but in

Parisumuttukali one finds the movements both clock-wise and anti-clockwise.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS:

The basic choreographic pattern is the circle formation. However, in the circle formation one can observe a few peculiarities compared to Mārgamkali.


Creeper-like Movement in the Circle:

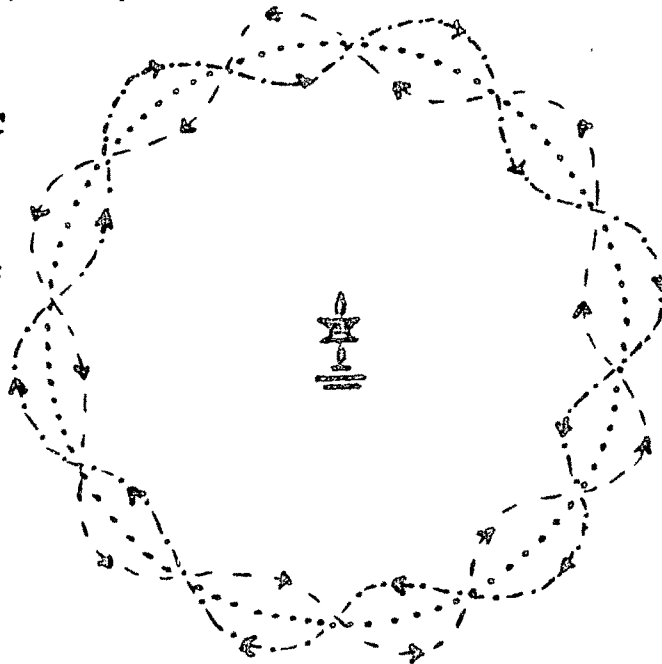
In this pattern six of the alternate dancers move anti-clockwise and the other six clockwise in a creeper-like movement keeping the basic circle around the traditional lamp as the basic line. The details of choreographic patterns could be found at the end of this chapter.

Normally Parisumuttukali is danced by 12 dancers as in Mārgamkali. The position and movement of the twelve dancers in a circle looks as if a big clock is placed on the dancing floor. In this particular choreographic pattern all the twelve dancers move to the centre and retreat to


PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE SYRIAN CHRISTIANS.

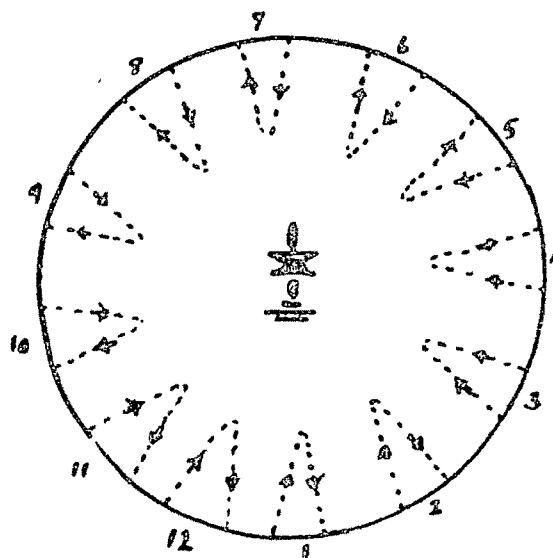
1. CREEPERLIKE CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN.

---→ = ANTICLOCKWISE
 -.-→ = CLOCKWISE
 = BASIC LINE
 = LAMP.

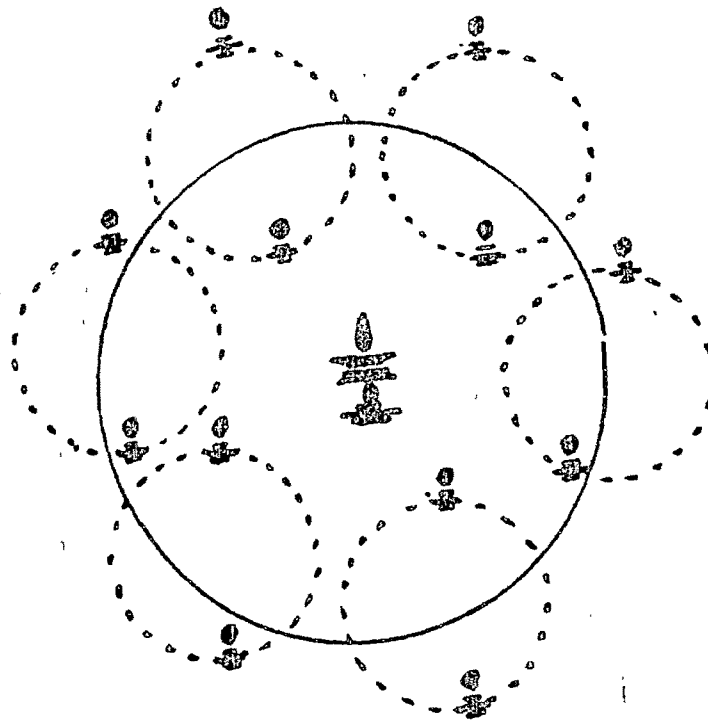


2. CLOCKWISE CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN.

1-12. DANCERS
 — = BASIC LINE
 = MOVEMENT OF DANCERS
 = LAMP.



3. SIX SMALL CIRCLES ON THE
BASIC CIRCLE PATTERN.



———— : BASIC CIRCLE

⦿ : DANCERS

..... : SMALL CIRCLES

⦿ : LAMP

the basic circle around the traditional lamp. Then they move one or two yards to the right and repeat the same movement a number of times. This choreographic pattern looks very impressive from an aerial view.

Six Small Circles on the Basic Circle Pattern:

On the basic circle pattern the 12 dancers pair up in twos and dance forming 6 small circles on the basic circle pattern.

ii) PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE LATIN CHRISTIANS:

In the 16th century A.D. Christianity in Kerala witnessed different phases in its socio-cultural and religious activities. Uptill this time there were only St. Thomas Christians commonly known as Syrian Christians. But with the invasion of the Portuguese there came to be a group called Latin Christians who probably were converted from the Hindus or crossed over from the Syrian Christians.

With the emergence of a new community of Christians, two main art-forms came into existence- Parisumuttukali and Cavittunatakam . While the latter had a lot of Western cultural influence in its theme, technique and presentation, the former had little influence on the technique and presentation. However, the themes were mostly on the Saints popular among the Portuguese.

Parisumuttukali has its roots in the martial traditions of Kerala. " The martial tradition has been predominant among the Christian community too. The landlord and the feudal chieftains among them construct their Kalari, the institution for physical training in their house premises and give systematic training to them. The Kalari Āsān or Gurukkal was invited from among the veteran families of the art from Malabar". (6)

HISTORICAL BACK-GROUND:

Parisumuttukali has a history of 500 years though the

exact year and the person responsible for its origin cannot be definitely ascertained. It is possible that the people who got converted to Christianity in the 15th century must have practised Kalarippayattu earlier. Then they must have developed this art-form with the inclusion of Christian themes, giving it a definite form. It is also possible that the Syrian Christians who crossed over to the Latin Church might have brought this art along with them and adapted it to the themes of the popular Saints of the Portuguese.

'Santiago' is the Patron saint of Parisumuttukali of the Latin Christians. Historically 'Santiago'(St.Jacob) was the commander-in-chief of Emperor Charlemagne. In 1662, in the coastal area of Cochin a Church was constructed in his honour. It was a custom among the Latin Christians to go and worship him at the Church of 'Santiago Pūnyavālan'. St.Santiago is known to be a brave warrior and an excellent gladiator. Parisumuttukali , the martial dance of sword

and shield found a fitting patron saint in St. Santiago who is venerated even to this day, by the performers of this art-form. Down through the centuries Parisumuttukali has been part and parcel of the church-feasts. Even to this day on the church-feast, Parisumuttukali is performed as an offering or Nēcca.

At present this art-form is prevalent among the fisher-folk of Mundamveli, Soudi, Mannachery, which are around Cochin, Arathunkal, Kattor, Mararikulam, Thumpoly and many other places.

TRAINING:

The Āsān (teacher) of Parisumuttukali imparts training to the performers. On a prescribed day, people who want to learn this art come to the house of the Āsān. They touch the feet of the Āsān and offer him Daksina in the form of money. The Āsān blesses the disciple and accepts the daksina. This is followed by the teaching of the body exercises. The training lasts for at least three

months, and is usually given at night. Singing and dance-movements are taught simultaneously. They have a variety of steps and choreographic movements but do not learn them with the technical names and terms. The script of the songs is not written, but is handed down by oral tradition.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

Though Parisumuttukali is a sword and shield dance of the martial nature, it is deep-rooted in the religious life of the Latin Christians. It is an offering which is an integral part of their devotion and worship.

Parisumuttukali starts with the Kavimūlāl, root of the poetry. This song is invariably on St. Santiago the brave warrior and patron saint of Parisumuttukali. It is a praise offering to St. Santiago. The composition of the song may differ from place to place but it will be describing St. Santiago's life history and characteristics in brief. During the field-work, a Kavimūlāl was sung by the

Mundamveli Parisumuttukali group, whose Āsān is Robert
Anandan parambu, is given below:

" Pukazh pērum Mundamvēli

Sandyav punnyāla Tak thiku thai

(The devotees are in praise of St. Santiago of renowned
Mundamvēli)

Tannutēya nāmadhēyam

Bālanmar collunnippo-

lakampāṭi citta vāyil vilāṅgitunnu

(Children praise your holy name, your name shines, dwells
in their mouths)

Pālvarna Kutirayilēri

Siluvai koti valiccu

Āntavanil priyanākum

Sandhyavu punnyala, taku thiku thai

(you, beloved ton our Lord, are seated on a white horse-
back holding a flag with a Cross as its emblem)

Kutiraikku katinjanu

Kālunālilum vīrasangal

Muttu ratna kutapiti-

Ccezhunnellattu ".

(Your horse has reins and all the four legs have anklets,
you ride under a pearl-decked umbrella)

In this Kavimūlal the performers song tells that they
come from the village Mundamveli. They present this dance
in the name of St.Santiago.

When they start Kavimūlal all the dancers stand in
a circle, the Āsān stands in the centre with the Elattālam
(they call it just tālam) a big cymbal used to keep timing.
Dancers repeat what the Āsān sings and stand stationary
in a prayerful pose. Every line of the song is ended with
Ta Ta Dhighitai. When all the lines are sung Āsān recites
the following Sollukattu Dhit Ta Inta Thari kita Dhinata
Taita Dhigi tai, and himself initiates the movements.
Now all the dancers move in a circle with definite
choreographic patterns. They end the Kavimūlal with the
above Sollukattu .

After the initial Kavimūlal , songs on St.Peter, St.Sebastian and others are sung depending on the Church feast to which it is dedicated in the same style. When they dance in the church- premises or at one spot they dance in a circle. Here the Āsān will stand in the centre and while performing on the way to the shrine they dance in two lines and the Āsān is between the two rows.

COSTUME:

In the Cochin area all the dancers and the Āsān wear a red shirt and white Muntu . In the Alleppey diocese, dancers wear coloured shirts, banyans and shorts. According to Robert Anandan Parambu a performer without a red shirt is not allowed to dance. This colour selection must have been taken from the Latin liturgy, where red vestments are used for Holy Mass on the feast of a martyr.

Parisumuttukali, being a martial dance, uses red as an appropriate symbolic colour. Each dancer has a sword made of wood in the right hand and a shield made of tin

plates in the left hand. There is no make-up used in the performance. It is performed only by men. There is no stage, the place of performance is mostly the streets leading to the shrines or churches, courtyard or the church premises. The performance takes place any time of the year. However, possibly due to the climatic conditions, it is not performed between June and August.

PARISUMUTTUKALI AS A NĒRCCA (OFFERING)

Nērcca , in Malayalam language is an offering made by the devotee to fulfill a vow made at a certain period in his life. It is also called Vazhipātu mainly by Hindus and at times as Kānikka (offering) in general. Many of the songs also are composed by using words like Kānikka. (an example is given while discussing the theme)

These people consider Parisumuttukali as a form of worship. During the pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint they go dancing on their way and pay homage to the particular

saint at the shrine. Also during the Nērcca (offering) ceremony Parisumuttukali is a part and parcel of the whole rite.

Whenever they perform for the Church no remuneration is accepted. Money collected on other occasions is donated to the church, after deducting their expenses. There is also another custom among them that if a performer collects a certain amount of money from his performances and gives to the Church every year. According to Robert Anandan Parambu Āsān, in Mundamveli at present a Parisumuttukali performer gives rupees fifty as his contribution to the Church every year. Dance as a part of the religious worship is nothing new to the Indian spirituality. It has always been one of the 16 Upachāris (ways of worship) in the divine rite of worship.

Parisumuttukali is performed on various occasions such as:

During pilgrimage,

Church festivals,

Offering ceremonies,

Marriage festivals. It is also performed in the family circle purely for entertainment.

DURING THE PILGRIMAGE:

During the pilgrimage to any particular shrine of a Saint which is normally done after Easter, people visit a shrine accompanied by the Parisumuttukali performers. On their way they sing pilgrim songs on various Christian themes and dance their way to the shrine. The usual practice is to go in two lines with the Āsān between the two rows. On their way to the shrine different families invite them to perform, in front of their house. So, short performances of Parisumuttukali take place in the courtyard of the person who has invited them, who in return gives them some donations. Such performances are considered to be auspicious by the people. The pilgrims thus dance their way to the shrine and make their offering

at the shrine both in kind and in the form of dance.

The Churches around the coastal Cochin area do have Parisumuttukali during the festivals. It is during this time that many people make offerings (Nērc̣ca). Parisumuttukali is invariably included in the Nērc̣ca (Offering ceremony). The offerings are done either to fulfill a vow or to ask for a favour from a particular saint. The Parisumuttukali performers are engaged by the offering party who accompany them from their houses to the Church in a ceremonial procession in the following order. Right in the front Centa mēla inclusive of Kombu, Elattālam, rows of children holding the church flags, devotees in two rows, Parisumuttukali performers, the band-party followed by the relations of the offering party and a decorated elephant. On the back of the elephant the offerings are kept under the Muttukutai (coloured umbrella with pearls)

When the procession reaches the Church-compound, the Parisumuttukali performers dance in front of the Church.

The offering is done and after that the dance-troupe disperses. At this time songs are mostly sung on the particular saint to whom the offering is made. Many a time ex-tempore songs are composed by the Āsān including the name of the family making offerings.

Offerings are also made during other times of the year in the similar manner. For example when there is a sickness, famine, floods or any other calamity, certain villages or particular families make the offerings where Parisumuttukali is included.

During the marriage feasts, the marriage party invites Parisumuttukali groups to perform in their courtyard. Here, they start with religious songs, at the same time include other songs on social themes. An example is given while discussing the themes of Parisumuttukali. Robert Anandan Parambu also mentioned that Parisumuttukali is performed at a family gathering for entertainment.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS OF PARISUMUTTUKALI:

The choreographic patterns are very similar to the other forms of Parisumuttukali and Kalarippayattu of Kerala. However, a few interesting patterns are given below. There are two basic principles on which the whole choreographic patterns are formed. (A)

i) Circle

ii) Two parallel lines.

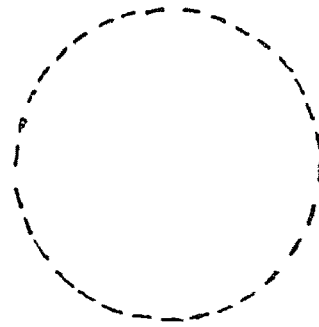
Dancing in a circle has been the most common phenomenon among most of the folk-dances of India. In Parisumuttukali too the circle is very important. However, there are many patterns formed in the circle itself. A few striking examples can be observed in the given line-drawings. (B)

Āsān and Parisumuttukali dancers stand with their legs apart as shown in the photograph (22). They gradually lift their left leg waving the shield and keeping the sword behind their head ready to strike (23). With a big leap in the air, they move to the right (24, 25). With the

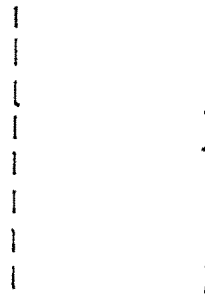
CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS OF THE PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE LATIN CHRISTIAN

A. Basic Principles on which the Choreographic patterns are formed

i. Circle



ii. Two parallel lines

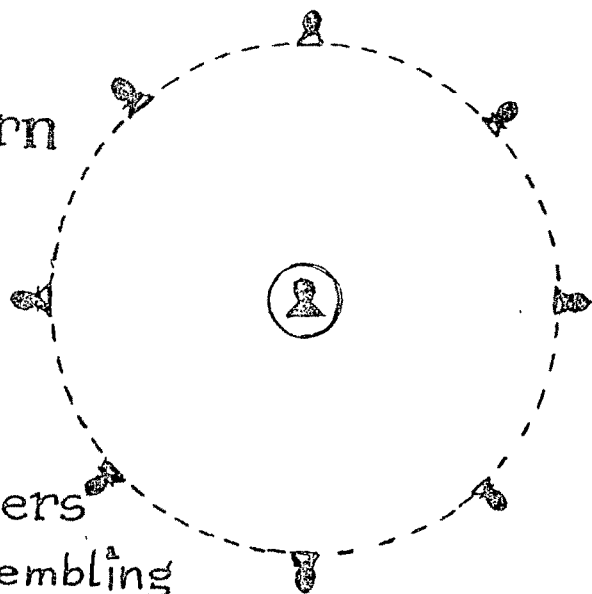


B. Choreographic pattern in the circle formation

② Āśan

--- Basic circle pattern

♀ Parisumuttukali dancers move to their right resembling a wheel in motion



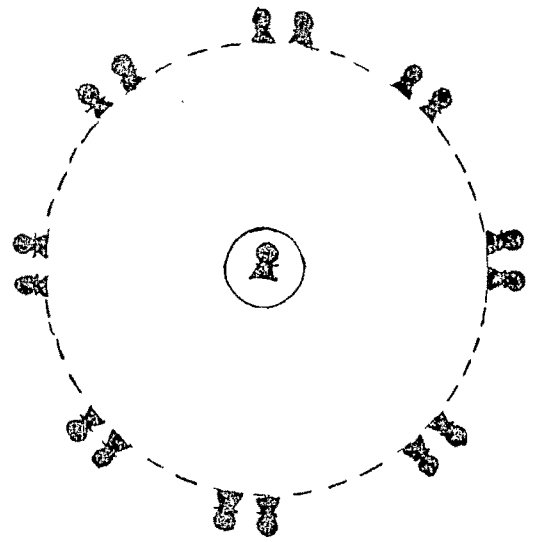
recitation of the Sollukattu by the Āsān the choreographic movement is changed. They pair into two and move in the pattern given below and strike (26) their swords against the others. (C) Each dancer makes a circle touching on one point with the other where they strike each other's sword resulting in the shape ∞ ∞ resembling a flower.

In the following pattern they form the sketch of a star. The move in two parallel lines in opposite directions forming the movement depicted in the line-drawings. (D)

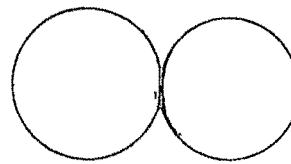
In another pattern they move in small circles which connect with the main circle. The Āsān stands like a pivot of the main circle. While doing this they keep their right knee on the ground. (E) This step is common among the Parisumuttukali players of Cochin area who come mainly from the fisher-folk. The latter dance on very sandy places (27). Then they sit in Murumandi and move towards the Āsān (28). When they reach very close to Āsān, they jump back and sit in a difficult but typical Parisumuttukali pose (29)

C.i. Dancers pair in two's

- ⚭ Dancers
- Basic circle pattern
- ⊙ Āśan

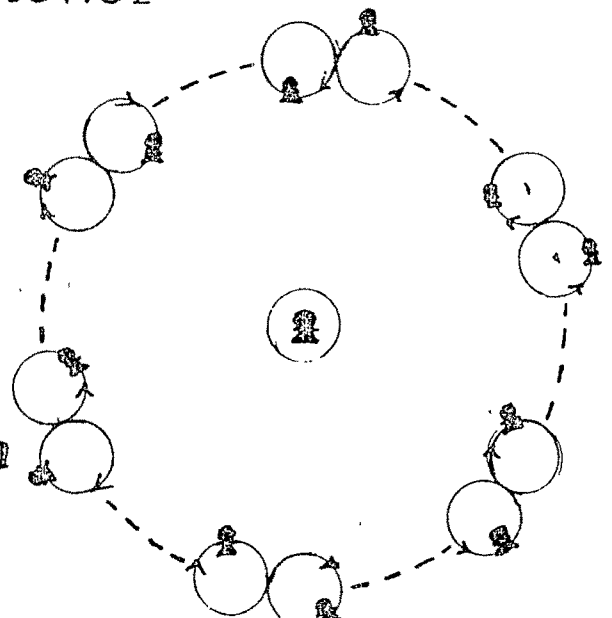


ii. Then they move in the formation given here below



This second stage of the Choreographic pattern resembles a flower

- ⚭ Dancers
- ⊙ Movements of a single pair of dancers
- Basic circle pattern
- ⊙ Āśan

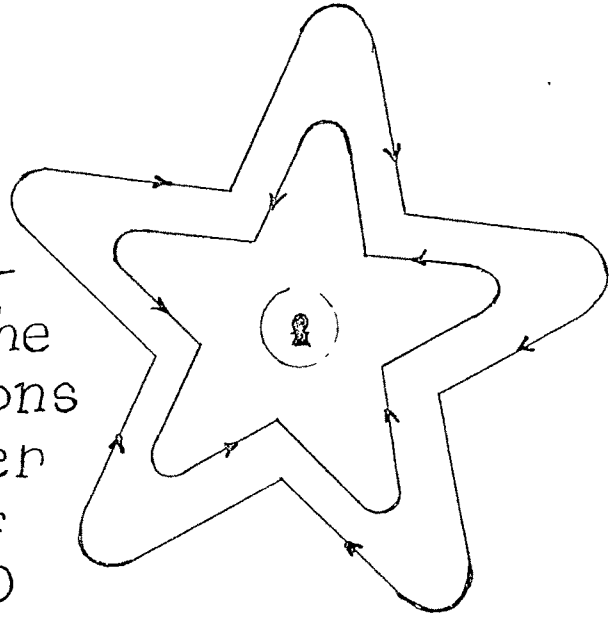


D.



Āśān

is the movements
of the Parīsumuttu-
kalī dancers in the
opposite directions
forming the inner
and outer line of
the star (sketch)

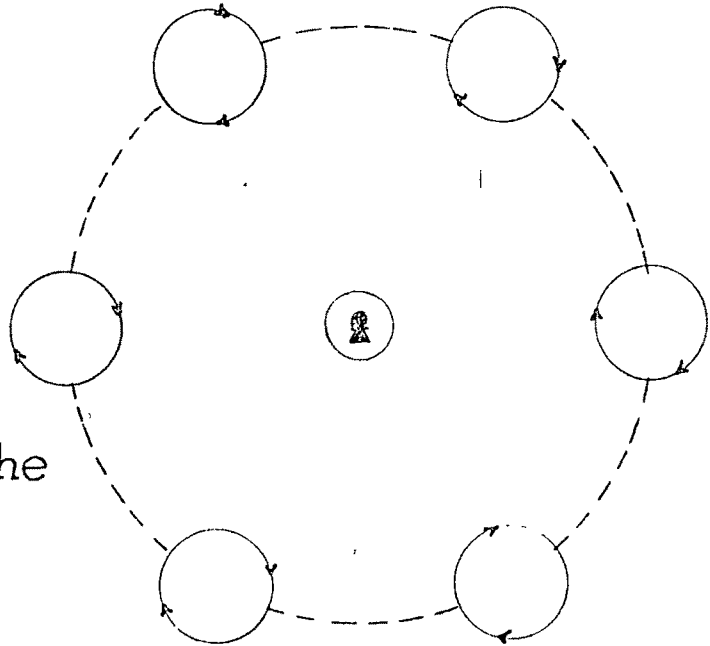


E

Āśān

Basic circle
pattern

movements of a
single pair of the
Dancers



In this choreographic pattern the
movement is done in the maximum speed

and rise on the left leg (30). Each Āsān does his own choreography according to his own artistic vision.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS IN TWO PARALLEL LINES:

This choreographic pattern is very important and commonly used by the Parisumuttukali dancers of the Latin Christians. It is used extensively in the dance during the pilgrimage or religious procession. The basic pattern is the same, the Āsān stands between the two lines of dancers.^(F) A few more examples are given which are very interesting in their formation movement.^(G)

PARISUMUTTUKALI SONGS OF THE LATIN CHRISTIANS:

Songs of the Latin Christian Parisumuttukali help one to differentiate it from the other forms of Parisumuttukali existing among the other Christian communities. The songs of the Latin Christians are mainly on the saints who are popular in the Latin Church and liturgy. There are many songs composed on the saints like St. Santiago, St. Anthony, St. George, St. Augustine, St. Sebastian, St. Peter, Mother Mary etc.

A song sung in praise of St. Peter, was collected during the field-work, is given below:

Nai thanai thana thinthinnai nai thanathinthinnai
 Thanai thana thinthinnai nai thanathinthinnai thanai
 Pārganil pala kutumbai vinikalal patariyakamatu melinju
vazhnitum
 Pāpikalkkati karuna ceytitum uttaman Patarosiliha

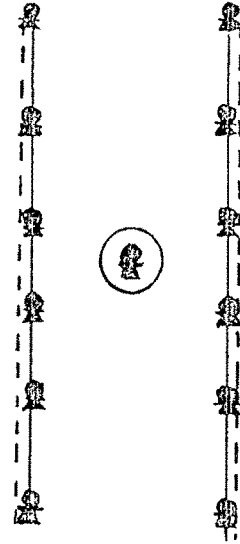
F.

1. Choreographic pattern in two parallel lines

⊙ Āśan

■ Paṛisumuttukalī Dancers

--- Basic line



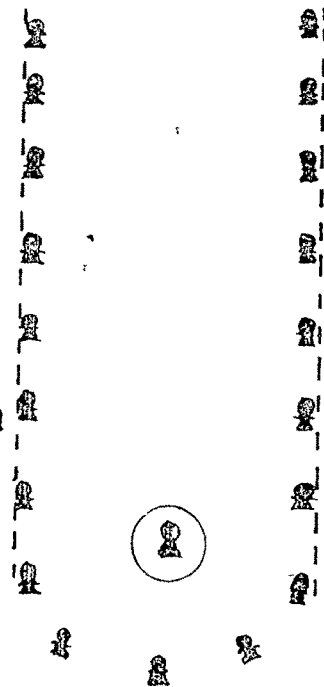
2. They also have the formation of 'U'

⊙ Āśan

■ Dancers

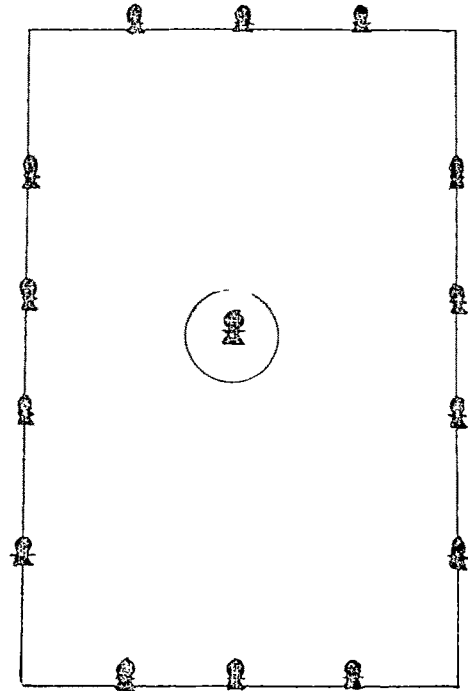
--- Basic lines

U choreographic pattern



iii. They also move in a Rectangular as sketched below

The whole rectangular moves ahead as one block with the Āśan in the centre.



§.

iv. Movement in the zigzag pattern

The dancers move to the centre as indicated in the sketch, strike the sword against the other and come back to their own original line

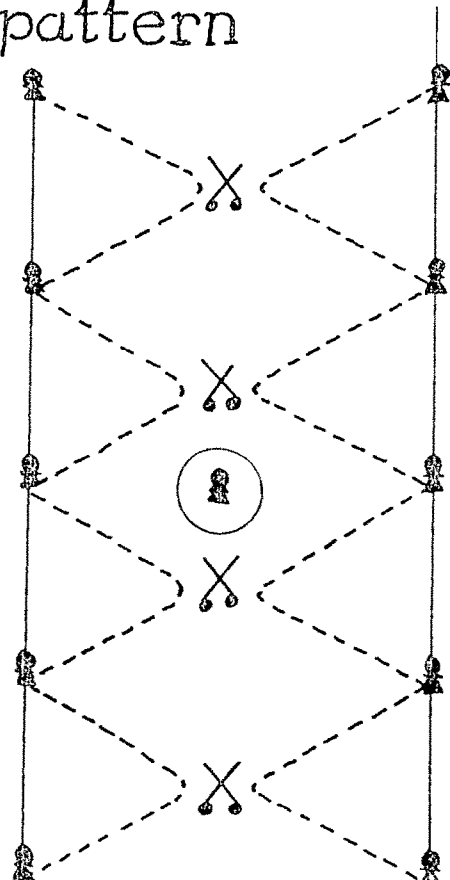
⊙ Āśan

⊙ Dancers

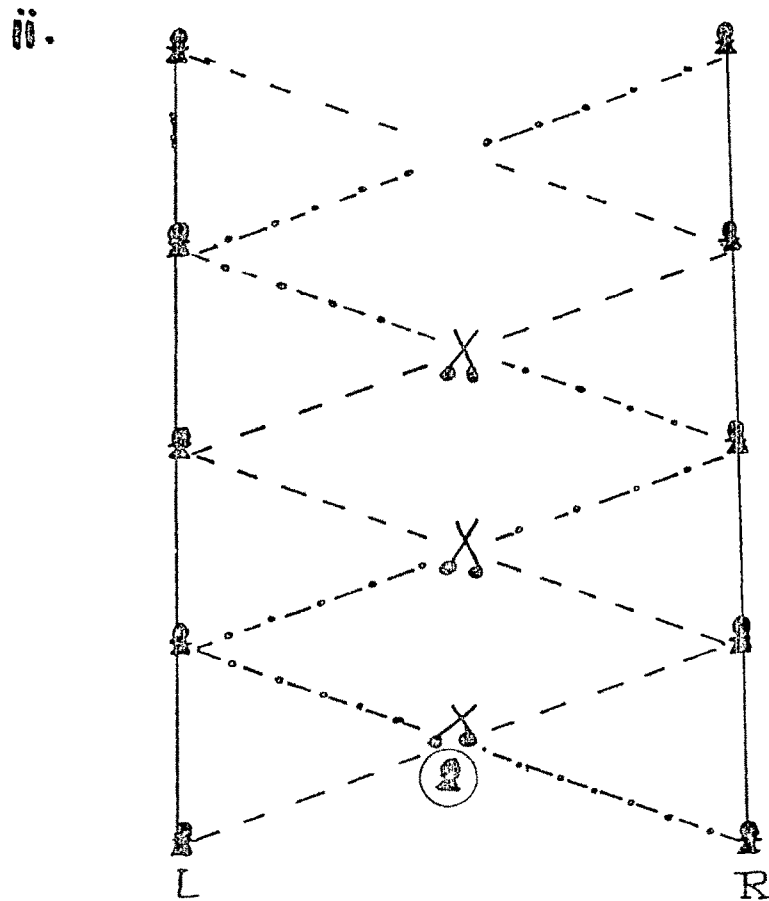
✕ striking the sword

--- Movements of the dancers on the left side

— Basic lines



In another choreographic pattern the dancer from one basic line goes to the other basic line and comes to the original. However when he reaches the centre he strikes against the sword of the opposite basic line dancer



⊙ Āsān

♂ Dancers

---- Movement of the dancers on the Left side

..... Movement of the dancers on the Right side

X Striking the sword

— Basic line

(Thana thinthinnai thanai.....)

Ārttaner tan cittamatupol bhaktiyutane mukti tannil

Satya prabhayōtu vāṇitum uttaman Patarosiliha

(Thana thinthinnai thana...)

The song on the saint does not give an elaborate life history or characteristics of the saint. It covers briefly the life sketch of the saint and includes a prayer to him. The songs are combined with Sollukattu in the same time. Sometimes only the Āsān sings the song and others repeat the Sollukattu (refer the song on St. Peter). They also sing to Mother Mary in a very devotional way, imploring her for help and praying to her.

Oh nangal kānikkayum kontu (thak di dhai)

Nangalita varunneram thavade

Kānikka mātāve nangal kānikkayum kontu (thaku di dhai)

Kānikkayum kontu nangalita varunneram thavade

Anpulla mātāve enne kāttutunakkene (thakudidhai)

Vālapillēruṭe sīlavum nannākkān, thavde

Kānikka mātāve nangal kānikkayum kontu (thakudidhai)

Kānikkayum kontu nangalita varunneram thavade

Nanmaniranjōle karunya matave (thakudidhai)
 Nangalil varunna tettu ksemikkaname, thavde
 Kānikka mātāve nangal kānikkayum kontu (thakudidhai)
 Kānikkayum kontu nangalita varunneram , thavde

There are also songs describing nature and social themes sung on the occasions of marriage feasts and social functions. Below a song describes the Jasmine flowers and the garland-maker. This was also collected during the field-work study concluded in and around Cochin.

Mullappūvum cūti kalikkunna vālare
 Enikkoru mālakku pū tarāmo (thakudidhai)
 Mullattatam kōri mulla nāttikontu
 Mulla viṭarumpol pū taram nan
 Mullappūvum cūti kalikkunna vālare
 Enikkoru mālakku pū tarāmo
 Pappayurangatte ummayurangatte
 Ninakkoru mālakku pū taram nan
 Mullappūvum cūti kalikkunna vālare
 Enikkoru mālakku pū tarāmo
 Mullattatam kōri mulla nātti kontu
 Mulla viṭarumpol pū tarām nan

Mullapūvum cūti kalikkunna vālare
 Enikkoru mālakku pū tarāmo
 Ūñjal kōrttukonṭaṅgati cennappol
 Aṅgaṭippilleri pū cōdicce.

It is also reliably learnt from Āsān Robert Anandan Parambu of Mundamveli that on certain occasions , these Parisumuttukali troupes perform for political party processions too. However, he made it clear that under no circumstances do they sing Christian themes on these occasions. Most of the performers among the Latin Christians of the above discussed dance-form belong to fisher-folk. Hence words and expressions typical of this community do occur quite frequently in their songs (refer to the songs mentioned earlier). Many of the words they use in their songs are uprooted from , or the origin can be traced to the Tamil language, i.e. Pukazh=praise, renowned, Sollum= say, Siluvai=Cross, Antavan =God etc.

The Parisumuttukali of the Latin Christians is unique in many ways especially in themes and occasions of its

performance. Though the dance-form has been there for a few centuries, it is hardly recognized and known outside their own small territory. They clearly state that they have very little support and encouragement from the Church authorities. It is an art-form where many traditions like Kalarippayattu, the ancient martial art of Kerala, the stories from the life of Saints, traditional folk-music of Kerala and the worship aspects of dance from the Indian spirituality have been all crystallised to form Parisumuttukali .

iii) PARISUMUTTUKALI OF THE ORTHODOX JACOBITE CHRISTIANS:

Parisumuttukali among the Orthodox Jacobite Christians is of a recent origin. Shri Mathan Kurian (7), commonly known as Pappi Asan says that the Parisumuttukali which they dance at present can be traced back to the Parisumuttukali prevalent among the Muslims in the late 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century.

The father of Parisumuttukali of the Orthodox Jacobite

Christians is Shri Vailatte Marcose, who was an expert in Muslim Parisumuttukali and Arabic language. Vailatte Marcose writes in his book 'Parisumuttukali Pāttu'⁽⁸⁾ that 'when music and literature were getting equal importance in the religious stories and ideas some of his friends requested him to compose songs on Christian themes to suit the existing style of Muslim Parisumuttukali'.

Moved by the request of the people and their need for an art-form Vailatte Marcose started composing songs on Bible themes to suit the Parisumuttukali of the Orthodox Jacobite Christians to which he gave a definite shape and form. Marcose himself writes in his book Parisumuttukali Pāttu (Parisumuttukali songs) that T.P.Narayana Pillai was the first one to attempt composing in this line. Both of them have written many songs on the Bible themes, a few of them which were collected during the field-work are given at a later stage of this chapter.

Though T.P.Narayana Pillai wrote many songs, it is

Vailatte Marcose from Ericad, Putuppally, Kottayam Dist. who taught this art-form to his fellow Christians. Marcose had many disciples, to name a few are Kuzhimattam Vattamala Kunjappa, Vakathanam Othara Kunjunju etc. Othara Kunjunju taught in Kurichi to Ambalakadavat Papan and Cheruveely Kunju, and from these above two Mathan Kurian, Mathan Mani and Kurian Kuriakose, all three brothers learnt the above mentioned art-form whom I met during the field-work and had an opportunity to discuss the technicalities concerning this art-form. These three brothers also were fortunate enough to learn at a later stage from Vailatte Marcose, the pioneer of this art-form.

At present this art-form is dying out. However, Mathan Mani and Kurian Kuriakose still have a few students. In Neelimangalam they have 13 disciples and in Arpukara, Kottayam 12 disciples. No other Guru of this art-form could be traced.

TECHNIQUE AND TRAINING:

Like the other martial arts of Kerala, Parisumuttukali of Orthodox Jacobite Christians has a systematic and rigorous training in the line of Kalarippayattu. Kalari is a thatched house set aside for giving training to the disciples and for practising this art-form. At present one doesn't find these traditional Kalaris but the training is given in the courtyard of the Guru's house or in an appropriate hall.

ACCEPTING THE DISCIPLES:

On a prescribed and auspicious day chosen by the Guru the disciples are accepted by him into his fold for training. They have an interesting initiation ceremony. The disciples come in a line to the Guru. The Guru stands facing the East with his Dhoti clad to the ankle. There is a lamp kept burning near the Guru. The disciples come with the Daksina (offering) which includes three beetle-leaves, one arocanut and other things with a small amount of money(in the olden days it used to be a four anna coin). They bring the Daksina in open

palms (Pushpaputa Hasta) while facing the Guru the disciple folds his hands (Anjali Hasta) pays respects first to the light, then to the Āsān (Guru) and gives the Daksina to him. Once the Guru receives the Daksina the disciple touches the feet of the Āsān (Guru) with both his hands and with the same palms touches his own forehead and chest, the Guru holding the Daksina in the left hand blesses the disciple with his right hand placing it over the head of the disciple. After this the disciple goes to the right side of the Guru facing the east. With this initiation ceremony the training begins.

The Training period is from three months to three years. The training is given either in the evening or late at night. There are many basic body exercises to be learnt and practised as it is in the Kalarippayattu of Kerala, after which there are a few characteristic steps of the Orthodox Jacobite Christian Parisumuttukali to be mastered by the students.

BASIC STEPS:

- (i) Prarambha Cuvatu (Beginning Step) Here the student

learns the basic rhythm pattern where simple body movements, swinging the body from right to the left and simultaneously stamping the right and left foot. (31) While practising this step an '8' beat sollukattu is used.

1	2	3	4
Ta	Inda	Dharikita	Dhigita
(1)	-	-	-
5	6	7	8
Tai	Ita	Dhigita	Tai
(o)	-	(o)	-

(ii) Onnām Cuvatu : This is the first step they use in their performance. Interestingly it is set to 7 beat count (Ta¹
2 3 4 1 2 3
ka Dhi mi Ta ki ta). On the beat 3 and 4 and also
6 and 7 the feet will be in Samapada as shown in the
diagram (+1). On the first and fifth the dancer goes ahead
towards the centre facing the sacred lamp. (32)

(iii) Rantam Cuvatu: This is same as the first but the dancer goes ahead by the side as indicated in the sketch (+2) and photograph (33).

(iv) Mūnnām Cuvatu: This step is also set to a seven beat rhythm but the dancer goes to the side rather than going

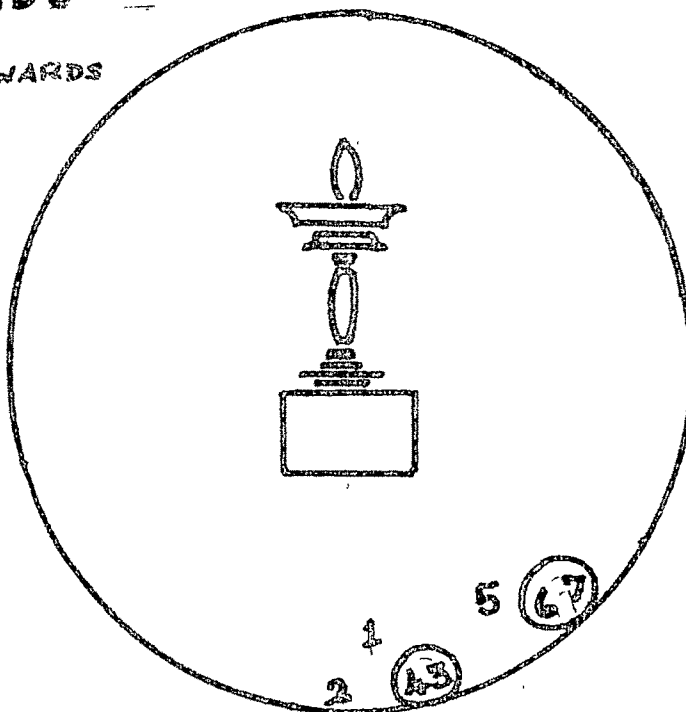
BASIC STEPS OF THE PARISUMUTTUKALI OF JACOBITE CHRISTIANS

+1. ONNAM CHAVIDU

1,5 = MOVEMENT TOWARDS
THE CENTER.

○ = BOTH FEET IN
SAMAPĀDA.

2 = STRIKING THE
FOOT ON THE
BASIC CIRCLE
PATTERN.



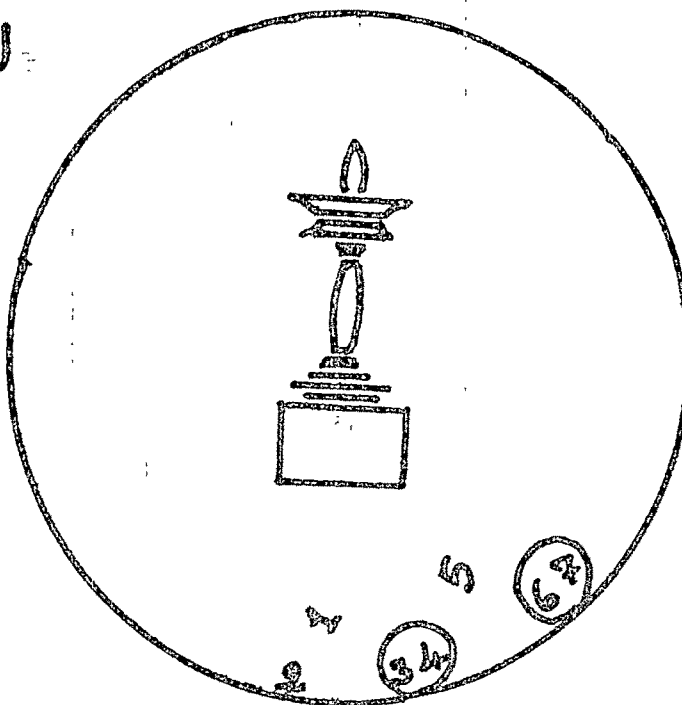
+2. RANDAM CHAVIDU

SIDEWAYS

1,5 = MOVEMENT TO THE
CENTER

○ = BOTH FEET IN
SAMAPĀDA.

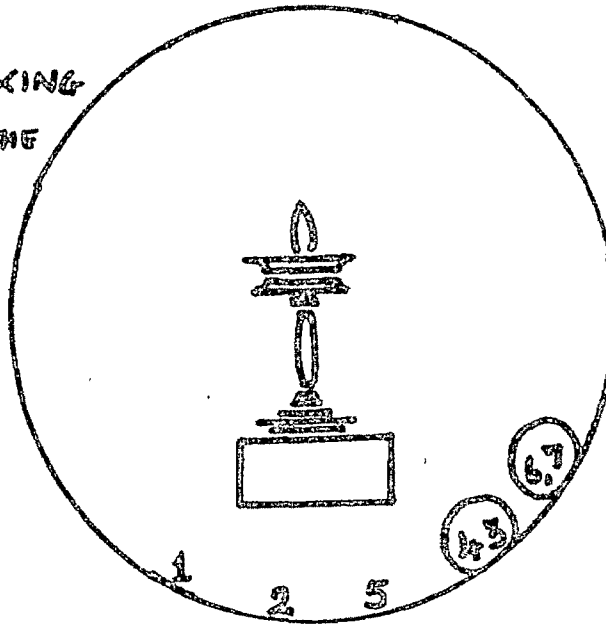
2 = STRIKING THE
FOOT ON THE
BASIC CIRCLE
PATTERN.



+ 3. MOONNAM CHAUDU

1, 2, 5. STRIKING
THE FEET ON THE
BASIC CIRCLE
PATTERN.

○ = BOTH FEET
ON THE CIRCLE
PATTERN IN
SAMAPĀDA.



+ 4. CHUZHINJATTIAM

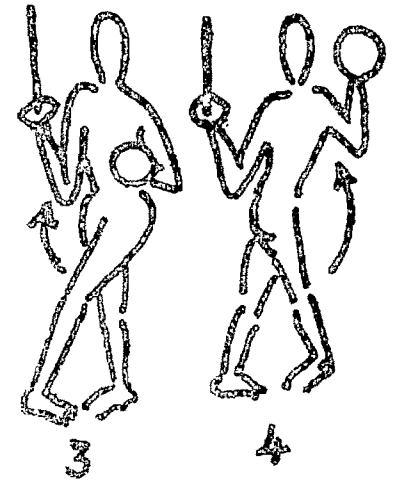
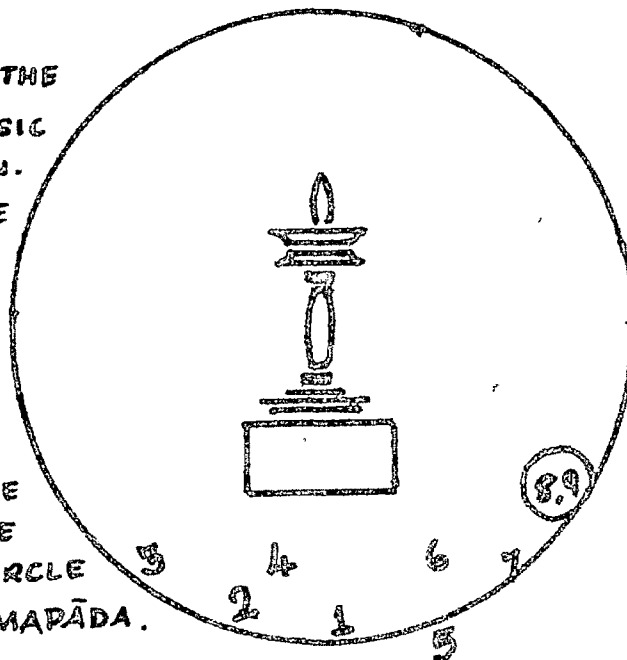
1, 2, 5, 7. STRIKING THE
FEET ON THE BASIC
CIRCLE PATTERN.

3, = STRIKING THE
R. FOOT ACROSS THE
LEFT FOOT.

4 = STRIKING THE
LEFT FOOT ACROSS
THE RIGHT FOOT

6 = STRIKING THE
FOOT TOWARDS THE
CENTRE OF THE CIRCLE

8, 9 = FEET IN SAMAPĀDA.



to the front as it is shown in the sketch (+3).

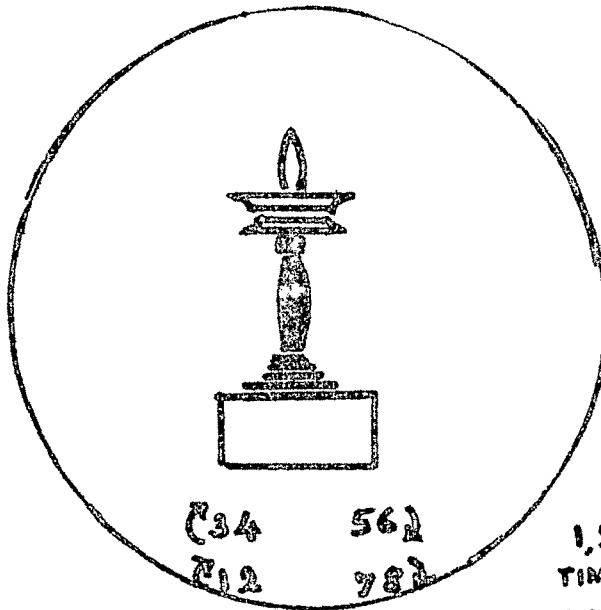
(v) Cuzhinjattam: (Swinging step)

In this step the dancer literally takes a swing on the 3rd and 4th beat (34) . To this step they add the Mūnnam Cuvatu of 7 beats which makes 16 beats which is counted in the Ādi Talam (+4)

(vi) Irunnu Cāttam: (Sit and jump) Bending the knees in a sitting posture holding the sword (35) in a horizontal position jump towards the lamp twice, then repeat the same by jumping backward without changing the body direction (+5). When they don't have the sword and shield they keep the hands in Pushpapūta hasta. This is done while practising. After this Irunnu Cāttam they join the Mūnnam Cuvatu (3rd step).

(vii) Sūci: (Needle) In this step the dancer advances towards the lamp as indicated in the sketch (+6), jumps on the 4th beat and sits on the right leg on the 5th and then stands in Samapada on the 6th beat. For the 5th beat position refer the photograph (36, 37). Here also they add Mūnnam Cuvatu to Sūci.

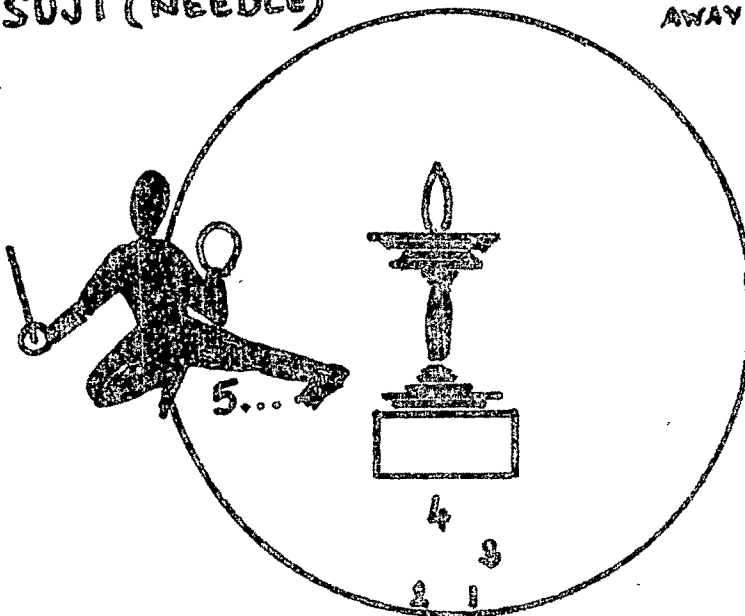
+ 5. IRUNNUCHATTAM



1,2,3,4 = JUMPING TWO TIMES TOWARDS THE CENTER IN MURUMANDI.

5,6,7,8 = JUMPING TWO TIMES AWAY FROM CENTER IN MURUMANDI.

+ 6. SŪJI (NEEDLE)



1,2,3 = GOING TOWARDS THE CENTER.

4 = LEAP IN THE AIR.

5 = TAKE THE POSE AS GIVEN IN DIAGRAM.

6,7,8 = SAME POSE AS 5, LOOKING AT THE NILAVILAKKU.

(ix) Hosanna Cuvatu : The word Hosanna comes from the Christian theology means 'Rejoice'. This catch-word was used while Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem. Here, while they are dancing for the songs on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and temple, they have a particular step- Hosanna Cuvatu. They literally march towards the lamp and on the 4th beat they jump (38) and to this also they add the Munnam Cuvatu (+8). Besides these basic steps there are "sollukattus" to be learnt for conducting the dance. Below a few technical terms and their use are given:

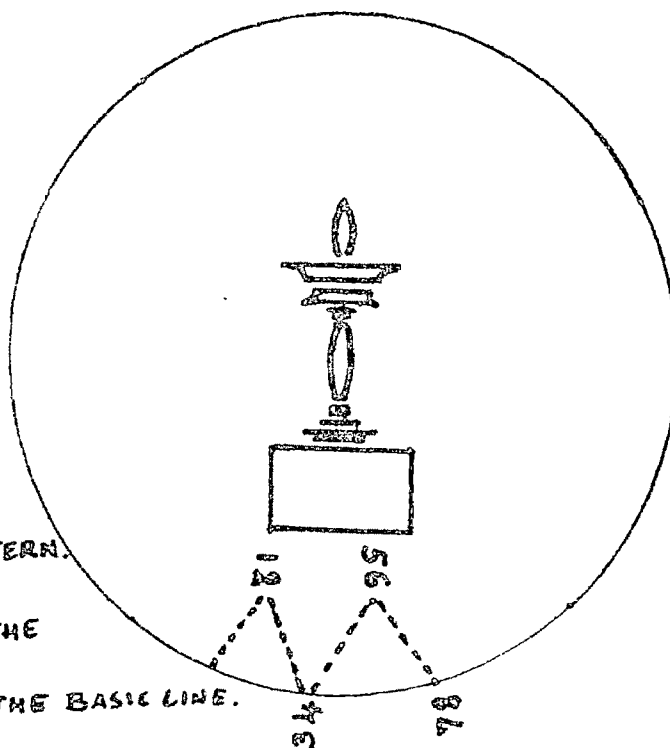
$$r^{-1} \Delta_{\mathbb{R}^n} u = 0 \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^n \setminus B_1, \quad u = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial B_1.$$

+7. ENKONIPPU

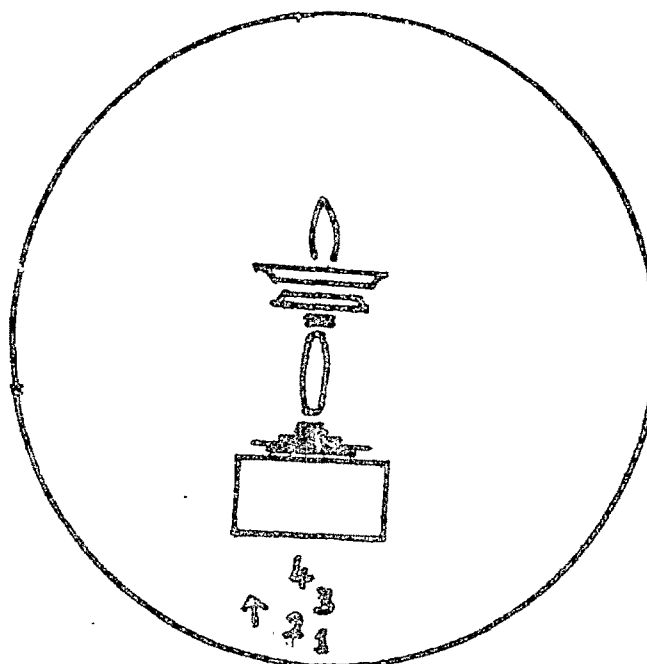
MOVEMENT
IN
ZIGZAG PATTERN.

1,2,5,6 = TOWARDS THE
CENTER.

3,4,7,8 = TOWARDS THE BASIC LINE.



+8. HOSANNA CHAYUDU



↑ = MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE CENTRE

4 = STILL POSE.

(a) Eta Talam (Changing the Step)

The Sollukattu is Ta Kargu Dhit ta tat ta tai ta dhigi tai.

Whenever the Āsān or the main person who conducts the dance recites loudly, everyone mentally gets ready for the next step.

(b) Kali Murukuka Talam (To increase the speed)

When the speed has to be increased then the following Sollukattu is recited:

Ta Kargu Dhit Ta Tat Ta Taita Talam Dhit Tai Talam

Dhit Tai Talam Dhit Tai Talam Tai Itta Dhigi Tai

(c) Niruthu Talam : To stop the dance they use the following

Sollukattu:

Ta Inda Dharikita Dhigita Tai

These are like muktayas or ending position of a Talam (rhythm pattern) and is a signal to change and start the next phase of dance or stop the dance.

Whenever a student picks up all these above mentioned Talams he can teach others. It is interesting to note that

after the initial training every dancer sings and learns the songs and melody together with the dance. Each Āsān or or Guru can compose and choreograph his own production, however, the basic steps remain the same.

ARANGETRAM: (FIRST PERFORMANCE)

Like other dance-forms in Parisumuttukali too Arangetram is considered to be very important. Arangetram is the first public performance of the dancer which takes place usually after the completion of a set course. However, at times it is done after the student masters certain number of steps. Without Arangetram they can't dance in public.

On the Arangetram day the disciples give to the Āsān (Guru) one Muntu (Dhoti) Shirt, Tōrtt (Big towel), Baniyan and some money as the Daksina. The Assistant Āsān gets only Muntu, Tōrtt and half of the amount equivalent given to the main Āsān. Thus with this preliminary ceremony the arangetram of the disciples is conducted before the relatives, friends and well-wishers of the disciples.

After the dance the disciples give a party to all those who attended the function. On this day the disciples and the Guru (Āsān) will sit together and eat as Jesus ate with his disciples.

COSTUME AND MUSIC:

The dress used for the performance is very ordinary. Usually white or coloured muntu is used, they tie a white towel called Toṛtt around their waist. On the upper portion of the body they don't wear anything. Right hand is used to hold the sword and the left for the shield.

The Music is typical of Kerala Folk-tunes. They don't use any musical instruments not even the traditional Elatalam of Kerala theatre.

PERFORMANCE:

They mostly perform during the Church festivals and feasts of the particular churches. In the olden days during Easter and Christmas time Parisumuttukali used to be part of these church feasts. They also perform during the marriage

feasts. The place of performance is the church premises or courtyard of the host.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

When all the people and dancers gather together at the place of performance, the preliminary preparations are conducted. On a small raised stool or platform a traditional lamp is kept and by the side of the sword are placed the shields close to the lamp. The Āsān (Guru) comes and lights the lamp helped by his assistant (39). At this stage all the dancers come to the dancing area, pay homage to the lamp(40), touch the feet of the Āsān and stand around the lighted lamp. Now the Āsān begins the Stuti pāṭṭu .

Stuti Pāṭṭu : (Prayer Song)

An example of Stuti pāṭṭu will be given later while discussing the themes. As the stuti pāṭṭu is being sung by the Āsān, everyone claps softly . After a while the Āsān moves to the right side, going round the lighted lamp in different ways and all the dancers follow him (41).

It looks as if a beautiful snake is crawling around the lamp. After three rounds the Āsān stands still facing the lamp while everyone falls in a circle. Now the clapping is done forcefully and with the Niruttu Talam the Stuti pāṭṭu is ended. After the Stuti pāṭṭu everyone picks up the sword and shield, demonstrate different steps to the rhythmic syllables (sollukattu) of the Āsān which are repeated by the dancers simultaneously with the dance. This can be called pure dance where skills are demonstrated. (42, 43)

THEMATIC SONGS:

Now the thematic songs are introduced into the performance. They usually begin with genesis and the songs are from Old Testament to the life of Jesus Christ. When they are tired they place their sword and shield around the lamp (44) , sit on the floor around the lamp and sing songs just clapping their hands. When they are fresh, again the dance is continued.

Niruttu pāṭṭu : is the ending song. Niruttu pāṭṭu is

like the mangalam in other dance-forms like Bharata Natyam, Mohiniattam etc. During the Niruttu pāṭṭu they place the swords and shields around the lamp and they stand around it in folded hands and sing the ending song -Niruttu Pāṭṭu(45).

THEMES:

Building up of the themes in the Jacobite Christian Parisumuttukali is interesting and unique. While the Latin Christians enact the life of the Saints, the Syrian Christians enact the life and works of St. Thomas, the Orthodox Jacobite Christians have stressed the salvation history starting with the Genesis- creation, Adam and Eve, Samson, David and Goliath, Kings of Israel, King Baltazar from the Old Testament and Jesus' birth, childhood, public ministry, entry into Jerusalem, death and resurrection of Christ, all from the New Testament. The Stuti Pāṭṭu is written in the pattern of typical Indian devotional poetry written by the devotee to his God. An example is given here below to illustrate the above observation.

Mannil paripāvanamām Kurichi tannil amarumpalli
Vānarulum mar Slihanmār tuna vēnam ceru bālarkku

(Holy apostles who live in or rules over the Kurichi Church,
 which is a holy place on earth, please help us young boys.
 Patron apostles of Kurichi Church, please help us your young
 boys.)

Tinnatham tinnai tinnatham tinnai tinnatam tinnai tinna tom
Kargu tatharikita tinthakam tatharikita tinthakam ta
Teyya takka tanka taka takina tom.

Nintiru malaratiyatiyār ninacca nitaka vinayanai
Cantamērum paricakalikkorumpetunni sabha tannil
Arivullavar parihasippatum sahajamallitil vannitum
Kuravassesham ksemiccu nangale anugrahikkānamēvarum

(We your servants humbly present this beautiful Paricakali
 before this audience (spectators). Please forgive our
 short comings and kindly all of you bless us.)

Tiruhdayam turannu vēntum velivu nangalkkēkuvān
Karunayullōrutayavanē nī kaninju kāttarulēne.

(Merciful creator, be gracious to us and open your Sacred
 heart and bless : (fill) us with your wisdom which we need.)

Sṛuṣṭi nāḍhanālāya nammute rakṣayamika atiyarkal
Rakṣaceitita nityam nangale rakṣikka mama nādhane

(Creator and leader, save us from our sins and offences and
 Keep us always safe under your protection)

Ī kavitalokke nangale sarvēṣa nī tēnnikka
Pizha varikil porukka dēva parama lōka daye

(God of all, please make us remember these poems. If we
 commit any mistake or neglect anything, please forgive us,
 the preserver of everything.)

(Beat repeated... Kargu thinnakam tinnai)

Most of the songs are written by Vailatte Marcose and
 a few by T.P.Narayana Pillai. The story of Issac's sons
 Essavu and Jacob is explained in the following song, where
 the poet in simple language tells the whole story in a
 novel way to the people who attend the performance. This is
 incidently written by T.P.Narayana Pillai.

" Puṇyavāṇissahākinuntayī ranṭu nakkal
 Onnāman Essavennum pinnavan Yākkōbum tān
 Tātanati prīti Essavotatupōle
 Mātavinatiratta vālsalyam Yākkobine

(Saint Issac begot two sons, the first one was Essav and the second was Jacob. Just as the father loved Essav more, the mother loved Jacob more.)

.....
 "

Here is another example where the story of Noah is beautifully depicted in the following verses.

" Nītimānām Nōhayōtī-vidham kalpiccisan
 Bhūmiyilākeyulla- jīvajālangaleyellam
 Hānivarutti bhūmi ākave nasippikkum
 Vellattāl hanippikkan-ulliluraccatinal

(God warned the just Noah " all the living things on earth I will destroy. I have decided to destroy them with water".)

Munnūrumulam nīlam vītiyampatu pokkam
 Muppatu mulamayī peṭṭekamonnuntakki
 Jīvajālangalile sarvavuminakalāyi
 Ōrōrōmurikalī-lōrō varganīalakka
 Ventavithamāhāram-sekharikkenamippol
 Entennalancettu dinam māri peyyikkum nan .

(Build a ship of three hundred feet long , fifty feet width and thirty feet height. Carry a pair each of all living

things, keep each species in a separate room, store sufficient food now, for I will make it rain heavily for five to eight days.)

.....

..... "

From the New Testament also the songs convey the message and story of the Gospel to the audience.

Besides the Gospel themes they also sing songs on the second world war, about famine and so on. Probably these were composed according to the need of the time. It was during the II world war that most of the compositions of the songs were made and hence the existing problems must have influenced them to write on such topics. Besides these have tremendous appeal to the people. If the Āsān is gifted in composing lyrics he may do it extempore as is done on many occasions.

Niruttu pāttu is a thanksgiving song at the end of the performance. The performers thank God and the people for

the success of the performance. Most of the time the Niruttu Pāttu is on Mother Mary,; however, it can be on Jesus Christ too.

NIRUTTU PĀTTU:

"Sakalēsa mātruve sakalēsa mātruvāyitum kanyayī lōka nāthaye
Tava pāda taruna tannil certtitum stuti stotrangal
Tava kārūnyamatināle nī kaikonṭṭitanam

(Mother of God, the leader of the world, we place hymns and praises before your feet. Please accept these in your kindness).

Paralōka rājniye paralōka rājni dukhitarkkennum āswāsadāyake
Bhūvil vannitum duritangal nīkki nanmakal certutan

Paricōtanugrahiccītennum bālar nangalilum.

(Queen of heaven, comforter of the afflicted, please remove the sufferings that come in this world and fill us with good blessings and graces.)

Gunamērum rūpame irul tingitunna bhuvanamennatinneka dīpame
Iha lōka jīvitamettam nālvazhiyal nayiccavan
Paralōka bhāgyamateruvan kākka nangale nī

(Virtuous mother, the only light that shines in this dark

world, please show us the right path to lead our lives in this world and thus help us to reach the heavenly blessings after this life.)

Nilamōtu swāgataṁ nilamōtu swāgataṁotitunnu
Balamōdamāyi bahumānya sadassinninum nanniyōtita
Paricotanugrahiccitane bālar nangalikum ".

(With great happiness we welcome you all. We thank you all respected spectators. We ask for your blessings upon us, your boys.)

The themes not only serve as the lyrics for the dance, but also they are a powerful media to instruct the people about the religious truths and Gospel message.

The ceremonial lamp which they keep in the centre is supposed to symbolise Christ and the dancers are his images on earth. In the very beginning by paying respects and homage to the burning flame, they draw strength from it.

Though Parisumuttukali of Orthodox Jacobite Christians has a short history of less than hundred years, it is a

well-defined art-form with the prescribed techniques especially with relations to the basic steps and development of the same. However, it is sad to note that it has very little attention from the church authorities. They have to some extent failed to see the usefulness of it. The Gurus who are at present old, are of the opinion that unless and until the church institutions or Govt. take active interest, the form of the Orthodox Jacobite Christian Parisumuttukali may die out.

REFERENCES:

1. M.D.Raghavan, Folk plays and Dances of Kerala(TRICHUR: The Secretary, Rama Varma Archaeological Society, 1947) P.4
2. M.D.Raghavan, Op.cit. p.44
3. M.D.Raghavan, Op.cit. p.47
4. M.D.Raghavan, Op.cit. p.22
5. Before the coming of the Portuguese, it is generally believed that there was one church in Kerala adhered to the Nestorian Doctrine. The Portuguese tried to eradicate Nestorian heresy and forced them to switch over the allegiance of the Syrian Church from Persia to Rome. When the Portuguese lost the political control, a part of the Christian community in Kerala repudiated Rome and these are called Orthodox Jacobite Christians. Those Christians who did not repudiate Rome but followed Catholicized Syrian liturgy are known as Syrian Catholics. Those who followed the Latin liturgy are called Latin Catholics. According to a survey conducted in 1961, 33.4% of the Christians in Kerala were Syrian Catholics, 22.5% Latin Catholics, 20.00% Orthodox Syrian Jacobite Christians and the rest belong to other groups and denominations.

6. Chummar Choondal, Theatrical and Folk Traditions of Kerala Christians, Journal of the Sangeet Natak Akademi-59, (New Delhi Sangeet Natak Academy, Jan-March 1981)
P. 40
7. Mathan Kurian, Kuthukallungal, Chingavanam, P.O.686531, Kottayam, Kerala.
8. Vailatte Marcose Aricad , Parisumuttukali pāṭṭu (songs of Parisumuttukali) Kottayam, M.S.Press, 1937, P.1

LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED OR CONSULTED

INSTITUTE AFFILIATIONS ARE INDICATED WHERE RELEVANT

Syrian (Knananite) Christians

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Role/Designation</u>
1. P.T.Joseph	Chamakala	Singer and dancer (School Teacher)
2. Thomman Lukka	"	Āsān
3. Thomman Uthuppu Vattothuparambil	Kaduthuruthy	Āsān
4. Dr.Jacob Velliyan	Kottayam	Professor (Musicologist)

Latin Christians

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Robertasan | Fort Cochin | Āsān |
| 2. Anthony P.J. | " " | " |
| 3. Dr.Chummar Choondal | Trichur | Research
Scholar,
Folklorist |

Jacobite Syrian Christians

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------|
| 1. Mathan Kurian(Pappiasan) | Kuthukallungal | |
| | Chingavanam | Āsān |
| 2. Mathan Mani | Chingavanam | " |
| 3. Kurian Kuriakose | " | " |

c) CAVITTUNĀTAKAM:

The term Cavittunātakam is made of two Malayalam words which is self-explanatory of the nature of the art-form. Cavittu- means steps (dance), Nātakam -means drama. Hence Cavittunātakam is a dance drama, laying emphasis on the foot-work. Cavittunātakam dance drama is found mainly among the Latin Christians who live on the coastal belt of Kerala. It is an unique art-form in many ways as it is a by-product of the result of the inter-action between the East and the West in the sphere of religion, theatre and culture. As a theatre art-form, "Cavittunātakam shows a happy blending of music, dance, action and kalarippayattu (gymnastics) of ancient Kerala. It is a gāna-nṛtta-nātakam in which , gāna (music) nṛtta (dance) and nāataka (drama) elements are harmoniously blended together. The actors sing while they act the drama and take steps (dance) according to the time measure of the centa (drum) and elattalam (cymbal) and other musical instruments playing in accompaniment. Acrobatics is another special feature of Cavittunātakam . Drawing its roots from the earlier folk arts of Kerala, Kūttu and Kūṭiyattam , Cavittunātakam closely follows the rules laid down by Nāṭyasastra, the basic text of all Indian Dramatic arts".⁽¹⁾

Commenting on Cavittunātakam Mohan Khokar says that, it is " unique in many ways, the form can perhaps best be described as a fusion between the dance-drama tradition of Kerala and European opera "(2). According to Dr.Chummar Choondal(3), Cavittunātakam synthesises the religious, cultural, social and artistic aspects of Christianity in Kerala. Sabeena Raphy(4) sees Cavittunātakam as a beautiful musical dance-drama akin to Kathakali but also very similar to the opera of the West. It is considered as the Christian counter-part of Kathakali by some and by others as an Indian edition of European opera.

ORIGIN OF CAVITTUNĀTAKAM:

It is commonly understood by many scholars that Cavittunātakam had its birth with the arrival of the Portuguese. Scholars like L.K.Ananthakrishnan Iyyar, P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, Dr.S.K.Nair, C.J.Thomas, J.C.Mathur, V.S.Andrew, A.Sreedhara Menon, Prof.Joseph Mundassery and Kaattumaatam Narayanan hold the above point of view. Dr.Chummar Choondal writes, " During the 16th century, Kerala Christians witnessed different phases in their socio-cultural and religious activities. The post-Diamper period provides instances of the direct Western involvement in the

cultural life of the natives. The Western explorers were chiefly motivated by their interest in colonial expansion and economic exploitation. The English and the Dutch did not deem it necessary to impose upon the Christian community their own cultural heritage. The Portuguese, however, due to a variety of complex circumstances, made their impact felt in the cultural field also. The Cavittunātakam, bears the stamp of foreign influence which opened new vistas of development for the theatrical arts of Kerala ". (5)

Dr.K.M.George, an eminent scholar in the field of Malayālam literature comments as follows with regard to the origin of Cavittunātakam, " the Portuguese who came to Kerala as early as the 16th century, were responsible for introducing Cavittunātakam which is a type of play similar to the miracle plays of the West. ' Genova' , 'Kāralmān' , and 'Napolean' are some of the better known plays of this type. The use of costumes, masks and curtains for the stage were novelties in Kerala. However, the literary quality of the songs and the dialogues in Cavittunātakam were rather low. The movements of the actors on the stage arrest our attention as that of acrobats. They are more vigorous than graceful, more martial than artistic. Those who did not

possess enough technical knowledge to appreciate Kathakali supported and encouraged this early attempt of dramatic portrayal in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was in a way the Christian counter-part of Kathakali which was reared on Hindu puranic stories ". (6)

However, according to Sabeena Raphy⁽⁷⁾ " in all probability these theatrical arts in an accepted form might have been introduced earlier and were popular among the early Christians of the ports and coastal areas before the Synod of Diamper itself. The people of the ports due to their incessant contact with the various peoples and cultures of the world, are by nature receptive of innovations ".

To support her point of view she quotes Gouvea, contemporary historian and Secretary to Archbishop Menezes who says, some plays were performed by the Christians of Cochin at night to entertain him on his return from Udayamperoor after the Synod (Gouvea, Antonio, Jornada...." Coimbara, 1606, p.125). According to Sabeena Raphy this play referred to by Gouvea can very well be the earliest form of Cavittunātakam. From tradition and known available historical sources, Cochin is considered the home of Cavittunātakam and there is a strong legend of a missionary Chinna Thambi

Annāvi of Fort Cochin , as the 'Father of Cavittunātakam.⁽⁸⁾

Dr. Chummar Choondal ⁽⁹⁾ says, Cavittunātakam originated with the advent of Portuguese in Kerala. This is evident enough from the theme, choreography, music, costumes, stage-geography, make-up and overall pattern of this art-form.

Church history and other historical documents clearly cite that the Kerala Christians were very much Indians in their thinking, liturgical services, worship patterns, social customs and artistic life. They were not affected by the European culture at least in their religious and aesthetic life. There is every possibility that theatrical arts like Kūthu , having the Bible stories etc. must have been in practice, just as the ancient Christian art-form like Mārgamkali existed and which is still in existence. Such art-forms must have disappeared with the sanctions of the Synod of Diamper (1599). Judging from the theme, nature and presentation of Cavittunātakam one could not logically conclude that such an art-form was in existence before the Synod of Diamper. The artistic entertainment rendered to Archbishop Alexes Menezes after the Synod of Diamper, quoted by Sabeena Raphy, must have been Mārgamkali .

Parisumuttukali or some sort of Kūttu . So Cavittunātakam must have taken a definite shape with the Synod of Diamper (1599).

WESTERNIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN KERALA:

The Westernization of Kerala Church started vigorously with the successful end of the famous historic Synod of Diamper in 1599 under the leadership of Archbishop Dr. Alexius Menezes. " To realise this task a moral crusade, more vigorous than before, was launched. Schools, seminars, study centres, press, publications, preaching, charitable institutions, hospitals, churches, music, meditation camps and the like were started. Besides these, the theatrical arts were also taken up as they were the most effective and natural medium of appealing to the people at large ".⁽¹⁰⁾ This movement of Westernization by the hierarchy backed by the political Lords, the Portuguese Govt., for their own advantage, gave rise to a complex situation in the life of the Kerala Christians regarding their religious, liturgical and theatrical norms. The Church authorities who alienated the new Christians of Goa from their own culture by crude and suppressive methods, tried similar tactics to alienate the Kerala Christians from their own cultural sphere.

In Goa the Church authorities succeeded to a great extent in their attempts but in Kerala their success was partial. Their attempts were counter-acted by firm opposition from a section of the people who vowed not to submit to the authoritarianism of the hierarchy. These Christians are called Jacobites. A section of the people submitted to the Portuguese led Church, but they stuck to their own liturgical and worship pattern. They are known as the Syrian Christians. Another section of the people who consisted of new Christians and a section of the Syrian Christians adopted Latin rites and are called Latin Christians. This group of people adopted the Portuguese customs and culture to a great extent. The use of Indian art-forms were prohibited for them by the Church authorities. So, the Portuguese-backed hierarchy tried to fill in this vacuum with the European type of theatre-art like dramas, Magi plays, passion plays etc. They successfully imposed the themes connected with their own culture and history, i.e. Kāralmān Nātakam, Roldon Napoleon Nātakam etc. Costumes and make-up were also taken from the West. However, the language, technique and music could not be changed completely. It was hard for the local artists to give up their tradition and technique in which they were rooted. Hence the music and technique took a new

form and shape blending the Indian and Western theatre-tradition. The failure of the Portuguese to achieve complete success in their attempts to alienate the local Christians and the attachment of the local Christians to their own traditional art-form gave rise to a new and unique art-form which came to be called Cavittunātakam.

Cavittunātakam developed and became a heritage of the Latin Christians of Kerala. Soon there were many dance teachers and troupes performing all over the coastal region of Kerala. Many plays were written on various topics. However, the names of the early authors are not known. Many of the manuscripts are signed as Cechuthachan (servant of Jesus) and Mariathachan (servant of Mary). Nearly for the last 300 years Cavittunātakam has developed into a stylised form having its own technique, presentation, choreography, system of training etc. In the following pages efforts have been made to get into the intricacies of this art-form.

TRAINING:

Performers of Cavittunātakam are trained in Kalaris, the local gymnasiums. The training period goes on for many months, sometimes for many years depending on the role a

particular performer will play. The martial element in Cavittunātakam is very dominant. Years ago each performer had to undergo training in sword play, fencing and other exercises. The swords used were real and sharp. Now-a-days the swordcraft training is given only to those who do the scenes involving sword fights. Also one notices that the sword display now is minimised.

After ceremoniously admitting the disciples by the teacher for training, the students are taught basic steps in different rhythms. Earlier the body-massage and physical training was also given simultaneously. In the second stage of the training, the pupils are assigned different roles in the play by the teacher. In the third stage the rehearsal proper takes place where each performer learns his role with the singing and with corresponding gestures, choreographic movements and expression. There is no fixed tuition fees paid to the Teacher. However, the expenses during the rehearsal are paid by the pupils or by a donor from the village.

Annāvi:

The teacher of Cavittunātakam is called Annāvi. He is also called Īsān. Annāvi is a pure Tamil word which denotes

instructor. According to Dr. Gundert the term Annāvi is used in Tamil as well as in ancient Malayalam to denote a teacher or the head of a company of actors. Annāvi plays a key position in the process of training and staging Cavittunātakam dance -drama. He must be well-versed in music, languages like Tamil (most of the plays are written in Tamil) and Malayalam, dance, acting, literature and stage-geography. He also must be an expert in martial arts like sword-play, fencing, gymnastics etc. The training is imparted in the Kalaris.

Kalari is made of a thatched roof under which the Cavittunātakam is practised and taught. It is in line with the ancient Kalari of Kerala where martial arts were practised. In the Kalari of Cavittunātakam one will find the traditional Nilavilakku and a Kurisu (cross). Mostly in the evenings and at night the practices for Cavittunātakam goes on under the guidance of Annāvi. The period before the performance of a particular play is called Colliyāttam, meaning the rehearsal period. The acceptance of the disciples is done on some auspicious occasions.

ACCEPTING OF THE DISCIPLES:

On an auspicious day selected boys are brought by the parents and elders to the Annāvi into the Kalari . Before selecting the boys an aptitude test of their voice, capacity to dance and march is taken. Physical looks and physique are also considered. These selected boys take an oath of dedication to the art of Cavittunātakam in front of a Cross (Kurisu) and the traditional lighted lamp (Nilavilakku) before the Annāvi and the local dignitaries. Now the ceremonious admission of the boys takes place according to the age-old Gurukula systems. The boys come forward one by one and place ten putten (old coin used in Cochin state) i.e. one rupee, in three beetle leaves and present it to the master. He then touches the master's feet and touches his own forehead and chest. The master blesses him. He is made a disciple. After pledging allegiance to the master, the boy pays his respect to the Text. Āsān opens the first page of the book and holds it out to the boy who in turn places 4 putten on the book and kisses it in reverence. The boy is admitted formally to the Kalari.⁽¹¹⁾ The text is called Āvati . Absolute obedience to the Annāvi is expected of a disciple. There are also a few stories prevalent among the people that certain talented artists were doomed because

of the curse of an Annāvi.

MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

Cavittunātakam like other performing art-forms of India has a systematic code for the staging of its dance-dramas. Intensive Colliyāttam (rehearsals) go on for many months before the Natakam is ready for arangetram or staging.

The staging of the Cavittunātakam takes place usually in the rural areas. It is performed during Christmas or Easter seasons. Sometimes the performance also takes place after the harvest. It is also performed on the invitation of a particular member of the village to fulfill the vow he has made. All the village folk gather together to erect the stage and other necessary preparations. No admission fee is collected from the audience for the performance. The expenses are met by the Polikkal or donations.

KĒLI:

In the evening the first Kēli begins. Kēli is an announcement made about the Cavittunātakam by playing the Centa. By this the village-folk are reminded and some come to know about the performance at night. At the first Kēli the performers enter the green-room for make-up and to

wear their costumes. Preparation for the performance by the Cavittunātakam artists starts in the morning. The Annāvi or Āsān takes his pupils to the Church to participate in the services, like Holy Mass, Communion etc. All the artists approach the parish priest and the elders for their blessings and good wishes.

In the evening when the first Kēli begins, the inauguration of the make-up is done by the Āsān himself. Annāvi holding the Cuvati (text) in one hand makes a sign of the Cross mark on the fore-head of each performer with white powder (manayōla) . After this initial ceremony, everyone gets busy with make-up(46) and wearing their dress (47). At about 9.00 p.m. the third Kēli is played. This is the signal that the play will commence in a short while.

A solemn playing of the cymbals announces the opening of the performance. This is followed by Stuti, Viruttam Mūlal, Tutiyōgar, Thodayāttam (it is also called Totayappenkal) the appearance of the Kattiyakkāran who introduces the theme and then the story is unfolded by singing , acting , expressing through gestures etc. Before the end of the performance Polivu pāttu is sung. Then with the Mangalam

the performance comes to an end.

STUTI PĀṬṬU:

After the solemn playing of the cymbals Stuti Pāṭṭu or prayer song is sung by the Annāvi , joined by all the performers (48).

"Ātiyūm arutiyilla jātiyūm matabhetamilla
Ajnātamāya Sṛṣṭi "

(There is no beginning so also no end, no difference of
caste or creed, an unknown creation)

"Paramatiru guruvaranām Yēsuve

Dharayilati karunayōte kākka dhanya "

(The Supreme Master (Lord) Jesus, Mercifully protect us in
this world (earth).

The prayer song is very long. In it, they pray to God,
invoke the Holy Spirit, praise Jesus Christ, Mary and all
the Saints. They also thank the Gurus (Annāvis) and author
of the text to be enacted. Stuti Pāṭṭu is followed by
Viruttam Mūlal .

VIRUTTAM MŪLAL:

In this part of the performance the story to be
enacted is sung in brief with the orchestral music. Viruttam

Mūlāḷ is just like the ' prologue ' of Greek drama and Nāṇḍi of Sanskrit theatre. Its duration varies from place to place. Upto this juncture the singing is done from behind the curtain. Now, the curtain opens and the next part of the performance is called Tutiyogar .

TUTIYOGAR:

Tutiyogar means the venerators of the audience. This is a pure dance item performed by the young boys about 12-14 years, dressed in soldiers attire. They come from two sides of the stage. They are also called Bālārpārtkkār (young actors). These roles are also common in Terukkūttu . Similar roles are also found among Christian Nātakams performed in the Palghat district by the Tamil speaking people. These two performers come to the stage executing powerful steps, they bow to the audience and kneeling on one leg, pay their respect to the Kalari Āsān or Annāvi and Cuvati(text) and give presents to the Guru. The present usually consists of a few rupees and a dhōti . This is the Gurudaksina each performer is expected to give. Especially when a pupil makes his debut on the stage for the first time he is expected to observe this custom. After this, the disciple touches the feet of the Āsān and pays respect to him. Besides the Guru, the costume Āsān is also given a present. Sometimes the

family members of the performer and even the audience gives presents. At times Kattiyakkāran acts as the master of ceremony during this function. The ceremony of giving presents is still in practice in the rural areas but not in the urban.

After this above ceremony the two performers get on to the centre of the stage and perform intricate and difficult steps under the direction and guidance of the Āsān, who stands right on the stage and plays the cymbals. After the performance of this Nrtta (pure dance) the performers sing the condensed version of the story that is to be enacted. Finally saluting the audience (the actors have to salute the audience on entrance and exit) they make their exit.

TODAYĀTTAM:

After the Tutiyōgar, half a dozen Todaya dancers enter the stage. They are all boys dressed in female attire. They make soft and graceful movements to the accompaniment of the melodious tunes. These performers also sing Psalms and Hymns in honour of the Madonna and other Saints. Their dance movements and actions resemble Kerala's traditional

Mōhiniyāttam ✓

KATTIYAKKĀRAN:

After Todayāttam , Kattiyakkāran or Kattiyan appears on the stage. The role of the Kattiyakkāran is like that of a Jester in Western drama. It can be also compared to the Property man of the Chinese stage. He moves about on the stage freely, makes comments on everyone including the audience, imitates the performers, picks up a cap, sword or any other thing on the stage. One can even find him at times carrying a dead soldier to the green-room.

Kattiyakkāran has to be well-versed in the Cavittu (steps), music and other techniques of Cavittunātakam . His task is also to amuse the audience and thus acts the role of a Joker. Coming on to the stage with a milk-white beard, artificial teeth, a massive or protruding stomach etc. he amuses the audience. His antics like trembling during a war scene, seriousness during a lighter movement on the stage, all these become a part of the performance. At times the Āsān will ask him to perform a Kavitam or other steps which he will first do in a funny way, then perfectly. In both cases if he does well, he is applauded. The Kattiyakkāran also should be an extempore poet. When the occasion arises he should be able to connect a particular

incident with the audience, the story of the performance on the stage etc. together and compose some original, interesting verses.

Kattiyakkāran has the freedom to enter the stage at any time without the direction and sanction of the Āsān. He is like the Tōzhan (companion) in the Sanskrit drama, who is intimately connected with the king. In the Nātakams prevalent in the Palghat district of Kerala among the Tamil-speaking Christians the buffoon or clown is called Sēvakan.

Besides these works, an important function of the Kattiyakkāran is to give a commentary on the play. He enters into direct conversation with the Annāvi. In a Durbar scene, he asks " Annāvi , who is the important personage on the stage?" Annāvi - " He is the great Emperor Charlemagne of France seated on his high throne ". The jester bows before the great " Emperor" and rejoins: " Annāvi , What does the great Emperor order?" Annāvi : " The great Emperor is giving orders to his ministers to prepare for a hunt". (12)

Such running commentary helps the audience to follow the story very well. Here, one should be reminded that most of the Cuvātis (texts) are in Tamil and the audience consists

of those who speak Malayālam . Hence, the Kattiyan in the Cavittunātakam is like a shadow of the play, who follows and is present throughout the performance, explains and interprets the story in Malayalam and thus helps the audience to follow, understand and enjoy the performance.

DURBAR SCENE:

Usually the play proper starts with the Durbar scene. The musicians sing Varavu Viruttam (entrance song) signalling the entry of the king. The Varavu Viruttam praises the king and his great qualities. After this, the great king enters the stage escorted by a dozen soldiers. He is dressed in colourful garments and is seen carrying a sceptre in his hand and wearing the royal crown. He also executes forceful rhythmic steps. The soldiers also dress themselves in attractive Greco-Roman dress and feather caps. They all together sing the praise of the Emperor. When they finish their part, the emperor starts to sing Koluvil Taru extolling his own greatness. While Koluvil Taru goes on, all the soldiers dance together in keeping to the rhythm of the song which the emperor sings. This song consists of 12-18 stanzas. After this, the emperor rests on the throne. (49) He then

orders one of the soldiers to inform his minister to report immediately. The soldier steps forward, salutes the emperor like anyone in the army and exits.

MANTRI:

Mantri or the minister has an important role in the play. The chorus announces the coming of the Minister. The first stanza of the song is sung by the minister from behind the stage. Then, all of a sudden he makes his entry onto the stage in dance-steps holding a sword in his hand. The soldiers join him in the dance. When the entrance song is over, the minister salutes the Emperor and stands next to him.(50) He then asks for the reason for summoning him. The emperor enquires with the minister about the well-being of his subjects. While the Mantri gives a detailed report, the soldiers join him in making graceful movements known as atanta . After this, they set out either for war or for hunting.

PÖRTARU (WAR CRY-WAR SCENE):

The fighting scene in the Cavittunātakam is very interesting. Usually the kings do not fight. The minister is the commander-in-chief of the army and leads the battle.

Before going for the fight, the emperor or the king prays to God kneeling on one leg. The soldiers together with the minister kneel down and join him in the prayer.(51) Before setting out for war, the minister is blessed by the emperor (52). The opposite parties enter the stage from two ends and march to the centre of the stage. They stand in two rows with drawn swords and shields. Everyone is ready for the fight. Then, one of the soldiers comes out from one party and challenge the other side.(53) At Annāvi's signal, the fight begins. Nearly 30-40 people fight on the stage with real swords and shields. (+54, +55). The movements and rhythm are as per the direction of the Annāvi. The fight goes on for nearly half an hour.

Besides the Pārtaru , the hunting scenes are very interesting. Here the dancers imitate the gait of different animals. At times a few romantic scenes are enacted where a commander of Charlemagne falls in love with a beautiful daughter of the enemy.(56) These scenes are also very thrilling. (56a, 56b, 56c)

POLIVU PĀTTU:

Polivukal means donation. Before singing the Mangalam the Kattiyakkāran sings Polivu pāttu which is a signal

for the generous people in the audience to give a donation towards the expenses of the performance. Staging Cavittunātakam is very expensive and hence donations are collected. When someone gives an amount, the Kattiyakkāran announces the name to the audience and the donor is applauded by all. A similar custom can also be found in Terukkūttu where they sing Vāluṇṇattū which is like the Polivupāttu of Cavittunātakam. Dr. Chummar Choondal, a folklorist from Kerala says that Polivupāttu is a common feature in almost all the folk-theatres of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

MANGALAM:

As in other performing art-forms of India, in Cavittunātakam too Mangalam is sung as the concluding piece of the long dance drama. For Mangalam all the actors come to the stage and array themselves in different rows. The Annāvi starts the thanksgiving song and all others recite in chorus. The theme of the song consists in thanking God, and the Patron Saint for the successful and happy ending of the Nātakam. Saluting the audience, all the performers march off to the green-room.

NATAKATTATTU: (STAGE)

Cavittunātakam is performed in the open-air theatre. The stage is put up by the joint efforts of the villagers who not only contribute in cash but also render their services in the construction of the stage. The venue will be either the Church premises or the village maidan. The stage is constructed about 8 feet high with less width and more length, approximately 30 feet and 100 feet respectively. The planks on the stage are fixed in such a way so that while dancing they produce a drumming sound. Nowadays the size of the stage has been reduced considerably. However, a bigger stage is essential for the Cavittunātakam, mainly because of the war-scenes where 30 to 40 actors enact the mock-fights.

On both sides of the stage there will be a Mēta which is an upper chamber, well-decorated, at a height of 6 to 8 feet. These Mētas are connected to the stage by ladders. They represent the palaces of the opposite kings. It is also used as a resting place for the king and their retinue. War is a must in Cavittunātakam, because of which Mētas are built facing one another.

At the centre of the back of the stage there is a

casement, rectangular in shape. A lighted lamp is hung in front of it. The bell-metal lamp (Nilavilakku) is placed on the stage before a cross. There is no curtain. The stage is open. At the farthest ends of the stage there are two doors for the entry and exit of the actors. Annāvi with cymbals in his hands takes his place near the Nilavilakku and other musicians take their places at either side. Whenever the performance is given in the cities, all these technicalities are overlooked because of the ready-made stage.

About seventy years ago, the stage-lights were arranged like this: A row of plantain trunks were pitched in the ground just before the stage. On the top of these trunks copper cans, filled with coconut oil in which thick wicks were fixed and were lit. Besides these lights, huge torch-lights were also fixed in the plantain trunks.⁽¹³⁾ The stage designer, the costume maker and the make-up artist is the same person in Cavittunātakam.

COSTUME AND MAKE-UP:

In Cavittunātakam the Āhārya Abhinaya is considered to be very important. Great care is taken by the costume Āsān regarding this aspect of the play. The costumes are one of the main attracting features of this art form.

" The costumes are noted for their artistic excellence. Since the plays are mostly of great emperors and medieval kings and knights of Europe, the costumes are elaborate as befits those personalities. There is a profuse display of colourful silk, velvet and brocades studded with dazzling pearls, glass chips and the like materials. The soldiers usually wear the Greco-Roman uniform. The helmet and breast-plate of the soldiers and the king's crown are first modelled in clay. Till today there are still a few village artisans who make these costumes and embellishments with a masterly hand. The costumes and make-up are realistic in Cavittunātakam. Masks and symbolic representations are not used. Kings are dressed as Kings, soldiers as soldiers and sages as such in accordance with their age and place. The emperor and kings in their rich royal robes and dazzling crown and sceptre, escorted by soldiers in their Greco-Roman uniform, helmet and armour indeed make an unforgettable sight ". (14)

To represent the palaces, different kinds of thrones, are prepared. They make the structure of the chairs with carved wood or metal castings. On it they work out with jewellery, paints, glitter etc. The emblem of each king is also prepared carefully. They also use Alavattam , a circular

fan which is made of peacock feather; Venkorraikutai - a royal umbrella decorated with pearls. This specially-made umbrellas are used even now in the church processions. St. Thomas Christians traditionally used this sort of decorative umbrellas in their social and religious functions. (15)

The above mentioned items are still used by the Gothuruthu Cavittunatakam troupe.

The attire of the performers is ornamental and well-studded with coloured stones on a silk or velvet cloth. The emperor and other characters playing the roles of kings, queens and knights use costly velvet and silk. All the characters wear a jacket-like garment which stretches just below their waist. There is a long silk cloth fixed to the collar of their jacket extending to the shoulders. This silk cloth almost touches their heels. (57) For their legs they use tight-fitting hose or at times full stockings. Costume

Āsān P.A. Bruno in an interview said that in the olden days the performers used to have their hands and legs painted white (16) and for their feet they used only cloth shoes. In the present day they use white stockings or tie their white pants in such a way as to give the impression of tight-fit stockings. For their hands they use gloves. The cloth shoes are fast disappearing and in their place canvas shoes

are (58) being used. This custom of using shoes which is not found in the Indian art-form must be the imitation of the West to match the other Greco-Roman attire. Hence breast-plate, armour, Helmet (pataccatta) are used by the soldiers.

KIRITAM (CROWN)

Kiritam is another important item of the costume. Practically all the characters adorn their heads: kings and noble men with crowns, soldiers with helmets and other characters with caps of different kinds. The crowns are beautifully decorated with stones, gold glitterings etc. They also use real feathers of the cock or dove (59) to decorate the crowns. The royal Cenköl (Sceptre) is a must for kings and each king has a Cenköl of his own. A Turkish emperor has the symbol of a half-moon and star on his sceptre (60), a Christian emperor has a Cross on his sceptre (61).

Colours vary from territory to territory. Each king has his own choice of colour. The Turkish king uses mostly green colour, significant of the Muslim religion. Red, golden, rose, shamrock , yellow , white , emerald, sapphire etc are a few colours to be mentioned. Black colour is used

on the occasion of death, sorrow or misery. White is used on joyous celebrations.

Make-up in Cavittunātakam is very simple. They apply powder on their face and use lip-stick. Beard, wigs and moustache are also used. Eye-brows are touched to the minimum.

Costume, stage-setting and make-up to a great extent are influenced by the Western tradition and very little of the regional influences are visible as narrated earlier. This art-form has given great accent to the Āhārya Abhinaya even at the expense of other factors like technique etc.

THEMES:

Cavittunātakam texts are called Cuvatis. " There are about fifty plays in the Cavittunātakam repertoire. The earliest of these, written about 300 years ago, is the Kāralmān Caritam. This recounts the heroic deeds of Emperor Charlemagne who, around 8th century A.D. led his troops to Palestine, defeated the Turks and converted them to Christianity. Kāralmān Caritam , which is the important play in the Cavittunātakam tradition, takes fifteen nights for its full presentation and requires nearly 100 performers.

The language of the plays in Cavittunāṭakam is Tamil or Malayalam with a high seasoning of Tamil. This is explained by the fact that the first few plays were written by a reputed Tamil scholar and poet Chinnethambi Pillai, a Roman Catholic who settled down in Cochin and by Vedanayakam Pillai, another Tamil poet, and it is the work of these two that set the tone for the plays that followed ".(17)

Originally the Cuvatis were written on palm leaves. Quite a few of them are imitations or copies of the old texts. This happened because the Āsāns would not part with the Cuvati which were in their possession and secondly some manuscripts were either lost or damaged. So different Āsāns wrote what they remembered and added their own literary contribution to it. The result is that we sometimes have many versions of the same story i.e. Kāralmān Nāṭakam has four versions.

Many of the names of the authors are not known. It was a custom among the Portuguese Missionaries to sign a work of literature as Chenchuthachan (servant of Jesus) or Mariathachan (servant of Mary). The purpose in introducing these foreign themes was to teach the people the Portuguese history, culture, geography together with Christianity and its noble principles, in and through these story forms.

It was only in recent times that stories based on Indian history, mythology and social themes were introduced.

The themes of Cavittunātakam can be divided into the following categories: (18)

1. Historical
2. Biblical
3. Religious
4. Social Themes
5. Based on Indian History and Mythology.

HISTORICAL:

Kāralmān Nātakam, which is commonly considered to be the first Cavittunātakam play was based on European history. Subsequently maximum number of plays were written on European history.

Schedule -I

Historical plays

Sl.No.	Title of Play	No.of Actors
1.	Robert Caritam	Not known
2.	Peregruese	"
3.	Lucina Nātakam (Princess Lucina of Hungary)	"
4.	Kāralmān Nātakam	42
5.	Napoliyan Nātakam	32

6.	Clovis Natakam	34
7.	Ancelikka	21
8.	Roldon	28
9.	Alphons Natakam	26
10.	Fabiyola	30
11.	Jnana Sundari	26
12.	Riccardinre Dhirakrutyam	24
13.	Victoriya Natakam	26
14.	Stanley Vijayam	20
15.	Nabilon	21
16.	Alexton	Not known
17.	Jameslar	"
18.	Sanjiclos	"
19.	Bales	"
20.	Jenova Natakam	38

BIBLICAL:

The second main stress was laid on Biblical stories which were effective way of teaching Christian doctrines. Many themes from the Old Testament and New Testament were selected and adopted for the Cavittunatakam dance-drama.

Schedule -II Biblical

Sl.No.	Title of Play	No.of Actors
1.	Yakkob Nātakam	Not known
2.	Abraham Natakam	"
3.	Tiru Vastram	"
4.	Kottāra Rahasyam	"
5.	Barabus	51
6.	Istakki Nātakam	48
7.	Pūrva Auseph Nātakam	41
8.	Gabriel	32
9.	Tobiyas	29
10.	David Vijayam	42
11.	Samson	Not known

Schedule -III On the life of the Saints:

Sl.No.	Title of Play	No.of Actors
1.	Alphonsa Nātakam	Not known
2.	Cathrina Nātakam	"
3.	Nicholas Nātakam	"
4.	Givarghese Caritam, Givarghese Patayāli, Givarghesum Perumpambum	28

5.	Allesu Nātakam, Mar allesu nātakam	32
6.	Brasina nātakam, Brajina nātakam	Not known
7.	Saint Sebastian	24
8.	Lilly	Not known
9.	Plamena Nātakam	"
10.	Martin Katha	"
11.	Anastasiya	"

SOCIAL THEMES:

In the 20th century besides these foreign stories, themes connected to society were introduced. It was a leap from the royal and religious themes. The Church authorities did not show any resistance to this new development.

Schedule -IV Social Themes:

Sl.No.	Title of Play	No.of Actors
1.	Kanakabalan	Not fixed
2.	Komalachandrika	"
3.	Dharmastan	"
4.	Valsakumari	"
5.	Vīrakumaran	"
6.	Vanabalan	"

BASED ON INDIAN HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY:

In the last 3 decades stories from Indian History and Mythology were also effectively introduced into Cavittunātakam . As the war and fighting scenes are the main attractions in Cavittunātakam the authors of these new themes have chosen such stories where there is a lot of fighting.

Schedule -V

Sl.No.	Title of Play	Author
1.	Akbar	-
2.	Anārkali	-
3.	Chandraguptan (King of Maurya Dynasty)	V.G.John
4.	Dharmaputran	V.G.John
5.	Dharmistan	V.G.John
6.	Bharata Yudhattinte Nandi (Adaption from Mahabharata)	Thottagam Joseph T.E.

V.G.John who lived in Fort Cochin is the first one to introduce stories from Hindu Mythology. He died in the year 1979.

MUSIC:

Cavittunātakam is a musical dance-drama where every performer is expected to sing. Practically not a single line of prose is to be found in the presentation. The actors sing while they act and dance. The music has a blend of alien and Indian musical traditions. According to Katavanadu, one of the art-critics of Mathrubhoomi paper in Cochin, the Cavittunātakam music at times resembles the local marriage songs. Dr.Chummar Choondal says, the influence of Terukūttu songs is seen in Cavittunātakam in the corrupted form of Ragas and Talas of Carnatic music. According to Dr.Justine Panakkal (19) the music of Cavittunātakam has a close association with polyphonic music. Polyphonic music is sung in different voices i.e. Tenor, Suprano, Bass etc. Sabeena Raphy says that " Cavittunātakam songs are composed in the vast and varied Esai of the rich Tamil musical literature. Kerala has inherited a rich legacy of Tamil music of the Sangha Poems, the classics of Tamil. It is from this vast Tamil music literature that Kūtiyattam and Kathakali developed their music. It is in this sweet familiar Tamil Esai (song) that Cavittunātakam plays are composed by a master-mind , so as to depict the various rasas, mainly sentiments of valour, as most of the plays parade deeds of bravery and thrilling fights ". (20)

One cannot rule out the influence of the Tamil folk-songs like Kāvati , Cindu , Kummi, Kolattam and ammanai . In some songs the influence of Malayalam folk-songs called Māvēli Pāttu is found. As already mentioned earlier the influence of Terukūttu is seen clearly. E.g. In Kāralmān Nātakam , the song describing voyage of Charlemagne to Rome, song of the Minister, Ship song of Charlemagne and song of the birds.

The Portaru (war song) in Kāralmān Nātakam is not in the Yudha Vattannal of Kathakali . The music here is in clear staccato of the Western style of singing. The war song between the Turk and Charlemagne, war song between the Turk and Oliver etc. clarify the above conclusion. Certain distorted version of Carnatic ragas like Kamboji, Ananda-bhairavi, Sankarabharanam is found in many places.

All these above-mentioned factors, styles and traditions of music have immensely influenced Cavittunātakam music in attaining a style and nature of its own. The play-back singers in Cavittunātakam are allowed only to accompany the actor. The actor sings in the higher octave, the accompanying singer repeats the same in the lower octave or in the higher octave. The chorus is sung in many voices. Choral music

(singing in many voices) is a special feature found in Cavittunātakam which is an influence of the Western style of singing. The repetition of the same tune is also seen, which is another common feature of Indian folk-theatre. Songs start in a slow tempo and end up in fast tempo which is a common characteristic of Kathak or Bhajan style of singing.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

Musical instruments used in Cavittunātakam are both Indian and Western in origin. Traditionally, during the performance the Āsān and other musicians stood in the centre of the back-stage and the singers took their place near the casement of the back-curtain as explained earlier. At present in some places, they sit to the right side of the stage. In Cavittunātakam there is a lot of stress on rhythm because of the nature of the art-form which is basically vigorous and forceful (Tandava) and hence the rhythmic instruments like Centa , Elattālam , Maddalam , dolakku and Jalra of Indian origin; Kettle drum, Cymbal and Tambore of Western origin are used. Besides these, string and wind instruments like Fiddle, Clarionet, Harmonium and Bulbul are also used. Some troupes like North Parur, Pallipuram, Fort Cochin, Arathungal and Vaduthala use more Western instruments(kettle drum, Clarionet, Fiddle etc.) than the other groups.



The role of Centa and Elattalam is very prominent in the orchestra. Before the play commences, Kēlikottu is performed, announcing the play. This is a common feature in many of the classical and folk-theatres of the South. However, Kēlikottu is not so elaborate as in Kathakali. There are three Kēlikottu - onnām kēli, raṇṭām kēli and mūnnām kēli. The play begins at the end of Mūnnām kēli. The music and instruments make Cavittunātakam more vigorous and forceful. The Eastern and Western traditions can be seen clearly both in music and in the use of the instruments.

TECHNIQUE:

Cavittunātakam as a dance-drama form has developed a technique of its own. When the students are admitted to the Kalaris by the Annāvi for learning Cavittunātakam, in the beginning various body exercises are taught to them in the line of the ancient Kalari tradition of Kerala. The trainees are also given body massage to make their body supple and ready for the strenuous dance. After this, the Āsān (Annāvi) teaches the basic steps (Irattipūkal) which is followed by the teaching of the complicated and intricate dance-pieces like Kavitaṁs, Kalāsams, Etakkalāsams and Atanta. Principles of acting and singing are also taught simultaneously.

FOOT-WORK:

The outstanding feature of Cavittunātakam technique lies in its foot-work. The name of the dance-form itself is derived from the two Malayalam words-Cavittu (step), Nātakam(drama) means a drama with steps or stamping of feet. Hence, more stress and importance is given during training to the foot-work.

Steps (Irattipūkal)

The basic steps are called Irattipūkal . There are twelve basic steps, however, they vary in number from 12 to 16 from one troupe to the other. Annāvis like Āsān George from Gothuruthy and a few others teach the steps systematically before they start the Colliyāttam (rehearsals). Collukattus of the steps include meaningless syllables (as in other art-forms like Bharata Natyam, Kathakali etc.) and a few verses of a popular songs of the play. 12 basic steps as taught by Āsān George of Gothuruthy troupe are given here below with a short explanation and their corresponding particular

Collukattus .

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------|--------|----------|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3-4 | - | - |
| 1) | Ta | Taiyum | Taiyum | | |
| | (1) | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| | Tai | Tai | Taita | Dhintaka | |
| | (o) | | (o) | | |

The right foot is forcefully stamped in the front in Tattu (where the full sole of the foot touches the floor) for the first beat, the left foot is stamped at the same position and on the third beat the right foot is brought back and stamped at the original position in stand at ease, and the left leg is stamped on the 4th beat. For the first two beats the right hand is kept in Ardhacandra hasta facing out-ward, a little away from the body and for 3rd and 4th beat the hand is brought close to the chest. However, the left hand is held in Dola hasta to the left side for the first two beats and on the 3rd and 4th beat it is kept in Sikara resting on the performer. The same pattern is repeated on the left side.

	1	2	3	4	
ii)	- Thadi	Mitta	Hitta	Ginu	Tagi
	(1)				
	1	2	1	2	
	Ta - - Ta	Taiya	Taiym		
	(o)		(o)		

The right foot is stamped behind the left foot in Mettu for the first beat and brought back to the original stand at ease position. The right hand is held in Ardhacandra hasta, facing out-ward and the left hand is held in Sikara close to the chest. The body turns at the torso towards the right side and the dancer looks from right side to the other diagonally. The same movement is done on the left side too.

iii) 1 2 3 4
Ta - Tadhi Tata Tataiyum
(1)

The right foot is stamped on the normal basic position, on the second beat again the right leg is placed behind the left while body is turned towards the right. On the third beat the right leg is again stamped in the original position and by stamping the left foot in the same place, the movement is completed. Here the Ardhacandra hasta is kept palm facing towards the dancer and the left hand is kept in Sikara as in the previous step.

iv) ⁽¹⁾ - Vāruminke ^(o) patakaluntraī ^(o) patakaluntraī Ta dhin

(1) (o) (o)
Taka Pōrjayittu vanta kappal vanta kappal Ta dhin taka

Turning the body to the left side, the right foot is stamped on the first and second beat to the right side, on the third beat the same right foot is stamped behind the left and on the fourth beat the dancer comes to the normal stand-at-ease position striking the left foot. The right hand is held in Ardhacandra hasta throughout, but the left hand is in Dola hasta for the first two beats and for the 3rd and 4th beat it is held in Sikara hasta close to the chest.

- (1)
v) Varum Sahōdarare vīryabhatare
(o) (o)
Marana vēlayil mayankitamal

Turning to the left side, strikes the right and left foot one after the other, thus by moving to the right, he completes the 3rd and 4th beat. The ultimate outcome of this dance movement is a semicircle. The hands are held in Ardhacandra hasta in opposite direction. This step is done by starting only from the right side.

- vi) For this step the Collukattu is same as that of the iv step.

The pattern of the dance movement gives the form of a triangle. On the first beat the right foot is stamped parallel to the left foot by turning to the left-side, the second beat by the left foot on the same place. For the third beat right foot is stamped diagonal to the left foot on the right side. For the fourth beat the left is stamped on the heel behind the right foot. The hands kept in Ardhacandra hasta both facing outward move like the wave with the movement and on the fourth beat both are kept in Sikara hasta, the right above the head to the right and left on his left thigh. The dancer looks at the right hand in the final pose. The same is repeated on the left side.

vii) Collukattu is same as iii .

The right hand is kept in Ardhacandra hasta palm towards the face, left in Sikara pointing to the chest. In the four beat rhythm, the right foot is stamped in the front for the first beat, second beat by the left foot on the same place, but the third and fourth by the right leg. The movement gives a quarter circle form. The right hand moves from the original position towards his right side above the head level.

viii) Collukattu is same as ii

Striking the right foot in the front both hands are held in Ardhacandra hasta , palm facing inwards. Second beat , the left leg on the same place. For the third beat right leg is stamped behind the left foot and the 4th beat by the left foot. Then for the 5th and sixth beat he moves to the left side and for the 7th and 8th beat, takes a pose to the right side where he looks at the Sikara hasta held in right hand and the left hand also in Sikara hasta held close to the waist striking the left leg behind.

ix) Collukattu is same as iii.

The hands are held in Mrgasirsa hasta but the middle

three fingers touch the palm, stamps the right foot for the first beat and for the second beat strikes the left foot, raises the right leg almost to his chest level while raising the right hand above his head pointing the fingers upwards, fixes his glance on it, the other hand points to the chest. This is also done alternatively on right and left side.

x) Collukattu is same as i.

On the first beat the dancer jumps in front landing on both the feet in Aramandi (half-sitting) position, on the second beat the hands are kept in Ardhacandra hasta facing downwards. On the 3rd beat the right foot is stretched to the front by striking the heel and at the same time maintaining the Aramandi position. Here both the hands are kept in Mrgasīrsabheda as explained earlier where the little finger of the right hand is pointing upwards, the left thumb is held at the right hand elbow, and this pose is kept for the fourth beat where there is no movement of the body.

xi) Collukattu is same as i or x.

The movement for the first two beats is same as the 1st two beats of the step. For the third beat he lifts his right leg bending it at the knee, keeping the Aramandi

position. The left hand is stretched above his head to the left side in Mrgasīrsabhēda hasta and the left is kept stretched down towards the raised right leg also in Mrgasīrsabhēda hasta . For the fourth beat the dancer keeps up the same pose.

xii) Manimakuta mutiyarasan mutiyarasan ta dhintaka
 Manimētayil etirēlkkave etirēlkkave ta dhintaka
 Parimalavāsana tailaṅgalākave
 Pūrana mullappu mallika mālayum
 Tōrana pūpantal nalamōtalankayil
 Tazhikayāyitu karanīyeka

Strikes the right foot in the front, the left hand is kept in Sikara hasta pointing to his chest and the right hand is held in Ardhacandra hasta facing the palm outwards, for the second beat moving to the right side strikes the same right foot and here both hands are held in Ardhacandra hasta facing the palm inward. Bending a little forward strikes the left foot in the front for the third beat holding same hand gestures. For the 4th beat left foot is stamped behind in Metṭu (striking on the front portion of the sole) The hands are kept in Ardhacandra hasta facing it outward. 5th beat strikes the left foot in the front bringing the

direction of his palms to his chest and on 6th beat he brings the left leg behind the right just as it is done for the 4th beat. For the 7th beat, takes a pose to the right side stamping the right foot and looking at the right hand which is in Mrgasīrsabhēda hasta. The left leg is stretched to the left side resting on the front portion of the foot and the left hand is held just below the waist.

KAVITTAMS:

Kavittam means a rhythmic choreographic piece of pure dance (Nr̥tta) performed at the beginning of a song. It is also performed at the first entrance of an important character or at the starting of a Durbar scene where soldiers stand in a row. Each talented Āsān could choreograph his own Kavittam combining the basic steps and other movements. However, it is said that traditionally 16 Kavittams were taught of which only 8 are in operation. There are a few Kavittams traditionally used for particular characters like Mantri (Minister) King etc.

Example for Kavittams:

(1)
Kitataka Tat tari takatari taka tallam
(o) (o)
Tat tari tom tari taka tari ta -

(1)
 Timrutat thadhi ghina tom
 (o) (o)
 Kitataka tat tari taka tari taka tallam
 (1)
 Tat tari tom tari taka tari ta -
 (o) (o)
 Timrutat thadhi ghina tom
 (1)
 Kitataka tat tari taka tari ta
 (o) (o)
 Timrutat thadhi ghina tom kitatak thom tari
 (1)
 Taka tari ta- timrutat thadhi ghina
 (o) (o)
 Tom - kitataka tat tari tam tharikita tom
 (1)
 Taka tari tam tharikita tom thom tari tam tharikitathom
 (o) (o)
 Tata tari tam tharikitathom ta-- kitataka
 (1)
 Tat tharikitataka taka tharikita thomtharikita

 Taka nam tharikita taka
 (o) (o)
 Thanda thinta ta thimrutat tathinghina thom

 Thimrutat tathinghina thom tathinghina thom .

ETAKKALĀSAM:

Etakkalāsams are vigorous steps performed in the middle of a song. Sometimes the song is sung in faster speed and meaningless syllables (collukattus) are used elaborately. They are 12 in number.

KALĀSAMS:

Kalāsams are vigorous steps executed at the end of a song. They are very similar to the Kalāsams performed in

Kathakali . However, the Kalāsams of the Cavittunātakam are of a simpler nature than Kathakali, but close to the latter's tāla system and style of reciting. An example of Kalāsam in Ādi Tālam is given below:

(1)
 Katir tam katir tonkattarikita takatarikita tinginam taka
 (o) (o)
 Tittittai - timruta tarikita takatarikita takatarikita
 (1)
 Tiginam taka tittittai taka tattatta takkitu takkitu
 (o) (o)
 Tarikita kitutai tarikita kitu tai tinam kritom tinam kritom tom
 (1)
 Tinakru karikinattai-krita tattā takkitu tikkitu
 (o) (o)
 Tarikita kitutai tarikita kitutai tinam krita tinkanam tom

ATANTAS:

Atantas are performed by the female characters in Cavittunātakam . They are a combination of a flowing steps performed very gracefully (lāśya) and softly which resembles the Mohiniyāṭṭam dance style of Kerala (61a). An example of Atanta in Ādi Tālam is given below :

(1) (o) (o)
 Takutajam tarikutajamdhami takutajam sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
 (1) (o) (o)
 Takutajam tarikutajamdhami takutajam sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
 (1) (o) (o)
 Tāni tantāna tana tana tanānai tāni tantāna tana tana tananai
 (1) (o) (o)
 Tāni tantāna tana tana tanānai tāni tantāna tana tana tanānai
 (1) (o) (o)
 Tutakrita- tarikitatitta - Tutakrita tarikita tom tadhintaka tom

HAND-GESTURES:

Many hastas are used in Cavittunatakam, but there is no exclusive treatise written and used for its hasta-language. These hastas are not necessarily as meaningful and precise as the gestures in Kathakali or Bharata Natyam. At times they are rhythmical gestures that follow the words and dialogue (61b). On a closer observation one realises that the hand-gestures are also used in a Nāṭya Dharmi style, for example the saying of the king was demonstrated in the case of the hasta Mrgasīrṣa (62) by stretching the hand from the mouth, one foot towards the front. Since the songs are sung by the performer, the use of the hand gestures is not very stylised and systematic. However, many hastas like Suci, Pataka, musti, Sikara, Anjali, Kapōka etc. are very frequently and meaningfully used.

During the pure dance, Ardhacandra is in most frequent use. Sikara and Mrgasīrṣabhēda that is, commonly used Mrgasīrṣa with the three middle fingers touching the palm are also used. The students learn these hastas and hand-movements together with the basic steps.

BASIC POSITIONS:

There are mainly five positions which are frequently

seen during the performance.

1. Stand at ease position (63) . The dancer stands erect keeping his two feet apart, leaving a gap of about 4" from one to the other. Hands are rested on the hips in Ardhacandra hasta facing downward. Chest is held upright. The head is kept in sama position. This is the most basic position. Here, one should note that this art-form is of a martial nature and the movement resembles the basic standing position of the soldiers (63a).

ii) Kneeling Position:

Soldiers kneel on two legs when they pray to God and

iii) Kneeling on One Leg: when greeting someone respectfully i.e. the emperor (51). Also when asking for pardon (63), receiving blessing from the elders (52) during the sword fight (54) etc. the position of kneeling on one leg is very popular.

iv) Aramandi Position:

This is found especially when they perform the 10th and 11th basic steps.

v) Standing on One Leg:

Where the left leg is firmly placed on the floor and the right leg is raised to the chest height is found in the

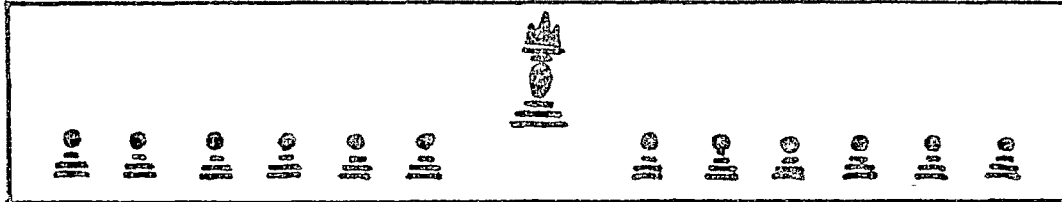
9th step. This step is performed to demonstrate anger, pride etc.

Most of the foot-work is done by raising the legs in front of the body in a marching movement. The entire foot is stamped against the floor. Certain movements are done by dancing on the heels by the female characters.

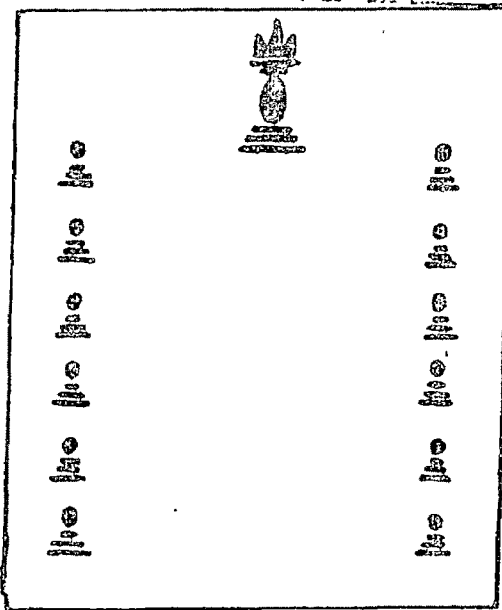
Their facial expressions tend to be more realistic than stylised (63b). It is more Lōkadharmi than Nāṭyadharmi. There are no specifically termed movements for the eyes, however, the use of the eyes by the actors is seen very much on the stage. Besides being a good dancer the Cavittunātakam performer should be a good actor and singer as well. The actor expresses himself by singing and acting. He sings with gestures, expressions, movements and modulation of the voice. After being taught the preliminary exercises and basic steps, the student learns his role by singing, acting and dancing simultaneously.

The art of sword-fight in Cavittunātakam is another special and attractive feature. The swords, spears etc. used in the play are real. The Āsāns who teach Cavittunātakam are also expert sword-fighters. The art and principles of the

LINEAR CHOREOGRAPHY --- 1. IN ONE LINE



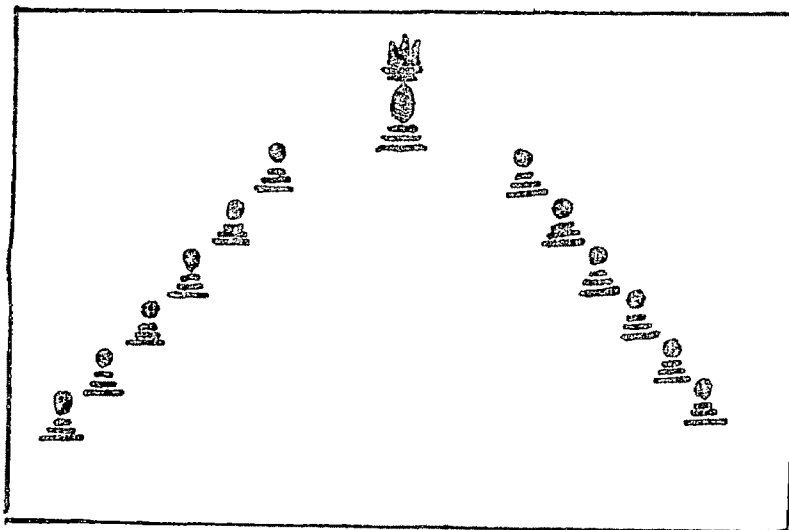
ii. CHOREOGRAPHY IN PARALLEL LINES.



 . EMPEROR OR KING.

 . SOLDIER.

iii. CHOREOGRAPHY IN DIAGONAL LINE.



sword-fight in Cavittunātakam is a blend of the Western gladiators and Kalarippayattu of ancient Kerala. At present experts in sword-fight among the performers are fast disappearing. Also very nominal training is given to the present-day Cavittunātakam students.

CHOREOGRAPHY:

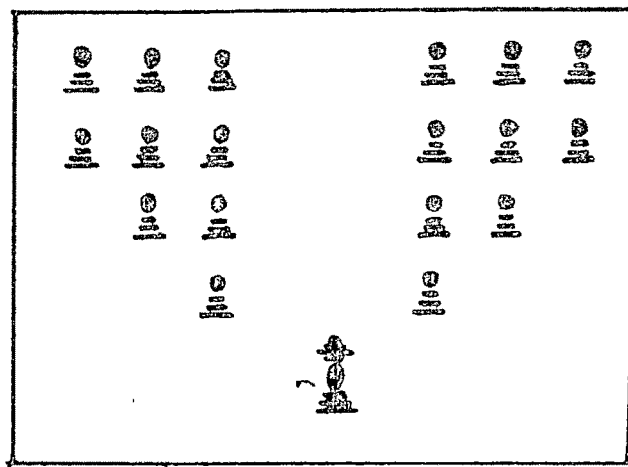
In choreography, together with the steps, the body movements are given equal importance. The movements of the body or parts of the body or a retinue of soldiers, the use of the space (direction and level), the timing of the movement (fast or slow), the mode of the movement (strong or light) and pattern of the movement (bound or free) are measured and carefully choreographed.



Choreography in Cavittunātakam can be divided into two categories: A) Choreography during peace time, entry of a character, dance of the soldiers etc. which consists of the Kavittams, Etakkalāsams, Kalāsams and Atantas. Here the choreography is attained mainly on two principles.

a) Line as the basic principle: Here, the actors, mainly the soldiers dance in a row. This type of choreographic pattern can be in one line, parallel, diagonal or in many lines.

For details refer the sketches given at the end of this chapter.

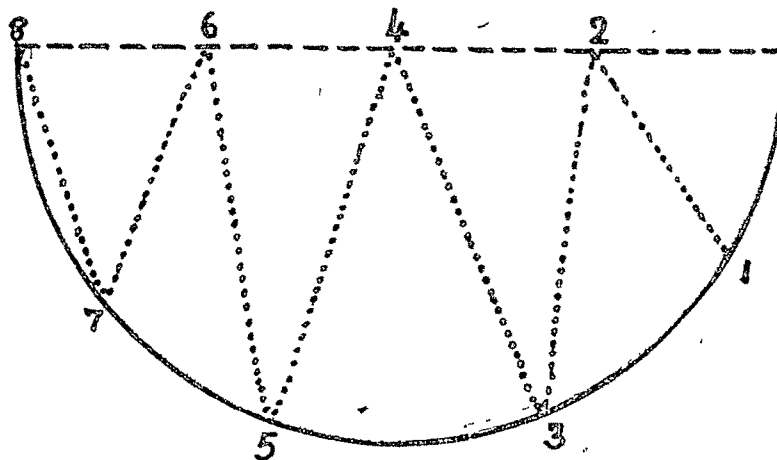
IV. CHOREOGRAPHY IN MANY LINES



 = MINISTER.
 = SOLDIER.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS IN SEMICIRCLE

i. SINGLE SEMICIRCLE BY A SOLO DANCER.

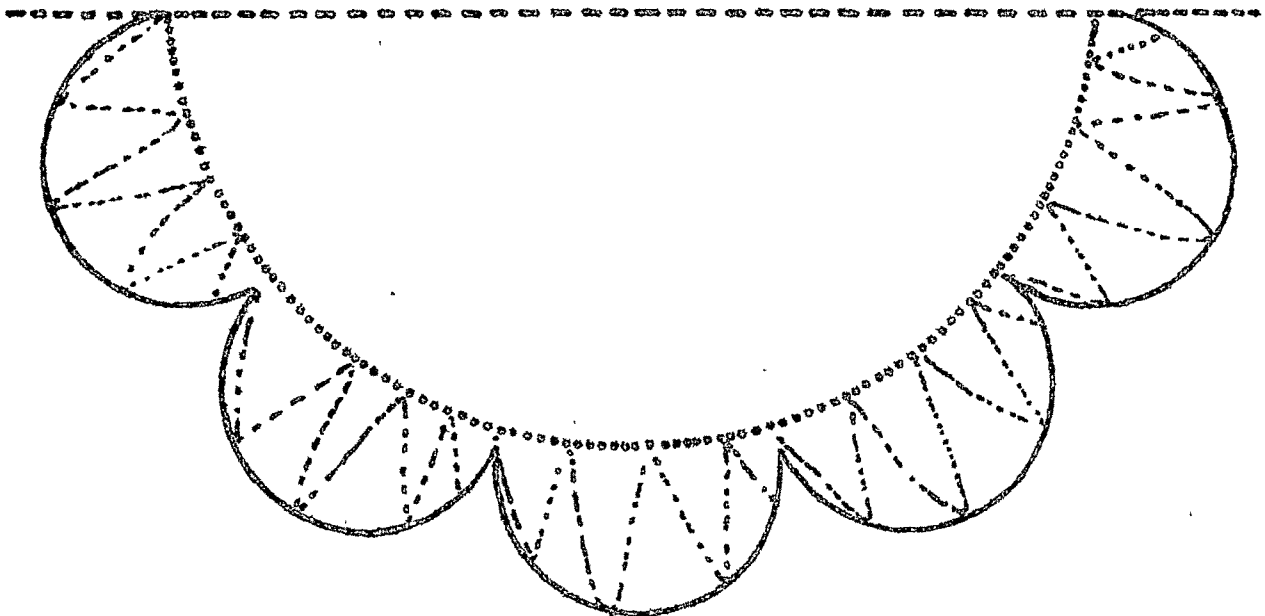


- - - - - = BASIC LINE
 = MOVEMENT
 ————— = SEMI CIRCLE FORMATION.

ii. SINGLE SEMICIRCLE BY THE GROUP.



iii. MANY SMALL SEMICIRCLES IN A BIG SEMICIRCLE.



----- = BASIC LINE

..... = MOVEMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL DANCER.

———— = SEMICIRCLE FORMATION.

b) Semi-Circle:

The movement of the feet and the body will effect the formation of a semicircle in different patterns. The basic steps No.4, 5 and 6 also have this choreographic pattern.

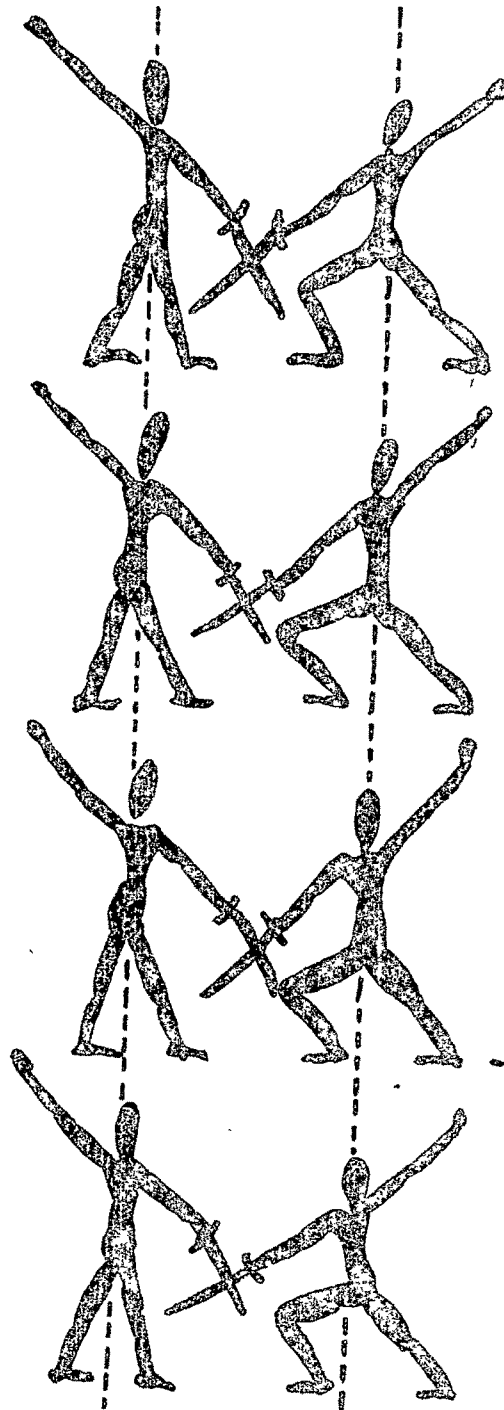
B) Choreography for the Fighting Scenes:

The choreography for the fighting scenes is based on the principle of attack and defence. These patterns are very interesting. There are group fights and individual fights. While attacking, the actor stands erect, however, the knees are slightly bent, the left hand is held high behind the head. The defender kneels on his right leg and the left hand is held high behind his head. Attack and defence goes on alternatively according to rhythm and the direction of Annāvi . A few striking choreographic patterns are given at the end of this chapter.

CAVITTUNATAKAM TODAY:

This art-form was very popular in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century it suffered a set-back. In the 1950s to cater to mass appeal, Āsāns like V.G.John, Thottagam Joseph wrote plays in Malayalam on Indian History and Hindu Puranas. Kerala Kalā Samiti introduced the plays

COMBAT BETWEEN THE OPPONENTS IN STRAIGHT AND PARALLEL LINES.

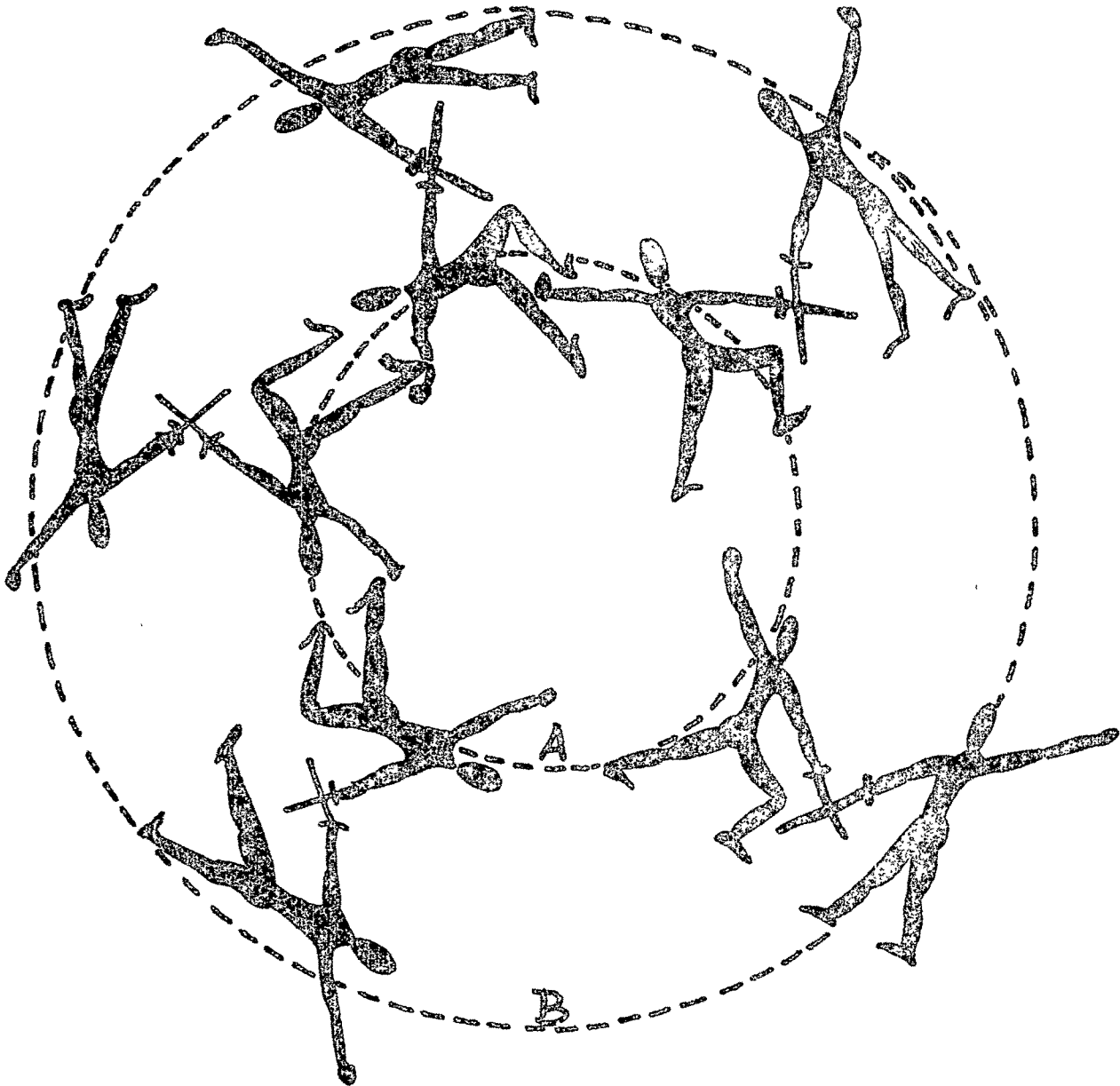


A : ATTACKING PARTY

B : DEFENDING PARTY

----- : TWO STRAIGHT LINES

II. FIGHTING IN TWO CIRCLE FORMATIONS.



A = DEFENDING PARTY - THE INNER CIRCLE FORMATION.

B = ATTACKING PARTY - THE OUTER CIRCLE FORMATION.

of Harichandra and Akbar in Malayalam successfully. However, Cavittunātakam is still struggling to rise out of its slumber.

According to Sabeena Raphy, in 1969 there were over fifty centre where Cavittunātakam was performed at random. By 1984 many of these groups have disappeared. The existing troupes are not very well organised due to lack of finance and patronage. The artists of Cavittunātakam are financially very poor and as a rule not paid, and even if they are paid, it is a very meagre amount. There is not a single organized centre that imparts systematic training as we have for the other art-forms like Yaksagāna , Ōttam Tullal etc. It will be a great service to the art of Cavittunātakam if the Government or Church organizations take an active interest in developing and promoting this art-form.

Cavittunātakam Troupes:

During the field work conducted in May 1984, the following troupes were found to be still active and had their performances regularly inspite of all the financial difficulties.

<u>Sl.No.</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>No.of Actors</u>	<u>Āsān (age)</u>	<u>Play</u>
1.	Kadamakkudy, Cochin	17	Thomas M.C.(55)	Alphonse Nātakam

2. Kadamakkudy, Cochin	21	Varkey K.V (75) Jnanasundari
3. Kothadu/Kandanadu	16	Pius Annavi (95)
		Joseph (50) Kāralmān
4. Kerala Kala Sadanam		
Palluruthy/Veli, Cochin	6	Jossey V.A. (52) Kāralmān
5. Ochanthuruth	11	Michael V.M. (58) Alphonse
		Nātakam
6. Pallipurem	7	Antony
		Charamkulath (51) Kāralmān/
		Ancēlika
7. Gothuruthu Yuvajam		
Kala Samiti	34	Paulose Pilothu (63)
		Georgekutty (40)

WOMEN IN CAVITTUNĀTAKAM:

Traditionally Cavittunātakam, like many other folk-arts of Kerala is performed exclusively by men including the female roles in the play. But for the past few years, women have ventured into this art-form. Umavati from Cochin is one of the successful artistes. It is interesting to note that this lady is a Hindu and had training under Āsān George of Palluruthy for 15 years. At present she is performing in the

Kerala Kala Sadan troupe, Palluruthy led by Āsān Jossey A. Vadakkeveetil. Other names to be mentioned are Mitti and Celin also from Cochin and Jessy Varapuzha from Kadamakkudy.

In the academic field there are a few eminent scholars who have worked for the promotion and development of this art-form. The contribution made by Sabeena Raphy and Dr. Chummar Choondal cannot be overlooked.

Sabeena Raphy did her M.A. in Economics from Madras University in 1951. By profession a teacher, her interest in social welfare and the arts led her to make study of Cavittunātakam and to form a drama troupe to revive the art. Her troupe has performed at State Festivals and in 1959 appeared in the Republic Day Festival in New Delhi. Mrs. Raphy has written several articles and has published a book, "Cavittunātakam " one of the substantial works on the subject. She is the first one to draw the national attention towards this art-form. At present she is engaged on a comparative study of the Mahabharata and the Bible.

Dr. Chummar Choondal is one of the most eminent folklorists in Kerala. He took his Ph.D from the University of Kerala for his dissertation on " Foreign Influence on the Theatrical

Arts in Kerala with Special reference to Cavittunātakam ".
 He is at present Professor of Malayalam , St.Thomas College, Trichur. He is the founder secretary of the Kerala Folklore Academy. He has many research articles and books to his credit. He has also made exhaustive studies on rare folk art-forms such as Kummati, Mārgankali , Āryamāla Nātakam , Ivar Nātakam, Mūvarasu Nātakam , Kannyarkali , Mutiyettu etc. He writes, enacts and directs plays. In the field of Kerala folk arts, he has also made a valuable contribution in assisting research scholars both in and out of the country. Though an academician by profession he lives with the villagers and identifies himself with their life.

In the 300 years of existence of Cavittunātakam , this dance-drama has attained a special form of its own. The unique aspect of this art-form is that it has a blend of Indian and Western theatre tradition especially in its technique, themes, costume, choreography, stage geography and presentation. In the sphere of theme and costume the Western elements dominate, but the technical aspect is dominated by the Indian theatre tradition. In the area of music there is almost equal importance given to both Indian and Western music.

The Terukūttu and Nātakams performed in Tamil Nadu and also by the Tamil speaking people of Palghat area are quite similar to Cavittunātakam. The Sinhalese Nadagama performed by the Catholic villagers of Sri Lanka also have a lot of similarities to Cavittunātakam. The language, themes, characterisation, presentation and other aspects of the theatre are very similar to Cavittunātakam. The roles of Annāvi, Kattiyakkāran etc. are almost the same in both the art-forms. The music also resembles each other. The involvement by the Portuguese in both areas in the cultural life of the people could be the explanation for these similarities.

In the middle of the 20th century, Cavittunātakam as an art-form was fast dying out. But in the 1960s onwards a few scholars like Sabeena Raphy and Dr.Chummar Choondal have drawn the attention of the nation by their writings on this unique art-form of Kerala. However, only an organised effort by the Government, Cultural academies and organizations could help make this art-form popular and alive among the people.

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13. Information gathered from Dr.Chummar Choondal
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page 38
16. Probably they wanted to depict the complexion of the
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17. Mohan Khokar... Op.cit page 93
18. Part of the data acquired from the documentation department,
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LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED OR CONSULTED

INSTITUTE AFFILIATIONS ARE INDICATED WHERE RELEVANT

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Role/Designation</u>
1.Dr.Chummar Choondal	Trichur	Secretary, Kerala Folklore Academy, Eminent Folklorist and research scholar.

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| 2. Mrs.Sabeena Raphy | Ponjikara, Cochin | Exponent of
Cavittunāṭakam |
| 3. Berno Parithussery | Kerala Kala Sadanam
Fort Cochin | Costume Maker. |
| 4. Jossey Vadakaveettil | " " | Āsān/Actor |
| 5. Varghese V.A. | " " | Actor |
| 6. Lazar N.R. | " " | Actor |
| 7. Devassy N.A. | " " | Actor |
| 8. Georgekutty Konath | Yuvajan Kala Samiti
Gothuruth | Āsān |